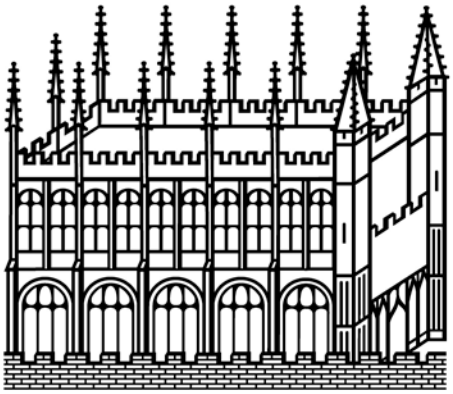

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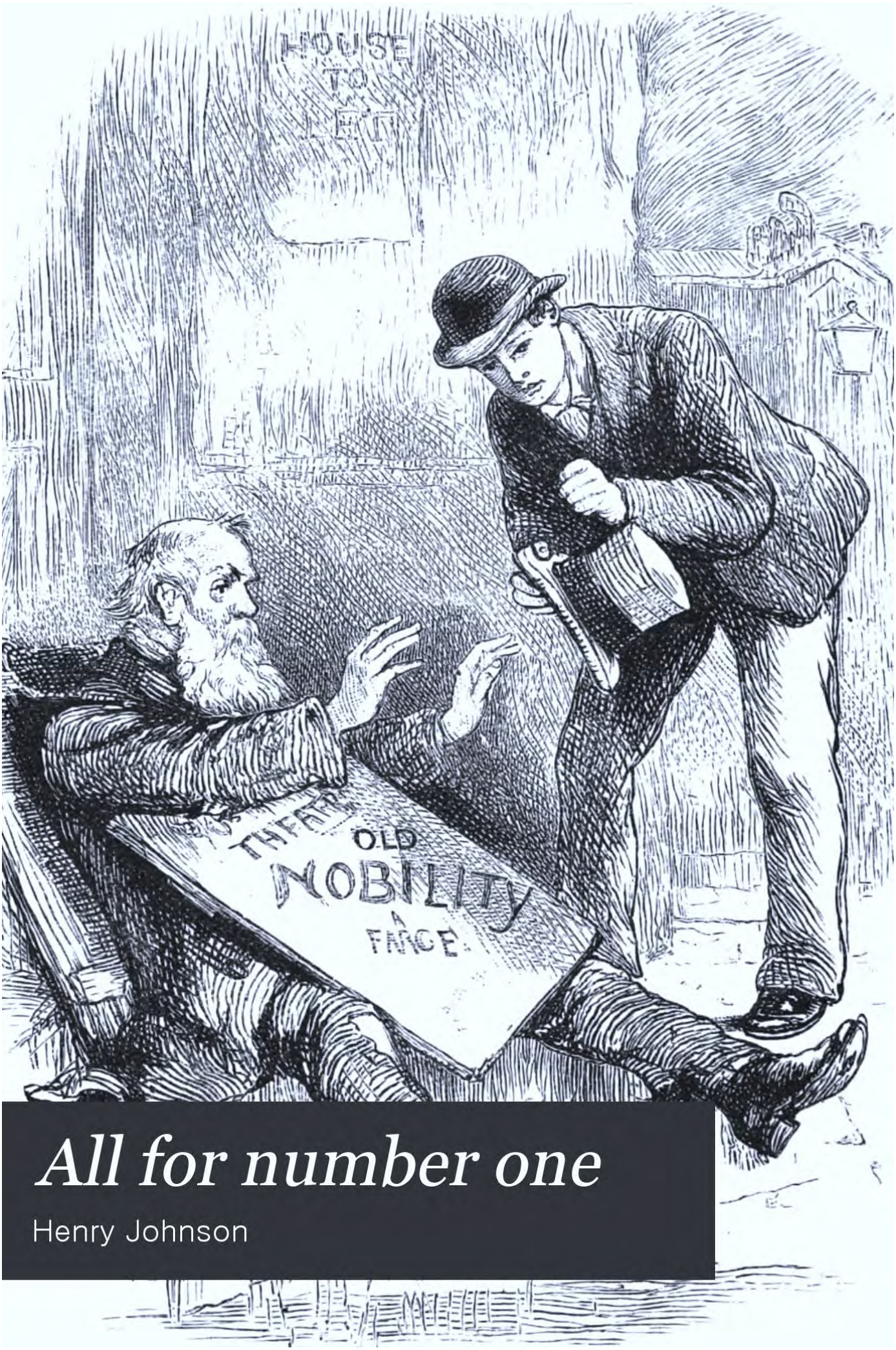
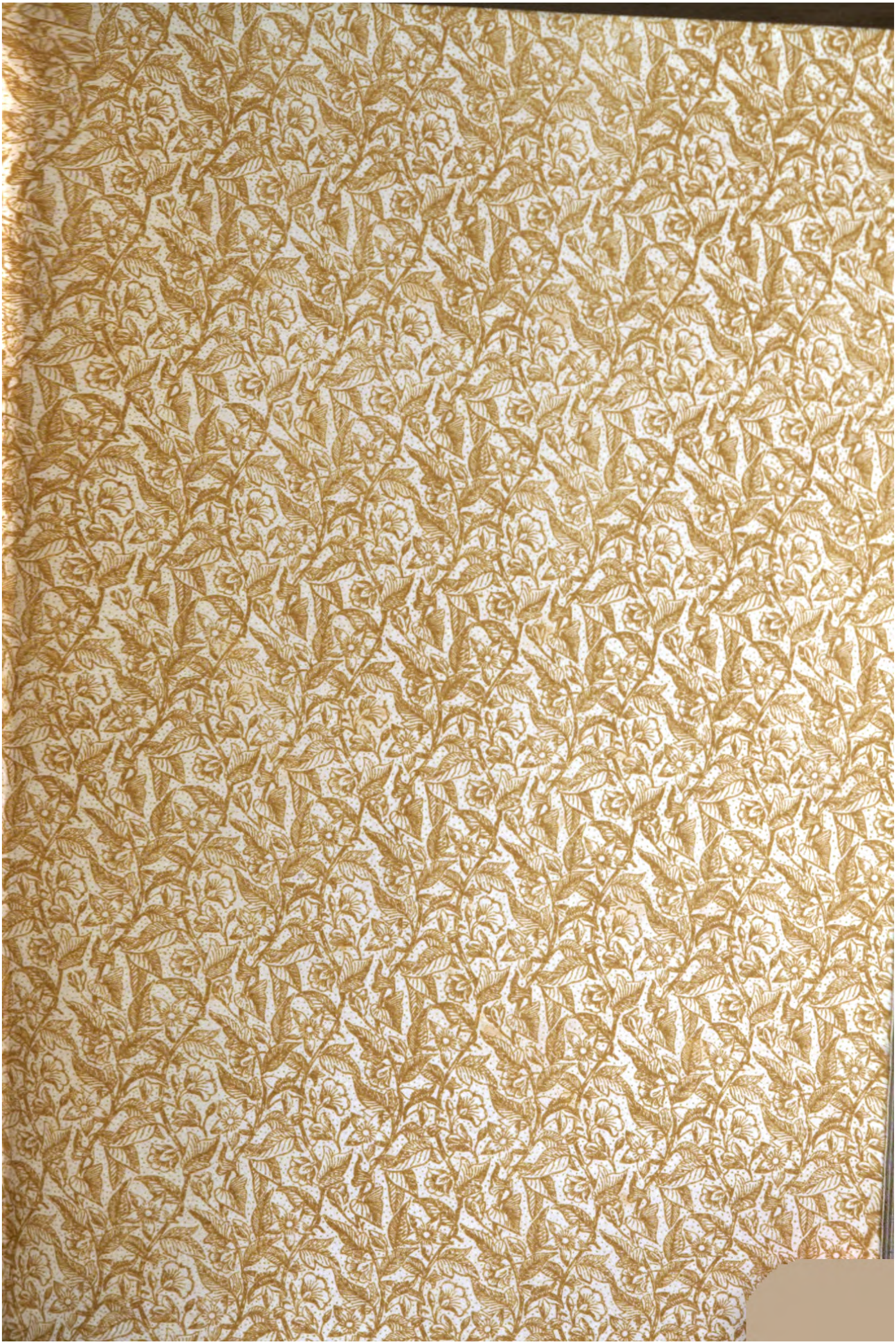
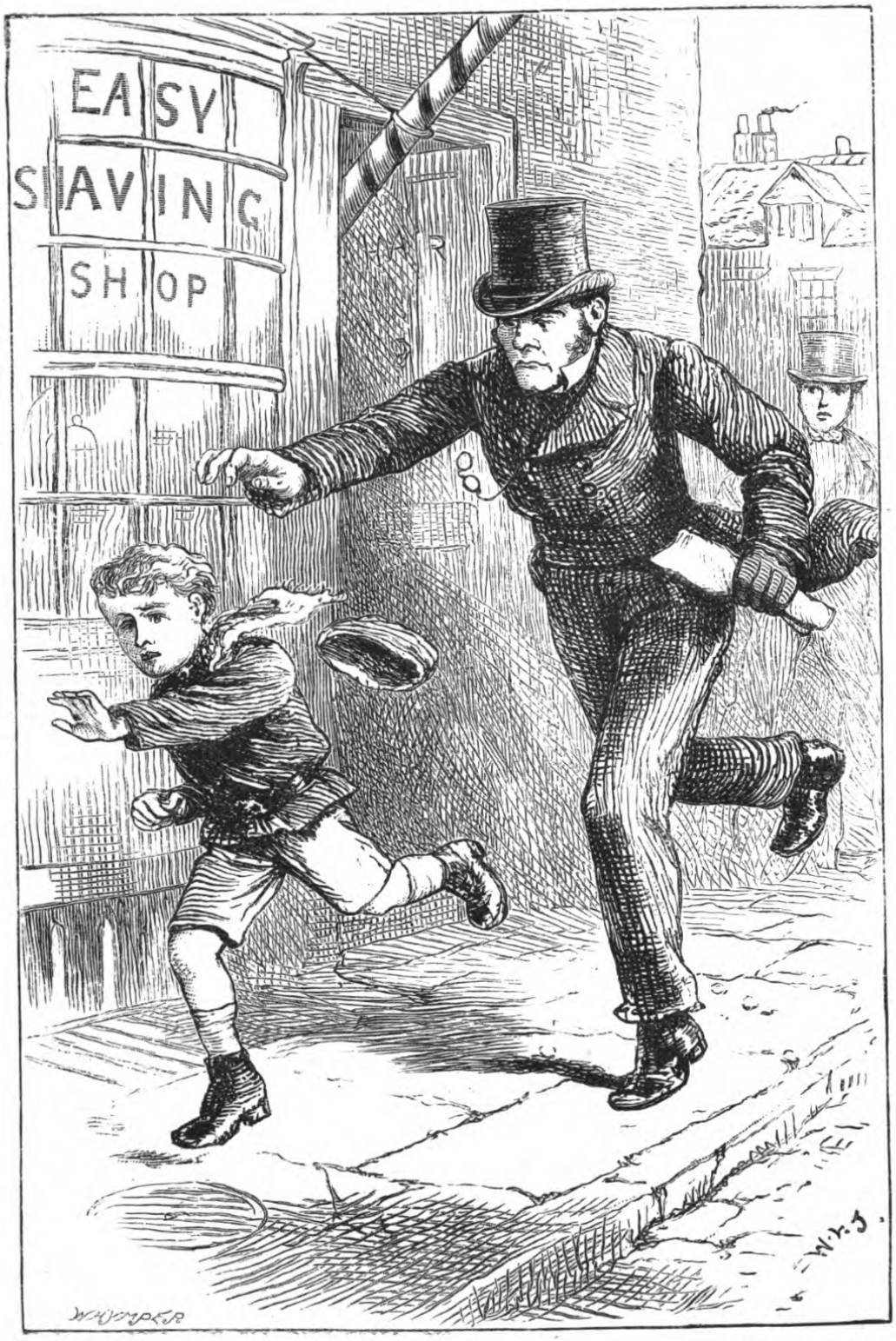


