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The Seed of the Righteous

By
FRANK BULLEN



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CHAPTER I

THE CUP OF TREMBLING

“SUSAN, dear, my heart is very sore to-night.”

The comely middle-aged wife of Richard Hertford looked up from her needlework in surprise at her husband's words, for they had a most unusual sound coming from him. He and his wife were of the very best type of London working folk, a pair whose lives were a lesson, unconsciously delivered, to those around them. He was a railway signalman at a wage of twenty-seven shillings a week; they had been married seven years and had four children, the eldest a boy of six, the youngest a girl of two.

Dick and his wife were both of the same age when they married, thirty-two, and had “kept company” for four years previously. She was then a housemaid in an upper middle-class family, a faithful, quiet servant, not very brilliant, but earnest and hard-working. She had brought with her from her far-away Yorkshire home an intense love for the religious faith in which she had been reared, and prized

above all things among her small possessions her letters from pastor and class leader in the grim little village chapel which was to her almost as the temple at Jerusalem was to the devout Jew.

But it was not until she had been in London for a year that she succeeded in finding a chapel to which she might go and feel at home, for her opportunities of getting about were very few, servants in those days, and in such service as she had, being almost prisoners in the house. When at last she did find a Methodist chapel she felt a thrill of joy such as she had never known before, and only then did she realize what her heart-hunger had been. It took some time before she could feel quite comfortable; for the chapel, though humble enough to urban Methodist ideas, was to her simple mind a place of great grandeur, and the worshipers, to her village notions, as yet unsophisticated by her London life, almost too grand for her to associate with.

This lowly attitude of soul she preserved during her whole period of membership at Lyon Road Chapel; and although her class leader and pastor probably thought she was dull and unappreciative, she was really full of love for her soul's home and her fellow-wor-

shippers. Then came the second great joy of her life—her meeting with Dick Hertford, who was a member of her class, but who, like her, by reason of his employment, had to be content with scanty attendance. He was her first love; and from the first time, when on a pelting wet night he offered her the shelter of his umbrella—she having lost hers—until the evening when my story opens, she had never lost the deep sense of delight she had felt in having the need of her humble heart satisfied.

No story of courtship and marriage could well have been more unromantic than theirs. They had no violent vicissitudes, no quarrels; nothing occurred to break the even flow of their lives. They were both orphans, and had no one to consult with reference to their ways; but both were deeply earnest and sincere Christians, who referred all their doings to a loving Father in the childlike faith that was a part of themselves.

Quite early in their courtship they had decided not to marry until they were able, out of their united savings, to furnish a little home and start life free from debt, of which they both had an inbred horror. But as their earnings were pitifully small, and they both responded generously to the calls made upon them for

charity and the needs of the church, it was not until they reached the age I have mentioned that they felt able to marry and settle down in a little home which was all their very own.

Their married life was full of peace, and although Dick's occupation kept him from her side for many hours at a time—and when he was on night duty those hours seemed very long—she was patient and cheerful, always magnifying her blessings and contrasting her quiet, happy life with those of her neighbors in the poor neighborhood in which they lived, where scenes of domestic misery through drink, unemployment, and sickness were painfully plentiful.

But in spite of all her care and frugality the expenses incidental to a growing family, the low rate of wages earned by Dick, and the high cost of living made it impossible for them to save more than was sufficient to maintain the absolutely necessary club payments and to meet the occasional heavy demands made for doctors' bills—for her health was far from good, and Dick always insisted upon having help from outside whenever she was ill.

Never a word of doubt or thought of fear for the future, however, had crossed her mind until the evening upon which my story opens, when

Dick, who had returned from duty in an unusually somber frame of mind, suddenly uttered the words recorded at the beginning of this chapter. As soon as she had recovered from her surprise she said:

“Why, whatever can be the matter, Dick? what should make your heart sore? Isn't everything goin' on well? We've both got our health, an' the children, God bless 'em, are doin' well, too. Your work's constant, an' though we can't save much, we're far better off than most of our neighbors. But perhaps you don't feel well tonight,” she added, anxiously.

“O, yes, I'm all right in health,” he replied, somewhat hastily, “but one of our fellows, Bill Hatherleigh—you've heard me speak of him—died suddenly yesterday in his cabin. He's left six young children, an' his wife is not strong; an' although he was one of the steadiest fellows I ever knew, he hasn't been able to save a penny more than'll just about bury him. An' what's to become of those helpless ones I can't think. An' it come over me all at once as I was walkin' home, whatever would you do if it should please God to take me off like that?”

“Why, Dick,” she cried in wide-eyed amazement, “whatever in the world is wrong wi' ye?”

I never heard ye talking like this before. Where's your faith in God? If ye'd been a spendthrift or lazy or drunken, ye might have cause to worry, but not now, not when ye an' I have lived the life we have. God won't fail us, I know he won't, for he knows how we've lived before him."

"Ah, my girl," Dick replied, despondently, "you're talkin' as if we'd made a bargain with God. But you know we haven't. We've lived as we have because, thank God, we've been led by him that way, an' we haven't been tempted like other people. An' I think we can say, too, that we've lived near him, because we've loved him an' couldn't be happy without bein' as close to him as we could get. Yet, somehow, that knowledge doesn't keep me just now from havin' a sinkin' feelin' at my heart as I think of poor Bill. There's another thing, dear; livin' where we are we haven't been able to make any friends. We couldn't associate with these people round us, not, God knows, because we're any better than they are, but their ways an' conversation don't fit in with ourn at all. An' havin' no folks either—well, altogether I confess I don't see what's to become of you if the Lord takes me away suddenly, or, what'd be harder to bear still, gives me a long

illness, an' then takes me away at the end of it. But there's just one thing about it that's helpful: all the worryin' in the world won't alter it, won't give me another shillin' a week to put away or lessen our expenses, so we must fall back upon what we've enjoyed for so long—
'Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' ”

By a tacit consent the subject was not again raised between the pair, except that in their mutual prayers they laid a little more stress than before upon the point of their entire dependence upon God for sustenance in the event of anything happening to the breadwinner. Dimly they realized that all people were dependent upon him for all the blessings of life; but, being human, they could not help feeling that a little nest-egg, had they been able to store one, would have made them much more contented and easy in their minds.

One thing especially made it harder for these simple souls to avoid fears for the future—the necessarily narrow lives they led. They had no recreations, except the one they dearly loved, their attendance at the chapel; but those attendances were, owing to Dick's employment and his wife's heavy household duties, seldom

enjoyed together; indeed, they were often at long intervals unable to go even alone. They read very little except in the Bible, and the newspapers not at all; and so, although they were very happy in each other and the children, their horizon was a small circle indeed. Even gossip, that wonderful solace to the wives and daughters of the poor, especially in country villages, had no place in their lives; they had no time for it.

But Susan did find time to help her poorer neighbors, not indeed with money—for of that she had none to spare—but with what money cannot buy, personal loving service in time of sickness and distress. Very often, after a hard day's work in her own home, when all the children were tucked snugly in bed and Dick was away on night duty, she would go out to a sick neighbor's house and do the washing, tidy up the poor place, and get back to her own home so tired that she could hardly drag one foot after the other, but with her heart full of content, the invaluable approval of the Spirit vouchsafed to the Christian who is following closely in the footsteps of the Master.

Of course it never occurred to her that she was doing something very fine, or that her life was full of heroism. She would have said if

she had been asked that she acted as she did because she could not help it; it was the irrepressible impulse of the new life within, the Force that does all the real good in the world. And Dick, although he sometimes gravely took her to task for thus overtaxing her strength, realizing how very much lighter his daily ordinary duties were than hers, could not help feeling a glow of sweetest satisfaction when he saw how closely she was following in the footsteps of the Saviour, and strove in every possible way to keep pace with her, while constantly admitting that in spiritual stature she towered far above him.

Unfortunately, since he had given utterance to his fears for the future, he had hardly been able to resist the temptation to look upon these labors of love as deserving of special protection from the mournful events of mortal life, and in discussing this with Susan they did not agree.

He would say: "Surely God can't let us come to grief; see how faithfully we serve him. It wouldn't be fair nor just, now, would it, for him to let us come to want, or our children either? Don't David say, 'I have been young and now am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, or his seed begging bread'? And yet I don't know, I feel afraid sometimes—"

Then his wife would say, with just a touch of reproof in her voice: "O, Dick, you know you've taught me that we mustn't make bargains with the Almighty. It may be his way for us that we should come to poverty an' want, an' as long as it is not through any fault of ours, be sure there'll be blessing in it, somewhere, somehow. But I'm quite sure of one thing, an' that is that it would be wrong of us to think that, because we have lived as close to God as we know how, we're entitled to the best of everything in this world. I know now it's wrong to think so, an' clean against Scripture, too, for there it seems as if God's nearest an' dearest, if he has any favorites, which I don't believe, have had the very hardest time of all his people. No, Dick, dear, don't let us make that mistake, nor worry ourselves about the future either, but go on livin' as we've always done an' trustin' to his goodness an' mercy to do all for us that is good."

Such, in brief, was the substance of many conversations between these simple Christian souls, although sometimes it was Dick that comforted his depressed partner, instead of being comforted by her. And so they lived their uneventful lives, giving out in the dark place where they lived a steady light from

above that the migratory population around could not help noticing, although they certainly did not understand it in the least.

At last it came about that one bitter winter, when the eldest boy was eight, Susan, coming home very late at night from doing a sick neighbor's washing, caught a severe cold, which settled upon her chest, and compelled her to take to her bed for a month. Bravely she battled with her sickness and the natural worry of a poor woman with four young children, but the struggle left severe traces behind it when at last she was able to resume her labors. Dick, too, showed the strain, for not only had the heavy expenses eaten deeply into their little store, but want of rest and the necessity of keeping steadily at his onerous duties in the great signal box had pulled down his naturally fine physique sorely.

But the first evening they had together downstairs they devoted to a little service of thanksgiving and rejoicing that they had successfully battled through the troublous time, and were now ready again to face the world. One thing was especially comforting to them—their children were all well and hearty, and the eldest boy especially was a fine little fellow, thoughtful and helpful beyond his years, besides get-

ting on exceedingly well at school. In fact, as such heroic souls will, they found many things to be grateful for, and, in consequence, they were very bright and happy.

So much so that when one of the class leaders from their chapel called upon them he was agreeably surprised to find them so cheerful; being a man in humble circumstances himself, as, indeed, were most of the congregation, he could easily have appreciated their being very depressed and worried. But instead of that he found himself being uplifted and helped by their example, and when he took his leave it was with a glow of satisfaction at his heart in that he had been privileged to witness a special and significant instance of the triumph of faith.

Such a strain, however, as our friends had gone through is not lightly overcome, and is bound to leave deep marks upon the bodily powers; and both Susan and Dick felt strangely unlike their old selves, Susan especially being conscious of a queer fluttering at her heart upon the slightest exertion. The knowledge of this, however, she kept to herself, for, woman-like, she wished to spare her husband pain and worry as much as she could, and putting the feeling down as "weakness," hoped that it would speedily pass off. But it did not, and

she made little headway in consequence, being generally only just able to keep about.

One wretched night, very dark, with a fierce blizzard howling, Dick, relieved from his onerous task, eagerly set his face toward home. To do so he had to cross a wide stretch of metals, which, however, he knew as we know the way about the house, and consequently had no thought of danger. Alas that the old saw about familiarity breeding contempt should so often be justified, and its dreadful results demand recording! He stepped aside to avoid a passing train, and a shunted truck flying noiselessly past, caught him, flung him under its wheels, and bumped over his prostrate body. One of the shunters stumbled over him soon after, and, groping fearfully about the limp form, dragged it into the six-foot way, and then rushed off for help.

Men came and bore what remained of Dick to a place where medical aid was soon procured, but it only took the doctor a minute to decide that Dick had passed beyond earthly needs. His uniform showed what he was, and after a few inquiries his address was discovered, and one of the porters was sent to break the news to his wife. He reached the house at about 2 A. M., and after some little trouble succeeded

in arousing her. She came down, trembling with cold and an indefinable apprehension, opened the door, and, staring wildly at the dark figure standing there, exclaimed: "Whatever is the matter? Where's Dick?"

The messenger said, thickly: "I'm very sorry, Mrs. Hertford, I hardly know how to tell you, but your husband—" He stopped, not knowing how to phrase his terrible tidings, but she in an unnaturally quiet voice commanded him to go on. Summoning up all his courage, he moistened his dry lips and uttered the dread words: "Your husband has been killed."

She made no reply, but stood staring at him fixedly, as if she had been in a trance for a few moments, then slowly collapsed and sank to the ground before him in a shapeless heap. He caught the candle from her sinking form, set it on the floor, and endeavored to raise her, but unavailingly. Then at his wits' end—for he was a young bachelor and not very resourceful—he stepped over her and rushed upstairs seeking help, but only found the four children soundly sleeping. There was no one else in the little house. With a dim idea in his mind that the poor woman had fainted he hunted about for some water, with which he went back and tried to revive her, but to no purpose.

Horribly alarmed at the situation, he then laid down the heavy head and ran out, leaving the door ajar, in search of help. At the corner of the street he was fortunate enough to find a policeman, who told him where he could get a doctor, and went at once to the house to mount guard until he should return. He was back in half an hour with the doctor, who, upon examination, pronounced the woman dead, and gave it as his opinion that she had died from shock upon receiving the news.

By this time in some mysterious way a few of the neighbors had become aroused and were profuse in their offers of help. So, since no better could be done, the policeman took the names and addresses of two of the volunteering women, put the house in charge of them, and left them to render the last solemn offices to the dead. Then he and the doctor and porter went their several ways, all considerably shaken by the sad event, for in spite of their experience there were elements of tragedy in the situation which touched them very deeply.

So the grim work proceeded, more neighbors coming in to stare and talk, and—must it be said?—plunder. Unhappily, yes, because of the character of those neighbors. Small articles began to disappear first, then larger,

until suddenly several quarrels broke out, and the once quiet home became a scene of uproarious brawling. In vain did some of the more decent among the invaders raise their voices in protest against this wickedness; having begun, it seemed as if it must go on until nothing but the bare walls remained. But a sudden diversion was made by the simultaneous awakening of the four children, who, seeing the room full of quarreling people, burst into loud lamentations and cries for mother, all except the eldest boy. He, poor laddie, sat blinking at the strange scene, the dim figures and guttering candles, but uttering not a sound.

Suddenly one of the women, who had been really doing her best, and had taken no part in the despoiling of the poor home, caught sight of the little lad's white, wondering face and rushed to his side. She flung her arms round his neck with a rough idea of comforting him, but he, trying to push her away, said in a strange voice: "Where's my mother?"

At that pitiful question, the woman burst into tears, crying: "O, you poor lambs, you've got no mother nor father now. How ever shall I make ye understand?" Then turning fiercely upon the other people in the room she cried stormily: "Look here, if this doesn't shame

ye, nothing will. There's some of ye that'll carry a curse with ye all yer lives for this mornin's work, robbin' the helpless orphans, that the sight of is enough to break one's heart." Much more she said to the same effect, while the three younger children wailed pitifully, "Mother, mother," until in some mysterious way the house was emptied of its undesirable visitors, and the two good Samaritans were free to pursue their self-imposed task of trying to comfort the bereaved ones.

But presently both of them remembered that they must be off to attend to their own households, and having first ascertained that the eldest boy was capable of looking after his little brother and sisters for a time, they took their departure, promising to look in again soon. And here my story proper begins.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNING LIFE

LITTLE Dick Hertford, aged nine, sat up in bed for some time after the two strange women had gone, like a child in a trance. The wailings of his brother and sisters went on incessantly, but they apparently fell on deaf ears. He was stunned, poor little man, for although bright and intelligent and very helpful in the house, he had never as yet felt any need for initiative; always there had been behind him his mother's guiding hand or voice. Nor had he ever realized the meaning of death, never had seen a dead person, although he knew theoretically that everybody must die. A more willing child never lived, but just now he felt quite helpless and did not know where to begin, even had he known what to do.

But gradually there came to his mind a picture of that dear mother, whose constant habit it was, when worried or bothered about anything whatever, to say aloud: "Ah, I know what I'll do; I'll ask the Lord about it." And many a time he had knelt by his mother's side listening while she, just as simply as a child,

made known her wants to the Father. The idea flooded his mind until, with sudden energy, he sprang out of bed, dropped on his knees, and cried, shutting his eyes very tight: "Our Father 'chart in heaven, mother's dead, an' I'm here all by myself, an' I don't know what to do. Do please help me an' show me same as you used to do mother when she asked you, an' forgive us all our sins for Christ's sake. Amen."

While he prayed out loud in a trembling voice, the other children ceased their wailing, gazing round-eyed at him kneeling on the floor, but as soon as he had said "Amen," the youngest child, Dolly, began to cry again much louder than before.

Without a moment's hesitation he rose from his knees and went over to her, saying: "Don't cry, Dolly. I'll dress you now, an' if you're a good gal, I'll get you a piece of breadnbuttersugar."

This promise pacified Dolly for the moment, but presently she whimpered again as her clothes were being put on: "Where's my mummy? I 'ont my mummy."

And that for some strange reason or other loosed the poor laddie's tears, so that, laying his head down upon the coarse quilt by his lit-

tle sister's side, he sobbed as if his heart must break. This outburst quieted while it frightened the other children, for Dick was by no means given to tears, and they hardly knew what it was to see him cry.

At last the paroxysm spent itself, and he resumed the dressing of his sister with only an occasional catch in his breath at intervals. And, although it may appear strange to mention the fact here, that one outburst seems to have sufficed him for life, for he has never shed a tear since. The other children, Jemmy and Susan, were awed into silence, and the dressing continued until they were all ready for the day.

Then, Dick going first, they all went downstairs, to find the usually neat and tidy kitchen a wreck, and to miss at once very many things their eyes had long been accustomed to. But there was food in the cupboard, and first giving Dolly her promised slice, Dick made some tea and laid the breakfast. The ha-porth of milk had been left at the door as usual, so that everything was in order, and the little group were soon seated at their meal, all eating with good appetite except Dick, whose heart was too full. Having seen them all supplied, he stole softly upstairs and into his mother's bedroom,

looking fearfully at the straight white figure on the bed lying so still and covered with a sheet.

An overwhelming desire to see what had happened conquered the cold thrill at his stomach and through the roots of his hair, and he went on tiptoe to the bedside, gently lifted the corner of the sheet, and gazed upon the dead face. Its hue curdled his blood, but its perfect serenity and peace reassured him; and although his little body felt benumbed he could not be said to be alarmed. But a great awe came upon him, which aged him as well as solemnized him, quenching every other feeling. After standing steadfastly gazing at the dear face for about a minute he quietly drew the sheet back into its former position and stole out of the room on tiptoe, the scene ineffaceably branded upon his memory.

As he went down the stairs there suddenly came into his mind the thought of his father. How was it that he had not yet heard of this trouble and come home? It may seem strange that this thought had not occurred to him before, but it must be remembered that owing to his father's occupation he was often absent from home at irregular hours, so that the children were accustomed to be without his

society, while their mother was always with them, and to her they turned in every difficulty. But now, having remembered his father, he longed intensely for his home-coming, feeling that when that happened much of his present trouble would disappear.

Meanwhile he busied himself getting Jemmy and Susan ready for school as usual, as he had seen his mother do, and when that was done he tidied up to the best of his ability. What little he could do, however, was soon done, and then although it was time to leave for school he could not go and leave Dolly, and he could not let the two younger than himself go alone, he having been used to escort them. O, how he longed for his father's foot-step! and yet, feeling that the tragedy of last night was still unknown to him, was afraid of what might happen when he did come.

At last a knock came at the door, and Dick, trembling with excited anticipation, flew to open it. But alas for his hopes! it was only one of the women who had promised to return. She was loud in her expressions of pleasure at his cleverness in doing what he had toward tidying up, and in getting the children ready for school, but her voluble talk was suddenly interrupted by Dick, who, looking as if he had

not heard a word of what she had been saying, said quietly: "Why doesn't father come home?"

For a few seconds the woman stared fixedly at him, as if unable to understand his pathetic inquiry. In truth, she was stricken with amazement, for it had not occurred to her that the boy was as yet ignorant of the completeness of his loss. And then suddenly, with a sort of scream, she burst into tears and snatched the little fellow to her bosom, crying: "O, ye poor lambs, don't ye know that your father's dead, too? This is too dreadful! And to think that those wretches should rush in and rifle the place at such a time; why, it's worse than a lot of devils would do. Well, I don't know what to do for ye—haven't ye got no friends, Dickie, no uncles or aunts or anybody like that?"

Dick, having disengaged himself from the woman's embrace, replied: "I don't know; I don't think so. We only had father and mother."

"Well," she went on after a pause, "I don't see what I can do. Ye'll have to go to the Union, of course, but who's to take ye? I can't stay with ye or go with ye, I've got my hands full as it is, and Mrs. Jones has gone

out to her work. I do wish somebody would come."

Her wish was almost immediately granted, for there came a tremendous double knock at the door. Upon opening it she was confronted by a policeman, who was accompanied by the relieving officer. In briefest business-like fashion the two men took charge of matters, telling the kindly woman that there was no need for her presence any longer, as they would do all that was necessary. They knew all the details as far as could be known from the report of the constable who had been first called in, and who had now gone off duty.

So, bridling, she retired, grumbling as she went that it was just like these Jacks-in-office to ignore the help that she had rendered. But they took no notice of her, being busy taking an inventory of what remained in the poor home. Then the policeman fetched a cab; the children, trembling and bewildered, were taken out of the house and bestowed in the vehicle, around which a gaping crowd had gathered; and the relieving officer, leaving the policeman in charge, drove off with his charge to the workhouse.

On the way thither the officer put many questions to the eldest boy, with the intention

of learning more of the circumstances if possible; but Dick could tell him nothing that he did not already know. Up till last night the children had lived as children ought to live, their every need supplied by their earthly providence, surrounded by an atmosphere of tender, loving care, and the catastrophe which had descended like a black wall had cut them off from it all so completely that they were as entirely helpless and ignorant as if they had been dropped from another planet.

The officer was not a sympathetic man—few of his class are—and the sight of bereavement and consequent misery was, by reason of his calling, sadly familiar to him; but there was something in this spectacle so touching that he muttered: “I shan’t be sorry to get this job off my hands; it’s about as much as I can stand.” Then, with a rough attempt at consolation, he turned to Dick and said: “Cheer up, old chap, you’re going to a good home, where you’ll be well looked after; and you’ll be a jolly sight better off than ever you was in your life.”

Dick answered him not a word, though his heart swelled with indignation at the thought of his being better off without his mother. But with the blessed elasticity of youth the

other children forgot their fears and sorrows in the drive, their first experience of the kind; and by the time the cab drew up at the great gate of the workhouse they were chattering gaily with one another. They were speedily transferred to the master's office; and thence, after a few formalities with the receiving officers, were drafted off to the children's wing and placed in charge of the matron as by the working of some well-oiled machinery, and without the accompaniment of a single kindly word. For it was before the days when Scattered Homes and special treatment had been ordained for pauper children.

Dick remained quiet and observant through it all, soaking in every detail, even though full of bewildered wonder at all he saw around him. Presently he turned with a start as the matron, having handed over the other children to her subordinates to be attended to, said: "Come, young man, you mustn't sulk. You've got a good home now, and you'll be well looked after and treated as long as you're a good boy. You must pay attention to all you're told, and you'll get on here as well as you could anywhere."

Dick looked up at her, O so gravely for nine years old, and replied: "Please, mum, I aint

sulky, and I will be a good boy; mother always said I was. But everything's so new and funny that it seems to make me silly. I will try and do what I'm told, because mother always taught me to."

His earnestness drew a grave smile to the somewhat stern face of Mrs. Beaver, the matron, and she said: "That's a brave lad, and I hope you'll grow up to be a father to those little brothers and sisters of yours when you're old enough."

Now, without in the least intending it, Mrs. Beaver had struck the right chord in Dick's brave little heart. He then and there determined that he would be just that—a father to them; he would try and do what he knew would please his mother, as he used to look after them when she was ill and be rewarded with many a kiss. But he said nothing to anybody on the subject, neither then nor afterward, though his resolution never wavered for an hour.

A severe ordeal awaited him the next day, when he was sent under the charge of an official to attend the inquest on his parents. He then heard, but for the most part without understanding it all, the evidence that was given about the two sad deaths; but, young as he was, he fully realized the terrible nature of the

calamity that had occurred. He heard, too, many expressions of sympathy with himself and his brother and sisters in their bereavement, but happily did not know that the neat little home which the care and self-denial of his parents had so lovingly built up was scattered to the winds, and the miserable pittance that it fetched went to pay the authorities some of the expense that they had incurred in taking over this little group of orphaned youngsters.

Well, it was all over now, the happy home life and tender, parental care. He and his brother and sisters were just units in a great company of the unwanted, under the charge of paid attendants, who, it must be admitted, tried to do their duty, but could hardly be expected to give love as well. And, worst of all for little Dick, he very seldom saw his brother and sisters, and still less frequently could he speak to them. This was a sore trial to him, for it was laid upon his heart somehow that he ought to look after them, to make up to them in some way, he did not know how, for the loss of father and mother. This weighed upon his mind so much that he was very silent and reserved; he lost the natural buoyancy of youth and did not play with the other boys in his section, held aloof from them, in fact, and of course suffered

for it. For he was called a variety of unpleasant names by the other boys, and by those in authority considered sullen and evil-tempered. Both of these injustices rankled in his mind and had a great effect upon his character through life. But he only shrank farther within himself, applied himself more diligently to his lessons, and looked forward to a time of escape from his present unhappy surroundings.

Such a course of treatment, however, upon a mere child could not but have a most depressing and aging effect, and most probably would have injured him mentally but for the blessed relief which came to him through another boy of about his own age who suddenly appeared from the infirmary, where he had been confined for a long time with scarlet fever. He was one of those strange youngsters who seem born to amuse. The very expression of his face was laughter-provoking—round and chubby, with pursed-up lips, a little snub nose, small twinkling gray eyes, and constantly taking on a number of quaint wrinkles, as if it were made of India rubber and was being pulled in various directions. And this jolly visage was crowned with a thatch of rebellious red hair, which stood up like so many flaming spikes, whenever

Teddy Muggs, for that was his funny name, took his cap off.

His body was as quaint as his face, and his speech was full of strange quips and cranks, as if he couldn't be serious to save his life. This apparition bounded up to Dick as he sat one playtime brooding in a corner of the schoolyard, with a yell of delight as of a Choctaw Indian. Dick looked up in utter amazement at the sound, and after staring at the queer little fellow grimacing before him, gradually relaxed his features in a smile.

"Well, now," screamed Teddy, "it can grin, so it can. I thought it was a nimmidge! Hooray!" And then, after capering about a little more, Teddy quieted down and, squatting by the side of Dick, gradually drew him out of his shell, until, for the first time since the dreadful shadow of his great bereavement fell upon him, he felt as if he had some interest in life.

The other boys, with whom Teddy was a prime favorite, not merely because of his fun-making capacity, but because he had a knack of suddenly turning upon any boy who was inclined to ill-treat him and making himself excessively unpleasant, soon came round to stare and comment upon the new acquaintance-

ship which had sprung up. It caused quite a sensation in that narrow little world of theirs, for they had decided that Dick was to be an outcast, even among them, and had acted upon that decision. Now they could not ignore the doughty champion that had suddenly arisen and taken Dick under his protection, but they were not at all prepared to forego their settled dislike of the harmless, quiet lad, whose habits and manners were so much unlike their own.

But although the majority of them, unwilling to lose their chief fun-maker, the life and soul of the playground, threatened Teddy with all sorts of boyish vengeance if he "took up" with Dick, their enmity made no impression upon the sturdy little rascal. He only avowed more loudly his determination to stick to his new-found chum, and Dick felt a new spirit rising within him, a resolve to be worthy of this friendship and support. And so the two lads became almost inseparable. They soon discovered their power as a pair who were bound to support each other, and although their determination cost them many a battle, many a collision with the authorities, who seldom took the trouble to be just in their distribution of punishments, all these troubles only had the effect of knitting them closer together.

And now I must explain that all of the preceding account is merely by way of prologue to the main part of my story, which is that of a brave lad's battle with fate, without any helping hands whatever, and with almost the gravest disadvantages to commence with. And it may be that additional interest will attach to the tale when it is understood that it is practically a record of actual fact, only such alterations being made as seem necessary in order to avoid identification.

For this reason we must now pass somewhat hurriedly over the two and a half years which Dick spent in the workhouse, in that mental and moral atmosphere which usually has such a horribly cramping effect upon the young, robbing them of all initiative and making them almost soulless machines. What the effect upon Dick would have been but for his chum, Teddy Muggs, it is hard to say; he would most probably have been crushed by loneliness and want of sympathy, as well as by the grim routine, in spite of the compelling motive that filled his heart. Now, however, having someone in whom he might confide, a chum who always looked on the bright side of things and who turned everything into fun except Dick's fervent aspirations toward being a father to

his young brother and sisters, he developed rapidly in mind as well as in body, and the good if coarse food, healthy life, and severe discipline made a sturdy lad of him.

Unfortunately, in those days there was no attempt made to teach the boys trades, and so the only hope they had of becoming anything but unskilled laborers was in their being taken out by some local tradesman to assist him in his business. Dick and Teddy eagerly compared their ideas of what awaited them, and built many gorgeous castles in the air thereupon. But Dick's daydreams had always for their main theme the rescuing of his brother and sisters from what he had always looked upon as a kind of prison, and this had kept his heart open toward them, in spite of the very rare opportunities he had of seeing them. They, poor little things, had little thought of their earnest brother—it was not to be expected at their age; and as he was never able when he did see them to bring them any of those little gifts that quicken the memories and affections of the very young, he had to be content with the hope that they would know and love him by and by.

The habit of prayer his mother had taught him never left him. He believed in a loving Father-God who would help him in answer to

his prayers. And so he prayed morning and evening that he might soon grow big enough to do what he knew his mother would have wished him to do—be a father to the helpless ones she had left. Thus he persisted, until one day, being gruffly told by the master that it was nearly time he was earning his living somewhere, he seized the occasion to beg that he might be allowed to go out and begin at once. And on that very day a local tradesman, who was one of the guardians, having intimated that he could do with an errand-boy, Dick was selected for the job, and found himself presently tossing restlessly on his little pallet bed, unable to sleep for thinking that this was his last night in the workhouse.

CHAPTER III

BEGINNING THE WORLD

LIKE all healthy little boys, Dick slept so soundly that the loud clanging of the work-house bell next morning took some time to penetrate his deep, refreshing sleep. Also, like most youngsters, except those with a naval training, he only came to his full senses gradually. But as he did so he became conscious that something strange had occurred in his life, and the feeling strengthened until the full knowledge that today he was to begin the world on his own account filled him with eagerness for the fray.

The force of habit compelled him to go through his usual routine of washing, dressing, and putting things away according to the rules under which he had lived so long; but his brain was busy all the time with the possibilities of the new life before him. He was not overconfident, either; certain tremors attacked him, made him fearful that he should not be able to please his new master, and so on; but ever there came to him the exhilarating knowledge that he would be working for something,

for the definite end of keeping the other children and pleasing his mother.

Everybody was less gruff and official that morning; but his impatience to go could hardly be restrained. He did not know when he was to go, except that it was to be today; and as for the position of his new place of employment, the whole world outside the workhouse walls was as much an unknown land to him as the interior of Africa. But at ten o'clock he heard his name called; he was wanted in the master's office. He hastened thither with quickened pulse, and found the master waiting for him with a kindly face and a few rather stereotyped words of advice. How could the master know that the dead mother's words were a living force in that little heart, compared with which any words of his were of the smallest moment? Still, it was kindly meant, and did cheer the boy.

Behold him now, a small, tremulous figure, outside the workhouse wall, a slip of paper in his hand and a look of utter bewilderment on his face. His first impulse was to ask a boy passing laden with a basket full of groceries if he could show him the way to Shortts Road; but, to his surprise, the boy not only said he didn't know, but used some very rude language

to him for inquiring. Still, he gave him one piece of sound advice—he was to “ask a p’leeceman.” And Dick, having never known the London waif’s particular dread of the fine men to whom Londoners owe so much of their comfort, went fearlessly up to the constable on point duty at the corner and proffered his question. The columnar man in blue looked benevolently down upon the small, eager figure, and laying his hand paternally upon the narrow shoulder, gave the requisite directions in true policeman fashion—clear, succinct, and forceful.

“Thank you, sir,” gratefully responded Dick, and sped off, arriving breathless at Mr. Dickson’s shop about ten minutes later. It was a fairly large, double-fronted establishment for the retailing of the thousand-and-one articles that are to be found in what we know as “oil-shops,” but which the proprietors dignify by the title of “Italian warehouses.” Outside the shop, and obstructing a large and entirely illegitimate portion of the pavement, was a curious assemblage of tin and chinaware, servants’ boxes, baskets, saucepans, and trays full of assorted oddments, ranging from blacking to patent medicines, all of which seemed like a mighty display of property in Dick’s

wondering eyes. But he did not stop to contemplate, he went boldly into the dark shop, whose windows, walls, and even roof, were loaded with such a miscellaneous assortment of goods that it seemed a perfect miracle how any one mind could ever remember where anything was or what was the price of it when it was found.

Dick had hardly entered the shop before from the gloom he heard a sharp voice: "Now then, young man, what's for you?" He stopped at the barrier of bundle-wood stacked against the counter, becoming aware of a big, red-faced man with a bald head and keen eyes, who peered sharply out at him, and was about to repeat his question, when Dick replied timidly: "Please, sir, I'm Dick Hertford, come to work."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the shopkeeper; "so you are. Well, come along, an' we'll soon see what you're made of. Look's if ye could do with a good deal of feedin' up though, an' yet I believe the provisions supplied at the Union are of the best quality an' most plentiful."

Dick heard all his employer's harangue, but only succeeded in absorbing as much of it as was addressed directly to him. Indeed, he had no time for meditation; for Mr. Dickson, like

most self-made men, did not believe in waste of time either by himself or those who served him. And Dick was so eager to please, so willing to attempt even if he could not perform everything he was asked, that he compelled the admiration of his master. And the time flew so rapidly that, although his poor little stomach gave no uncertain warning of its needs, he was amazed when Mr. Dickson said: "Now then, my lad, you can go and get your dinner."

Poor Dick stopped in the middle of what he was doing, looked up innocently, and inquired: "Have I got to go back to the workhouse for it, sir?"

"Good heavens, no," replied his employer. "Ye've done with the workhouse now. By the way, where's your clothes?"

Then Dick remembered that he had been told that as soon as he had obtained a lodging he was to send for or fetch the scanty wardrobe allowed him out of the rates, and that henceforth he might expect to maintain himself on his wages—five shillings a week.

So he did what first occurred to him—he told his master the exact truth about his position, and as an afterthought explained that he had no money to live upon until Saturday, nor any idea of where he might be sheltered

or what he would be expected to pay for that shelter. Mr. Dickson grumbled a bit, and said various things in a half-audible voice about not being prepared to board and lodge as well as pay; but eventually, looking down at the wistful face, decided that he could go in the kitchen and get his dinner, and that he could sleep under the counter on some sacks until Saturday, after which he would have to shift for himself.

“But,” he added, as if afraid that his benevolent instincts might carry him too far, “if ever I catch ye having a light in the shop after I turn out the gas, or so much as tasting a morsel of anything that doesn’t belong to ye, out ye go, neck an’ crop.”

Dick smiled fearlessly—was it likely that he would do what he ought not?—and said his thanks very earnestly. Then Mr. Dickson, feeling somehow very good and generous, told Dick to mind the shop while he went in to dinner, and disappeared into the parlor, leaving Dick alone with the amalgam of flavors that went to make up the atmosphere of the emporium. And here I am reminded of the exigencies of space, or I could ramble on at any length, since I have been in exactly the same position as Dick. But the desire must be

sternly repressed, and I can only record how at the end of half an hour, Mr. Dickson reappeared, his face shining greasily where he had wiped it upon his apron, and said in a husky voice: "Go down to Hulda, Dick, and she'll give ye something to eat."

"Yes, sir," ejaculated Dick, and was gone, for he was ravenous.

O, that boyish hunger! To feel it now—only for five minutes—with the means to gratify it that I have! But this is absurd.

Upon Dick's entering the kitchen he was immediately confronted by Hulda, a shambling, round-shouldered, flat-faced girl of about twenty, with wistful eyes. The two stared at each other for about five seconds in silence, then Dick said, humbly: "Please, mum, master said I was to come down here and get some dinner."

"Yuss," replied the girl, almost eagerly. "I know; missus said I was to give ye some. Come along, set down." And pushing back with one hand some of the dishes that littered the whole table, she dragged a windsor chair up with the other. Dick seated himself modestly, hardly daring to look around, for the general disorder and slovenliness of everything jarred upon him strangely, and he felt almost

as guilty as when he had on one or two occasions felt a strong desire to whistle in chapel during service. He had never known such conditions before.

However, Hulda slopped down before him a big soup plate full of Irish stew and a chunk of bread. The smell of the savory mess was almost maddening, and he began to dribble; but bending his head, he murmured the sweet grace his mother had always said: "Thank you, dear Father, for this good food in the name of Gentle Jesus." He was about to begin his meal when he looked up and saw Hulda's round eyes fixed upon him and filled with tears. But neither of them spoke; their feelings were difficult of expression; and, besides, Dick had something clamoring for attention beneath his nose. Hungry as he was, though, he soon stopped eating, and stared with amazement at Hulda, who was sobbing over her food instead of eating it. As soon as she felt the boy's earnest gaze fixed upon her, however, she made a brave effort, choked back her sobs, and muttering, "It's nothin', ye only reminded me of my mother," made pretense to go on with her meal.

Dick was too shy as well as naturally too polite to put any questions, so nothing further

was said until his plate was empty. Hulda had been watching him furtively, and at once rushed to replenish it; but Dick refused any more, having indeed made a goodly meal. Rising at once, he said shyly: "Thank you, mum," and was about to depart when Hulda cried: "What's yer hurry? Ye aint ben down here ten minutes yut." Dick replied quite honestly, as knowing nothing of any rightful times for meals, "Please, I must go; master may want me," and, backing toward the door, disappeared, leaving the poor girl to the loneliness which hung so heavily upon her, and which she had hoped to dispel for a little while by some conversation with Dick.

Now there is a serious temptation besetting me to enlarge upon Dick's further experiences as Mr. Dickson's willing, obedient slave, for "slavery" is truly the only word which could be applied to such services as his; but I dare not yield to it because of the vista that lies before me. I must hasten over those hard and heavily burdened days when Dick toiled faithfully, unquestioningly, unremittingly from seven in the morning until ten-thirty at night all the week except Saturdays, when it was always one o'clock before he got home; for after the first few nights under his master's

counter, by great good fortune he had been introduced to an old charwoman, who rented a small room and a large cupboard—it could not be dignified by the name of a room—adjacent to it. She had lived alone since the death of her granddaughter, a girl of about Dick's age. And now she consented willingly to put Dick up and look after him for the not extravagant sum of eighteenpence a week. Out of the balance of his weekly wage, three and sixpence, it behooved Dick to “find himself” in clothes and food. Now, for Dick this was not so hard a task as it may seem to most of us, because he had inherited a prudent strain from father and mother, and had learned to find all his amusements at home, where amusements are costless. Now, amusements did not seem to be indicated, as the doctors say. Life was far too serious for this small man of under thirteen, burdened with the mental load of a brother and two sisters presently to be provided for.

Dick was neither priggish nor abnormal. His healthy appetite for enjoyment and his sense of humor were just what they should be at his age; but his upbringing and the strain he had so stoutly borne had between them achieved that somewhat sad feat of putting an old head on young shoulders, a feat which the

false proverb assures us is impossible, but which very many of us know is nothing of the sort. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Dick's downyings were often filled with a weariness of soul as well as body. There was no play in his life, no fun, only hard work without a kind word, except from the old char-woman, his landlady, and she was hardly intelligible to the eager youngster. The servant, Hulda, had promised well; they were beginning to understand each other fairly when their acquaintance ended by Dick's finding a home.

And so poor little Dick's life was lived austere, being debarred from that enjoyment which is the divine prerogative of all young things, and cannot be withheld without certain injury to the subject.

Relief, however, came in due time. Dick was toiling along toward a customer's house under a heavy load of miscellaneous articles. He took little heed of his surroundings, for his present duty demanded all his physical forces. And then, suddenly, a grinning red face, topped by fiery hair, was thrust into his, and a voice breathing laughter in every intonation chuckled: "What 'O, 'ere's me boy'ood's hidol! Shake 'ands, me old chum, an' let me tell ye 'ow I've missed ye!"

Dick stared and gasped, and recognized Teddy Muggs. But he had no time to speak; for while he was gasping with astonishment, Teddy said, sternly, "Now then, no te-ars, me chee-ild. Hi know 'ow glad ye are, an' so hon, an' so forf; but the question I've gotter put t' ye is the hall himportant one, ' 'Ow're ye gettin' on? ' "

Teddy paused—not for a reply, for that mattered naught to him, but from lack of breath; and Dick recovered from his stupor of amazement, saying: "O, Teddy, I'm so glad to see you. I never—"

"Stop there," interposed Teddy, dramatically. "Now I know. I ben waitin' t' 'ear an' now! come t' me arms, me long-lorst chum." And to Dick's discomfiture Teddy flung both arms around him, and pretended to weep with much noise. But full of fun as Teddy was, he could not help noticing the real tears in Dick's eyes, the working of the mobile mouth; and suddenly dropping all his clowning, as natural to him as breathing, he whispered: "Dear old chap, don't cry. I loves yer, woodn't hurt yer feelin's was it ever so. Tell us 'ow yer gettin' on."

And so it came out that Teddy, also emancipated, was errand boy at a fancy shop near by,

whose proprietors were a newly married couple, and so full of each other's love that they shed it abroad and much of it fell on Teddy. He told Dick, to the latter's deep amazement, that he could save all his wages ("screw" the wise call it). "'Cause the missis gives me a lot more'n I can eat, an' they's made up a bed for me wot's a fair king t' the old show over there." And he jerked his fingers in the supposed direction of the workhouse.

Dick should, of course, have felt envious of the deep difference between their respective lots, but he was far too overjoyed in meeting Teddy. And then in the midst of his joy rose the specter of his work. He sprang to his feet from where he had been sitting on his basket handle, and said: "Teddy, you won't forget me, will you? I live at 13, Fishers Place, Mrs. Bryan. I've got all day Sundays, and, O! I would like to see you then."

Teddy raised one hand on high dramatically, saying: "By yon bright moon I swear—never mind, I'll look ye up; but say, boy, don't look so funerally. My motto is, If ye can't be 'appy, look 'appy; 'taint so good, I know, but 'taint arf bad, now you take my tip. Well, tartar, me beauty. I will see thee hanon!" And with a quaint caper intended to be dramatic,

and, evincing Teddy's acquaintance with the local "gaff," the pair separated.

Strangely lightened at heart, and hardly feeling the burden of his basket, Dick sped along to his destination. But alas! his thoughts were in a whirl; he did not look where he was going, and he slipped upon a banana skin lying on the pavement. Down he came, basket and all, with a crash. Springing to his feet, he gazed ruefully at the late contents of the basket strewn all over the pavement, several bottles being smashed. Officious helpers sprang apparently from the ground, as they always do in London, the ruin was soon cleared away, and Dick mournfully lifted the basket and trudged shopward.

Now, it must be admitted that while Mr. Dickson was a fairly good type of the London tradesman, he had little notion of abstract justice and little patience with other people in their misfortunes, especially if those unfavorably affected him. So when Dick came in with his basket of debris Mr. Dickson, who, it happened, had just run a splinter under his fingernail, looked up with a sour expression, and seeing his small servant, snapped out: "Where ye bin? if ye don't make more haste with yer errands, I'll sack ye, d'ye hear? I aint goin'

t' pay a pack o' boys t' play about in my time, so don't ye think it."

Poor Dick; he waited until his employer had finished speaking, and then timidly and with sob-choked voice told of his misfortune. I may not, even though it be a story of true life, go into too many sorrowful details; but in five minutes Dick, dazed, bruised, and utterly bewildered, found himself outside the shop, afraid of the human tempest within, yet looking longingly back at its forbidden portals.

But to children like Dick the troubles and trials of their daily life mean little at the time. They are looked upon as an inevitable part of the scheme of things, to be met and lived through as such. And this by no process of reasoning, but incidentally as part of their lives. So Dick, after a few bitter thoughts—it was physically impossible for him to cry—went homeward, his eyes bent on the pavement and his mind in a whirl. And, consequently, he was brought up suddenly with a bang against somebody, whose anger turned into uproarious laughter and culminated in a wild war dance. Half stupefied, Dick gazed upon the fiery red hair, snub nose, and twinkling eyes of Teddy Muggs as upon one who sees visions of things that are not.

“ Well, me bowld 'ero! ” shouted that worthy child of fun, “ goin' t' another funeral? Blest if ever I see sich a mug, and me name wot it is too. Oose cat's dead now? ”

Poor Dick, smiling in spite of himself, began his doleful story, but had not got more than a few broken sentences out before Teddy, his blue eyes aflame, caught him by the arm and screamed: “ Come on! let's go an' smash 'is blessed winders—” but here I must halt, for Teddy's remarks were too redolent of White-chapel for a respectable book. Half of them were unintelligible to Dick, who, by a mysterious law which does operate continually, had not even yet acquired the fouler dialect of the street. And his look of consternation caused another revulsion of feeling in Teddy, who burst into delirious laughter, and shouted: “ No matter-r-r-r-r, his time shall come. Meanwhile show me your diggin's, and I will there a plan unfold whereby ye, my boy'ood's friend, shall regain the 'ites of lugsury an' splendor. Ha! ha! ” And away they trudged.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE

By great good fortune Mrs. Bryan, Dick's landlady, was at home when they reached there; and Teddy with his antics went straight to her heart at once. For in her young days she had been a chorus girl at some minor theaters, and his sham histrionics aroused deep and pleasant memories. Teddy, however, had a businesslike side, despite his immense fund of fun, and before many minutes he had made it clear to the good old woman that Dick had lost his job, but that he, Teddy was going to be responsible for Dick's rent until a new job was discovered for him. And the meeting presently resolved itself into a regular treat of fried fish, chip potatoes, and beer for Mrs. Bryan, at the consumption of which they were as happy as it is given mortals to be.