All for number one

Henry Johnson





See page 49.

ALL FOR NUMBER ONE

OR

Charlie Russell's Ups and Downs

A STORY FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

BY

HENRY JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF 'UNTRUE TO HIS TRUST,' ETC.

'Kind hearts are more than coronets'

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CHAPTER I.

A HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS.

'A HUNDRED thousand pounds!' said Mr. Smith to himself; 'that's a deal of money, and will want a lot of looking after. I knew my reward for honesty, industry, and perseverance would come some day; nothing like honesty—it's sure to pay. I shall be a gentleman now; and my neighbours will have to show me becoming politeness and respect. But what to do with the money—that's the point. I must have advice. Jack Flint's the man to consult; I'll go to him.'

'A hundred thousand pounds!' mused Mrs. Smith; 'how fortunate! No more drudgery! I've been Reuben's slave long enough, that's certain. He surely won't refuse now to engage a servant to do the hard

work. I'm a worn-out, ill-used creature, and should soon have been in my grave if relief hadn't come in some way or other.'

'A hundred thousand pounds!' exclaimed Jim Smith in the cellar, as he was preparing to bring into the shop the sugar and butter that his father had been adulterating over-night. 'Now, then, for a life of pleasure! I wasn't born to stand behind the counter all day long—I knew I wasn't. I was born to lead a gentleman's easy life; and that's going to be my life henceforth.'

In his excitement Jim fell into a mistake by which his father's customers were benefited, and which compelled his father to be, unknowingly, honest for a day, at least. Jim carried into the shop the wrong articles, namely, the sugar and butter that had not been tampered with on the previous night. As soon as his father's back was turned Jim took the opportunity of removing his apron, and, putting on hat and coat, walked round to the Rising Sun, where he spent all his money, and whence he was at last turned out by the police at a late hour of the day.

'A hundred thousand pounds!' muttered Mr. Smith's

tenants in Paradise Gardens; 'much good may it do him! Precious little good it'll be to us, that's certain. He'll hug his money tight, and be harder on us than ever.'

Mr. Smith, although he was what is termed 'a thick-skinned man,' would not have felt particularly edified by what followed from his tenants' lips; for they prayed heaven that his new-gotten wealth might be a curse instead of a blessing to him.

'A hundred thousand pounds!' said Ellen Smith to herself, as she was tidying her little room at the top of the house, overlooking a vast array of chimney-pots. 'I fear father doesn't deserve it; but Providence has sent it, perhaps, that he may be kind and charitable to the poor and starving. Surely he will let me have a few pounds now to give to the poor people who are out of work.'

Then, as was her custom before beginning the day's duties, she knelt down and prayed. She asked that her father might use his wealth aright, and devote some of it to the outcast and miserable ones in the Heavenly Father's great family.

Ellen Smith sat at the desk in the shop all day,

taking the cash and keeping her father's books. For these services she was provided with board, lodging, and clothes, but no money. She was engaged to be married to a hard-working, steady, and fairly-educated carpenter, who had lately commenced business in a small way on his own account. His name was John Russell. The banns had been published, and the wedding was to come off in a week or two.

Reuben Smith, who carried on his business near the Mile End Road, suddenly became wealthy through the death of a distant rich relative. This person died without leaving a will. Reuben Smith, being the nearest surviving relative, inherited the fortune of the deceased, amounting to about a hundred thousand pounds.

Mr. Smith, although he considered himself an estimable character, was by no means a good man. He was dishonest in business—adulterating his goods, giving short weight, and taking a base advantage of his customers whenever there was a possibility of doing so. He was selfish, unkind and heartless, particularly in his own family. His main object was 'to get on in the world;' in which object he succeeded. He was a keen man of business, kept

his shop bright and clean, took care that no one ever over-reached him, and had saved enough money to buy a row of cottages in Paradise Gardens.

Even from boyhood selfishness and love of money had been the chief features in his character. He was nicknamed by many people 'Old Grab-all,' from his covetous and niggardly disposition. One or two neighbours who knew him in his early days were ready with curious stories about his youthful efforts to obtain money at any cost. They said that he went to a school kept by an old lady. One of the scholars happened to break the rules and was sentenced to receive a severe caning. Reuben Smith bargained with the boy that if he gave him threepence he would receive the caning in his stead. The money was paid, and Reuben was thrashed; and the schoolmistress, being blind in one eye and short-sighted in the other, never detected the deception. Reuben would save up his money until two or three shillings had been reached, and then he would squander it all on himself in eatables and drink. Reuben Smith's money seldom did him any real good from his boyhood to his death.

It often happens that the least deserving people obtain great prizes in the lottery of life. There are many good people who are always miserably off, and sometimes on the point of starvation; and there are some bad people who 'fall into luck's way,' as the saying is, and become possessors of more wealth than they know what to do with. Reuben Smith 'fell into luck's way,' much to the envy of his neighbours. The windfall of a hundred thousand pounds was a great surprise to him. It is true he expected a small legacy when his relative died, but not in the least so large a sum as that which had now become his own. No wonder he felt puzzled, and scarcely knew what to do with his fortune. He wanted advice, and went to consult Jack Flint. This man called himself 'a solicitor,' and used to collect Mr. Smith's rents, as well as attend at a cheap rate to any little 'law business' which his client might have in hand. This 'law business' consisted chiefly in seizing the goods of Mr. Smith's tenants for rent.

When Mr. Flint heard of his employer's sudden good fortune he immediately put on an air of politeness and flattery quite unusual in him. After repeated

congratulations, and a lengthy discussion respecting future plans, Mr. Flint thus announced his views: 'Well, sir, with humble deference to your own wise judgment in the matter, my opinion, as a lawyer and a man of experience, resolves itself into three parts; first, you must dispose of your business; second, you must change your name for one more aristocratic; and third, you must reside at the West End of London, and take that lofty position in life to which by character and natural gifts you are so well adapted, and from which you have been debarred until the present time. A great future, depend upon it, is in store for you, sir; a seat in Parliament and even in the Cabinet might, with a little perseverance, be secured: the day will come when England will be proud of you, sir.'

'I think your proposals, Mr. Flint, are extremely wise and judicious, and therefore demand careful consideration, which they shall certainly receive. You may rest assured, Mr. Flint, that I shall make use of your valuable services in whatever way it may be possible to do so.'

'Thank you, sir,' replied Mr. Flint. 'Of course the marriage of your daughter with that carpenter will not now be entertained.'

'Of course not. A very valuable hint, Mr. Flint.'