When Dick parted with Teddy that night it was with a lighter heart than he had known since the terrible calamity which had thrown him upon the world. And yet he had borne another calamity that day, one that even to the average boy looms vast and terrifying—he

trembles to go home and tell them he has "got the sack." How, then, think you, must it appear to the homeless lad? I know from bitter experience, but even I could not do the situation justice, with its depth of boyish despair. Dick, however, knew that he had found a friend, one who had already proved himself worthy of the name—a friend, moreover, who had brought the divine gift of laughter into his life, and had made him for a few happy hours forget the almost crushing severity of his lot.

And so another name was added to his little list at his prayers. Fervently he repeated, "God bless Teddy, and pay him back for all he's done for me," for Dick with simple faith looked upon Teddy's promises as matters accomplished. When morning broke Dick awoke to two stern facts: first, that he was hungry; and, second, that it being Friday, he had only ninepence left, and that tomorrow would bring no pay. So he rose and made his usual toilet by the aid of a pail of water, a lump of soap, and a coarse towel, and then all in a glow hurried out into the keen November wind. But presently he was brought up all standing by the delicious smell of newly baked bread issuing from a large baker's shop. He faltered, stopped, and entered. The baker, a large, red-

faced man in shirt and trousers only, with his bare feet thrust into slippers, said immediately: "Well, nipper, what's for you?"

"If you please, sir," replied Dick, "I want a penn'orth of stale."

The baker threw back his big head and laughed loudly, but went behind the counter and produced from beneath it a tray full of odds and ends of cake and bread in a more or less broken-up condition, saying: "Now, then, hold up yer cap," and Dick, eagerly obeying, presently found himself with as much good food as that useful article would contain. With a grateful "Thank you, sir," Dick held out his penny; but the baker waved the coin away contemptuously, saying gruffly: "Hook it off. My boy'll be here in a minute, and he might go for you. He'd think you was after his job."

So Dick departed for a sheltered doorway in an unoccupied house, where he sat and contentedly made his breakfast. Then, after a drink at a neighboring horse-trough, he felt strong and able to face the foe with a good heart. But he suddenly thought of Teddy's invitation to visit him at his place of work, and at once decided to do so first before entering upon his day's search. So he set off thither, and on entering the street where the shop was

situated found it full of people rushing toward a central spot.

Full of excitement, he joined the hurrying crowd, and presently found himself packed in the midst of an excited mob of people who were held back from the center of attraction—a group of fire engines—by a cordon of police. A house was fiercely blazing, and the firemen, after the usual manner of that splendid body of men, were toiling with wonderful energy to extinguish the flames.

Presently Dick, jammed in between a number of grown-up people swaying hither and thither, unable to see anything and almost suffocated, longed to escape; but he had to endure his imprisonment for an hour, until the fire was extinguished, the house having been completely gutted. The people gradually dispersed, and Dick was then able to see that the premises destroyed were next door to the shop where Teddy had told him to come, which shop was badly damaged also by heat and water. And suddenly he caught sight of the brilliant red head and nearly black face of his chum, who was looking out at the shop door with an air of vast importance, as one for whom the police, who were energetically moving people on, had no terrors.

After a few vain efforts to attract Teddy's attention, and being warned by policemen to "Get along out o' this," Dick thought that it was no time for his visit, and that he had better be moving about his business. So he began his first day's search for bills in shop windows bearing the legend, "A boy wanted." And he found, as we all seemed to do in those days, that although while he was in employment such announcements were very plentiful, yet now that he sought for one they had all mysteriously vanished. He trudged and trudged until he was weary, and at last finding himself near Saint James's Park, he went in, lay down on the grass near a group of loafers who were sleeping, and went to sleep himself.

He woke in about an hour, and resumed his search, but unsuccessfully. He did see several bills, but upon entering the shops was invariably told that he was too small—they all seemed to want a boy with the size and strength of a man to do a man's work for a boy's wage. But still he persevered until it was night, and he felt bound to make his way back again through the labyrinth of streets to his lodging, his only satisfaction being that he had been able to keep his ninepence intact, thanks to the baker's abundant generosity in the morning.

At last he reached home, ready to drop with fatigue, and was met at the door of the room by Teddy, who was looking as anxious as it was possible for his comical face to express.

“Wot cheer, me noble 'ero?” he burst out as soon as he saw Dick; “I fought you'd been an' listed for a sojer, 'relse run away to sea. Wot yer bin doin' wiv yerself all day?”

“Only lookin' for a job,” replied Dick, wearily, “and there don't seem to be none for me anywheres.”

“Garn,” responded Teddy, scornfully. “You've only bin lookin' one day. I know fellers bin out weeks and weeks an' aint got nothin' yet. It's all a matter o' luck, ye know” (with an air of profound wisdom quite comic in a sage of thirteen). “But that aint the pint (as the chaplin used to say Sundays in ahr country mansion); the thing is, could ye do wiv a couple of savelogions? Corse 'ere they is, an' a chunk o' bread, an' as the bloke wot made 'em's a heminent friend o' mine I can guarantee they won't bark at yer, anet mollrow neiver.”

Dick gratefully took the sausages, and dropping into a chair, began to eat—almost ravenously.

Then Teddy, with a nonchalant air, as of a

man who is accustomed to disseminate epoch-making news, said: "We 'ad a fire next door to us t'day. Oil shop. Burnt clean aht, they wos. Nothin' but the walls a-standin' now. An' our place aint damaged neiver! O, no, not arf it aint! But my bloke's wide'o, he's got hissself well insured; so we're all right. Business as ushal during rebuildin', see?"

"Yes," mumbled Dick with his mouth full, "I saw it. I was coming to see you and got stuck in the crowd. And after the fire was out I saw you at the door of your shop; but the policemen wouldn't let me come to you."

"O," delightedly rejoined Teddy, "I was in charge of the premises, ye see. The Govnor'd gone t' his place in the city, an' the missis bein' afraid o' fire, 'ad gone in next door 'long o' the lodgers an' the gal. That's the beauty of 'avin' a man about the place, ye see. An' now ye jest keep yer nerve up. Yore all right. You an' me k'n hang it aht fer weeks an' weeks s'long as I keep in work; an' I'm all right, I know, though I did feel as if me price was marked down this mornin' when I fust see the fire."

Indeed, that was a red-letter day in both their lives. For there had been adventure—danger, the sense of responsibility, all dear to

the heart of boyhood; and when Mrs. Bryan came home they could fight their battles over again and did, Teddy unconsciously and innocently magnifying his adventures until he almost believed that the fire had happened for the special purpose of showing of what he was capable when put to the test.

But Dick had no luck, as he, imitating Teddy, called the condition of things preventing him getting a job. Daily he trudged about the streets of this terrible city of ours, covering he never knew how many miles, and learning unconsciously a vast number of things besides the topography of London. He managed to pick up in casual jobs of horse-holding, bag-carrying, etc., enough to feed himself; but he felt a sinking of the heart as he saw his clothing grow shabbier and shabbier, and thought of the immense difficulty which still lay before him in the matter of his brother and sisters. He never missed visiting day, calling on them and telling them to look forward to the time when they should be free and living with him.

The memory of his mother kept this hope alive in his heart in face of all discouragements. It had become a permanent part of his religion. Had he been asked to define his religious beliefs, he would not have been able to do so.

But in his mind was ever the image of his mother, who had believed in a loving God and Father who cared for the least of his creatures, and whose heart could always be reached by prayer if that prayer were offered in the name of his dear Son Jesus, who was once a poor workman on earth. It does not matter in the least that the real figure in his mind during his prayers and his thoughts of the unseen was that of his mother. The effect upon him was just what the Father would desire. And it kept him clean in mind, honest, and true—in the streets but not of them, entirely unaffected by their foulness.

Thus passed a weary three months, during which Teddy was faithful to his promise and the very joy of Dick's life. His quaint sallies and comments upon the events of each day always filled Dick with laughter, even when his heart was heaviest; and although he seemed frivolity itself, he never once made a sign that he was weary of his self-imposed charge. But the winter was very hard, and poor old Mrs. Bryan found it a severe task to live, what with her rheumatics, bronchitis, and her various labors.

Yet she, like Teddy, never allowed Dick to feel that he was a burden, and their little family

gatherings on Sunday were among the most precious and profitable times of their lives. And then, although none of them so much as dreamed of going to church or chapel, Dick would get out the little cheap Bible that had been included in his workhouse outfit and read aloud; and because it was in him to read well, he read the beautiful stories as if they were true, not as if the reading were a task to be got over as soon as possible and as much credit taken for as could be allowed.

One day, in the very early spring, Mrs. Bryan was at work at a great house in the neighborhood of Eaton Square, when her employer came into the library where she was, to find a book. He was a man after God's own heart, who never missed an opportunity of saying a kindly word or doing a kindly action; and seeing the old woman essaying a task beyond her strength, he went and helped her and so got into conversation with her. She that morning was full of little Dick's hard lot and ill success, and before many words had passed she had brought his case up. Mr. Harcourt listened intently, and after many questions begged her to send Dick up to him.

The upshot of this was that Dick was permanently installed as a page in that great

house. Every member of the household knew his story, and from the scullerymaid to the master were in sincerest sympathy with him. Behold him, then, his rags (for they were now rags) flung away and replaced by a quiet livery well made and well fitting, while the generosity of Mr. Harcourt had provided him also with a good suit of private clothes in which to visit his old friends when off duty.

Strange to say, it did not take very long for Dick to shake off the casual habits to which he had become accustomed in his nomad life, for he had never grown to like that life at all. Yet we all should know how hardly such slackness affects most natures, making them lose the habit of discipline, of due performance of duties, and become unfit for sustained effort. But in the same mysterious way in which he had been preserved from the contamination of the streets Dick was saved from this evil, and he took to his new duties, which indeed were not arduous, with a zest which endeared him to everyone in the house. He was a servant of servants, as usual with a willing boy in any business, though it is often falsely said that no boy earns his keep. And so willing was he that the more work was required of him the better he was pleased and the happier he became.

His greatest delight, however, was the gathering of the whole household morning and evening for family prayer. Then, indeed, he gave himself up to the purest of all enjoyment; then he felt that his mother, looking down upon him out of heaven, would be full of delight in knowing that her boy had such opportunities of meeting his fellows around the mercy seat, long as he had been debarred from that inestimable privilege.

Many a joke was made at his expense because of his rapt attention at these times and his shining face afterward; but he cared nothing for that, and secretly every one of his fellow-servants admired him for it, although all were unfair in their exactions from him of much more than his duty required. But his unconscious influence for good in that house was immense and none of those who were then associated with him will ever forget it.

After he had been a member of Mr. Harcourt's household a year he had another heavy blow. It had been his regular custom once a fortnight to go on Sunday evenings and spend an hour with Mrs. Bryan and Teddy at his old lodgings, and very happy he always was in their company with his heavy budget of news to unload. One Sunday evening in November

he trotted off to Fisher's Place in high glee for his usual pleasure, exceptionally happy, for he had now managed to put away five whole pounds, and his master had told him that his wages were to be raised at Christmas from three to four shillings a week.

But as he drew near the house he felt a quite unaccountable lowering of his high spirits, a general depression which puzzled him. He pressed on, however, and found Teddy bending over their old friend, who was lying on her bed gasping out her life. A sudden seizure of the heart, consequent doubtless upon a long course of rheumatic pains, had caught her while she was chatting with Teddy, awaiting Dick, just before the latter came in. So that there was no time to run for help even if help could have been of any avail.

It was all over in a few minutes after Dick arrived, neither of the boys recognizing the importance of the event until the presence of death made them do so. Then Teddy ran downstairs in an agony of grief and aroused the landlord, who in common with many of his class knew nothing of his lodger, and cared as little so long as his rent was paid and no trouble given. He was only slightly disturbed. Finding that he would be at no loss, he gave the

necessary orders, and the two boys finished their Sunday by walking up and down the street until it was time for their return. Dick bore the blow better than Teddy, whose light nature was terribly impressed by the dramatic occurrence. Dick was fully occupied in comforting his chum, who had hitherto taken the lead in a most masterful way, but was now subdued to the point of dependence.

They parted at ten o'clock, Dick returning to his place of service with a new sense of responsibility upon him, because he felt that the right and proper thing for him to do would be to pay for the funeral of his poor old friend out of his first savings. With this idea in his mind he approached the butler on reaching home, and asked if he might speak to the master—an uncommon request in the house where every servant was welcome to consult their employer upon any matter at any convenient time, Mr. Harcourt being, indeed, father of his household in the best sense.

Dick was soon called into the library, where the kindly man who employed him sat. Without a trace of nervousness the boy told his pitiful little story. Mr. Harcourt listened gravely, and when Dick had finished said: "Very well, Dick, you shall have all the leave

you want to attend the inquest and funeral; but your little savings must not be drawn upon. They are wanted for a much higher purpose than burial. I will attend to the funeral as far as is necessary; but I feel sure that you will find your poor old friend has made provision for that. Such quiet, humble souls usually contrive to do so."

Dick left the presence, as he usually did, feeling uplifted and happy, and the knowledge of his employer's quiet and steadfast sympathy made the real trial of the week that followed seem easy to him. Yes; and if the truth must be told fully, he felt rather important too. It must have shown itself in his manner, because Teddy felt it and resented it accordingly.

And after the funeral, when they should have been nearer to each other than ever, Teddy said: "Well, Dick, I'm gettin' abaht fed up wiv this. No chance to git on, ye a blessed flunkey 'at thinks ye're everybody. There, I sh'll clear aht an' go to sea; I'm fair sick of everyfink."

A thunderbolt falling in the middle of the street could not have startled Dick more. In an agony of contrition he caught hold of Teddy and almost shouted: "Don't, Teddy; I don't think, I never have thought myself everybody.

I don't want any chum but you; don't turn against me. You're the only friend I ever had except God since mother and father died, until Mr. Harcourt, and he's different to you, you know."

But Teddy was now on his dignity, and refused to recognize the pleading of his chum, only saying in response: "Yuss, it's all very well fer you; but I'm goin' to sea. I got a charnce, an' I'm goin' to take it. Ye stop an' live on the fat o' the land, ye don't want me any more."

And off he went without another word, taking with him, Dick felt, the half of the latter's life, and making him feel that unless he could be reconciled he could not go on with his life's work. It was a crisis in the boy's career, though that he could not know and certainly did not realize.

CHAPTER V

GOING TO SEA

THE state of Dick's mind the next morning was most unenviable. Poor lad! he was torn by his desire to do what was right by his master, and to behave well to Teddy, whom he loved with a fullness of affection that some of us would find difficult to understand, having always had someone to love and someone to be loved by. And there was also the awakening spirit of adventure in his heart, the "wanderlust" of the original nomad which is in every one of our hearts, and only wants a word to bring it into full vigorous life when we are young. Therefore it is not to be wondered at that Dick's duties that week were irksome to him, and that, in consequence, he received many reproofs which he knew he deserved and resented none the less keenly on that account.

The recollection of his main object in life, the setting free of his brother and sisters, was just as keen as ever—had never, in fact, faded for a moment, even when he was happiest in his present beautiful home. But the idea that he might by going to sea earn enough in one

voyage to do that which his soul longed to accomplish, whereas in his present occupation, pleasant as it was, it might be several years before he could be independent—and he was not sure whether he could or would be then—O! he would risk it, this launching out upon unknown seas in a double sense.

So it came about that on the following Wednesday after his painful parting with Teddy, he went to the butler and begged him for an hour's liberty after nine o'clock that night. The butler gave him permission ungraciously enough, adding: "You aint been hardly a bit o' good lately. I don't know what's come over ye. Now, mind you're in by half-past ten, or you'll get into trouble—d'ye hear?"

Promptly at nine Dick ran off to Teddy's place of work, meeting that worthy outside the shop, which he was regarding with the air of a proprietor about to dispose of it.

"Teddy," gasped Dick, "I'll come with you. You're the only friend I've got" [O, Dick, is Mr. Harcourt nobody?], "and I can't part with you. Besides, we shall earn more money, shan't we?"

For some minutes Teddy did not reply, but, gazing at the eager face before him with his mouth comically screwed up as if whistling,

seemed to be weighing the problem. For when he had wounded Dick so at their last meeting, he had not imagined what the effect of his words might be. He spoke without thinking of the result, as so many of us do, and then go away and forget what we have said. But Teddy was a boy of parts; and, besides, he had made up his mind as to his procedure, so he replied very quietly at last: "All right, Dick, me son; I'll speak to me chum, an' he'll get us both a job in the same ship. I'm sorry I hurt ye the other night; I thought ye was done wiv me altogether."

A voice from within called Teddy to shut up the shop, which operation being quickly performed left Teddy free to roam up and down with Dick for the time remaining to the latter, discussing their procedure. It came to this, that the ship in which Teddy was to sail lay in the West India Docks loading for Levuka, Fiji, a small barque of about five hundred tons register. She was to leave that day week, and Teddy had said nothing to his kind employers about his departure, fearing in his heart that they would try to hinder his going, and, with the usual thoughtless ingratitude of boyhood, caring nothing about the inconvenience as well as real sorrow that he was causing them.

The upshot of their conference was that they were to meet on Sunday, it being then Thursday, by which time Teddy would have everything arranged and give Dick his final instructions. Then their talk drifted into all kinds of enthusiastic imaginings about the glories of the new life, all based upon a colossal ignorance of the facts, but so full of the beautiful optimism of boyhood that he would be hard-hearted who could blame them. When they parted Dick had got so worked up that he lost the qualms which first possessed him at the thought of leaving Mr. Harcourt without a word after all his kindness; he was simply possessed by the spirit of adventure, to him so entirely new and fresh.

When the two boys met on Sunday Teddy was literally swelling with the importance of the news he had to communicate. His idea of going to sea at all had been aroused by a young man with whom he had come into accidental contact, the brother of a boy chum of his. This young fellow was an able seaman who had made the previous voyage to the South Pacific in the *Day Dawn*, and was given to a good deal of brag about the profession he had chosen. He was, for a sailor, fairly prudent, and had left his discharge with the mate, assuring his

being shipped again. And in one of his recent visits to the vessel to see when she would be ready for sea he had, at Teddy's entreaty, put in a word for him with the mate, who had promised to ship the boy at a pound a month.

But when Teddy had proposed the enlistment of Dick also, Wilson, the seaman aforesaid, looked grave, and didn't know if it could be managed, until the bright thought struck Teddy that a little money might ease the situation. So in Dick's name, and knowing of his banking account, he promised Wilson the enormous sum of a pound if he would use his influence with the mate to get his chum shipped also. Now Wilson was outward bound—that is to say, his money was all gone; also he had no influence whatever with the mate. But the one fact did not neutralize the other, so he promised with apparent reluctance that he would do his best with Mr. Jackson, the mate; in fact, he might say definitely that it would be all right if he got that pound.

Of course poor Dick assented eagerly, promising to give Teddy the money, which he had drawn out of the post office ready for leaving, if he came home with him. And this being done, they parted with the definite understanding that Dick was to join Teddy the following

Wednesday evening, and the pair would hasten on board the ship.

Dick slept little that night, for his little brain was in a whirl. He could not say his prayers, even, for his mind refused to dwell upon anything but the possibilities of the new life. And he must see his brother and sisters, see them and tell them his grand schemes for their deliverance, and bid them wait patiently and hope for his return with pockets bulging with money to set them free from what he regarded only as a superior sort of prison with a definite and disgraceful stigma attaching thereunto.

He rose in the morning heavy-eyed and languid, with the butler in a very bad temper and the family away. Apparently he could do nothing right, and doubtless he was careless, being distracted in mind. At last the butler—who was, after all, not one of the best of men—gave him a resounding blow on the head which knocked him down. That stroke awakened some lurking fierceness in Dick's nature, for he sprang to his feet, glared wildly round, and then, with a scream like a wild cat, flew at the butler, biting, kicking, and scratching like a mad thing.

There was a terrible scene, for the butler, who was a portly man with no heart to speak

of, yelled for help, firmly believing that the boy had gone mad. And indeed it seemed like it, for it took all the other servants to drag him away from his foe, and then it was a long time before he could be calmed down. But when peace and order were restored he was told to pack up and be off at once under pain of being handed over to the police, an order which he very gladly obeyed. It may be satisfactory to read that upon Mr. Harcourt's return, he, ascertaining the truth of the matter, promptly discharged that butler as being entirely unfit to hold such a responsible situation as the head of a household.

Behold Dick, then, entirely free once more. Having left his belongings, now grown to quite respectable dimensions, at Walham Green Station, and with £4 10s. in his pocket, he bent his steps toward the workhouse, and asked as a special favor to be allowed to see his brother and sisters, as he was going away to sea. It was immediately granted, for indeed there is little of the Bumble about our workhouse officials now, and Dick spent a very happy hour with his dear ones. He painted a glowing picture of what he was about to become, and bade them all think of the short time that was to elapse before he would be

back again with his pockets full of money to take them away to a pretty home where they should all live together happy ever after.

It somewhat damped his brotherly ardor to find that the children did not show any enthusiasm, but listened languidly, as though they were rather bored than otherwise. Jemmy, too, being now twelve years old, was openly envious of Dick, and half resentful of the latter's unconscious patronage. The girls were more interested; but, taken altogether, the interview had a somewhat discouraging effect upon Dick, which was not lessened by the obvious disfavor shown by the officials. Mr. Dickson, as one of the guardians, had justified his cruel action at Dick's expense, and made statements which Dick never had an opportunity of refuting.

However, the interview came to an end without any tears, although Dick's heart was full almost to bursting as he turned away from those grim portals. How he managed to put in the time between that afternoon and Wednesday he cannot remember; perhaps it is sufficient to say that on Wednesday at dusk he crept cautiously down to the vessel, leaving his belongings at the station. She loomed enormous in the gathering gloom, her network of

rigging and spars dimly outlined against the sky; and Dick, with his heart thumping furiously, was summoning all his courage to board her, when a small form rolled over the side, slid down a fender lanyard, and rushed up to him saying: "I spotted ye, I ben waitin' fer 'ours an' 'ours, so's I could give ye the tip. Kin ye climb?"

"I think so," falteringly replied Dick.

"Come on, then," said Teddy, and led the way.

It was a tough job for Dick to shin up the side by the rope which suspended the heavy long fender; but he managed it, and followed Teddy forward into the forecastle, a dim triangular space in the bows of the ship decked over to do duty as the sailors' quarters.

It reeked of tar and paint and bilge-water; but it did not smell fetid, for a fresh breeze blew through the hawse-pipes, two great holes in the bow through which the cables ran from the windlass, which was in the broadest part of this apartment.

"Now," whispered Teddy in tragic fashion, "ye mustn't be seen. Wilson couldn't ship ye; the mate said one boy was enough on the articles, so we're goin' to stow ye away. It'll be all right when we get to sea."