As the two parted at the door of the tavern where the interview had taken place, Mr. Flint made a most polite bow to his patron. Whilst returning to his ordinary upright position he caught his heels in the fore-wheel of a perambulator, and, much to his vexation, but greatly to the amusement of several persons in the street, was thrown violently into the muddy road. He set off to his shabby lodgings—his 'chambers,' as he called them—not to replace his soiled garments, for it was out of his power to do so, his wardrobe being exceedingly scanty, but to reflect on his client's improved prospects, and to consider the best way to benefit himself and retrieve his shattered fortunes at the expense of Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith walked home with jaunty air, having a most exalted opinion of himself and of the powers he possessed to sway the destinies of his country; in fact, he felt himself to be the most important person within a radius of five miles.

When night came and the shutters were put up Mr. Smith sat in his parlour, his face beaming with self-satisfaction.

'Where's Ellen?' he asked of his wife.

'Upstairs, putting on her things to go for a walk with John.'

'Bother John! Send her to me; I want to speak to her.'

Ellen soon appeared in hat and jacket, ready to go out.

'Ellen,' said her father, 'of course this wedding won't come off now, you know.'

'Won't come off! What do you mean, father?' exclaimed Ellen, thunderstruck.

'What do I mean? Why, that you'll have to break off your engagement to John Russell.'

'But why, father? Tell me why.'

'Tell you why? I should have thought the reason was quite plain enough. You'll just have to go and tell John that you can't marry him now, because I've come into this bit of property.'

'Tell him I can't marry him because you have suddenly become rich? You don't mean that, father, surely.'

'I do mean it, Ellen,' said Mr. Smith, sternly; 'and you must do as I bid you without any further palaver.'

'But, father, it would be so dishonourable towards John.'

'Fiddlesticks!'

'You forget the banns have been published, and John is furnishing three nice rooms, and my clothes are nearly all quite ready, and we have had presents from several friends, and, father,—I do love John with all my heart, and he loves me.'

'Stuff and nonsense! What's love got to do with it? One would think you were a bit of a girl of sixteen instead of a woman of two-and-twenty.'

'Love's got everything to do with it, father; and if our hearts were not bound up together we should never have thought of marrying.'

'Come here, Ellen,' said Mr. Smith, trying to speak coaxingly.

Ellen went nearer her father and took a chair at his side.

'Ellen,' he began, taking her hand in his, 'you are aware my position is entirely changed. We shall soon move to the West End, and live in a grand house, and have carriages and horses and lots of servants. And I—I intend to become a member of Parliament. And we shall mix with the cream of the aristocracy and nobility; and, Ellen, some day you may marry a real live lord, or even a duke!'

Ellen withdrew her hand, whilst an expression of pain and trouble spread over her bright pure face.

'Isn't the prospect of such a marriage,' her father continued, 'worth breaking off the match with John?'

'No, father, it is not!'

This decisive answer quite upset Mr. Smith. He arose from his easy chair, and looked very angry.

'Tut, tut, tut!' he exclaimed; 'I am astonished at such nonsense. You'll have to do as I wish, Ellen; do you see?'

'I will not be dishonourable, and break John Russell's heart, for all the riches in the world!'

'Very well, young woman; understand, now, the day you marry John Russell you are no longer my daughter, and not a penny of my wealth shall you have!'

Ellen stared at her father, as if unable to comprehend him. Then she slowly and silently left the room.

She saw John Russell, and told him all. It was startling news for him. With characteristic unselfishness, he said he was ready to give up Ellen if she thought that was the right thing to do.

But Ellen thought that such a step would not be

right, and therefore she declined to consent to John's self-surrender.

In deep distress and perplexity she consulted one or two intimate friends, and then the vicar of the parish, to whom she was well known as a faithful, hard-working visitor amongst the poor. It was a difficult and serious question for the vicar to decide; but he felt it to be his duty to take the responsibility either of approving or disapproving of Ellen's contemplated marriage with John. He knew Mr. Smith—knew his character well—his selfishness, unkindness, and greediness for money, and was therefore able to judge whether the commands of such a man to his only daughter—old enough and experienced enough to think and decide for herself—should be carried out. He paid several visits to Mr. Smith, and found him eaten up with vanity and worldliness, and with no thought or desire for his daughter's true happiness and welfare.

He was quite unable to alter Mr. Smith's decision, and, more than once, was received with rudeness and insolence.

At last, after careful deliberation and seeking the

guidance of God,. he told Ellen that he thought she would be perfectly justified in marrying John Russell.

Ellen had determined to abide by the vicar's decision, whichever way it turned. So now she felt her way was clear. In a few weeks the wedding was celebrated at the parish church, whilst good wishes fell upon the bride's ear on every side from a crowd of poor people and children to whom she had been kind.

Six years of happiness and peace Ellen and John Russell spent together; and then came gloom and sorrow. John lost several hundreds of pounds through customers becoming bankrupt. Then his health failed, and he was unable to give the attention to his business which it demanded. Then he had to turn journeyman-carpenter once more. Times being bad he was often without work. Ellen bravely came to the rescue, and obtained a situation as cashier in a large shop in Whitechapel. She had one child — a boy, named Charlie, with black curly hair and bright, intelligent face. It is the story of Charlie's early life, together with a good deal about his relatives and friends that we now have to tell.

CHAPTER II.

RESCUED FROM THE FLAMES.

'FIRE! fire! fire!' Such was the alarming and terrible cry that broke the stillness of early morning in a certain street in Mile End a few years ago.

A policeman appeared quickly on the spot, and, running to the house from which the smoke was proceeding, strove to arouse the inmates; whilst another policeman hurried off to the nearest fire-engine station.

On the arrival of the first engine the upper part of the house was in flames. From room to room the awful lurid glare rapidly spread, whilst the sky, red with the reflection of the fire, brought crowds of people into the street. Engine after engine came

rattling along, and was speedily got to work; but all the water thrown on to the building seemed to have little effect. A messenger had been despatched for the fire-escape; but all the inmates were supposed to be rescued. Suddenly a man in the crowd shouted, 'There's a woman and her child in the second floor!'

Someone answered the speaker that he was mistaken, and that all the lodgers had been brought out of the burning house in safety.

'I'm not mistaken,' said the man; 'I left Mrs. Russell and her boy in that room yonder five hours ago, and they are not amongst the people saved! They're in the house, I'm certain!'

As he spoke the escape was wheeled into the street; but it had become impossible to place the machine against the house without at once being destroyed by the flames.

A fireman attempted to enter the building; but, the devouring flames having consumed the staircase, he could make no headway without meeting with certain death. Just then, from a hundred lips, the cry arose, 'There she is!' And there, at the only upper window from which the flames were not issuing, appeared the

figure of a woman in her night-dress with a child in her arms, and her long hair streaming over her shoulders. She had thrown up the window, and now looked imploringly for aid. As the crowd gazed in horror they heard her piercing cry, 'Save my child!'

In the meantime a search had been made for a tarpaulin and blankets. A waggon was drawn to the front of the house. Six strong men jumped upon it, and, holding as high as possible a large tarpaulin and a blanket, shouted to the woman, 'Jump, and you'll be saved! Throw yourself out—quick! It's all right.'

The poor woman heard, but hesitated, seemed terror-struck, and to shrink from throwing herself down. Presently she took a wrapper that hung over her arm, and secured it round the arms and body of her child. Then, leaning out of the window, with a piteous cry, which none who heard ever forgot, she dropped the child, fell back, disappeared, and was seen no more. The floor beneath had given way, and she was hurled into the furnace below.

The child fell into the tarpaulin unhurt, and was at once taken charge of by friendly neighbours.

A few hours later, as soon as the firemen could search amongst the smouldering ruins, the mother's remains were discovered, presenting a shocking sight.

And what about the bereaved husband? He had gone down to Hatfield, hoping to find work, but was expected back on the following day. He had been ill and desponding for some time, owing chiefly to the scarcity of work and his many losses. His neighbours feared the very worst results when he should become aware of the dreadful calamity.

He was unsuccessful in obtaining employment at Hatfield, and returned to Mile End disappointed, weary and sick at heart, and almost hopeless. On approaching the street where his home had been, he was looking forward to his loving wife's warm welcome, and his boy running up to him for the usual kiss. Alas! how different to his expectations was the spectacle that awaited him!

He walked down the street, and on observing the black heap of ruins stood still, speechless with horror.

No one could be found to break the fearful tidings.

'I can't do it,' said a neighbour; 'he'll go mad when he knows. He worshipped his wife.'

'Tell me,' said the poor fellow with thick and trembling voice, 'what has become of my wife.'

But the person whom he addressed shrunk away without making any response.

Presently the woman who had been taking care of Charlie brought the little lad to his father. John Russell snatched up his child and kissed him again and again, relieved and thankful that he, at least, was safe.

'Where's your mother, Charlie?' he asked.

The boy burst out crying, and, between his sobs, answered, as he pointed to the ruins, 'There, there!'

The child had not seen his mother's remains, but he knew something terrible had happened to her.

His father began to guess the awful truth. Just then the vicar, who had always been John Russell's staunch friend, came along, and, touching John on the shoulder, said, 'Ah, friend Russell, I want to speak to you. Come with me, and bring Charlie with you.'

Then the vicar took John's arm and led him to the vicarage, whilst Charlie ran along at his father's side, holding his hand. The vicarage was close by;

and on arriving there the clergyman showed John Russell and Charlie into the study. With the utmost kindness and sympathy the minister told John what had happened. Had John been his own brother he could not have shown greater feeling and tenderness.

When he knew the worst John groaned, but spoke not a word. A deathly paleness covered his face, whilst he kept his eyes riveted on Charlie, who sat on his knee. John's trouble was too deep for tears. The minister, Mr. Staunton, tried to comfort him, quoted now and then a verse of Scripture full of consolation, and offered a few words of prayer. But the poor fellow continued silent and motionless. The hours passed on. Mr. Staunton decided that Russell and his child should spend the night at the vicarage. His wife came into the room after a while, and told John she would like to put Charlie to bed in a snug room upstairs. But John, still silent, would not allow the child to be removed from his knee. At length, when it was nearly midnight, the vicar and his wife succeeded in prevailing upon John to allow them to put Charlie to rest on the couch in the study. Charlie, wrapped up in a blanket, was

soon fast asleep, whilst, in his dreams, he sobbed and sighed. All through the night his father's eyes were fixed upon him.

The vicar, anxiously and patiently, sat with John, and adopted every means he could think of to afford comfort and relief, but with no success. Speechless, deathlike, the image of despair, John sat gazing at his child. The vicar became alarmed at his condition. If only tears would flow he knew his troubled mind would be relieved. But the tears came not.

John Russell remained at the vicarage for several days, and there seemed but little improvement in his condition.

Ellen Russell's funeral attracted a crowd of people; for having been well known and highly esteemed, and having drawn around her a large circle of friends, chiefly from amongst the poor, her loss was keenly felt and deeply regretted. The coffin was loaded with flowers; children sang hymns at the grave; whilst the tears freely shed by both children and adults were evidence of the tender regard and love which Ellen had kindled in so many hearts. Poor John Russell, and Charlie, half-choking with sobs, stood

at the grave-side, calling forth the sympathy and pity of all gathered around.

This sad part of our story must not be prolonged. John Russell's many troubles, crowned by the last and greatest of all, occurring, as they did, when his health was bad, affected his mind. His conduct became exceedingly strange; he seemed as if unable to recognize Charlie; and at last, as the kindest and wisest course that could be adopted, he was placed in a home where people who had lost their reason were taken care of and, if possible, cured.

So Charlie Russell, when barely five years old, was suddenly deprived of the protection and love of both father and mother. But his mother's teaching and influence never lost their power all through life. They became the foundation of his future character, and assisted him in his battle with the world around, as well as in his endeavours to overcome evil within him, and to make other people better and happier.

Although robbed of his parents, Charlie was sheltered and cared for. Several persons who had been attached to his mother wished to take charge of him. The vicar selected Mrs. Clarkson, who, with her

husband, occupied two rooms in one of Mr. Smith's cottages in Paradise Gardens. She had known Ellen Russell from infancy, and was very fond of Charlie; and having no children of her own she was extremely anxious that the little fellow should be committed to her charge. So Charlie was soon installed in his new home. Mrs. Clarkson did all in her power to make up for the loss of his mother, and the only danger was that she might spoil him by over-fondness. Two or three kind people at the church sent Mrs. Clarkson a sum of money weekly for Charlie's support, whilst a gentleman in the neighbourhood promised to pay for his education as soon as he was old enough to go to school.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

WHEN Mr. Smith had come into his fortune he disposed of his business in the Mile End Road, and removed with his wife and son to a fine mansion at Bayswater, close to Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. He changed his name from Reuben Smith to Rutland Smythe, deeming the latter far more aristocratic than the former. The house was furnished in the most fashionable and expensive style. A carriage and a pair of thoroughbred horses were purchased. A crest and motto were selected; the crest being 'an arm in armour, *rampant*,' and the motto 'Truth and strength.' These were emblazoned on the visiting-cards, and underneath was engraved, 'Rutland Smythe, Esq., 6 Victoria Mansions, Bayswater.'

When Mr. Smythe had taken possession of his new abode he was quite at a loss to know what to do with his time. As he trod his velvet-pile carpets he felt entirely out of place, whilst again and again he wished himself back in the old shop weighing out a certain adulterated compound which he was in the habit of labelling 'Best Dorset.' The amusement most to his taste was to visit the shops in the neighbourhood, selecting the grocers and cheesemongers for his special study, and sometimes discussing with the shopkeepers the state of the provision market, and the rise and fall of Irish bacon. Mrs. Smythe severely reproved him for such undignified conduct—so unbecoming in 'a man of wealth and position.' She did her best to throw dust in the eyes of the tradesmen, and tried to make them believe that her husband was the descendant of a wealthy and titled family. She had received a rather better education than had fallen to the lot of her partner, and sought to correct his numberless faults in grammar, as well as his outrageous offences against polite manners. Mr. Smythe always dropped his h's, and put them in where they were not wanted. His v's and w's often exchanged places, the singular and plural

numbers were generally in a state of confusion, and his final consonants invariably omitted. 'School' he pronounced 'skule,' 'farthing' 'fard'n,' 'education' 'eddication,' and 'pudding' 'pudd'n.'

Rather than disfigure these pages by such errors, whenever Mr. Smythe appears on the scene, at least for the present, he will be made to speak as if he had received a tolerably good education.

Do all she could, Mrs. Smythe was unable to transform her husband into what is commonly termed 'a gentleman.' What with making friends with cheesemongers, the absence of polished speech and manners, and the gossip of the servants, in a few months the secret was out, to the amusement of the tradespeople, and to the disgust of wealthy neighbours. When it became known that the gaily-painted establishment at 6 Victoria Mansions was occupied by a retired grocer from the East End, the banker at No. 5 ceased to remove his hat on meeting Mr. Smythe, whilst the merchant's wife at No. 7, who had been in the habit of bowing gracefully to Mrs. Smythe in the Park, now found some other object on the other side of the road demanding her attention whenever Mrs. Smythe came in view.

On the whole, Mr. and Mrs. Smythe felt neither comfortable nor happy with all their wealth and grandeur. In fact, Mr. Smythe was heard to remark that the first five years spent at Bayswater were the longest and most wretched five years in the whole course of his career. And no wonder that was the case, for the main object of these two people was to make a grand show in the world. They were stupidly proud and abominably selfish; and the natural result followed — everybody disliked them.

It was nearly noon. Mr. Smythe had just finished breakfast. Rising late, he usually completed that meal when people in less fashionable quarters of the town were thinking about cooking the potatoes for dinner. Throwing his bulky person into a luxurious easy chair, he took up the morning newspaper, and began leisurely to glance over the news. He always started with the police reports and murders. There being so little that was sensational or remarkable in his own experience, he felt particular interest when such events occurred in the lives of others. His attention was directed to a paragraph headed, 'Fire and loss of life in the East End.' Full details were given of the catastrophe—the rescue

of the child, the death of the mother, and the gallant efforts of the firemen to enter the building to save the woman. Mr. Smythe read the paragraph carefully twice. Then he trembled, and turned pale. Since the days of childhood he had never been known to weep; and the death of his only daughter, whom he had so harshly treated and had not seen for five years, failed to bring the moisture to his eyes.

He rang the bell, and said to the servant who answered the summons, 'Tell your mistress I wish to speak to her.'

Mrs. Smythe speedily made her appearance. Her husband, thrusting the paper into her hands and pointing to the paragraph, said, 'Bad news.'

The woman read, and then fell fainting to the floor.

Again the bell was pulled. 'Attend to your mistress,' said Mr. Smythe to the servant.

Then the rich man, leaving the room, put on his hat and walked into Kensington Gardens. Choosing a secluded spot, he walked up and down for an hour or two in the shadow of the fine old trees. Sometimes he uttered his thoughts aloud. 'If she had only done as I wished, this would never have happened.' 'She

might have married a lord or an earl; and then I should have got into Parliament.' 'This boy of hers—I wonder what he's like. I wonder if he would do credit to my position in society.'

In the whole of his reflections he had not a thought or word of blame for himself.

His wife had gone to see Ellen once or twice every year, but he had never seen her since her marriage, when he closed his doors against her. He had, however, been informed concerning her movements and the particulars of her life. It was through Mr. Flint that this information was received. Flint still continued to collect Mr. Smythe's rents at the East End, and, having been appointed Mr. Smythe's 'man of business,' he was supposed to devote the greater portion of his time in attending to his employer's business affairs. He went to the city every day on Mr. Smythe's behalf, buying and selling stocks and shares, purchasing wines and house-property, and lending money at a high rate of interest. He seemed to be in quite flourishing circumstances now, and resided in a snug villa near Regent's Park.

Mr. Smythe had always manifested great interest in

Charlie, and was in the habit of making enquiries of Flint respecting him. He had gathered that he was a comely child, with his mother's deep grey eyes and his father's intelligent features. He had also learned that Charlie was a remarkably sharp and clever boy, and that he and his mother were inseparable companions. He had often secretly desired to see his grandson, and, now that Ellen had gone, his anxiety in that direction became deeper.

One day Mr. Flint, engaged in accounting to his employer for the rents he had received, was asked by Mr. Smythe, 'Any further news of John Russell and the boy?'

'Yes, sir; Russell has become deranged, and has now been sent to an asylum.'

'Indeed! I think that makes my course a little clearer. Where's the boy?'

'Mrs. Clarkson has undertaken the charge of him. She has no children of her own, and says that, should Russell not recover, she will adopt Charlie and treat him as her own son. It's a poor look-out for the boy; Mrs. Clarkson's husband is only a warehouse-porter, as you know.'