Had Dick possessed any worldly wisdom at all, he would have shrunk back in horror from such a prospect; but his faith in Teddy was absolute, he knew nothing of what was before him, and so he assented gratefully to all that was proposed. Therefore in a very short time his bag and box of clothes had been brought on board, some of his little store of money had been expended on such edibles as the fancy of the two boys suggested, and at last, thoroughly wearied, more from the novelty and excitement than with fatigue of body, they both crept into the same bunk and fell asleep.

So deep was the sleep of the lads that they did not hear the various members of the crew coming into the fore-castle, ordered to be aboard to sail at dawn on Thursday. And it was not until the little place was a perfect pandemonium of noise made by six drunken, fighting, roaring seamen that the two lads awoke full of fear, clinging breathlessly to each other and wondering what it was all about. For, indeed, it had no resemblance to any of their imaginings about life on board ship, except maybe in some of Teddy's gory piratical literature.

So they lay and shivered with apprehension, until one by one the roysterers subsided into silence because unconscious.

Then Teddy whispered in Dick's ear: "Don't be afraid, old chum; that's the way sailors always carry on the last night before leavin' port. Wilson told me so, an' he's all right."

Dick didn't answer because he felt utterly depressed and miserable. A sense of wrongdoing lay heavy upon him. For the first time he doubted the wisdom of his coming here, and just because of this hideous scene which he had witnessed outraging all his inherited ideas.

But we have no time to moralize; for almost immediately, as it seemed, the raucous voice of the mate was heard, garnished with all sorts of adjectives too commonly used at sea, adjuring the sleeping seamen to come forth and get the ship out of dock. With a whispered caution to Dick to remain where he was, and on no account to show himself, Teddy jumped out and hastened on deck.

The rest of the morning is for Dick an indelible memory, which he would fain lose, but cannot, nor will lose until he dies: the sudden incursions of men from without endeavoring to drag the unwilling sailors to their tasks, the meaningless uproar, the language, the maddening incertitude of it all to that little shivering figure in the forward bunk, and O, the leaden-

footed hours! Then came hunger and thirst hardly bearable; but Dick was one of the enduring kind, and he held out until at last Teddy crept to his side with a pot of some steaming liquid and a piece of bread, murmuring: "Here you are, chum. O, I'm sorry I come. It 'as been awful on deck; I feel fit to die. But I never forgot ye, an' sometimes I wished I was where ye was. Everybody seems mad, an' yet the ship keeps on goin' for all she's worf. We're very nearly down to the Nore now, I yerd one o' the men say. I don't know where that is; but I fink it means that we're nearly out o' the river an' at sea."

Dick did not say much but drank the strange, hot liquid. He did not know what it was except that it was hot and sweet; but that does not much matter on board ship. Then suddenly he knew the need of solitude, because the vessel had passed beyond the shelter of the river and began to feel the incoming swell.

I will skip the next few wretched days, and pass on to the morning when a white-faced, trembling lad on the poop of the *Day Dawn* endeavored to answer truthfully the questions of the skipper, who, however, did not look very angry, not nearly so angry as the red-faced mate, who seemed to think that Dick's having

managed to be on board in spite of his vigilance was a distinct reflection on him and resented it accordingly.

The interview ended in a hearty laugh from the skipper, who said: "Well, Mr. Davis, there's no accounting for tastes. You and me would run a long way to get from the sea, and these boys run a long way to it. But we felt like they did once, and so I can't ever feel angry with 'em. Don't be frightened, boy. Nobody's goin' to hurt you here if I know anything about it, an' I think I do. You poor mis'ble little chap! He'd be a bad lot that'd hurt you."

So Dick was at last free of the ship and at liberty to gaze about him at the marvels of the sea and sky, to smell the strong uncontaminated air, and feel new life and strength soaking in at every pore. To his immense surprise, too, the men whom he had regarded with such fear and disgust were now transformed into gentle, genial fellows, full of kindness and desire to help, while every one of them seemed anxious to teach Dick something connected with his new calling.

As for Teddy, he had evidently been born for the sea, as some boys do really appear to be. Seasickness had not troubled him at all, he

had picked up the argot of the sea in a surprising manner, and was obviously a prime favorite with all on board. When Dick with glistening face came forward from his interview with the skipper it was Teddy who with a vast patronage introduced him to the cook and by degrees to the rest of the crew. And after a few days of fine weather, Dick began to feel as happy as a boy can be in this world—so happy that he again began to pray, a matter that he had neglected except in spasmodic ejaculations during his deepest trouble and pain in the first days of his seafaring.

But pleasant as the life seemed to him, there was one drawback arising from the intensely practical unboyish side of Dick's character. He could not find out from Teddy what his earnings were likely to be, and he dared not as yet ask anybody else. So he never learned that he was only on board by sufferance, a trespasser on the ship's hospitality, and by no means a wage-earner at all.

The few fine days which had befallen them in the middle of the Bay of Biscay passed away, and left the vessel tossing uneasily on a huge blind swell rolling in from the Atlantic and apparently undecided which way to rise or fall. The sky took on a greasy gray shade,

and seemed to descend until it almost touched the mastheads. Then the wind raised a moaning, desolate cry, while the warmth departed from the air, and all hands shivered with chill and apprehension.

With a savage burst of triumph the gale began and increased in violence until to Dick's almost benumbed senses it seemed as though the sea and sky were blended, and that any moment might be their last. But really the danger was not so much from wind and sea, which were no heavier than thousands of vessels weaker than the *Day Dawn* brave every winter successfully. It was the extraordinary density of the atmosphere, not fog but spindrift, which made it impossible to see a ship's length. And everybody but Dick and Teddy on board knew this, being worried accordingly.

The best lookout at such a time is of no avail, for mortal eyes cannot penetrate the gloom, and so no blame can be attached to the unknown steamer which leaped upon the *Day Dawn* out of the thickness, crushed through her upper works, and ground her fierce way, backed by the momentum of eight thousand tons, right through the staunch frame of the smaller craft.

There was a horrible congeries of noises, hissing of escaping steam and whirling foam, roar of wind and crash of timbers, and then silence most profound with darkness befitting. . . .

How long after Dick cannot tell, he felt himself gently lifted into a boat, aching in every limb, and, strangely enough, somewhat peevish at being disturbed, for the bitterness of death was past and the return to a world of pain unwelcome. But succeeding wrenching pain he found himself beginning to take an interest in life once more. Upon inquiry he discovered that he was on board the Orient steamship *John Elder* bound to Australia, whose keen-eyed lookout had espied him floating like a bit of drift-weed flung across a bucket-rack, and reporting the discovery had caused the great steamship to stop, lower a boat, and amid the intense and sympathetic interest of hundreds of passengers to rescue the poor little stowaway, who thus at a bound and by brevet rank of suffering became the one object of interest to all on board the great mail steamship.

But alas! of all whom he had known and grown to love in the *Day Dawn* there remained not one, not even Teddy, his genial, lovable

chum. They had passed into the beyond, and left him, by an inscrutable decree, sole survivor of this *little* tragedy of the sea: so usual, yet so poignant and appealing to all who think.

CHAPTER VI

HAPPINESS

IT is no slight test of character to be able to withstand a sudden elevation to the position of a hero without losing mental balance, yet it is pleasant to recall that this did occur in Dick's case. He took but a very short time to recover from the shock to which he had been subjected, and when he appeared on deck in some borrowed clothes became at once the center of attraction. The captain put him through rather a severe examination respecting the vessel he had been in and his position on board, which he passed through triumphantly, not knowing any reason why he should conceal anything or feel any inclination so to do.

But when the captain gave orders that he should be sent forward to share the crew's quarters and food there was something like consternation among the passengers, who had idealized the gentle-faced delicate-looking little chap into something very different from what he really was. They remonstrated vigorously with the captain, who had to politely inform them that he was doing his duty simply,

and that his orders did not admit of his treating distressed British seamen as first-class passengers. The debate ended by one eminent colonial gentleman, who was returning home from a holiday in Europe, offering to take Dick as his servant, and thus secure a berth for him in the second class.

This offer Dick gratefully accepted, for to be quite candid he had not taken to the seafaring life with any enthusiasm. He was not of the temperament or physique fitted for it. So when an offer was made that placed him above the necessity of going into the fore-castle again he was delighted. Of course the novelty of Dick's appearance among the passengers soon wore off. His simple story soon lost its charm, and he took the place assigned to him as if all had been arranged for his doing so long before.

Lest, however, it should be thought that Dick, amid all these vicissitudes and with the immense amount of attention and flattery which had been bestowed upon him, had been in any way spoiled, let me hasten to say that no sign of such deterioration showed upon him. He remained humble, simple, and good. There are some people who are unspoilable, and Dick was one of them. In this, as far as he can tell,

the happiest time of his life, he never lost the extreme sense of gratitude, first to God as the Disposer of events, and next to the immediate instruments. Nothing seemed able to alter this grateful habit of mind in him, or make him regard his blessings as coming to him of right.

His new employer, Mr. Jenkins, was delighted with him, and would have spoiled him had it been possible. His duties were of the lightest, and in the ports visited by the ship, such as Gibraltar, Naples, Port Saïd, Colombo, he had ample opportunity of indulging his great faculty of wonder, which, as you know, is so closely akin to worship. And when at last the ship reached Australia and he gazed upon the mighty land of which he had heard so much, he felt as if, no matter how long he lived, he could never rise to greater heights of happiness.

Albany, Adelaide, Melbourne were all visited, and Sydney, his master's home, was reached, when there came a catastrophe: his master suddenly informed him that he was ruined and could employ him no longer. In his bitterness of spirit Mr. Jenkins said that, having brought Dick to the land of plenty, he would be well able to look after himself—it was only poor men who had once been rich who

would find a difficulty in doing that. Dick did not understand, but felt perfectly sure that he did not want to stay in Australia. His business was in England, in London, where his beloved ones were. And no amount of talk concerning the possibilities of fame and fortune in this new world for the young made the slightest impression upon him. Deep-rooted in his soul was the conviction that his future as well as his duty lay at home, in London. He was obviously not an empire-builder, esteeming the spread of the imperial idea in far-distant lands beyond all claims of home.

Well, thank God, we are variously constituted, and I cannot blame little Dick Hertford, tempted on every hand to remain in the great brave colony, because he remembered his brother and sisters at home in the Fulham Workhouse and decided that he must return to them. But how? It was no easy thing to decide, however much he might desire it. Fortunately, the *John Elder* was still in port, and he went to the captain, who was a just man, if occasionally stern. Dick laid his case before him, and had the satisfaction of being accepted as a boy seaman to work his passage home. He did not note the moisture in the skipper's brown eyes as the latter uttered the pleasant

words, "Yes, I can ship you tomorrow." But, then, skippers are privileged to conceal their emotions, since to exhibit them may be costly for owners, who have only dividends to consider in connection with the running of their ships.

Homeward bound! the thought filled Dick with joy, yet he came back but little richer than he went. True, the first munificence of Mr. Jenkins had fitted him out with a goodly kit, which, alas, he was fast growing out of, and the generosity of passengers had provided him with money up to the amount of a little over ten pounds. But at Dick's age we cannot think of trifles like these. Moreover, on the passage home the captain had, in the making of conversation at the saloon table, which is always one of the most difficult of his duties, told Dick's story. And since Dick was on duty on the promenade deck all day, the homeward passengers had ample opportunity to gratify their curiosity as well as to show their appreciation by giving the gentlemanly-looking boy sundry pieces of money, which he carefully stowed away.

But I am not going to describe an ordinary, uneventful passage home from Australia by the Suez Canal. Such travelers are we all today

that it would be really almost an insult to do so. I can only, therefore, say that in due course Dick reached London again much richer in experience if not in money, with his horizon immensely widened and his faith in the goodness and love of his fellow-men much increased.

Happy indeed is the lad who can survive such an ordeal as Dick had gone through without losing some at least of his early ideals. Yet there are many who might do so were it not for an original bias toward evil which the absence of restraint only seems to encourage. But Dick was of a material that seemed proof against any evil influences; it really appeared as if his mother's gentle spirit hovered about him and held him immune from any of the tainting effects of freedom to do what he would that often makes such havoc of the young life in our midst when cut loose from home restraints.

His delight at reaching home again was deep and full. His dear country, he felt, was better far than any he had glanced at on his long voyage, and he was almost surprised himself at the passionate patriotism which welled up in his small heart. But landed from the vessel and arriving at Fenchurch Street, it was suddenly borne in upon him that in it he had no one spot that he could call home, no one who—

ah, yes, there were the little ones anxiously awaiting him, and at thought of them his spirits rose. He had then an objective to make for, even if it were only a workhouse. And on the instant he turned his steps toward Mark Lane Station, having left his "dunnage," as he had, like an old sailor, learned to call his baggage, in the cloak-room at Fenchurch Street.

Speeding swiftly westward in the District train to Walham Green, he first counted his precious little hoard, which now amounted to fifteen pounds. A little fortune in itself to some boys, and one to be dissipated in a miraculously short space of time from want of knowing how to handle any money larger in amount than pence. How well I remember when, younger than Dick, I was paid off from the *Western Belle* at Green's Home with eight sovereigns and a lot of silver! Those golden pieces awed me. To think that I owned them! I could not remember having seen one before except when I once went with auntie to pay her rent at the post office in Jonson Place, and to my baby eyes the sovereigns looked magnificently large, even as golden five-shilling pieces might do. To carry them about with me (for I felt that I could not help flaunting them) would I knew be to invite some one to rob me.

So I speedily came to the conclusion to convert them into clothes, which I had often so sorely felt the need of. And I did do so, nor ever regretted it.

But Dick had a splendid stock of clothes; and also (what I never possessed) a habit of keeping his own counsel, and only opening his heart to tried and approved friends. Moreover, he had an object in view, which he felt would need all the ready cash he could muster, And, greatly daring, he had made up his mind to take a desperate plunge.

So when the train drew up at Walham Green he sprang out and almost ran all the way to the workhouse, being nearly in a panic as the possibility occurred to him of something having happened during his absence. Arrived at the great door, he took a vigorous pull at the bell, with a sense of having in some mysterious manner lost his awe of the place. The porter, rather startled at the stentorian clanging of the bell, came to the wicket hurriedly, and when he saw that it was only a boy spoke accordingly.

But Dick was in no wise alarmed, and merely said, when the porter paused for breath: "I want to see my brother and sisters, name of Hertford. And if I did ring loud, how many times have I heard you telling people to

ring as if they wanted somebody to hear 'em? You seem as hard to please as ever."

The man gasped, glared, and then laughed, for he was not a bad sort at all. At last he said: "Why, ye must be young Dick wot went to sea. Well, you've come back with a rare cheek on ye. Never mind; I'm glad to see ye, and so will the master be. He aint forgotten ye, I know, 'cos he often speaks of ye. Come along in, ye young rascal." And he flung the great gate wide open, making a mock obeisance as the little figure passed in.

It nearly overwhelmed Dick to find that what the porter said was more than true. Not only did the master remember him, and favorably, but many others did, too, and he soon learned that Mr. Dickson's treatment of him and others had become widely known in its truthful aspect; and in consequence he was now something of a hero in the place, especially as in some way it had leaked out that he had gone to sea. Why, it was almost like a triumphal procession from wing to wing of the great building until he met the three who had never been absent from his thoughts for a single day since his mother had died.

The change in Jemmy struck him chiefly. This lad was now thirteen, and fiercely resent-

ful of all restraint. He bore with smoldering ferocity all the rules and regulations of the place, but it was evident that he wanted badly to break loose. So his meeting with Dick was rather constrained on his side. He looked at Dick with a sidelong, envious glance, as who should say, "Who are you, to get out of this prison and leave me here?" The girls, on the other hand, were obviously hypocrites. They had learned to say only that which would please, and not that they felt or meant, and they could not shake off this habit of long-ago acquirement in presence of this strange brother who might possibly be an inspector of some sort come to find out something about them and get them into trouble. Alas, without blaming anybody, this is the inevitable result of herding children together in great institutions. But even in Scattered Homes, unless the matrons be *good*, there is room for worse evils. However, the whole question is fraught with difficulties.

Of course Dick was daunted by this reception, for his warm and lovable nature had not anticipated it; but he had too much good sense to be angry with what he saw the children could not help. A little of his enthusiasm did infect them, Jemmy especially showing great

desire to escape. At last Dick bade them farewell, giving them his solemn promise that he would get a cheap lodging and a few things together and then come and take them away. They did not believe him, and showed their doubts quite plainly; but he pretended not to see this, and bidding them an affectionate farewell, went away, full of his schemes for liberating them.

So deeply immersed in thought was he that he hardly looked where he was going, and thus as he turned into the Fulham Road he was nearly knocked off his feet by a gentleman going in the opposite direction. "My boy," began the gentleman, "you should—Why, mercy on me, if it isn't my runaway Dick!"

Dick at the same moment had recognized Mr. Harcourt and hung his head. But Mr. Harcourt, laying a firm, kindly hand upon him, said: "Now, Dick, bygones shall be bygones. Come home with me and tell me all your adventures. Your old enemy the butler is no longer in my service, so you need not be afraid of meeting him. And I'm sure you are not afraid of me."

Thus adjured, Dick went gladly with his old friend, and soon found himself prattling away as freely as if nothing had ever come between

them. Arriving at the well-remembered house, Mr. Harcourt gave orders for tea to be brought into his study, for he would not let Dick go down among the servants yet, in case they should reproach him. In a little while Mr. Harcourt was in possession of all the main facts of Dick's experience since his running away, and when the lad's simple story had come to an end he said gravely: "My dear Dick, I know you are thankful to God for all his mercies to you, and so I won't tell you to be so; but I do think you have been exceptionally blessed. Never forget that. And now tell me what your plans are."

Thus encouraged, Dick told all that was in his heart to do for his brother and sisters, Mr. Harcourt listened with glistening eyes. When at last Dick had finished he said: "Well, my young hero, I cannot discourage you, though I feel what a great undertaking you have before you. Nor can I offer you a situation in this house, for I feel that would not be suitable for you. But I can and will recommend you to a good and cheap lodging, and next to a berth in a big office, with which I am connected, as messenger. You will get good wages for your age, and your work will not be too heavy for you. It will also be constant as long as you do your

duty, about which I have no fear. But the lodging must be seen to first."

It may seem strange, but while Dick fully realized the value of what Mr. Harcourt was doing for him, he was yet somewhat disappointed to think that he wasn't doing it all himself. He had felt something of a hero while he was laying his plans, and now—he seemed to be dependent upon somebody else again. So it is to be feared that he was not so grateful as he might have been while Mr. Harcourt was conducting him to the house of an ex-servant of his who had married a tradesman in the neighborhood, and had a portion of her house to let unfurnished.

Fortunately, Mr. Harcourt knew nothing of this, and consequently was able to take a very pleasurable interest in the proceedings of hiring two rooms from Mrs. Freeth at five and sixpence per week, and of arranging for her to furnish them plainly and sufficiently at a cost of five pounds, which Dick in manly fashion insisted upon paying, although Mr. Harcourt would certainly have done so had it been necessary. Then with instructions to Dick where to call the next day on the business of getting the berth mentioned, and with a whispered instruction to Mrs. Freeth to give an eye to the

two little girls, Mr. Harcourt took his departure, full of gratification at having, as he thought, done some of his Master's work.

Dick, left alone with Mrs. Freeth, immediately began to discuss ways and means with her, finding at once that she was disposed to act as if he must do in all things as she wished. But Dick had no intention of being in leading-strings at all. He wanted to be entirely independent, paying his way and ordering his little affairs as he felt able. And so there was rather a sharp passage of arms between the masterful woman and the lad, which, however, ended in an entire victory for the latter, who had learned in a severe school the virtue of pertinacity, or obstinacy, as it may be called.

"O, all right," she said at last, with a toss of the head, "have it your own way; but, mind ye, if ye an' your brother an' sisters don't be'ave yourselves, out ye go, neck an' crop. I wouldn't keep ye not for forty Mr. Harcourts unless ye be'aved yourselves."

Dick smiled at this and did not answer; he knew better than to talk when he had gained his point. He changed the subject immediately to the "getting of the sticks in" as it is colloquially termed, meaning the furnishing of the two rooms. And so energetic was he that, to

the surprise of Mrs. Freeth herself, by bedtime that night the rooms were ready for their new lodgers, and on one of the beds Dick slept, peacefully enjoying his well-earned rest.

Armed with Mr. Harcourt's recommendation, Dick had no difficulty in obtaining the post he went to solicit the next morning. His duties were of the simplest, and his hours nine till five, while the wages, fourteen shillings a week, seemed to him wealth beyond belief. It was then Thursday, and he was to commence on Monday; so he had ample time to arrange the transference of his little family, and to settle down in his new home. Of his own initiative he would never have gone to Mr. Harcourt again, but that kindly man came after him, and entered into the spirit of his enterprise with so much zest that Dick could not but enjoy his help.

When on the following Sunday Dick and Jemmy, Susan and Dolly, sat round the little table in the larger of the two rooms, and Dick served out the dinner from a dish brought by Jemmy in triumph from the bakehouse, a breast of mutton baked over a dish full of potatoes, they were all as happy as kings and queens are popularly supposed to be; and Mrs. Freeth, peeping in at the door, said to her husband be-

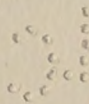
hind her: "It's as good as play watchin' the darlin's pretendin' they're father an' mother; but it makes me cry all the same."

I do not think it would be possible to exaggerate the amount of delight or add to the sense of happiness felt by the little family in their freedom and reunion. But unquestionably Dick was the happiest of the party, for he had attained unto the fulfillment of his desires, and, besides, had the supreme joy of feeling that he was the responsible head of the new home. The others could hardly appreciate their liberty as yet, for they felt a sense of restraint, and routine habits still clung to them. But whenever they felt a sense as of wrongdoing they had only to glance at the shining face of Dick to be assured.

After dinner he took them all for a walk down by the river; and although they went firmly and decorously enough, their hearts swelled with an increasing appreciation of their altered condition that added to their happiness every minute. And when, tired but delighted, they returned to their lodging, and Susan, under Dick's direction, made tea and laid the table, their cup was full. Indeed, it ran over when at nine o'clock Dick gathered them all three round him and solemnly thanked God for

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the full and complete answer to his prayers. Never again in all their lives could they know such perfect happiness as they felt in that overflowing hour, the happiness of innocence, satisfaction, and love.



CHAPTER VII

THE WORKADAY WORLD

MONDAY morning the whole family was astir at the early hour which had become a habit with all of them by reason of their bringing up; and Dick, having made an alliance with Mrs. Freeth, departed to his new situation with an easy mind, knowing that all would be well until his return, for the children could not get into much mischief with Mrs. Freeth to keep an eye upon them. Jemmy was to take Dolly out to play, with all sorts of injunctions not to get into mischief or mingle with bad boys—a rather superfluous injunction, since London boys do not readily admit a strange boy into their cliques and gatherings.

Susan, under Mrs. Freeth's direction, was to be the little housekeeper, and a sense of her importance kept her from envying Jemmy and Dolly, who were to enjoy an outing. Thus we may leave them, and follow Dick to the great office where he was to commence his new career. He went prepared to meet with all sorts of troubles, remembering his ship life; but he was agreeably disappointed. His duties

were light, and the other lads who performed similar tasks were kindly and well-behaved. Being neither stupid nor slow, he soon found favor in the eyes of his superiors, and a fearless habit he had of looking at whoever was speaking to him straight in the eyes, and speaking boldly, yet without impudence, won him favor on every hand.

That was a momentous day for Dick. For in it he found his place in the scheme of things. Wherever he had been prior to this, from his first launching, there had been a hitch in the working of the machine. Even in the beautiful household of Mr. Harcourt he had somehow felt out of place, although no conditions could be considered more conducive to a lad's happiness than those obtaining there. Here, however, he felt perfectly at home. He was asked to do nothing that came strange to him, no one attempted to bully or browbeat him, and when he reached home on the evening of his first day's employment it was with a high and happy heart. His joy was not lessened to find awaiting him a bright and cheerful room, a blazing fire, a tea table neatly spread, and the sullen, furtive look gone from the faces of his brother and sisters.

Well, if this were not a record of actual fact,

I should have a difficulty in presenting it to you, for your experience of youngsters, and that of most persons, widely differs from this. But I ask you to believe not merely that the picture I have drawn for you is true, but that I have known personally two other boys who were built on exactly the same lines, and who behaved in exactly the same way as my hero at the same age. To see Dick sitting at the head of his little table beaming upon his family and satisfying a healthy appetite at the same time was a sight to silence croakers.

But it was at the same time a sight to make certain of our mentors exclaim: "That boy will never get on." No, he will never *get on*, thank God. He will never trample humanities beneath his feet, turn a deaf ear to the claims of blood or helplessness; but he will be happier by far than any of those who have never known the pinch of hunger or shared their last half-penny with one in direr need than themselves. I feel that I ought not to waste space in saying that Dick, unaware of the discussion of political economists or the squabble of parliamentarians, thought of none of these things. He and his three helpless ones were entirely happy, and that was all. They did not trouble their head about the future; that very rightly was in the

hands of One mighty to save; and when Dick gathered them round him for family prayer at—as he felt—the call of his mother, a peace brooded over them all such as the greatest of philosophers might sigh for in vain.

There would really be nothing more to record for some time, but that among Dick's many masters at the great office where he was employed was a gentleman who held the office of superintendent of a huge Sunday school. Now, this gentleman was not what I should call a good man, although undoubtedly his claim to such a grand title would have been allowed by most of his coreligionists. By virtue of his office, which placed him in a position of authority, he transacted most of his secular and religious extra work in the time paid for by his employers, being careful at the same time to prevent any of his subordinates doing the same thing. He was austere and formal to a degree; and believed poverty to argue incapacity, inability to look after number one—the main article in his creed. He was methodical in his charities. Teetotaler and nonsmoker, he yet needed a box of matches in his pocket, and purchased them once a week from a blind man who stood in the main thoroughfare, crediting himself with a penny to charity.

It must, however, be conceded to him that he had the interests of his chapel at heart. It came first, I believe, after the acquirement of property, which was really his chief aim in life, and everything connected with it took almost the highest place in his estimation. In addition, he was naturally inquisitive, and could not rest content without knowing, as far as he was allowed, the business of everyone with whom he became acquainted. So it befell that, on coming into contact with Dick, a few well-placed questions put Mr. Saunders in possession of the salient facts in Dick's short but eventful history.

The result of this close questioning was for Dick entirely good, because Mr. Saunders immediately suggested that Dick and his charges should become members of his Sunday school, a proposition which Dick most gratefully accepted, for it filled a gap in his life which he had always felt aching. Yet such was his shrinking modesty that, had it not been for Mr. Saunders taking the initiative, he would probably have remained for a long time unattached and hungry for the shelter of chapel and Sunday school.

Next Sunday, then, clean and neatly dressed, the four youngsters presented themselves in

good time at South Street Sunday School, where they were met by the superintendent panoplied in all the dignity of his office. And as he was nothing if not thorough in all he undertook, before he left them he had seen them duly entered upon the books, placed in their respective classes, and their teachers were informed that the Hertford family were his special care.

This, it appeared, was all that had been wanting to complete the stability of Dick's little household. True, his wages were very small; but the rent was only two and six pence a week, the rest, unknown to him, being made up by Mr. Harcourt in the same secret manner practiced by that good man in many other acts of love. But then they were well supplied with clothes. Susan did the family washing like a little woman, they lived on the plainest and most simple food, drinking neither tea nor coffee, and so they made both ends meet; and be sure that Dick did not feel any burden laid upon him in carrying out his self-imposed task.

Thus the current of their lives flowed evenly, or in a manner that was pathetic in its simplicity and beautiful in its ordered regularity. The only little trouble was occasionally with Jemmy, who gave promise of having a very in-

dependent spirit, impatient of control of any kind. But as none of his escapades were serious, and he never went to the length of defying Dick's authority altogether, this only meant that Dick began to look forward to a time when Jemmy would get beyond him, and to feel that if the lad were out at work earning something, it would tone down his superfluous energy by turning it into a proper channel.

I do not mean to say that Dick actually thought in such terms as the above. I am aware that among far too many people he will be looked upon as a prig already, without having this additional offense laid to his charge; but I do mean to say that this was the substance of his thoughts and words in consultation with Susie, who was fast developing into a staid little matron though younger than Jemmy.

"An' whatever he earns, Dick, it'll be a help, won't it?" said she, sagely, in one of their discussions after Jemmy and Dolly had gone to bed.

"No, Susie," replied Dick, "I don't want any of his money. I can earn enough for us all, and I'm going to get an eighteen-penny raise presently; Mr. Saunders told me so. But Jemmy ought to be doing something. If he

doesn't get a job soon, he'll get into trouble, I can see, and he won't mind a word I say soon."

Dick was shrewd enough to see that Mr. Saunders would be the very man to consult about getting Jemmy a job, for that worthy man, despite the many grave flaws in his make-up, was certainly given to such good works as putting people in the way of helping themselves. And it did not detract in the least from such assistance as he was in the habit of giving that he always took great care that it should cost him nothing, or that it was always confined to members of his congregation and Sunday school. At any rate, he knew them better, or thought he did, than any of the outer world, and indiscriminate help, whether it be charitable or not, is often only the result of indolence and a desire to avoid personal feelings of pain.

To Mr. Saunders, then, Dick went the very next day, with a request that, if possible, something might be done for his brother, not with the object of his earning money, but of his being kept out of mischief. Mr. Saunders listened judicially and cross-examined Dick very closely, learning more of the family history than he had ever known before. Then when Dick had been pumped dry Mr. Saunders

said, magisterially: "Very well, I will see what can be done. Stay behind school next Sunday with your brother, that I may have a talk with him. That will do just now."

With that Dick was fain to be content, but he had learned enough of Mr. Saunders by this time to know that, though he was pompous, inquisitive, and dictatorial, he always promised less than he intended to perform, and that his word was his bond. So when Dick went home that night he told Susie that he felt sure it was all right, and that he would not have to trouble Mr. Harcourt. Does it seem strange to you, reader, that a boy should feel loath to go to a friend for help who is always willing, nay anxious, to do so? Then let me tell you that I enjoy the friendship of a man now who as a boy had a patron as generous as Mr. Harcourt, a boy of the arab, or lowest London, class. After one great act of kindness received by his wealthy patron, that boy, though encouraged to do so by letter and word, never again accepted the smallest help from his friend, nor ever approached him save at stated intervals, very far apart, to report progress, because he conceived it to be his duty to do so. And for thirty years that boy and man struggled on in London rearing a family of ten on thirty shillings a

week with credit to himself and them, and never an appeal to the fountain of charity, ready to flow at a word.

I feel that in these days of wholesale pauperization it is well to know that such a spirit of real manliness does exist, and that not merely among the seasoned veterans in life's battle but among the very young, even amid the most unfavorable surroundings.

Mr. Saunders was, as usual, better than his word, and in a week Jemmy was apprenticed to a shoemaker in the King's Road, a member of South Street Chapel, who could be depended upon to keep Jemmy out of mischief if full employment would accomplish that desirable feat. The result was entirely satisfactory, except to Dolly, who missed her playmate, for Jemmy became an inmate of his master's house, and his family only saw him on Sundays for brief intervals. And then he appeared to have become so filled with a sense of his importance and prospects that the rest of them speedily got tired of him and his boastings, especially as he never by any chance seemed to recognize that he owed any gratitude to Dick, for which the two girls loudly upbraided him; but Dick spoke no word.

So Jemmy gradually drifted away from the

little family, finding interests that were not theirs; but still he kept up his association with South Street, both Sunday school and chapel, and so Dick's heart, though somewhat saddened at the apparent callousness toward him and his sisters shown by Jemmy, was not troubled by the idea that Jemmy was staying away. Dick, indeed, was akin in mind to the conscientious father of a family, who having launched a child on the world, feels that he has done his part, and that it now remains for the child to do his, buttressed by many prayers for his well-being. The father has the other children still at home to think of, and should now be relieved of some worry connected with the absent one, at any rate.

Well, Jemmy passes out of our purview for some time, and Dolly, sweet, wayward little Dolly, the family pet, comes up for consideration. She was getting a big girl now, full of vigor and spirits. She was twelve years of age and bigger than Susie, who was a year older. Yet Susie was most womanly, and thoughtful beyond her years. This, perhaps, was owing to her having certain duties thrust upon her, and also because she had a certain temperamental likeness to Dick, who was born to interest himself in everyone else's welfare before his

own, and in whose mental equipment selfishness had no place.

Reports began to arrive from the school which Dolly attended of her unruly behavior and occasional truancy, and it would have been ludicrous, had it not been so pathetic, to see the sixteen-year-old Dick gravely sitting in judgment upon rebellious Dolly, and racking his young brains for means whereby he might restrain her and keep her in the straight way of rectitude.

Help came in a most unexpected fashion. One of Dick's office associates was an enthusiastic learner of the Tonic Sol-fa system of music-teaching. He was so full of it that he was in danger of becoming a nuisance, for he was instant in and out of season impressing his views as to its virtues upon all with whom he came in contact. Presently Dick fell under his spell, and after an impromptu lesson or so became almost as enthusiastic as his teacher, who immediately carried the news to Mr. Saunders, a veritable professor of the art in his scanty spare moments. The result of this happy intervention was that on sundry evenings each week Dick, Susie, and Dolly were to be found at a certain hall, where, for sheer love of music and delight at being able to impart a

knowledge of it to others, young men and women labored strenuously.

This new occupation proved a veritable godsend to both Dolly and Susie. There were no more complaints from the school, and Susie lost the look of the patient drudge that she had begun to wear; for were there not these blessed evenings to look forward to and prepare for, when they were enveloped in a concord of sweet sounds of their own making, an entirely innocent and delightful means of putting in such spare time as they had? And, joy of joys, one evening when Sue and Dolly were practicing a rather difficult part song which was to be sung the following night, there came a tap at the door and in walked Mr. Harcourt.

Years afterward that kindly man was wont to say that he could never remember so delightful and happy an evening as that. As soon as the first little commotion caused by his arrival had subsided, and the matter they had been engaged in had been explained to him, he settled down in a corner of the room and insisted upon their going on, for, as he said, they could not be shy with him. And, sure enough, they presently forgot his presence, being so engrossed in their performance, while he sat entranced at the sight of these three

children thus beautifully and happily employed without any compulsion or supervision whatever.

At last the lesson was pronounced by Dick to be duly learned, and then Mr. Harcourt, wisely refraining from much comment upon what he had just witnessed, began to ask about progress generally. The answers he received, given in all frankness and innocence, were such that he found it difficult, being a man of highly emotional temperament, to restrain his tears. But he was quite unable to bring forth the chief object of his visit, which had been to relieve Dick of the care of his two sisters. With the happy domestic scene before him he felt that for some years, at any rate, it would be quite wrong to interfere in any way with what was going so well, and so he very wisely forbore to mention the real object of his visit. But being essentially a man of simple, lovable nature, he made himself quite at home, so that his juvenile hosts forgot to regard him as the grand gentleman; and when at last he parted from them it was with a very light heart as well as a sense of profound thankfulness.

A year rolled swiftly away, and found Jemmy almost a stranger to the family circle, nay really looking down upon them from his

sublime height of being commended by his master as a first-rate workman who could learn anything he chose to turn his hands to. Not one spark of gratitude for the care and love shown to him by Dick remained; it was all crowded out by arrogance and self-satisfaction. Pride in his own abilities choked out his better nature, and since upon his infrequent visits he never had anything to talk about but himself, he speedily discovered that this exclusive topic became unwelcome, and he presently ceased to come at all. But as Dick heard nothing but good of him through Mr. Saunders, he very sensibly did not worry about him.

Dick had now reached a salary of fifteen shillings and sixpence a week, and Susie had become so useful to Mrs. Freeth during the day that there was now nothing to pay for rent. Gifts of clothing, too, had been mysteriously made, so carefully that no sense of obligation had been incurred by the little group, and in consequence of this relief the nest-egg in the Post Office Bank was being added to instead of being encroached upon. Both Dick and Susie had so far advanced in their music that they were now the proud possessors of certificates, and able to give lessons as well as

receive them. And Dick was a teacher of rare promise in the Sunday school, able to hold the attention of his class in fine style when other classes were fidgeting and getting out of hand.

Then in quick succession came three heavy blows. Dolly, at the instance of Mr. Saunders, was taken into a great household at South Kensington to be fitted for domestic duties, and thenceforward came scarcely ever to see her brother and sister. Then Susie became restless. Much as she loved her brother, she was, after all, but a young girl, with her own ideas of life to consult, and at last she, with a few tears and much hesitation, confessed to Dick that she had been discussing matters with Mrs. Freeth, who had concurred in her opinion that she ought to get on in the world, and had offered to introduce her to a big house where she would learn to be a domestic of the best type. Dick, who, without losing any of his first-rate qualities, had certainly grown to regard himself as being an essential factor to his sisters' happiness, listened in silence, but with a sick feeling at his heart.

And the very next day he fell ill and had to be carried off to Saint George's Hospital.

CHAPTER VIII

DEVELOPMENT

DICK'S first feeling after being put to bed and made comfortable was of profound gratitude for what he felt had been the marvelous sequence of events. For in his old head he had often pondered over the possibility of his being incapacitated, or even killed, and wondered, with a trembling sense of helplessness, whatever his dependents would do in such a case. Now he could only lie and thank God for the security with which all his little affairs had been arranged. There was absolutely nothing for him to worry his head about, least of all his employment, which he had been told was absolutely assured to him, so that all he had to do was to address himself whole-heartedly to the business of getting well.

His ailment, though a very serious one, was not painful to bear, and did not affect his mental powers at all, so that he could really enjoy the long rest. Right from the outset he became a prime favorite with doctors and nurses, who were deeply interested in this boy with the serious manner of an elderly father of a family,

who had none of the frivolity of youth or its restlessness either—in fact, as one of the nurses put it, “he looks as if he was born to bear other people’s burdens.” But his ready, bright smile and eager gratitude for any kindness, however small, created quite an atmosphere of satisfaction in his ward. Other patients were ashamed to grumble and give trouble when they saw how Dick was bearing his trouble. Unconsciously all of them began to try to imitate him with more or less satisfactory results.

Every day Mr. Harcourt, putting off weighty business, came and sat by his bedside for half an hour, for, being a governor of the hospital, there were no special visiting days for him. These visits were the most delightful episodes possible to Dick, for Mr. Harcourt was a man of peculiarly bright and happy temperament, with a rich fund of humor and a power of putting everybody at his ease which was invaluable. He had formed a great affection for the steady, serious lad, and thought no trouble too great in order to serve him in the only way that was really helpful.

Then on visiting days Mr. Saunders came, bringing with him an air of officialism and patronage which he himself would have been the last to suspect. He always brought news

of the office, the Sunday school, and the singing classes, and conveyed, in rather a lofty manner it is true, but still he did convey, the impression to Dick that he was much missed in these three different quarters, and that they would all be very glad to see him back again. Then Mr. Saunders would take his leave, having discharged what he felt to be a duty at considerable inconvenience to himself, but alas, from a temperamental defect over which he had no control, leaving behind him a sense of relief that his visit was over.

So, taken altogether, it is not too much to say that those hospital days were to Dick the choicest of his life. He had known neglect, loneliness, cruelty, hunger, and the hardest toil; he was now in a pleasant backwater of the great stream of life where the sun shone, kindly voices murmured helpful things, and the stress of the great world-conflict without only came in subdued murmurs. On every hand he received loving-kindness, and the more grateful he became the more everybody seemed determined to show him that he should receive still more kindness.

There was one bitter drop, however, in his overflowing cup of joy. None of his own came to see him. He knew, of course, how they were

situated, and did not expect too much; but he felt soul-hunger for his own flesh and blood. That, of course, was because he had spent himself for them. He was unconsciously obeying the law that compels us to love those for whom we sacrifice ourselves far more than those who sacrifice themselves for us.

More than that, he did not even know how they were behaving in respect to their various occupations. If any of his visitors were in a position to tell him, they did not do so, but confined themselves to generalities and platitudes which even he could see the meaning of. Still, he got a great deal of comfort out of his belief, doubly instilled by heredity and experience, in the overseeing power and goodness of God; and he did not, could not, worry, but grew in faith and love toward all. In fine, his stay in the hospital ward was both seedtime and harvest of his soul.

The spring was well advanced when the doctor came to Dick's ward and told him that he might go for a good walk in the park opposite, just then aglow all down one side with the beauties of hyacinths and tulips. Dick gratefully obeyed, and with a strange, unreal feeling as of being out of place in this wonderful, beautiful world, yet with an almost

choking sensation of thankfulness for all the happiness he was enjoying, he strolled quietly about, drinking in the sweet air, and enjoying sights and scents and sounds as he had never done before. He felt, however, that he was easily fatigued, and, consequently, glad to avail himself of the seats scattered about. And when he returned he was closely examined by the doctor as to his feelings, and, having answered all the questions satisfactorily, was told that he might go out every fine day for a week, and at the end of that time he probably would be fit for work again.

As the time approached when he expected to resume his place in the workaday world, he was torn with conflicting feelings. He had been so happy, his life had been so easy, and the love showered upon him had been so pleasant, that he felt loath to part with it all; yet he had been also accumulating energy, and he needed an outlet for it, so that he was really eager for the work which he knew lay before him. More than that, he yearned in secret to find out how his brother and sisters were faring; for he could not rid himself of the idea that he was directly responsible for them to his mother in heaven.

A few days later, when able for the journey,

it is hardly to be wondered at that he went straight to the places where he could get news of his dear ones. That day was one of the darkest he had yet endured. He first called upon Jemmy, who received him with a sullen air of independence, almost resentful, and in the course of a very short conversation gave him to understand that he, Jemmy, was going his own way, didn't intend to be in leading-strings held by Dick, and much more to the same effect. Dick came away deeply wounded, and yet in some corner of his mind there was a sense of relief. He knew that he had done his duty; if Jemmy ignored his obligations, that was a matter that Dick could neither help nor hinder, and so he was wise enough to leave it where he left all his other troubles.

The meeting with the girls troubled him more. Had he been older and wiser, he would have expected something of the kind; but he turned to his sisters with a feeling that they at least would cling to him, no matter what Jemmy might do or say. But he felt that they had already formed their own acquaintances, had accepted a certain routine of life in which he had no place, and, although they were gushingly affectionate, he realized that they too had gone beyond his reach.

For the first time he felt himself alone in the world. Bitter were his thoughts concerning ingratitude, etc.; but the past eight weeks in the hospital had not been wasted on him, and he felt comforted and uplifted in his hour of trial by the knowledge that if those for whom he had spent the best of his thoughts and energies had ungratefully turned against him, there were others who owed him nothing, but were prepared to assume a debt by no means their own for the sake of pure, unselfish love.

After this week of preparation and gradually returning strength there came the day that Dick had dreaded, the day of parting with all the dear friends he had made in the hospital. And they were sorry to lose him too, for his gentleness and amiability had endeared him to them all; in fact, there were tears in some of the nurses' eyes as they bade him good-by and listened to his halting words of thanks as he turned away from what had indeed been a home of rest to him.

Arriving at his old lodgings, he was quite unprepared to find Mrs. Freeth waiting for him with a glowing welcome. Not that he and his landlady had ever been on other than peaceful terms, but there had never been any very great

cordiality between them since Dick, upon their first meeting, so quietly asserted himself, and gave Mrs. Freeth to understand that he did not wish her to interfere with his family concerns unasked. But she was a really good woman, and her heart went out to the quiet, well-behaved lad who, after such strenuous exertions for others, was now, at a most dangerous period of life, left, as she thought, all alone. This sufficiently accounted for the warmth of her welcome, but she could not know of Dick's resources against what she supposed would be his terrible loneliness.

Nevertheless, he was quite grateful for this mark of affection, and took tea with Mrs. Freeth, hearing such scanty news of his brother and sisters as she was able to give. It was not unsatisfactory, except that Jemmy had apparently determined to go his own way entirely, having cut himself off from both chapel and Sunday school. But his behavior at his business seemed good, and for that Dick was thankful. Susie, Mrs. Freeth told him with a certain pride, as if she had no small share in the matter, was doing excellently well, had become a prime favorite with the housekeeper, and had been promoted to be an under-parlormaid, for which her good manners and genteel bearing emi-

nently fitted her. Dolly she had never seen but once, but she had heard from Susie that she was getting on very well indeed.

So Dick felt content, satisfied that his work had been well done, and if he did crave for sight and touch of his own flesh and blood—all that he had in the world—he could not help feeling that freedom to fight his own way in the world was not a bad thing after all. And after a little rearrangement of domestic details with Mrs. Freeth, whereby he relinquished one room and took his breakfast and tea with her, he went to bed and slept the care-free slumber of innocent health.

The next day being Sunday he awoke with delightful anticipations. A love of the service of worship and praise and ministering was bred in him, although, as we have seen, his parents had but little opportunity to gratify their desires in that direction. So wrapped up was he in the joy of the coming day that except for feeling a tightness in various parts of his body and a coolness at wrists and ankles he was unaware that his best clothes were now far too small for him, and that he was likely to be an object of derision to boys in the street. Mrs. Freeth did not mend matters by making some disparaging remarks about his appearance, and

suggesting that he had better stay indoors that day, and get some new clothes as soon as possible. This brought the color to his face and a defiant ring to his voice as he gave her to understand that nothing of that kind should or could hinder him from going to Sunday school or chapel.

Yet when he heard the rude remarks of youngsters in the streets, and the tittering mingled with the undoubtedly cordial welcome he received from the teachers and Mr. Saunders, he felt that he was paying quite a sufficient price for his determination to let nothing keep him away. It spoiled his day, made him feel restless and unhappy, as well as annoyed, to think that clothes could make all this difference; and he vowed that the next day should not pass without his getting some new garments, thankfully reflecting that he was quite well furnished with money for the purpose.

There is no need to dwell upon his reception at the office next day, for beyond the satisfactory experience that both equals and superiors expressed their pleasure at seeing him back again and looking so well, he slipped quietly into the old groove, as if he had only just left it the day before. But before the day was out

he was conscious of new power, not merely in physical strength, though that was strongly noticeable, but greater mental ability, readiness to grasp the inner meaning of the orders he received, to act in the spirit as well as the letter of his work, which made him walk with a firmer step, carry himself more erect, and speak in a more confident tone than he had done before.