'Flint, listen to me. I've been thinking over a plan that I'm now resolved to carry out with your assistance.'

'Certainly, sir. My best services are at your disposal.'

'My son, James, as you are aware, is a good-for-nothing rascal; and I've no doubt that before he is many years older he'll kill himself with drink and fast life. You understand, Flint, that James doesn't do credit to my position in society, and never will until he mends his ways—which isn't at all likely to happen. If I left my wealth to him he would speedily squander his fortune and bring disgrace on his father's name. Now, I've been intending to find some respectable lad to adopt as my son. I should train him in my own fashion, after my own way of thinking. I should teach him to hold me in the utmost respect, and to maintain my reputation high amongst the upper classes. And then I should be happy and contented to make him my heir and leave him the bulk of my property.'

'An excellent plan, sir,' said Mr. Flint.

'Now, Flint, I've made up my mind to see this grandson of mine, and if he seems likely to do me

credit I'll do for him all that I said just now, and make him my heir.'

'You are most generous, sir. Such kindness to the son of your undutiful daughter deserves a rich reward.'

'Go as soon as possible, Flint, and bring the boy straight to me. If he is old enough to understand, let him know what my benevolent intentions are. I've no doubt he'll be happy enough to find a home with his grandfather.'

'Your orders shall be carried out, sir. Good morning.' With a low bow Mr. Flint retired.

Mr. Smythe felt he was doing a most kind and praiseworthy act in befriending his grandson. Perhaps there may have been some qualms of conscience in his low and sordid nature, arising from his cruel treatment of his daughter, which may partly have prompted him to make some reparation for his heartless conduct; but selfishness was his chief motive; he desired to have in view an heir who would exalt his name and reputation by good behaviour and polished manners in society. People would point to the heir, he thought, and say, 'See, that handsome, rising, well-conducted young man is the heir of rich Mr. Smythe'

What a pity it was that, instead of thinking so much of his own dignity in the sight of the world, he did not go and kneel at Ellen's grave, and, with bitter tears and broken heart, confess to God his sins and selfishness!

CHAPTER IV.

'A QUEER BOY.'

A FEW days after the interview recorded in the last chapter Mr. Flint presented himself at the humble lodgings of Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson in Paradise Gardens, Mile End. Good Mrs. Clarkson was hard at work tailoring, finishing off men's coats, for which she received miserable pay.

The room was poorly furnished, but clean and tidy. Charlie was sitting on the carpetless floor, looking at a soiled and worn picture-book, which Mrs. Clarkson had bought to amuse the child. At the window, which overlooked acres of chimney-pots, there was Charlie's pet canary, chirruping merrily, as if trying to make his owner happy and to drive care away

from the kind woman who was so industriously plying her needle and thread. Charlie had come to the picture of Cain slaying his brother Abel, and was trying to read the story, which had been put into short words, so that children learning to read could understand it. Now and then Charlie would ask a question about the brothers, and sometimes it was of too puzzling a nature for Mrs. Clarkson to answer satisfactorily.

There was a rap at the door; not a gentle, modest rap, but a very loud and long one. Mrs. Clarkson usually merely said 'Come in' to visitors, but, thinking someone of importance was waiting to enter, she laid aside her work and proceeded to the door. On opening it, and seeing the person who stood outside, her countenance fell.

'Oh, it's you, Mr. Flint; what's your business, sir? This is not rent-day,' said she.

'Good morning, Mrs. Clarkson. No, it's not rent-day. Hope you're well.'

Now Mrs. Clarkson, being well acquainted with the history of Thomas Flint, had a very low opinion of his character. She, as well as most people who had come in contact with him, regarded him as a most

dangerous person. Outwardly polite and gentlemanly, he was really a deep, designing man, who used all sorts of cunning manœuvres to gain his ends. He had an evil countenance, and an unpleasant, rasping voice. Mrs. Clarkson was therefore anything but pleased to see him standing at the door. She did not invite him to enter, but he walked straight in without invitation.

As soon as Charlie saw the visitor's face he jumped up from the floor and fled to the furthest corner of the room. He knew little or nothing concerning this man; he had heard his name, but was never told that he was a bad man.

It often happens that children are able to distinguish in a moment their friends from their foes. In other words, they often take a liking or dislike to some people the very first moment they see them.

'Well, Charlie, my boy, and how are you getting on?' asked Mr. Flint.

Charlie made no answer, and squeezed himself further into the corner.

'Won't you speak to me, Charlie?' enquired the visitor.

'No. I don't want to speak to you,' replied the boy.

'Come, come, Charlie, how is this? why don't you wish to speak to me?'

'Because I don't like you,' was the child's blunt answer.

'Hush, Charlie,' joined in Mrs. Clarkson, 'you mustn't say that to Mr. Flint.'

'Oh, never mind, Mrs. Clarkson,' said Mr. Flint, laughing. 'It's very singular, though, that he doesn't like me when he has no cause for it. Charlie, I've got some good news for you; and I expect you won't dislike me any longer when you know what it is.'

Charlie's face brightened as he put the question, 'Is it good news about my father?'

'Well, no, it's not about your father; it's something about your good grandfather.'

At once the brightness vanished from the lad's face.

'Your grandfather,' continued Mr. Flint, 'has decided to do a great kindness to you. He is going to take care of you. His grand, beautiful home is to be your home. He will give you all you want. You will ride in his carriage, and see all the wonderful sights of London—the Zoological Gardens, the Tower, the

Monument, and the rest. You will be to him as his own son; and when he dies you will have a great deal of money, so that you need not do any work all your life. Now, isn't that good news, Charlie?'

The boy remained silent for a moment or two, and then answered decisively, 'No.'

'Well, this is indeed very singular,' said Mr. Flint; 'I thought you would be so pleased to go and live with your rich, kind grandfather. Don't you like your grandfather?'

'No,' answered Charlie.

'You have never seen him. Why don't you like him?'

'Because he doesn't love God.'

Mr. Flint looked amazed, then smiled, and finally appealed to Mrs. Clarkson for an explanation. But Mrs. Clarkson only shook her head.

Mr. Flint, again addressing the boy, said, 'I don't understand you, Charlie. What do you mean? How do you know your grandfather doesn't love God?'

This was Charlie's reply,—'Because before my mother was burned to death I heard her pray nearly every day that grandfather might be a better man, and begin to love God. So I know he doesn't love God, and so I

don't like him. Mother told me I must pray for those who don't love God, and so I pray for grandfather every night. Do you love God, Mr. Flint?'

Mr. Flint coughed, looked uneasy, then smiled and said, 'Well, you *are* a queer boy, Charlie.'

'You see, Mr. Flint,' said Mrs. Clarkson, by way of explanation, 'Charlie is always thinking about his poor mother, and what she taught him; so it comes natural to him to speak as he spoke to you just now.'

'I see, I see,' said Mr. Flint; 'he will soon improve, though, when he gets into his grandfather's hands. Now, Charlie, I haven't any time to waste; so, be quick, please, and put on your hat and jacket, and come along with me to your grandfather's.'

The hot blood rushed into Charlie's face, and his lips trembled as he said, 'I won't go to my grandfather's, Mr. Flint. I love Mrs. Clarkson and Mr. Clarkson, and I'm going to stay with them until father gets well, and then he'll take care of me.'

The canary gave a prolonged chirrup, as much as to say, 'Bravo, Charlie! Bravo!'

Mr. Flint frowned, and looked very angry. 'Mrs.

Clarkson,' said he, 'I request that you will use your influence with the boy, so that I may carry out his grandfather's orders.'

Mrs. Clarkson was rather perplexed; she scarcely knew whether she ought to send Charlie away or to keep him. She considered a little while, and then spoke.

'I think it very strange, Mr. Flint, that Mr. Smith' (the rich man was still known by his old name in the East End) 'should suddenly take a fancy to the boy, after not caring a straw for him or his mother all these years. Charlie was entrusted to my care by the vicar; and I am responsible to him and to John Russell for the boy's safe keeping. I will not, therefore, allow Charlie to leave me without, at least, the vicar's consent.'

'My good woman,' rejoined Mr. Flint, 'the vicar has nothing to do with it. Mr. Smythe has a legal claim on the boy. Charlie's father being incompetent to take care of the boy, Mr. Smythe, being the next relative, has the right of control over him. So, you see, Mr. Smythe has the law on his side, and can do what he pleases with his grandson.'

'I don't know anything about law, Mr. Flint. I've spoken my mind, and intend to abide by it. Charlie shall not leave me without the vicar's permission.'

Again the canary trilled his highest and loudest notes, somewhat to the discomfort of Mr. Flint, who could scarcely hear his own voice as he said to Mrs. Clarkson, 'Very well, then; as you are determined to support the boy in disobeying his grandfather, your conduct shall be duly reported to that gentleman, who will doubtless lose no time in seeing that his authority is respected and his wishes obeyed. I deem it probable that Mr. Smythe, as your landlord, will give you immediate notice to leave these rooms.'

Then Mr. Flint stalked out of the room, slamming the door after him.

'Oh, mammie,' said Charlie, 'I'm so glad he's gone; and I am so glad you didn't want him to take me away.'

'Charlie, dear, I don't want to part with you; but if I had thought it was quite right that you should go and live with your grandfather, then I know you would have gone with Mr. Flint if I had told you to do so.'

'I should like to see the lions and tigers at the Zo'gical Gardens, though, mammie. Will you take me some day, please?'

'Yes, dear; next Whit Monday you shall go, if we can afford it.'

'Thank you, mammie; that will be nice.' And the child jumped on to Mrs. Clarkson's lap, and expressed his thanks with a hearty kiss.

The prospect of the treat on Whit Monday drove all thoughts of Mr. Flint from Charlie's mind. For the next day or two the boy talked of scarcely anything else but the animals he was expecting to see at Regent's Park.

CHAPTER V.

THE 'QUEER BOY' IS MADE A PRISONER.

SOMETIMES Charlie went errands for Mrs. Clarkson, and he was always willing and pleased to do anything he could to help her. One evening, having gone to a neighbouring shop for a pound of sugar, he lingered at the window of a toy and book shop, and looked with longing eyes at the tempting display of articles for the amusement of children. Picture-books, tin steam-engines, railway-carriages, and omnibuses; wooden horses, dogs, cats, kangaroos, lions, tigers, lambs and birds; whistles, balls, bats, stumps, kites, hoops, marbles, and other things innumerable absorbed Charlie's attention. It was a difficult matter to make

up his mind which of the things he liked best of any; but he quite decided that the first time he had a little money to spend he would buy a whistle and a kite. He had seen boys flying kites in Victoria Park, and often wished he possessed one of his own.

Whilst gazing at the things in the window he was quite unconscious of the presence of an observer close by, who remarked to a person standing at his side, 'Why, that's the very boy we've come to fetch! We shall be saved the trouble of going on to Clarkson's. Fetch a cab—quick!'

The speaker was Mr. Flint, and the person addressed was Mr. Smythe's butler.

In a few minutes a cab rattled down the street and was drawn up a few yards from where Charlie stood. Then Mr. Flint came forward, touched Charlie on the shoulder, and said, 'Hullo, Charlie, my boy; how do you do?'

Charlie was startled, looked up at the speaker for a moment, and then ran off as fast as his legs would carry him. Mr. Flint followed him, and, his legs being a deal longer than Charlie's, soon overtook the boy and grasped him tightly by the arm.

'Not this time, Charlie; oh, no. You won't have your own way again. I've got you now; and you'll have to come along with me; so you had better come quietly, like a good boy.'

Charlie struggled hard to get away; his jacket was torn, his cap flew off, and the pound of sugar and change out of a shilling were scattered over the pavement.

'I won't go with you!' exclaimed Charlie. 'I'm going back to Mrs. Clarkson's.

'Nonsense, Charlie. You don't know what's good for you. You're going to your kind grandfather. So come along, and don't kick up a row.'

'You're too easy, Mr. Flint,' said the butler; 'give him a crack on the head.'

Charlie continued to struggle. Then Mr. Flint, losing his temper, struck him hard on the face—the first blow the boy had ever received from anyone in his life. Charlie never forgot that blow.

His struggles were useless. Flint and the butler bundled him into the cab, which was then driven off towards the West End.

Charlie sat huddled in a corner terrified, his arms and head full of pain from the treatment he had just

received, and his heart very sad. It was seldom indeed that he ever cried, but now he burst out sobbing, and all the way to Bayswater the tears fell. Once he said between his sobs, 'Oh, do let me go back to Mrs. Clarkson!' But Mr. Flint only laughed and said, 'Not to-day, my little man.'

'He's got a spirit of his own,' said the butler to Mr. Flint.

'Quite true,' said Mr. Flint; 'if he had been my child, I'd have got rid of it long before now.'

'Never mind; he'll soon mend his ways, I reckon. With the guv'nor, and you, Mr. Flint, and me to teach and wallop him, he'll very quickly learn how to behave himself.'

'Just so, Saunders.' That was the butler's name.

At last the journey came to an end, and the cab stopped at Victoria Mansions. As the men led Charlie to the servants' entrance of the house the boy made just a feeble resistance for a moment, but it was quite in vain.

He was taken into the kitchen, and there the cook washed his face and hands.

'Well, he *is* a pretty boy,' exclaimed the cook, who

was a kind-hearted creature. 'Give me a kiss. I only wish he was mine. There, now, don't cry any more. You shall have such a nice supper when your grandpa has done with you.'

'There you are, cook,' said the butler, 'a-spoiling the child already. It would never do for you to have children of your own to bring up. You'd never break 'em in.'

'Excuse me, Mr. Saunders,' said the cook, with her arms akimbo and her head tossed back; 'if I had had the bringing up of you, you'd a-learnt better manners towards the weaker sex by this time, and the landlord of the King's Head wouldn't have to complain that the score of a certain gentleman's servant gets too big to be trifled with, nor yet would a certain wealthy gentleman I know be for ever suspecting that his butler sells his old port at three shillings a bottle. So there, Mr. Saunders!'

A laugh was raised amongst the other servants at the butler's expense, as that gentleman, looking very angry, retired upstairs with Mr. Flint and Charlie.

Mr. Flint led Charlie into the drawing-room, where Mr. Smythe was seated alone, doing nothing but biting

the nails of one hand, and stirring up the coins in his pocket with the other.

'I have carried out your instructions, sir,' said Flint, 'and have been able to secure and bring you the boy. This is Charlie.'

Charlie, having glanced round the richly furnished room, now, as he stood, stared at Mr. Smythe with curiosity and some amount of alarm.

'So you're Charlie, are you?' said Mr. Smythe, rising from his easy chair, spreading himself before the fireplace, and surveying the boy from head to foot.

Charlie said nothing.

'Don't you hear what I say? Is your name Charlie?'

'Say "Yes, sir,"' whispered Flint, at the same time pinching his arm severely.

'Be quiet, Mr. Flint!' exclaimed Charlie, releasing himself and standing at the back of a chair.

'Oh, you've got a tongue, then, have you?' said Mr. Smythe.

'Yes.'

'"Yes, sir," or "Yes, grandfather;" do you understand?' asked Mr. Smythe.

Charlie was silent.

'Don't you understand me? can't you hear?' said the great man, getting red in the face.

'Yes,' said Charlie.

'"Yes, sir,"' shouted Mr. Smythe.

'Yes, sir,' faltered Charlie.

'Is your name Charlie, then?'

'Yes—sir—grandfather—Charlie Russell.'

'Now, then, understand; henceforth and for ever your name will be Augustus Smythe; for that name's far more aristocratic than Charlie Russell.'

Charlie stared and wondered.

'Look here, youngster,' continued Mr. Smythe; 'I'm going to adopt you—all out of kindness and for your good—and for the future you'll have to forget your old name and remember that you are now christened Augustus Smythe. Flint, take the young ragamuffin upstairs, and tell Jane the housemaid to look after him until the governess comes; and mind, Flint, give strict orders that he's not to mix with the servants, and never to go into the kitchen. His training for the upper circles must be commenced at once.'

'Very prudent indeed, sir,' said Flint; 'I trust the

boy may reward you for your trouble, and become your comfort and pride.'

Thereupon Mr. Flint retired, leading away Charlie. On the way to one of the top rooms, which was to be Charlie's chamber, Mrs. Smythe appeared. Her greeting was decidedly warmer than that of her husband. She kissed the lad, stroked his curly head, and told him to be a good boy. Charlie was favourably impressed, and thought his grandmother seemed a kind woman. If Mrs. Smythe felt disposed to be kind to the boy, she would have very little opportunity of carrying out such an intention; for Mr. Smythe had decided that he would have sole authority over the child, attend to the training of his mind and manners, and look after him as much as possible from morning to night. Mr. Smythe held undivided sway in his mansion; he controlled all the arrangements, ordered about everybody, engaged and dismissed the servants, pryed into the larder, examined the milkman's book, and, when coals were delivered, always counted the sacks himself, to make quite sure that he was not cheated. Mrs. Smythe was thus a mere cypher in the establishment. She stood in terror of her husband, meekly obeying his stern com-

mands, and trying to do her best 'to keep up a position in society.' Mr. Smythe was both 'King' and 'Queen' of his own 'Castle.'

Although he determined that he himself would attend to the training of Charlie, yet, conscious that his own education was anything but of a first-rate character, he contemplated engaging the services of a governess. But he found it very difficult to find a governess who would be likely to satisfy his requirements. He wanted a person who would be ruled by him in every respect and teach the child only what he ordered her to. He thought he was an excellent judge of character and disposition from the human face; and in visiting various agencies for governesses he had not yet met with the face which indicated the characteristics he sought.

When Charlie reached the little attic-chamber he was left alone for a few minutes. He felt himself a prisoner, and began to picture all kinds of troubles and punishments that would fall to his lot. He devoutly hoped, however, that Mrs. Clarkson would come the next day and take him back to Mile End. Whilst he was standing on a chair at the tiny window in the twilight,

looking at the tops of the trees in Hyde Park, Jane, the housemaid, entered the room.

'So I'm to put you to bed, am I? Not if I know it,' said she. 'I'm not a-goin' to be nussmaid as well as 'ousemaid for all the Mr. Smythes in the world! So you'll jist have to undress and git into bed by yourself. So look sharp, 'cause this is my night out.'

Charlie could not understand why this young woman should speak in such a cross way to him. He said nothing, but took off his jacket and knickerbockers, stockings and boots, and then got into bed.

'You don't want no nussmaid, I see; you're more of a man than I took yer for. You're all right, ain't yer?'