It was, therefore, with a feeling that it would be quite well worth it, that he received the news of a further advance in his salary of eighteenpence a week, bringing it up to the by no means contemptible figure of seventeen shillings a week, which to a lad of his frugal habits was positive affluence, enabling him to add at least five shillings every week to the nest-egg cosily lying in the Post Office Savings Bank. So methodical and old-fashioned were his ways, and so careful was he to mind his own business, that even Mr. Saunders, who loved to treat everyone with whom he came in contact as if they were under his special charge (which is a curious way some entirely unlovable men have got), interfered very little with Dick as he found how self-possessed and manly the young fellow had become.

This, however, was only on the business side of him. At chapel or Sunday school he gave

his lovable nature full play, and at the singing classes he seemed to be uplifted into a beautiful world of his own whither annoyances or troubles of any kind never came. And he was so humbly helpful with it all that none were envious of him or spoke unkindly of him, save those foolish members of his own sex who called him conceited and other ill-suited names because outside of the hall he had no tastes in common with them.

Not that he was in no danger of becoming unduly impressed by a sense of his own importance. For now he entered himself on the books of the Birkbeck Institution for several subjects which he felt would be of use to him, and soon discovered that although his early education had been very perfunctory, almost useless in fact, except that he had learned to read very well, his ability and energy were such that he was able to hold his own with lads of his own age who had been blessed with every educational advantage up till thirteen or fourteen years old. And when that knowledge comes to a young man, it is as heady as wine. Without something to counterbalance the tendency it is almost unreasonable to expect that a young fellow will not get "above himself," as we say.

Dick, too, at this time, it must be remembered, had no home influences whatever, for he never could grow so fond of Mrs. Freeth as to take her into his confidence. And as the time wore on, and he saw nothing of his brother and sisters, he found himself thinking less and less about them, and except for the outlet of Sunday school and singing class, more and more wrapped up in himself.

But if I have failed to impress you with my firm and fervent belief that Dick was under the special protection of Divine Providence, as if, indeed, his beloved mother's spirit had been permitted to watch over him, I am truly a bungler. So much did this guardianship appear to be the case, that at this critical juncture, when Dick was in undoubted danger of being utterly spoiled, something happened that, looking like a terrible calamity at first, became indeed a disguised blessing.

Going home one night late from the Birkbeck, when he had been a student at the Institution for about six months, he was admitted as usual by Mrs. Freeth, who said, coldly: "Your brother's upstairs waitin' for ye."

Dick answered lightly, not noticing her tone, "O, is he? I'm glad of that," and went bounding upstairs. But when, bursting into the

room, he saw his brother's face, his own fell, his outstretched hand dropped by his side, and he cried: "O, Jemmy, what have you been doing?"

He might well ask the question, for Jemmy, never able to conceal his feelings well, wore a look of utter, reckless despair. There was fierce sullenness in it, too, defiance of anybody and everybody who should dare to or care to interfere with him. In dogged tones he answered: "Nothing to make a song about, nor yet to be looked at as if I was Cain. I've got the 'push,' that's all."

"Got discharged!" gasped Dick, who had learned to hate slang, and, indeed, had never used it much.

"Yes," mimicked Jemmy, "got discharged, if you like that better."

There was silence for a few minutes while Dick, who had sunk into a chair, tried to grasp the situation. At last he said: "But how could Mr. Hawkins discharge you? You were apprenticed, bound to him for four years!"

"Can't help that," replied Jemmy. "He told me to clear out, and said if ever I came into his shop again, he would put me away where the dogs wouldn't bite me for a long time to come."

“But,” persisted Dick, “whatever can you have done to make Mr. Hawkins behave like that to you? I heard that you were going on all right, so, although I was sorry—you don’t know how sorry—that you didn’t come to chapel, I felt I’d better not interfere.”

“Well,” replied Jemmy, “it wasn’t much, after all. I got in with a lot of lads around there that was doin’ somethin, and all had money. I used to go with ’em whenever I could; I had to have some company, of course; and they used to always stand the beer and the fags and sometimes a feed. And on Sundays we used to go down by the river in the meadows there, and they’d play pitch-and-toss. I never had no money, so I couldn’t play, and some of the blokes was always snacking at me being in their gang and never paying for anything or playing. So I had a fight or two over it, and then I didn’t see why old Hawkins should have me there doing a journeyman’s work for nothing and I helped myself to a bob or two out of the till. He said I had some boots, too; but he’s a liar, I never had none. And, anyhow, he wouldn’t a-knownn nothing about it if I hadn’t been a fool and got too much beer one Sunday night; and when I come home he pitched into me, the coward, and went through

my pockets and found about five bob. And then he put what he called two and two together and kicked me out. And there you are."

Poor Dick! He felt no anger against his brother, only stunned horror. Drunkenness, gambling, theft! Was he responsible? Had he failed in his trust? And what might not the girls be doing, for all he knew? He could not think coherently, he could only sit and stare in front of him at vacancy, until Jemmy said: "Don't take it so to heart, Dick; I'm sorry I've been such a bad 'un, but I'll do better now. 'Taint your fault, anyhow."

"I'm not so sure about that, Jemmy," answered Dick, wearily; "perhaps if I'd kept my eye on you a little closer, it wouldn't have happened. I'm not blaming you, Jemmy; I'm blaming myself and Mr. Hawkins as well. But O, I'm so glad poor mother isn't alive to know it. Poor mother! O, Jemmy."

Jemmy burst into a paroxysm of tears, and flung himself on Dick's neck, sobbing out: "Dick, Dick, don't. If you'd have dressed me down to rights, I could have stood it; but I can't stand this. I am a bad 'un; but, please God, I'll do better. If I can't do nothing else I can go abroad and not do anything more to make trouble for dear old Dick, father and

mother and brother and all in one. Do forgive me, Dick.”

I must pass over the scene that followed until Dick and Jemmy, seated together over a supper of fried fish, were able to discuss the situation calmly with respect to the future. But in that short hour or two Dick had received the check that he needed, and Jemmy had learned—it was revealed to him as by a lightning flash—what his brother’s love for him really was, a lesson he never forgot.

CHAPTER IX

IDEALS

DICK awoke the next morning with a load on his mind. He did not know what to do about Jemmy, except that he must tell Mr. Saunders and take his opinion. He felt very doubtful of the line that gentleman would take, and knew the possibility of its being a most unpleasant one. But having given Jemmy the money to get his dinner, and asked him in an off-hand sort of way to keep away from those acquaintances of his who had been of such ill service to him, he strode away to the office in quite a different mood from that in which he usually went to work.

His interview with Mr. Saunders was painful, and he had continually to curb his desire to speak hotly. For Mr. Saunders believed in justice, not mercy, and he had nothing but reprobation for Jemmy, for whose conduct he felt personally responsible, since he had recommended him to Mr. Hawkins. Of course he had never a word of censure for Dick, and this, in Dick's present frame of mind, only added fuel to the fire of his anger. However,

he kept his own counsel, though with great difficulty.

Finally Mr. Saunders, having vindicated his position, as he thought, said: "The only thing that I can recommend for your brother is emigration, and it is the only way in which I will help him. In a new country he may do better, but I do not know. However, you may consider this, and let me know."

Dick thanked him, and that evening sought Mr. Harcourt's help for the first time. As he explained the good man's heart went out to him, full of sympathy and love. When he had finished, Mr. Harcourt said: "Very well, Dick; we'll see about your brother for you. He'll be all right yet. You be perfectly easy in your mind about him, and I'll talk to Mr. Saunders. By the way, send Jemmy to me. Tell him to be here at ten tomorrow morning. And don't worry about your sisters. Call and see them occasionally by all means; but don't blame yourself for neglect. Now, good-by, and God bless you."

The end of that week saw Jemmy Hartford on his way to Australia full of hope, and gratitude to the good brother to whom he owed so much. All had been arranged by Mr. Harcourt, even to the day's leave

which Dick had been granted to go and see him off. The two girls were there too. Really, it was wonderful, thought Dick, how Mr. Harcourt seemed able to arrange everything; and they had such a reunion as did them all good. But the net result of the whole business to Dick was just what he needed, and from thenceforward a change was noted in him, a change which led one of his workfellows to remark: "Dick isn't half as fresh as he used to be."

Now I come to the next development of my hero's character. He had noticed with some curious clawings at his heart that certain boys came to Sunday school for a few weeks, and then were either expelled for bad behavior, or ceased to come for reasons of their own. And the idea took possession of him that here, perhaps, was a way in which he might show his genuine repentance and sorrow for the grievous fall of his brother. Perhaps these boys were all right in themselves; they certainly had leanings toward the good, or they wouldn't have come to Sunday school at all, and they only wanted sympathetic handling to show what good there really was in them.

So he went to Mr. Saunders and unfolded his scheme for reaching and holding these

rough and undesirable lads. To his dismay, Mr. Saunders would have nothing to do with it. To his orderly mind the boy who would not behave in Sunday school was an outcast, a pariah, and could only be dealt with by ejection. What became of him afterward was his own concern. For Mr. Saunders had never rightly grasped the meaning of the divine dictum, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*." His concern was not at all with the lost, but with those who professed to be saved and could behave themselves.

The upshot of the conversation was that Dick quietly announced to Mr. Saunders, much to the latter's annoyance, his intention of taking a hall somewhere for the purpose of conducting a Sunday school for boys who had been pronounced hopeless elsewhere. He avowed his belief that many, if not all, of those boys were full of possibilities, but they had not been fairly dealt with. This made Mr. Saunders bristle with anger. That anyone could question the actions based upon his long experience savored of sacrilege; he could not admit any controversy on the subject, being perfectly convinced that he was right.

The interview ended by Mr. Saunders loftily

disavowing any further connection with Dick, whom he characterized as puffed up with a sense of his own importance out of all proportion to his abilities. He further said that he would not have Dick any longer as a member of his school or chapel, unless he became more amenable to discipline and thought less of himself. Dick listened gravely and silently; but this youngster had an inflexible will, and having made up his mind as to the right course he ought to take, nothing ordinary would turn him from that way.

So in perfectly respectful words he informed Mr. Saunders that his mind was made up, and that, deeply as he regretted setting himself up in opposition to Mr. Saunders, he was compelled to act as he was doing by a power outside of himself. So they parted with quite concentrated anger on the part of the man and real sorrow on that of the boy; and I am ashamed to say that in business matters for a very long while afterward Dick was made to feel what it had cost him to oppose Mr. Saunders.

But Dick was perfectly happy on the first Sunday when, in a tumble-down sort of hall in Kennington, of which he and three other young fellows whom he had infected with his enthusiasm had made themselves responsible for the

rent—a huge matter of ten shillings a week for two meetings on a Sunday of two hours each—he presided over a gathering of about twenty lads of from fourteen to eighteen years of age.

It would be quite safe to say that nearly all of them, though personally solicited by those who had their welfare at heart, had come with the expressed or implied intention of “having a lark.” But I do believe that, had they known of the self-sacrificing labors of Dick and his friends, of the expenditure of hard-earned money and equally precious time that had gone to the opening of this extraordinary little Sunday school, they would not have behaved as they did. For in ten minutes from the time that Dick had opened with prayer and a hymn the place was in a state of horrible uproar. All the scholars were smoking, and all were endeavoring to show as plainly as they were able their utter contempt for religion in any shape or form there presented to them. It was a curious experience, and one which Dick’s most reliable helper declared he would not face again for any consideration whatever. Dick, however, went on in a strange, detached manner, as though he were not in the least surprised nor in any way worried. At last, as at a given signal, the *scholars* rose, flung away their

almost smoked-out cigarettes, and began to wreck the place.

Ah! your London lad of the lowest class is, taken in the mass, a cowardly savage; in the absence of any power sufficiently strong to inflict punishment of a painful kind, he will do strange things. And so it came about that Dick presently found himself alone in the place, his clothes ruined, his flesh scratched and bruised, and the woodwork of the hall in fragments around him.

Of course that experience put an end to Dick's personal scheme of benevolence toward his fellows, as he thought them. But he was in nowise defeated or dismayed. So after he had repaired damages that evening and had explained his experience to Mrs. Freeth, he set himself to some hard thinking as to what move he should make next. The idea of giving up never entered his head, although he was quite willing to try another method, for although pertinacious he was not obstinate. That night he prayed hard about it, never doubting that he was called to the work, but desiring earnestly to be guided in the right way of doing it.

He felt wonderfully refreshed after his communion with the Father. No revelation came

to him, no new idea, nothing but a sense of being all right, which is so real yet so impossible to explain. When he went to the office that Monday morning, it was with the air of a conqueror, and certainly showing no sign of having sustained only on the previous day what most people would have called a disastrous defeat.

During the dinner hour, which, if fine, he usually spent in a recreation ground near at hand with one of his fellows, he felt moved to tell the tale of yesterday's experiences to the young man who generally went with him. Now, Dick was, as I have before pointed out, a reticent, self-contained lad, not at all given to discussing his own business, and so their midday conversations were usually about official matters. Therefore when today Dick began to set forth the happenings of Sunday his companion listened intently as if afraid of losing a word.

When Dick had finished, he said casually, "I should think you wouldn't want to go through that again. It's plain they don't want you, anyhow."

Dick flushed, as he replied: "No, they don't want me, but I want them. And, God helping me, I'll never give them up. They're splendid

fellows, I'm sure, if they were only on the right road. I shall learn better how to deal with them presently; but I'll never give them up."

Dick's companion looked at him curiously for a few moments without speaking, as if sizing him up mentally, and then said slowly: "I should think you would be the kind of chap that old Jackson would like to get hold of. He runs a mission down our way—sort of Methodist affair, though I don't think he's one of the regular ones, and it's quite a pastime for the boys to get in there and break up a meeting. He seems to get a rare lot of 'em there, though, and some people say he does a lot of good."

In a moment Dick was eagerly asking for information as to this man's whereabouts, and carefully noting them down with a firm determination to visit him the next Wednesday evening when it appeared that he held a mid-week meeting, indoors in winter and outdoors on an adjacent common in summer. In the meantime there was the secular interest of life not to be neglected, and Dick threw himself into his work and studies with redoubled energy, being cheered immensely by the knowledge that his superiors looked upon him benevolently as being a youngster with a head upon his shoulders. Also a letter from Susie,

full of enthusiasm about her new life and the way she was getting on in it, gave him great pleasure and made him feel that if mother was looking down, she would be pleased to think that all was well with her loved ones.

For the memory of his mother was the central factor in Dick's life. Around him always there was an aroma, an atmosphere of holy influence, which, like the globule of air in the nest of the water-spider, kept him from spiritual contact with evil. It was all around him, but could not touch him. In certain circles he would be looked upon as priggish, abnormal, and certain, sooner or later, to develop into something entirely undesirable which I need not stop to define. But I know and am sure that Dick and his like are the salt of the earth, keeping on their good and true way untouched by any of the modern unsettling cries that hinder and arrest the development of so many souls.

Wednesday night came, and with it great excitement for Dick. He was rarely moved like this; but the fact was that he was eager beyond bearing almost to get to close grips with the things that matter. He threw his whole heart into his business, and the educational exercises of the Birkbeck; but into this

business of benefiting his fellows he threw his very soul. Presently he arrived at the hall, a curious ramshackle building up a byway, its door battered as with many volleys of stones. The door was closed, but there was a light inside; so he went boldly up and tapped. He tapped many times, for Mr. Jackson was so inured to the alarms and excursions of the youth of the neighborhood that he did not take any notice of casual taps.

Presently, however, the door opened, and a tall gray-bearded man with wonderful brown eyes stood facing Dick. Only for a moment though; an almost instantaneous scrutiny satisfied Mr. Jackson that Dick was one of the Body, and, reaching for his hand, he drew him in.

“What is it, my son?” queried the older man, almost pleadingly.

Dick told him all, nor was interrupted until he had finished, or, rather, paused for lack of breath to go on with.

Then Mr. Jackson sank down on his knees, never doubting that his lead would be followed by Dick, and gratefully thanked God for his goodness in sending so promising a recruit to the work. They, therefore, rose happy, and plunged into details. Summarized, the matter

was in this condition. Mr. Jackson was in a business house where he had been for thirty years, and where he was highly valued. He had neither wife nor child, and every ounce of his superfluous energy went into the direction of doing good to his fellows as he understood it. He had no need to save, since no one was dependent upon him; and as for his old age, with a merry laugh he declared that when the good Lord had done with his services he would take care of him.

Their interview was most satisfactory to Dick, whose heart warmed to Mr. Jackson as never before to any man, not even Mr. Harcourt, and he inwardly vowed to devote heart, soul, and strength to the cause that this new-found friend had at heart. That evening's exercises were enough for him, as regards an exposition of the methods of the place. He saw a crowd of poorly clad men, women, and children, who in the main listened to Mr. Jackson's exhortations and were always reverent in their demeanor during his prayers. He looked upon the upturned faces from his seat on the platform and pitied them with all his soul.

So he went back to work full of divine energy, and so impatient that he could scarcely wait for Sunday. Indeed, he could hardly

control his thoughts sufficiently to do justice either to his work or to his classes; but he strove hard to do so, and at last, full of high hopes and dreams of victory, he sallied forth to the hall on Sunday morning, rather pleased than otherwise that it meant a walk of four miles. That morning's service fixed him definitely for the remainder of his life. Comparing it with the service he had so much enjoyed at the chapel over which Mr. Saunders reigned supreme (he was not the minister, but the power behind the throne), he saw that here were love and life, there formalism and cold respectability. No one came here for what they could get, in influence or diverse ways well understood among chapel folks. All came because they expected or believed or hoped to meet there the Elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for no other sublunary reason whatever.

The singing, which was sufficiently good even to please Dick's fastidious ear, was led by a young lady about Dick's own age, who presided at a good harmonium with a gravity and attention far beyond her years. In spite of his earnest attention to and full enjoyment of the service, Dick found, with a certain surprise, that this young lady's image was present

to his mental vision even when he could not see her; but he strove to banish it as he would have done any other extraneous matter not immediately connected with the work in hand.

That night's open-air service, however, so fully engrossed him that he had no room for thought of anything else. The desire to spread the splendid news of what he felt was life to him, the gospel of divine love and present help, was overwhelming; and when the leader called upon him to speak, he went forward at once, though trembling in every limb, determined to give his testimony, his witness to the truth of the faith that was in him. The few stammering words that he was able to utter had perhaps a greater effect upon the quiet, listening crowd than any grand flight of oratory would have had, for no one there could look into his face and not feel sure that here, at any rate, was a disciple indeed who was uttering no uncertain sound, who was giving no formal adherence to a certain set of doctrines, but whose heart was on fire with the love of God.

Returning from the meeting that night to the hall, Dick was conscious of a satisfaction that he had never known before, a fullness and rounding off of his life, and he really felt as if life had nothing higher or better to offer.

Then he realized what a long walk home was before him, already weary with the long standing in the open air. But that only added to his satisfaction; he had a high delight in thus, as he felt, overcoming the weakness of the flesh for the Master's sake. So he strode manfully homeward, his heart a veritable nest of singing birds as he recalled all the incidents of his adventurous life.

Then into the midst of his thoughts there came the face of the girl at the harmonium with almost a pang of sweetness, quite unintelligible to him, but altogether delightful. This young man had never even dreamed of love before in the commonly accepted sense of the term; he had lived a life of love, but it was asexual, entirely unselfish and devoted; in fact, it was the love of God shed abroad in his heart and overflowing upon all about him. His happiness, then, was complete, and his heart was full of praise as he stepped briskly up and knocked at the front door of his lodgings.

It was opened almost instantly by Mrs. Freeth, who burst out with, "Look here, young man, if you think I'm going to sit up all hours of the night waiting for your pleasure while you're gadding goodness knows where

and all, you're mightily mistaken. You're going the same way as all the rest; but you shan't blame me for not givin' you warnin'. Here, it's a quarter past eleven o'clock, and a Sunday night too. You oughter be ashamed of yerself. What would your pore mother have said, I wonder?"

Poor Dick felt, as once before, a very fury of rage coming over him, for in spite of the platitudes so often uttered upon the subject, to be accused wrongfully is much harder to bear than to be accused justly. His face burned, his fists clenched themselves, but in that moment he received strength to restrain himself. And he replied calmly: "You are quite wrong, Mrs. Freeth. I have been nowhere that I should not. Perhaps you mean well, but you are too ready to believe ill, and I will at once try to find other lodgings. I'll explain to Mr. Harcourt why in the course of the week."

Mrs. Freeth made no attempt to reply to this beyond mutterings, and Dick passed into his room unmolested further, but not to sleep. In spite of his indomitable perseverance and his high ideals, he was too keenly susceptible of injustice still to sit calmly down under the imputations Mrs. Freeth had hurled at him with

the best intentions, as she thought. Silly woman! But dimly he wondered, as he lay thinking, what had become of the uplifting joy, the calm delight he had felt on his way home. Fortunately, he was not given to self-analysis, or he might have suffered still more. And toward the morning he fell asleep.

CHAPTER X

DICK, THE MAN

THE next week was a busy one for Dick. First he had to find new lodgings, and they were of preference near the mission with which he had cast in his lot. Mrs. Freeth had made some diffident advances, but it was a curious characteristic of this young man that he always felt as if his lightest word must be his bond, to be redeemed by fulfillment at no matter what cost to himself. And so, though he was strictly and punctiliously polite to Mrs. Freeth, she soon recognized that she had really lost her lodger.

He had to see Mr. Harcourt and explain matters, and was surprised to find that Mr. Harcourt by no means agreed with his leaving Mrs. Freeth, or took more than the most languid interest in his religious work over the river. This attitude of Mr. Harcourt's hurt him, but did not move him in the least, and so they parted on slightly less cordial terms than usual. Then there was his work at the office, which he very rightly regarded as claiming his best attention; indeed, it was one of the most

estimable factors in his character that he was essentially trustworthy. His work was by no means of a highly technical nature, much of it, indeed, being of so low a grade as to call for very little of Dick's really high intelligence; but whatever it happened to be that he was doing, that for the time was his sole concern, from which nothing was allowed to draw his attention.

“What a paragon!” I'm afraid I hear some reader sneer. Well, I admit that such a character is becoming increasingly difficult to find. The tendency is all in the direction of scamping the work for which we are paid, and putting our best energies into our play or our hobbies. But I rejoice to think that I have been privileged to know several lads who, while undoubtedly keen upon their play and their hobbies, certainly put their work first. Yet, strange to say, none of those lads have attained to eminence. They are good, faithful, and most worthy members of society, but they are only earning a bare living by incessant labor, and should they be overtaken by severe accident and rendered helpless, or in middle age lose their employment through no fault of their own, I don't like to point out what they have to look forward to. Which makes me feel

that the prime factor in "getting on" from a worldly point of view is not any of the qualities I have named, but an absence of the highest moral sense of the finest feelings of our nature bred of the teachings of the New Testament.

Among Dick's chief activities was his evening education. At that he toiled like any beaver. But toil he never so hardly or so eagerly, he always found that he was in the common ranks of the students, never one of those in the first flight. It was not want of perseverance or energy; it was simply want of ability. He had his limitations, as we all have, but he was gradually learning that those limitations were much lower down the scale than he cared to admit. In proportion, however, as he learned about the things he could not do, the heights he could not climb, he determined to do those things that he could do as well as they could be done.

Thus, although he was undoubtedly downhearted at times at his lack of ability to keep up with the best of his class at the Birkbeck, he always found solace when Wednesday or Sunday came and he could pour out of his full heart the joy of his belief in the love of God. In this supreme delight of his life he was upheld by no force of character, no special train-

ing, no desire to be good in order to gain something in the nature of special favor from on high. It was an overmastering desire to serve his fellows in what seemed to him the best of all ways. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee," was his motto, unconsciously it is true, but no less certainly. And so he gave to this loving labor all the fervor of his soul, and was in consequence uplifted and upheld, thereby being indeed as nearly happy at this time as any young man can be, while at the same time he was kept in the way of holiness.

Now the prodigality of nature is a commonplace of natural science, but how few there be who speak of the prodigality of Love!—not that bestial, selfish passion which profanes the high and holy name of love, but the love that Paul outlines in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. And when Dick was engaged in his mission work he felt his heart aglow, and because of the flood of love that he poured out it was always brimming in accordance with the divine promise. His superintendent, Mr. Jackson, yearned over him and felt at times as if in open meeting he must clasp him to his breast and proclaim aloud the joy he felt in having such a coworker.

Dick's life at this time was curiously narrow but entirely full within its limits. He had absolutely no home life, the lodging house wherein he occupied a room being almost as silent as the Trappist monastery. Of the twenty-two young men who lived there none knew another, each had his own little niche in the hive wherein he slept, but his life was lived outside of the building altogether. The place was as silent as a grave. Two old women did the chores and a pale, gawky lad cleaned the boots and carried round the tea and bread and butter that formed the breakfasts of these early-rising youths. And whatever their lives may have been outside, there can be no question that within those walls they were exemplary. Very rarely indeed a young fellow would come home the worse for liquor, or cause a disturbance, but in the morning he would receive from Mrs. Price, the stern landlady, a week's notice to quit, and from her fiat there was no appeal. So the delinquent passed in his latch-key, packed his small belongings, and vanished.

To Dick, however, this monastic calm of his lodgings was very welcome. His time never hung heavy; he did not know the meaning of spare moments, for there was always something to do. Unconsciously, too, he

allowed his two sisters to become shadowy shapes of memory. He had attempted to keep on visiting terms with them, but his visits were not encouraged, and he was so sensitive that after a snub or two from housekeeper or butler he determined to keep away, and did so, only being careful to let his sisters know his whereabouts and of his welfare by a letter every month. His satisfaction, however, was great to know that, as far as he could ascertain, they were all doing well. And an occasional brief letter from Jemmy brought the news that he was making his way very slowly but surely on a big station near Bathurst. So Dick had no anxieties about his family. All that had passed away in the most satisfactory manner.

Now it must be admitted that although Dick had undoubtedly been attracted by the sweet serious face of Miss Grace on his first visit to Meecham Hall, the impression had not been deepened subsequently. He was heart and soul in his work, and as far as he was concerned there was no time for love-making or thinking about it in the ordinary sense of the term. Mr. Jackson had an extraordinary driving force; in the business of soul-saving he was as energetic as some people are at money-getting, and no one could work long

with him or under him without either becoming like him or being disconcerted and leaving him. But as the work grew more and more strenuous, owing to the lowering of the neighborhood, Mr. Jackson and his band of volunteers were drawn closer and closer together in their necessity of presenting an unbroken front to the common enemy. It was in the never-ending fight that they all got to know one another very well, and Dick, who had as of right slipped into the entirely congenial position of Master of the King's Music, was brought into very close and firm relations with Miss Grace the organist.

Yet such was the caliber of these two young people, neither of whom had yet passed the stage of legal infancy, that neither had so much as hinted by any means that they felt inclined to be aught to each other than fellow-soldiers in a common cause. And how long this singular aloofness on the human side would have been maintained it is impossible to say but for an accident. It was Easter Sunday night and the surging crowds of the street were disorderly in the extreme. Never in Dick's experience had he faced such opposition. Bands of youths and girls who on other occasions would have been content with a passing jeer, now

stayed, and with ribaldry of all kinds seemed determined to prevent any carrying on of the meeting at all. But Mr. Jackson and his helpers were made of stern material, and this treatment only made them close up their ranks and sing the songs of Zion more lustily, since speaking the word was out of the question.

At last the crowd, as if maddened, made a savage rush at the little band, and in an instant there was a scene of wild confusion, the yelling of the hooligans and the screams of the women making a hideous contrast to the usual concord of sweet sounds. A solitary policeman was sufficient to put the cowardly rabble to flight, and then there was revealed amid the wreckage of books, lamp, harmonium, and banner, the prostrate form of Dick with his head upon Miss Grace's lap. She was hatless and her hair was in disorder, but she was steadily pressing her handkerchief to Dick's forehead, from which a stream of blood flowed every time she lifted her hand to look. The jagged wound had been made with an ugly piece of slate which had laid bare the skull from the eyebrow to the roots of the hair.

In a few minutes all was quiet, the debris had been cleared away, and Mr. Jackson's devoted band had retreated to their beloved

hall temporarily stopped, but in no wise defeated, rather elated that they were counted worthy to suffer in the Master's service. A doctor had been sent for who dressed and bandaged Dick's hurt and commended Miss Grace for keeping the dirt out of it. When he retired Dick was able to walk, a bit tottery but full of pluck, and what was more, full of gratitude to the brave girl who had, as he was informed, done her best for him in the midst of a howling mob.

For the first time he felt a thrill of desire to keep near her when the time came for them all to seek their homes. He loathed the idea of his lonely lodging and longed to feel still that gentle touch upon his head. But he knew that he was thinking of impossibilities—for the present at least, and so with a heavy inward sigh he bade all present good-night and turned homeward. He had not gone far, however, when he heard light footsteps following him, and presently Miss Grace reached his side a little out of breath, and catching at his arm said gaspingly: "Mr. Hertford, are you sure you can manage? I'm afraid you must feel very faint—I wonder some of the other men didn't offer to come with you"—and then she stopped suddenly as Dick, reaching for her hand,

moistened his parched lips and said: "God bless your kind thought. I'm not so bad but that I can get home, but you can't imagine how glad I am to have you think of me."

"O," she replied, with a half-hearted attempt to draw her hand away, "then I'll say good-night. I only fancied you looked too poorly to go alone. But if you are quite sure you can do without my help—it's getting late—I'd better get home."

In a moment, as by an intuitive flash, Dick grasped the situation, saw that here was the shadowy something that he had been needing so hungrily. All the loneliness of his little room, of his life, wherein his sole companionship had been the ideal of his sainted mother, his isolation from his kind in all those little intimate things that make up the sum of time, rushed into his mind. His clasp upon her hand tightened into a grip, and he said hoarsely:

"Miss Grace, Mary, if you could love me—I've nobody in the world—and I know now that I've loved you for a long time without daring to let the idea get full hold of me—"

With a little glad cry she leaned toward him, and her disengaged arm fell across his neck. There were a few short sobs of deepest

happiness, and then, because the Kennington Road on a Sunday evening at ten-thirty is not exactly a secluded lane, they walked side by side primly enough, arm in arm it is true, but that was the merest convention common to their class—it was an outward sign that had nothing in common with the soaring manhood that rushed into Dick's heart like a bursting geyser, or the beautiful satisfying sense of brooding protection from all outside ills that filled the soul of the woman.

But as might be expected from what we know of Dick previously, their conversation had nothing of the romantic about it. Purely utilitarian as far as everyday life was concerned, the only words of love that passed were an occasional "dear" or a timid "darling," and even they were uttered apologetically, as if a hardly warranted liberty was being taken. For our pair of lovers belonged to that great saline stratum of goodness that saves the bulk of our workers from decay, yet is always alluded to in terms of sarcasm by leading novelists and publicists. May God long preserve to us the good young man and good young woman, whose ideas are bounded by the class, the love feast, the open air, and the day's work! They may be narrow in outlook, their physical

temperature may be low, but they make for clean, sane manhood and womanhood, and they are the nation's greatest asset.

All too soon the pair reached the door of Dick's lodgings. Immediately Dick's chivalrous *motherly* instincts were aroused, and he began to talk about accompanying Mary home. But she gave a scornful little laugh. "Leave that till you are stronger," she said; "I'm looking after you now, and I order you to go straight upstairs to bed. You must not think because you are strong you can play tricks with your health. Go to bed my—dear, and take care of yourself for my sake, because I love you, and I want you for my husband."

For all answer Dick drew her near him, as with him his mother had been wont to do, and said: "Kiss me good-night, then."

I am not writing a love story in the ordinary sense of the term, and so I refrain from any unnecessary comment upon that kiss. It was just a sanctifying seal upon a bond between them wherein either was held holy by the other, and the dangers that are justly dreaded by our lawmakers and the guardians of our morals had no existence. A most beautiful and clean condition which is in full working order among the class of which I write—a class that may be

trusted to stand four square against any attempt to disintegrate the family or to rob the individual by such hare-brained folk as are at present heard loudest in the nation's councils. I am not going to advertise any of them; they are fully capable of that, and by all decent-thinking and decent-living folk are equally feared and understood.

Dick parted from Mary and went up to his little cell with a firm step, the footfall of a man who had reached solid ground and found what he had wanted for so long without knowing what it really was. Upon reaching the privacy of his little room he sank into a chair and endeavored to survey the situation. He sat for a while with his head between his hands—a casual observer might have thought him a prey to the deepest dejection—the whole of his life flitting before his mental vision in kaleidoscopic sequence. And then he suddenly rose from his chair, cast his hat upon the bed and poured out his heart's fullness in praise to God.

In a few minutes he arose with a vigorous movement and, humming one of his favorite hymns, cast off his clothing, never heeding the hurts he had received—in fact, he did not feel them—then leaped into his bed and in three minutes was fast asleep.

You need no assurance from me that Dick's attitude on Monday morning did not pass unnoticed at the office, any more than did the curious strap of plaster on his forehead. Of course many small witticisms were bandied at his expense, none of which he heeded, although he had a bright smile for all, the smile of the conqueror. Then came an ordeal, a summons "on the carpet," for Mr. Saunders had noted with lowering brow the damage to Dick's face, and had reported it in a roundabout way to the chief. Strangely enough, the chief had secretly developed a strong liking for Dick, and when the latter appeared before him white and warlike with that uneven strip of plaster, he was already prepossessed in his favor.

Questioned sharply, Dick told his tale modestly and clearly, the result being a flush upon the chief's face and an expressed hope that "we'd all stand up for our ideals as manfully if need be." But this never even fluttered Dick. He felt uplifted beyond any usual happenings. Unconscious of any enmity toward him, he had never bothered his head about such things, and, verily, he reaped his reward. Yet it must be admitted that there was an uncomfortable feeling left after the interview that someone had been trying to injure him, and the

“ why? ” which necessarily welled up from his heart met with no answer.

Poor Dick! He did not yet know the wicked busybody who, in default of better employment, maligns, slanders, and injures in every way conceivable to him innocent people. Such an unspeakable class had never entered his purview, nor if they had, would he have permitted himself to believe in their existence.

Therefore the ordeal of Dick's appearance among his fellows with that ornamented face passed off quite easily. Clad in the complete armor of happy innocence, praise or blame were alike immaterial to him. But it needed all his self-control to keep his mind from wandering from his duties or his studies to the possibilities of this new and rosy future. Joyfully he studied the rows of figures in his bank-book, showing how steadily he had been laying by a goodly portion of his earnings, not, indeed, with any conscious idea of such a contingency, but from some ingrained, inherited habit of economy.

But O! how hungrily he looked forward to Wednesday! He had always loved his mid-week break with its little Sabbath of loving ministry, its sense of sweet service; now it had an added savor—the actual sight of a dear face

and sound of a musical voice, the thrilling touch of a tender hand. It came at last, and in no one thing was he disappointed. His face literally shone as he greeted Mary and Mr. Jackson, who were standing together as he entered the little hall. Mary smiled blushing as she noted the love-light on Dick's face, and Mr. Jackson, grasping the young man's hand warmly between his own, exclaimed: "My dear lad, I never thought you'd be any the worse for that nasty knock, but I wasn't prepared to see you looking so beaming. And the scar isn't at all unbecoming. How wonderfully your flesh does heal to be sure—the result of a clean and simple life, of course. Ah, well, He knows how to make all things work together for good to them that love Him, and I rejoice to see the promise hold."

Then they turned away to the evening's duties, in which, although there was not the slightest opposition, there was also an absence of the usual interest. People would not stay and listen, and if the truth must be told, both Dick and Mary were not in the least sorry when Mr. Jackson, with a heavy sigh, gave the word for closing the meeting. Both felt somewhat guilty in that they were putting their own pleasure before the mighty work in which

they were both engaged, but that is only another way of saying that they were intensely human and in the first flush of their love for each other.

The farewells said, they departed together, amid the whispers of the little band of helpers, who were all as much interested as if they had a personal share in the pretty development. Again the confidences, so matter-of-fact and plain-spoken—as became those who knew life's realities. Mary told him that she maintained herself by dressmaking, having succeeded to her mother's connection—poor mother, who had lost the use of her hands through rheumatism. Father was a plasterer, able to earn good wages, and spend them in the curious recreations of the British workman—drink and gambling on horse-racing, his only literature that baleful Star, whose beams are only cared for when they show the way to a “winner.” At any rate, it was a red-letter Saturday when one quarter of his wages were handed in to the family exchequer. And when he had no work he looked to be fed and furnished with tobacco and beer money by the two women who loved him in spite of all.

Dick only gripped his beloved's arm tighter as he heard this, while he registered a vow that

when they were one this little matter should be revised: there would be no more cheap tobacco and beer for a loafer if he could intercept its flow.

CHAPTER XI

AN ALLIANCE ON TERMS

IF in the foregoing chapter I have given the idea that Dick had become slack in the service of the Lord, I must ask pardon; for, in very truth, he was fired by a new enthusiasm—a burning desire to excel in the noblest of all pursuits—that of saving the perishing human soul. This it was that led him to plead with Mr. Jackson for the use of the hall on Tuesday evenings, as a gathering place for the youth of the neighborhood who cared to come and be taught singing. Poor Dick could not pose as a teacher, or anything else, although what he did know he knew well; but he thought he could conduct a sort of week-evening Sunday school by the aid of his beloved. And she urged him on. Already he had become her hero; in her eyes he was the very perfect knight, who, as far as man might, was realizing the Christ by going about doing good.

And so this enterprise also was begun. A simple, earnest prayer for help and guidance from Dick and Mary in the empty hall, all else

forgotten but their desire for the benefit of the young chaps whom they pitied so much, and she began playing over some of the simple tunes they loved so well. One by one the boys slouched in furtively, or ruffling it, as if determined to show that they were not ashamed, but in the end about twenty were present. And Dick stood up before them in simple, manly fashion, saying:

“Boys: I’m one of you, as I think you know, and me and my sweetheart thought we might amuse and interest you for an hour on Tuesday evening, to teach you what we’ve learned in the way of music and singing. All we ask of you is that you’ll let us teach you, and if any of you know anything of the Tonic Sol-fa that you’ll lend a hand. But first let’s ask God’s blessing.”

They were taken by surprise, and allowed Dick’s short, fervent petition for heavenly blessing and guidance to pass unhindered. It was immediately followed by the full strains of the harmonium, in a sort of voluntary. And then a lively song was introduced, in which all present were able to join. So from one thing to another the time sped, and almost before any of them realized it the evening was over, and they were hand-shaking and anticipating great times on the ensuing Tuesday evening.

When the last visitor had departed, Dick and Mary knelt again and thanked God for this auspicious beginning. Then, putting everything in order, they left the hall, and sedately strolled toward Mary's home, for she had asked Dick to come and be introduced as her future husband. He did not feel at all elated at the prospect, nor did she; but it had to be faced, or, rather, the autocrat of that small home had to be met; for, however little he was entitled to such a position, he most jealously claimed it, and indeed always enforced it, as if a ruler by divine right.

Presently they were all in the "sitting room," and all—that is, mother, Mary, and Dick—looked exquisitely uncomfortable. Father, in his shirt sleeves, with a short clay pipe in his mouth and a jug of beer at his elbow, was quite at his ease. He had greeted Dick with a sort of boisterous heartiness, saying: "So you're come courtin' my girl, 'ave yer? Well, I don't mind, s' long as your intentions is honorable (ha! ha!); but she says you're a teetotaler, an' don't smoke. Now, I don't 'old with excess, but, at the same time, I aint got no use for people wot can't have a friendly glarss, nor yet a pipe, an' so I don't deceive yer. I'm a plain man, I am; Bob

Grace is my name, an' I aint ashamed of it. I k'n do a day's work with any man, I k'n take my glarss a beer or I k'n leave it, an' them as don't like me they've only got to say so—"

Why go on? I have no patience with the nauseous twaddle, prolonged indefinitely, which constitutes the conversation of the much-beloved British workingman; without any excuse, either, because the way of education is open.

The two women sat and suffered while my lord grumbled on, and Dick, with his teeth clinched, thought manfully of the rescue he was presently about to effect. He was relieved by Mr. Grace suddenly rising and muttering something unintelligibly, reaching for his hat, and lurching out of the room. Mrs. Grace rose and went after him, but speedily returned with a white face.

"My husband isn't quite himself tonight," she said. "He's a wonderfully good fellow, as husbands go, and he's never offered to lay a hand on me since we've been married, and that's six and twenty years next Michaelmas. But I'll own he's a bit queer at times. Never mind. What would you like for your supper, Mr. Hertford?—have a bit of fish?"

Dick, however, truthfully asserted that he could not eat a morsel, and, further, that he must be going. Nothing would induce him to stay longer, so he made for the door, the mother allowing Mary to go with him unattended. A great flood of pity welled on to his love as he clasped his dear one to his breast, murmuring: "O, my love! I can save you from that dreadful man."

She drew away from him, saying: "Dick, you forget, he's my father."

Yes, he had forgotten, as so many others have; but he never forgot again. Earnestly he begged her pardon for not being able to see through her eyes, for in a flash he had determined that she was well worth the sacrifice demanded of him. Of course it was as readily granted, and after a little period of bliss—understood by lovers, but entirely incomprehensible to any other human beings—they parted, Dick walking soberly toward his lodgings, full of plans for the future.

He entered the silent house as usual, went up to his little room amid a silence as of death, opened the door, struck a match and lit the gas. There on his table lay a letter. He turned it over and over, scanning stamp, postmark, and address, and at last tore it open to read:

MY DEAR BROTHER DICK : Mrs. Jameson came over here tonight and says that Dolly has gone, she doesn't know where. I am broken-hearted, but cannot do anything. So will you be when you hear this. Poor Dick, you done all you could, and this is the end for her. She was always a frivolous little cat.

Your loving sister,

SUSAN HERTFORD.

Poor Dick, indeed! In the midst of his happiness, modified, it is true, by the prospects of such a father-in-law, came this. Immediately he began to accuse himself. Was he to blame? And no matter how hardly he might strive, how complete were his vindictory arguments, still would remain the feeling that he was responsible. Poor Dick! He was of the veritable sons of Canaan, burden-bearers, carriers of loads wherein they have no share but the weight. But, as we have no desire to harrow our hearts unnecessarily, it may as well be recorded at once that Dolly's only offense was base ingratitude. She had been offered a better situation, but had not cared for the small trouble of informing Dick. She developed into a very clever, cold-blooded young person, who married an honest tradesman and ruled him with a rod of iron, assisting or, rather, driving him into a very good business. But Dick learned none of this until some dozen years after, and then quite by accident. And all that

time he bore about with him a burden of sorrow, thinking that he had perhaps failed in his duty. No, we have no more to do with Dolly.

Still, Dick proved the exception to the general rule, that sorrows come not in single spies but in battalions. Without any pushfulness on his part, beyond his always eager desire to do his work as well as it could be done, he was one morning summoned into the presence of the august chief of the great business. Now, such an experience is generally a racking one, for most fellows when "carpeted," as it is called, try to recall which of their innumerable derelictions from duty has been discovered, and are, consequently, in a most unenviable frame of mind. Not so Dick. He knew with an assurance beyond dispute that nowhere had he failed to do his utmost—knew it so well that the idea of his being hauled over the coals never occurred to him, and he looked his chief in the face with an open ingenuousness that was very pleasant to look upon.

His faith was fully justified, for the result of the interview was that he was raised from the Gibeonite ranks of the messengers to the far higher status of clerk at a commencing salary of thirty shillings a week, with an annual in-

crement of two and sixpence per week, and a maximum of a hundred and fifty pounds per annum. In a moment his thoughts flew to Mary. It was Friday, and he had not yet begun to write to her, so he must wait till Sunday in order to communicate the grand news. But it would be difficult indeed to analyze the whirling emotions that possessed Dick that night. Gratitude to God came first—it was with Dick a habit carried to the length of thanking God for an occasional gleam of sunshine or a tasty morsel—grief for the missing ones, joyful anticipations of a home of his own—and a wife, and also a perfectly legitimate yet veritably immense pride that he had been able to come so far in spite of all the army of obstacles arrayed against him.

Sunday came; it seemed a long wait, and after the morning love feast, when a select company, with Brother Jackson at their head, all went to the local Methodist chapel and partook of the blessed meal, Mary timidly said: “Mother told me to ask you if you would like to come and have dinner with us today.”

Very quickly Dick turned and queried: “Would you like me to come? because, if so, I’ll be glad.” Shyly but sweetly she conveyed to him that she had arranged the whole

business to that end, and off they went, full of satisfaction.

Dick often says that he can never forget that day. The pompous platitudes of the plasterer and his lordly patronage of the weakling who would not drink of his flowing jug were all as nothing, while the presence of the mother made no difference—there was a joyful recompense in the hour's privacy in the best room before afternoon Sunday school. Then Dick told of his altered prospects, and he suggested that they might wed forthwith, young as they were. And she, with all the intuitive wisdom of her sex, counseled prudence.

Dick felt that he could not wait for that pretty little home which he had planned; but he had learned a very high degree of patience and tenacity, and so, although it is to be feared that there were threads of Mary and the little home in all the utterances from Dick, whether in Sunday school or meeting, there was a fire, a brilliancy, about whatever he said or sung, alternating with a pathos that was remarkable, because he was usually so equable, that attracted the notice of all, and when the long day was done, accounts had been made up, and the books put away, Brother Jackson laid his hands affectionately upon the shoulders of Mary and

Dick, everyone else being gone, and spoke solemnly, gently, lovingly.

“ My dear children, all my heart is with you, all my prayers are yours. I have watched you and prayed over you. And I feel full of joy to think that you are all in all to each other. But, dear ones, so remain. Allow nothing to come between you; be chums and lovers. Kneel hand in hand and, however you may be tempted, never speak harshly one to another. For harsh words rankle; they are so easily spoken, so impossible to recall. Forgive me for being an old foggy, but, dear ones, I have been married thirty years and for the last fifteen I have not seen my wife. So you see, although I am advising you, I have made a curious mess of my own life. If I could only recall many things that I have said! if only I had been wiser! Ah, well! God bless you and preserve you from the grief of saying, ‘ If I had done so and so, I should not have been—’ Good night.”