'Yes, thank you,' Charlie answered.

Then Jane, with a faint 'Good night,' hurried out of the room, banging the door after her.

Charlie was very hungry, and he was wanting his usual basin of bread and milk, which Mrs. Clarkson always gave him for supper. His thoughts wandered to his father and mother, and he tried to imagine what his mother was doing in heaven. He thought he would like to be with her, and yet he thought he would not

like to die just yet. He wondered if his mother knew of his troubles, but hoped she did not, because it would make her unhappy. He called to mind many things she taught him, and how loving and kind and patient she always was. He remembered she often told him he must always try to be good and brave, even though he had troubles and disappointments, and people treated him badly; and that he must try to love and do good to people who were bad and unkind, because God loved everybody in the wide world. He felt he had been treated unkindly by Mr. Flint and his grandfather, and that there was a lot of trouble in store for him; but he made up his mind that he would try his utmost to be good and brave.

Full of thoughts of his father and mother, and the sad events that had deprived him of their love and care, he was startled by the door being opened and someone entering carrying a tray and a lighted candle.

'Well, Charlie, you're not asleep, I see; I'm not too late. I've kept my promise; I never break a promise. They wouldn't let you come into the kitchen to have your supper, and so I've brought it up to you.' It was Martha, the cook, who spoke.

As the gleam of the candle fell on it she saw Charlie's face brighten.

'There's a glass of milk, you see. Now, what do you suppose I've got under this cover for you? Guess.'

'I don't know, I'm sure,' said Charlie.

'Well, I won't keep you waiting. I daresay you're hungry. Look!'

Then the good-natured cook removed the cover, and Charlie's eyes fell on a large baked apple dumpling, brown and tempting, hot from the oven.

'Now, dearie, eat it all up quick, and make yourself happy.'

'Thank you; it's very kind of you,' said the boy.

Charlie sat up in bed, and soon set to work to demolish the savoury dumpling.

Whilst he was thus engaged, Martha sat at the bedside and talked and laughed, making the boy laugh as well.

'Look here, Charlie, I've been hearing the talk that's been going on downstairs, and I know pretty well all about you. I believe you've had a lot of trouble, and I don't know how you're going to be treated here. I

hope everybody will be kind to you, because they ought to be. But I'll be your friend, anyhow. Do you understand?'

'Yes, thank you.'

'They tell me that master says you're never to come into the kitchen; but I'll come upstairs now and then, and see how you're getting on. I'll see that you have plenty of victuals, at all events; and if anybody's unkind to you just tell me, will you?'

'Yes, I will,' said Charlie, with his mouth half-full of pudding.

'And they tell me master's been and altered your name, and is going to call you Augustus Smythe. Charlie's your name, isn't it?'

'Yes; Charlie Russell.'

'Well, I don't like "Augustus," and I shall call you "Charlie;" it's ever so much prettier than "Augustus." My name's Martha—Martha Bentley; and I'm the cook; so you'll try and remember, won't you, dearie?'

'I'm sure not to forget.'

'And you shall have a nice little supper every night; and mind you tell me when you're in trouble. Now

lie down and go to sleep like a good boy. You've said your prayers, haven't you?'

'Oh, no, I haven't.'

Charlie, with the strange events that had happened, and his new surroundings, had really forgotten to say his prayers. He was just getting out of bed, when Martha said, 'Never mind, you can say them just as well kneeling against the pillow as kneeling on the floor.'

'I had rather get out, I think,' said the boy.

So Charlie had his way, and, covering his face with his hands, knelt down by the side of the bed.

'Say a word for me,' whispered Martha.

When Charlie rose from his knees Martha said, 'Did you remember me, Charlie?'

'Yes; I thanked God that you were kind to me, and I said, "God bless Martha Bentley!"'

'There's a dear.'

And God did bless Martha Bentley; for people with kind, thoughtful, and unselfish hearts are always made happy by the consciousness of having done good to others.

'Good night, Charlie; pleasant dreams. You shall have a nice breakfast in the morning.'

Martha tucked in the bed-clothes, made Charlie comfortable, and then went downstairs, humming a cheerful melody.

CHAPTER VI.

CONJUGATING FRENCH VERBS.

WHEN Charlie did not return from the grocer's after an hour had passed, Mrs. Clarkson grew very anxious. She put on her things and went round to the grocer, and heard from him that the boy had purchased the sugar. She made enquiries at other shops and of many people, but could learn nothing about Charlie. When her husband came home they went out together, searching all the streets of the neighbourhood, questioning policemen, and giving a description of Charlie at the police station. Late at night they heard that Flint, in company with another man, had been seen in Mile End early in the evening, and it was supposed they were on their

way to put the broker into the lodgings of one of Mr. Smythe's tenants for rent. Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson, much distressed, searched about Mile End all night. The next morning they heard from a child that two men were seen to put Charlie into a cab and drive off with him.

On learning this they at once suspected that the men were Flint and his companion. Mrs. Clarkson decided to go to Bayswater and enquire at Mr. Smythe's residence for the missing boy. On arriving there, Saunders, the butler, informed her that Charlie was in the house, and that Mr. Smythe intended to keep him there. She asked to see the boy, but was refused. Then she sent up a message to Mr. Smythe, begging that she might see Charlie just for a minute. But Mr. Smythe declined to grant her request, and told the butler to order her to go about her business at once, and never to attempt to see Charlie again.

The cook happened to be out at the time, otherwise Mrs. Clarkson would doubtless not have met with such a rough reception.

Finding it useless to stay any longer, she returned to Mile End, distressed, angry, and indignant. She

called on the vicar and informed him what had happened. He regretted Charlie's forcible removal to Bayswater, and, whilst he thought nothing could be done at present to alter the position of affairs, promised to call on Mr. Smythe.

In a few days the vicar did call at Bayswater, but Mr. Smythe professed to be too busily engaged to see him.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson received notice from their landlord through Flint to quit their lodgings in a week. This step was taken because Mr. Smythe did not wish Flint to be questioned week after week, when collecting the rent, respecting Charlie. He wanted the Clarksons to be got out of the way, and for all connection and interest between them and Charlie to cease.

Six months passed away, and Charlie still remained at Victoria Mansions. In some respects he had changed very much. The happy, contented, fearless look on his face had disappeared, and a look of terror and anxiety had taken its place. He was treated harshly and unkindly by most of the people in the house. Martha Bentley seemed the only person who

had any love for him. Had it not been for her kindness, cheerful ways, and defence of his interests, he would have felt wofully miserable. She looked after his wants, and did all she could to make him happy.

The governess whom Mr. Smythe had engaged was a singular sort of person. Aged about fifty, she professed to have gone through a long and rich experience in the education of the young. She was tall and thin, with a hard stern face, a sour temper, and with little natural sympathy except for her own troubles. We will not, however, be too hard upon her, because we have no knowledge of her early history. She may have had a terrible battle to fight in her younger days—a fight against adversity, unkindness, and wrong; so we must be merciful towards her, and only write about her training of Charlie.

Mr. Smythe had a room which he called his 'study.' The walls were covered with book-cases, and the cases full of books—all splendidly bound. But very rarely did the owner make any use of his books. When he happened to take one down it was merely that he might look at the pictures; for he was fond of

looking at pictures, though not fond of reading. He bought all those expensive books and cases simply because he understood that it was 'the correct thing' for a member of the upper circles of society to possess a study or library.

It was in this room that Charlie's education was carried on. Mr. Smythe was present every day, to hear what the governess tried to teach her pupil. He had issued his orders to the governess respecting what she was, and what she was not, to teach the boy. He told her she was not to bother his head with arithmetic, weights and measures, book-keeping—'such vulgar stuff'—because the lad would never have to 'degrade himself' as a clerk or shop-keeper. She was to teach him how to speak and write correctly, and impart a thorough knowledge of the French language.

Charlie made very fair progress with the English portion of his education; but he was too young to begin learning French; and the French verbs, with their curious changes and difficult pronunciation, bothered and worried him exceedingly. What with the harsh voice of the governess, and the terrible eye of his grandfather always fixed upon him, he usually

became very nervous when the French lesson was in progress.

Mr. Smythe put the worst possible construction on Charlie's failure with the foreign tongue. He put it down to obstinacy, and determined to compel the boy by punishment to make progress.

One day Mr. Smythe entered the study carrying a strange-looking article, which at once excited Charlie's curiosity. It was a stout leather strap, that had been used at some time or other in the harness of a horse. Charlie's curiosity was soon removed.

'Come here, Augustus,' said Mr. Smythe.

The boy obeyed his grandfather's summons.

'You see this strap, don't you?' said Mr. Smythe.

'Yes, grandfather.'

'Well, that's to thrash you with if you don't get on with your French. Do you understand?'

Charlie's only answer was a look of terror.

'I say, don't you understand?' shouted Mr. Smythe.

'No, I don't quite understand—at least I don't understand why you should thrash me if I don't get on with French.'

'Then I do. So you'd better mind. The first mis-

take you make you shall have one stroke with the strap; the second mistake, two strokes; the third, three strokes, and so on. I'm determined to stop that wicked, obstinate spirit of yours, and stop it I will. Now go to your lessons.'

This same old strap had been in the family for many years. When Jim was younger it had been used very freely on his back; and that was the chief reason why Jim turned out a scapegrace and lost all respect for his father. And it was now to be used in compelling poor Charlie to conjugate French verbs correctly.