They found themselves out in the crowded street, their hands still tingling from his nervous grip, but of what he said it is only just to say that they remembered little. For they were two intensely practical, commonplace young folks, without a trace of hifalutin or

penny novelette style in their make-up. Love? —O, yes, an ocean of it, but in its rightful place, a firm foundation whereon to build happiness, not a madness with which to run riot for a time and then awake to disillusionment and misery.

Very earnestly and sincerely Dick had laid before Mary his sorrows with regard to Dolly and Jemmy, expecting, yet hardly prepared, for the vigorous sympathy she gave him.

“My dear one,” she cried, “you have been father and mother to them. You gave them the best of your life for years. Surely you could not be blamed by the Lord for not doing what was impossible. Be comforted, dear, and let us live our own lives now—”

He stopped her, crying: “Mary, let it be soon. Neither you nor I have ever had a real home; let’s make one.”

But at that she was silent until he, mistaking her, in man’s fashion, said, resentfully: “Why, don’t you want me, after all, Mary?”

Quickly she turned upon him, replying, with trembling in her voice: “You know I do; but poor mother, can I desert her now? O, God,” she cried, in her perplexity, “help me to do right!”

Before that outbreak Dick was silent, and

the subject of marriage was not again mentioned between them that night. Still, for all that, Dick felt more determined than ever to possess his promised wife at the earliest opportunity, for, as I have before remarked, he is a man of remarkable tenacity.

No cloud was between them as they parted—they saw too clearly into one another's soul for that—and when they kissed each other good night at the blank wall of Kennington Oval their hearts beat as high with pure hope and holy love as ever did those of youth and maiden since the world began, in spite of what is said of the viciousness of London streets at night, consequent upon the liberty enjoyed by our young people.

When Mary reached her home she was immediately assailed by her mother, who had been waiting impatiently for her, with the question: "Well, is anything settled yet? I'm on thorns. Your father's gettin' worse an' worse. He came in tonight an' said he didn't intend to work any more. He'd been listenin' to some big-mouthed fellow down at the Cross, who had plummed him up with the idea that there was goin' to be a sort of Slate Club on a large scale; all the money there was in the country was goin' to be shared out, an' nobody

should work who didn't want to—an' he never wants to. He says work is beneath him, that he ought to be in Parliament."

She paused for breath, and Mary replied, quietly: "No, nothing is settled yet—that rests with me; but if you think that I am going to tie my dear one down to the worthless vagabond—if he is my father—that has made such a ruin of your life, mother dear, you are quite wrong. My darling had a father and mother he remembers with love and sympathy. Shall I load him with a loafer, a man whose only idea of happiness or comfort is to loll over a bar, drinking, and talking what he calls sport, while those who should be his first care starve? No, a thousand times. I'd take you, dear, if you'd leave him (but I know you won't), but I won't, no, I will *not*, have my love imposed upon by my father."

Of course the poor mother burst into tears, for with her, as with so many similarly situated, habit had taken the place of love. She knew how true her daughter's words were, but could not indorse them, and so her long vigil came to naught. Mary said no more, just did quietly what she usually did before going to rest, and then, with a heavy sigh, retired, leaving her mother to wait for Mr. Grace when the

closing of the "houses" should allow him to come home. But for a certain sense of economy in his pleasures Mr. Grace would have belonged to the local Radical Club, where he might have gambled and drunk practically all night, and all day Sunday as well, but he begrudged the small subscription, and by so much was kept decent. But of other decencies he knew nothing; he was, like the great majority of London artisans, the most selfish of creatures, caring nothing how his woman-kind fared so long as his peculiar pleasures of talking horse and discussing Captain Coe's finals were not interfered with.

Readers of this story, do believe me, in all your high ideas for the elevation of mankind, it is well that you should know that against you are arrayed not merely the forces of evil as exemplified in drinking and debauchery, but in the utter selfishness which is the principal characteristic of the British *workingman* today. Go round his chosen haunts and listen to him, if you want proof of what I say.

Dimly and afar Mary recognized this, knowing, too, how often her scanty earnings had provided food and rent for the huge-limbed man who cared nothing for either her or her mother, and, when he did give up any

of his earnings, distributed the money as largesse undeserved, and in its very nature benevolent. She was also quite sure of the horror with which Dick would regard such ideas, and bravely determined that he, at least, should never become the victim of them as her poor mother and she had been. Ah, there was the crux of the situation—without her what would become of poor mother, who was not able to earn anything? The problem was beyond her, yet she inwardly determined that the blessed future to which she looked forward with Dick should never be sacrificed to a selfish man's lusts, even if, as was only too probable, her mother might have to suffer.

So she resolutely put the matter from her with a quiet determination, uncommon in one so young, and went to her nightly prayers, thanking God for the great joy that had come to her, pleading for a blessing on the poor weak mother, and making the usual faithless petition on behalf of her father, whom she had long ago come to regard as a hopeless case, because he knew, none better, the right, and deliberately, from pure selfishness, followed the wrong.

Meanwhile Dick had risen to the height of his new opportunities promptly. The report

upon him at the close of his first day at the desk by his new chief was that he would make an ideal clerk, rather slow, of course, but accurate and conscientious to a degree. Dick felt the change much more severely than he had dreamed was possible. After the free exercise of his former employment, the cramped position for so many hours was very painful, but he accepted it as an unavoidable concomitant of his promotion, and promised himself that he would soon get used to it.

But his greatest triumph came on the morning of the following day in his new position. Mr. Saunders, who had never spoken a word to him, except officially, since he had left the chapel, stopped him on the stairs, and, holding out his hand, congratulated Dick in stately fashion upon his promotion, assuring him that in his (Mr. Saunders's) opinion no one more worthy of it could be found. And, for a wonder, Mr. Saunders did not spoil the kindness of his congratulations by any patronizing advice, as was his wont, nor did he make Dick feel that it was only because of the latter's success that notice was being taken of him by so important a personage.

But every other consideration, Dick now found, was merged in the prospect of wife and

home. Nothing seemed comparable to it in interest; nothing, in fact, had any interest at all except in so far as it bore upon this all-important question. His constant habit of thankfulness to God for all his mercies was now enriched by the thought, running through every thanksgiving, of Mary. And so he panted for Tuesday, and the good work they were both engaged in together. When that evening came he was uplifted and amazed to find quite a little crowd of lads present when he arrived at the hall, although he was early. And he had hardly time for even a perfunctory greeting to his darling before there were at least one hundred present. It was a most delightful experience, and before he stepped forward for the opening hymn his face literally shone with sacred joy, so that his auditors felt awe-stricken. And the whole of the evening's proceedings went with a vigor and verve that kept his enthusiasm at the boiling point.

When at last, tired out, he closed the meeting and went to the door to shake hands with those who were departing, one big fellow lingered behind muttering that he'd like to speak to him. Dick readily assented, and then learned, to his grateful astonishment, that the excess of numbers was owing to the fact that

there had been a force organized to break up the meeting. But they could not begin, so wonderfully had they been impressed by his look and manner, and the result had been a triumphant success. Bidding the sheepish-looking fellow good-by, he hurried to Mary, who was waiting for him, and told her the glad news. Then together they dropped on their knees and thanked God for their great blessing. They were about to rise when Dick, putting his hand on her shoulder, said: "Mary, let us get married soon; say next month. I'm sure God will bless us, and I do want a home so badly with you in it."

And she replied: "Very well, Dick, it shall be as you wish. God bless you."

CHAPTER XII

MARRIAGE

THE next few days were busy ones indeed for Dick and Mary, who met every evening, and went hunting for a home in the neighborhood of Brixton. At last they fixed upon a flat of three rooms quite close to the hall that was almost like a life-center to them, and then there was the delightful task before them of buying and plenishing for that little nest. Mary, poor girl, had hardly any money; the demands of her father had barely left her sufficient to clothe herself decently; but that was a source of additional pleasure to Dick, who loved to be looked to, and he thought, with rejoicing, that he actually had in the Post Office Savings Bank just over a hundred and fifty pounds. So when Mary, lured by the specious advertisements of shoddy furniture dealers, timidly suggested that they should do their furnishing on the hire system, Dick became energetic in speech and gesture.

“My dear one,” he said, “if there is one part of the Bible referring to our daily life that appeals to me more than any other, it is ‘Owe

no man anything.' I suppose it is because my sainted mother so often had it on her lips. She could never owe a penny, would rather starve, and looked upon all these schemes for luring poor people into debt as inventions of the devil. No, dear, what we can't buy with ready money we'll do without, and, thank God, it won't be much."

With a silent pressure on his arm she assented, and all was peace.

On Sunday, in consultation with Brother Jackson, they decided that the wedding should take place at the plain Wesleyan Chapel, where for so long they had been in the habit of enjoying communion, and had grown to know and love greatly the ardent young apostle who was the pastor thereof.

It was now the last week in March, and, in accordance with a custom obtaining in the office, the juniors took their vacation early in the year, Dick's falling in the second and third week in April. So the wedding was fixed for the first Monday in April, Dick arranging for a week's holiday with his bride and a week at home, settling down before resuming his work at the office. But at Mary's home there was trouble. Her earnings were sixteen shillings per week, and she had hitherto given it

nearly all to her mother, her total savings being only a pound. Now she resolutely refused to give up more than five shillings of her earnings, her father being in full work, and was, in consequence, treated to a full and rich exposition of her father's ideas concerning her and her sweetheart, and, incidentally, her mother. She, however, had a brave and single heart, and stood her ground boldly. She did not return railing for railing, but told her father that if he were in want or ill she would starve herself to aid him, but she saw no sense in pouring her poor earnings through him into the till of the publican and the pocket of the bookmaker.

It says a great deal for her courage and constancy that not one word of all this sore trouble reached Dick's ears. She bore it alone, determined that he should in no way be burdened with her family troubles if she could avoid it. And so, when settling the wedding day arrangements, Dick asked if she would like to have a meal at her parents' home, she said "No." She would like her mother to come and see them married, but she would prefer to be given away, if that were necessary, by Mr. Jackson. And so, to avoid complications, the day of the marriage was kept secret from Mr. Grace, who, fortunately, was employed at

a distance. And the little company at the chapel consisted only of Mary and her mother, Brother Jackson and Dick, the minister, and caretaker.

It was a solemn little service, having its due effect upon all concerned, and afterward, at Brother Jackson's invitation, the little party, including the minister, sat down to a light and plain meal at a temperance hotel in the neighborhood, and for a couple of hours were quietly and entirely happy together. There was then a hurried leave-taking of all friends, but especially of the poor, tearful mother, who much dreaded the home-coming of her husband. Then together they walked to the little home which was all ready for them, and to which Mary's things had been removed in the morning. Thence they journeyed in a fourwheeler to Waterloo, and so to Weymouth for the first week of their wedded life.

How very tame and unsensational, aye, and yet unconventional! For both these young people, loving each other none the less because they were eminently sensible, had begun as they meant to go on, and, somehow, neither of them felt the necessity of an extravagant outlay and show which they could not afford. It must not be denied, however, that there was some bitter

admixture in their otherwise brimming cup of joy. On Dick's side it was that Susie, to whom he had written inviting her to his marriage, had never even answered his letter, and Dolly was not, as far as he knew, within his reach. On Mary's side there was the thought of her mother facing the home-coming of Mr. Grace and explaining the situation to him.

But, like the wise youngsters that they were, they dismissed these glooms from their minds, and sat hand-in-hand in the grimy third-class carriage on the Southwestern express bearing them swiftly westward with overflowing hearts, and eyes that occasionally brimmed over so with joy that they could not see the fleeting landscape. They were not alone in the compartment. Dick knew nothing of the magic of a tip, nor if he had would he have felt justified in, as he would have thought, buying from a railway official what he had no right to sell—by which it will be seen that he was a most inconvenient young man to deal with, and one that was never likely to “get on” very fast in the worldly man's sense of the term. But they were enwrapped in each other, and consequently took no heed of their surroundings or their neighbors, and so we will leave them for the time.

Mrs. Grace prepared her husband's evening meal with a heart that palpitated and hands that trembled. Many a time had she dreaded his home-coming, but never so much as now. For she knew his morose and sullen temper when tired, hungry, and *sober*, and wished with all her poor aching soul that someone else had to tell him the news. Suddenly he walked in and flung the bundle of wood which he, in common with most of his fellows, took from the buildings where he was employed as a perquisite, down in the corner. But none of them ever failed to take full credit from their wives for their thoughtfulness in saving the household expenditure to that extent. Without a word, he flung himself into a chair standing ready at the table, and began upon the savory meal smoking before him.

A few mouthfuls refreshed him, improved his temper, and, taking a long drink of tea, he looked at his wife, who was hovering about him, and said: "What's the matter with you, woman? Why don't you sit down and get some grub?"

She sank into a chair at his word and buried her face in her apron, sobbing as if heart-broken.

"Now, what's wrong? Look here, stop that

snivellin'; when a man's ben workin' hard all day he don't want that kind of thing when he comes home."

"O, Bill!" the woman wailed, "I'm sorry, but I can't help cryin'. Our baby's gone."

"What d'ye mean?" he growled.

"Why, Mary's got married today an' gone away with her husband."

It is characteristic of the man and his class that he deliberately finished his meal, filled his pipe, lit it, and stretched out his legs luxuriously before he replied. Then he said: "O, she has, has she? Married that rantin' Methodist feller, I s'pose? All right, only don't let her darken *my* door any more. If she does, I'll give her the order of the Boot. As for him, if he valleys his own skin, don't let him come nigh Bill Grace, that's all."

Mrs. Grace had by this time recovered from her alarms, and found somewhere a little spirit. Because she spoke up and said: "Well, I'm glad she's gone, an' she isn't likely to have such a life as mine has been. Her husband's had to provide her with clothes even because her father's eaten up all her earnings, an' I— an' I—was hardly fit to go an' see her married, the poor child. An' you can rant an' swear at him as much as ever you like, but, thank God—

yes, thank God—he won't do as you've done, a dear lad that's brought up his whole family since his parents' death; an' if our child was an angel from heaven, she wouldn't be too good for him. As for you, you're my husband, an' I've got to put up with you; but, if I was to die this minute for it, I'd say thank God my child is married an' free from you."

And the powerful Mr. Grace—whose loud voice was oracular in workshop and private bar, who cared for no man, and sometimes had visions of a seat in Parliament, after a tempestuous meeting at the local Radical Club—was mute and shrinking, as is the bull-terrier when the hard-pressed kitten faces him, cornered. He went on smoking his pipe and saying nothing. Indeed, no word further was uttered that night in the home of the Graces.

But Mrs. Grace, having found her long-lost spirit, went about her duties of clearing away and preparing for the morning with a straighter back and head held higher than she had known for many years. And, strange though it may seem, the big, selfish man was all the better for his sudden lesson. He was by no means made a good man, but he was better to his faithful wife than he had ever been before, and as the time wore on he grew

quite subdued and peaceable when his married daughter and her husband came to visit their parents. He was even noticeably civil to Dick, trying to start some topic which might be interesting; but in vain, for they were as far as the poles asunder in thought, and had not one idea in common.

Each of us has his or her own ideas of happiness; but, setting aside relative notions of pleasure, I take leave to doubt whether any human beings could have been happier than Dick and Mary on the first real holiday of their lives. For they were one in heart and mind; they owed nothing of their present joy to anyone but God, and that debt they hourly and gladly acknowledged. They had no fears for the future, for their faith forbade that, and in every new and beautiful scene around them they took full and abiding interest. They were both very young, as years went, but quite old in the knowledge of life-difficulties, and when they felt any doubt as to their ability to face life's problems they thought of God.

Their chief delight was to wander down to the Chesil Beach, and, sitting on the ridge, to look out upon the tumbling surges for hours, noting how all the turbulence and violence of those seething waves were hushed when the

barrier was reached. And Dick told Mary tales of his one voyage, and of his thoughts at that time, while her clear gray eyes looked into his brown ones with perfect confidence. She said but little, for she was that rarely sweet being—a silent, self-contained woman, given to deep thought and few words, and she was fully content with the man of her heart. And, when the day came for their return to London she was quite ready. In fact, as she whispered to Dick, much as she had enjoyed their holiday, she was anxious to be in their own dear home, among their household treasures, in order to feel the housewife's joy.

So, on a lovely spring afternoon, they returned, and sat down to tea almost speechless with delighted gratitude. For, during their absence, friends of theirs, who had loved them without saying much, had learned of their marriage, and, to their intense amazement, had sent a regular stack of presents, useful things of all kinds. Chief among their unexpected delights was a pretty cottage Broadwood piano from Mr. Harcourt, who had learned, through Mr. Jackson, of the wedding. When she saw it Mary could not help shedding a few joyful tears. "For now," she said, "I shall be able to help you, dear, if you won't let me go to

work. I can soon get some pupils for playing and singing, and—O, dear! isn't God good to us?"

Dick could only nod his head, for the sense of unexpected appreciation of love—which, he feared, had been taken from him unjustly in the case of Mr. Harcourt—was more than he could trust his utterance to. No one whom he had more than a nodding acquaintance with seemed to have forgotten him; and, most touching of all, there was a magnificently bound volume of Sankey's Hymns, suitable for piano or organ, presented by the young ruffians of his Tuesday singing class.

The rest of that precious day was devoted to gloating over and arranging their many treasures, culminating in a delightful little evening meal, at which Mary's mother was present, almost speechless with admiration of the cosy little home and the many beautiful tributes of affection. She brought with her the consoling news, for Mary, that Bill, her husband, seemed somehow to be a bit ashamed of himself, and, while still professing his determination never to see or speak to his daughter again, he undoubtedly handed over a greater proportion of his wages, as realizing that Mary's weekly contribution had almost

paid the home expenses. She stayed with the happy pair until ten o'clock, then solemnly blessed them, saying: "I feel as if I couldn't ever be thankful enough to God for bringin' you two together an' startin' you off in married life like this. I'll pray every hour I live that you may never be less happy than you are now, because you'll never forget how good God has been to you."

It is difficult to say whether the second week of their honeymoon, spent at home, was happier than the first week at Weymouth. Anyhow, it was delightful, and yet to outside observers the young pair were seriously matter-of-fact and businesslike.

Their landlady, discussing them to a couple of cronies, said: "They're only kids, you know, not much over forty years between 'em; but I know many an' many a married couple, old enough to be their parents, what aint got half their sense, nor yet their old-fashioned ways. I only wish any of my youngsters was likely to turn out half as well."

There was great joy at the Tuesday evening meeting, and such an accession of numbers that Dick was tempted to make a little preliminary speech. At least, that was what he intended it to be. But the Spirit came upon him, and he

told in simplest and most earnest fashion the story of his life to that gathering of about one hundred and thirty youngsters of from thirteen to seventeen years of age. They listened with strained attention, for there was not a phrase they did not understand, not an incident but had its hidden meaning for them. It was the life they knew, but with such a difference! For all through it ran the golden thread of God's care, everywhere came irresistibly to the front the face of the praying, God-loving parents, who though dead yet spoke and acted in their child. Suddenly Dick ceased, saying: "I must beg your pardon, lads, for talking to you so long; perhaps we'd better get on now with our singing."

At that moment a neighboring clock told the hour, letting Dick know that his few *preliminary* remarks had used up all the allotted time for the whole meeting and an hour besides. And, more wonderful still, that audience had been held so that scarcely a movement save of irrepressible emotion had been made the whole time.

There was a wild burst of applause, cheering repeated again and again, while Mary sat with the tears streaming down her shining face, and Dick felt as he had never felt before. In that

moment, however, his main thoughts were centered upon his mother in loving wonderment whether she was sharing in this tremendous joy. Then, as the cheering subsided, he lifted his head and said: "My dear chaps, you know I can't say anything, so let us have 'The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit with us all evermore. Amen.'"

When the pair got home that night Dick said to Mary: "Dear one, we'll have to pray against getting puffed up if much more of this goes on. How do you feel, dear?"

"I feel so proud of my dear that it seems as if my heart would burst. I don't seem to think of myself at all."

"And I," he rejoined, "don't feel a bit as if I had anything to do with it at all, except that I am glad that everybody seems to love us so. I can't seem to think of anything but mother. It seems just as if she were always near me and God at the same time, talking friendly like to God about me. It's a wonderful feeling. And then, like a dark cloud on a sunny day, there comes the thought of Susie and Dolly and Jemmy. I know I can't help the way they have behaved; but there is always the thought that perhaps I might have done

more. Why, O why, has not Susie written or come to us?"

He had hardly finished his sentence before there was a knock at the door, and to Mary's cry of "Come in," there entered a really beautiful young woman, who walked straight over to Dick, folded him in her arms, and kissed him passionately. Mary stared with rounded eyes at this until Dick, struggling to his feet, said:

"Darling, this *is* Susie. Thank God, she's come at last." The greeting between the two young women was not overcordial, for Susie, her first burst of affection over, had a most decided air of hauteur, and besides, had evidently come with that preconceived notion of putting her sister-in-law in her place that is characteristic of the class to which she belonged. And Mary, with a woman's tact, was quick to see this, while her love for Dick made her refrain from resenting it.

A desultory talk followed, in which Susie gave her adverse opinion of Dolly and Jemmy in no uncertain terms, informed them that she was now lady's-maid at thirty pounds a year, and engaged to be married to an electrical engineer, who was in an extraordinarily good position.

"And, by-the-by, he's waiting for me"—

she did not say where because of a notion that the saloon bar of the nearest public house would not commend itself to her brother as a desirable waiting place—"and I've been much longer than I intended. Sorry I couldn't come to your wedding, but my duties made it impossible. Well, good-by, Richard [kiss]; good-by Mrs. Hertford [frigid hand-shake]. No, don't come down," and she was gone.

Dick and Mary stood and stared at each other for a minute or two in silence after she had gone. Then Dick, taking Mary in his arms, said: "Darling wife, don't let us refer to this incident again. It really doesn't matter, except that it eases my mind. Henceforth we have only each other to think of as the family, and that is an entirely good thing." And Mary replied with a kiss.

My commonplace story draws to a close, that is as far as my original purpose is concerned. I hold that in practically all novels the story ceases just when the life-interest begins, that is, with the marriage of the hero and heroine, and that this true story is no exception to the rule. But in the present case the marriage of my hero was not the end foreshadowed in the story, nor was the life-struggle anything to do with the heroine. And for its commonplace

incidents, pray do not blame me, but life. Indeed, although the story has always been clamoring at me to write it because of what I consider its invigorating effect, I have felt, and do feel, that it can in no wise be classed with stories of adventure.

But this appears apologetic, and that I do not feel is at all necessary. What I do feel is pain at parting with Dick on paper, because from henceforth he pursues the even tenor of his way, he and his dear wife being indeed lights in their corner of our great London, full of the joy of living and doing their work as unto the Lord.

I should have been happier in the conclusion of this little story if I could have shown the behavior of Susan Hertford's other children in a better light, but it would have been at the expense of truth. In their case, as in so many others, it would seem as if, the burden of responsibility being entirely taken from them, they had developed a selfish callousness in place of that gratitude which might have been looked for, but which is so often in similar cases looked for in vain. If, however, this true story proves anything, it is that there is no dictum in the grand old Book truer than "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; that the perennial

well-spring of the water of everlasting life in the Christ's man or woman is a living fact as well as an uplifting idea, and that there is today as there has ever been, a special blessing from on high ever attendant upon the Seed of the Righteous.

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