Charlie went over to the governess at the other side of the room, feeling quite sure that the strap would be of no service in helping him to learn the verbs. He felt quite sure, too, that he was not obstinate, and that he had done his very best. He feared he was going to make many mistakes; so, in view of the punishment he expected, and remembering again his mother's advice, he made up his mind to be very brave indeed.

The verb to be conjugated was *savoir*, to know. Charlie managed to get through the indicative mood

without a mistake; but when he reached the subjunctive his troubles began. '*Je— je—*,' stammered the boy, '*je save.*'

'Wrong,' said the governess; 'you ought to remember, for you repeated it after me yesterday.'

'Come here,' said Mr. Smythe, roughly.

Charlie obeyed instantly. High in the air the strap was raised, and down it came on Charlie's back. The boy flinched, and then, at Mr. Smythe's command, returned to the governess.

Another mistake.

'Come here, Augustus,' said Mr. Smythe.

Down came the strap twice vigorously on the boy's back. Charlie's face reddened, and he bit his lip, but no tears fell.

'May I tell him the first person, sir?' asked the governess.

'Yes,' Mr. Smythe replied.

'*Je sache*,' said the governess.

Then Charlie tried to go on, but stumbled and blundered.

'Come here, sir!' shouted Mr. Smythe, who was now losing his temper.

Charlie obeyed.

Again his grandfather raised the weapon, and struck the boy with all his might. His temper had grown into a violent passion. The strap came down, not thrice, but six, twelve, twenty times! Charlie flinched at each stroke, but no tears fell. He bit his lip till the blood ran down. Then suddenly his face grew pale as death; his eyes closed, and he fell senseless to the ground.

Mr. Smythe bounced out of the room, feeling no doubt that he had faithfully done his duty, and had conquered his grandson's supposed stubborn spirit.

The governess was at a loss to know what to do. She rang the bell. The cook answered the summons.

'Oh,' exclaimed Martha, when she saw Charlie lying on the floor, 'what have they been doing to the dear child!' Then when she stooped and felt the boy's cold face, and saw the blood trickling from his lip, she exclaimed, 'Why, he's dying; and you've murdered him, you wicked creature!'

'I've done nothing at all to him; it's all his grandfather's doings,' answered the governess.

'Then you ought to have prevented him; you're as bad as he is, you unfeeling, cruel wretch!'

Martha had taken Charlie in her arms, and now carried him straight to her own room. Throughout the day she watched and tended him as far as her duties would permit. He soon recovered consciousness; but it was a day or two before he was well enough to attend to his lessons. Mr. Smythe accused him of shamming illness, and insisted on his coming to the study in the usual way; but Martha assured him that his head was very bad, and, unless he wanted the boy to die, he must allow him to remain quietly in bed for a while. Mr. Smythe went upstairs and looked at Charlie, in order to see for himself that he was not being deceived, and was compelled reluctantly to own that he appeared unfit to apply his mind to his books.

Then Mr. Smythe went to his study and spent a very unhappy day; for he was perplexed and harassed by an unusual train of thoughts. He began to think that he had been doing wrong in his brutal treatment of Charlie, and that his object in adopting the lad would never be attained by the system of

training he was carrying out. Then, by degrees, feelings of a more humane and tender nature than he had experienced for many a day sprang up in his heart. For the first time an idea struck him, which, had it only being cherished and put into action, might have transformed his entire character. It was this: *Would it not be a good thing to win Charlie's love?* He pondered over that idea until at length the truth dawned upon him that he was loved by no one in the world. Then he thought he had lost a great deal all through life by not being affectionate and kind. He felt that his life had been marked by two aims only: the first, when, as a tradesman, he sought only to make money, and the second, when, having become rich, he desired to occupy a prominent place amongst the aristocracy. Presently he thought of his conduct towards his daughter, and owned to himself that he had treated her harshly and cruelly. Rising suddenly from his easy chair he bustled towards the door, turned the key, went to his desk, and, after a few minutes' search, found a portrait—the portrait of Ellen. He looked at it for a moment, whilst his hand shook; then kissing it he exclaimed, 'Oh, Ellen,

Ellen! if I had only treated you with kindness, I should have been a better man, and you would have been living still!'

This was strange conduct for Mr. Smythe; but it showed that, in spite of his pride, meanness, and sordid selfishness, there had existed some affection for his daughter, never exhibited before. His motive in locking the door was to prevent any one finding him gazing at his daughter's photograph. He had always wished it to be understood by other people that because of Ellen's marriage he had practically effaced the recollection of her from his memory. His pride had been the great hindrance to any acknowledgment of affection for her. He had, however, secretly kept this portrait for years, although it was very seldom he ever looked at it.

'I'll treat the boy differently, I will!' he exclaimed, still looking at the photograph: 'he shall learn to love me, and the strap shall be destroyed.'

If Charlie had only come into the room at that moment, his grandfather would probably have embraced him warmly, begging forgiveness for the ill-treatment he had suffered; and thus a new and bright

chapter would have been commenced in the history both of the boy and his grandfather.

Unfortunately, Mr. Smythe's good resolution did not last long. He began thinking again; and his thoughts went far back to the days of his own childhood, to his parents, to the house where he was born in the East End, and the little attic-chamber where he used to sleep. Suddenly the softened expression which had been playing on his face disappeared, and he looked stern and hard again. He rose and paced the room, troubled and excited, exclaiming, 'This will never do! I must stick to the old way of training; it succeeded with me, and it must succeed with Augustus in time.'

Our resolutions all through life are, as a rule, influenced and decided by mere trifles. So it was in Mr. Smythe's case. What was the cause of his sudden change of mind? Though a trifle, it drove away the tender influences to which he had just been yielding. In that attic chamber, which memory had recalled, Mr. Smythe saw, written in large letters on a card hanging over the mantel-piece, the motto, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.'

'Ah!' he pondered, 'my father practised that motto

in my training; and I've been successful in life; why shouldn't the same treatment succeed with Augustus? I must still use the strap after all.'

And thus the prospect of happier days for Charlie faded quickly away.

Whilst there is no excuse to be offered for Mr. Smythe's brutal treatment of Charlie, it must be remembered that he was a very illiterate, uncultured, small-minded man. Probably he had scarcely opened a book since his school-days, and had associated but little with his fellow-men. He was wedded to two or three selfish and sordid ideas, which guided and ruled his life. The subject which for so many years had absorbed his attention was how to get money, and how to keep it when obtained.

CHAPTER VII.

TAKING 'FRENCH LEAVE.'

WHEN able once more to take his place at the little table in the study Charlie observed, to his sorrow, the strap lying at his grandfather's side ready for use. He felt he could not possibly make progress with his lessons, either English or French, as long as he was threatened with undeserved punishment. Each evening he worked hard to learn his lessons ; but when the morning came, and he went into the study, much of what he had learned seemed to vanish from his memory as soon as he saw the instrument of punishment and his grandfather's eyes steadily directed towards him. Again and again

was he thrashed, sometimes for trivial mistakes. He fancied the blows were less heavy than they used to be, and that his grandfather was growing less stern. Mr. Smythe's tender reflections mentioned in the previous chapter seemed to have left behind some good influence.

Two or three times a week Charlie walked into the Park or Kensington Gardens with the governess, but was not allowed to run about and enjoy himself. When walking down the Bayswater Road he often noticed the omnibuses with the names of the places they went to written upon them. He read the words 'Holborn,' 'Whitechapel,' 'Mile End,' and longed to jump into one of the vehicles and be carried back to Mrs. Clarkson at Mile End. The name 'Mile End' seemed to bring to his mind a paradise—a place of happiness and peace, compared to his grandfather's mansion. He desired, too, to see his father, or to hear if he was recovering. Night after night he would lie awake and wonder why his grandfather could be so unkind and cruel. When he did go to sleep he sometimes dreamed he was in heaven, and his mother, looking like an angel, was teaching him

English and French; and he had no trouble with his lessons and made no mistakes, for his mother was so gentle and loving. And when he awoke from such bright dreams, and contrasted them with the four hours' torture in prospect in the study, his heart sank within him, and he wondered for how many months or years his present bitter experience was to continue.

He had to suffer much, too, from his uncle Jim. Regarding Charlie with jealousy and suspicion, Jim frequently struck and kicked him when he happened to meet him in the house.

Martha did all she possibly could for Charlie's comfort; and Charlie looked upon her as the only friend he had left in the world.

One day he had just returned from a walk with the governess. The governess went upstairs, and Charlie was left alone in the hall. The door was open, and Charlie stood and watched the Mile End omnibuses passing by. A sudden thought struck him. Why shouldn't he go out, follow these omnibuses, and so find his way to Mile End and Mrs. Clarkson? He could come back again, he thought 'very soon; and

surely his grandfather would not be angry. He could enquire about his father, and perhaps be able to see him.

Filled with this thought, he slowly walked down the steps on to the pavement. He waited a minute. A Mile End 'bus came along on its way eastward. Then Charlie set off walking in the same direction. Then he began to run, but was not able to keep up with the 'bus. He thought of turning back, when he saw another 'bus in the distance. He followed that, and passed the Marble Arch into Oxford Street. He knew Mile End was a long way off; but, with the omnibuses to guide him, he felt sure he should reach the desired place in safety. He had not a penny in his pocket, or would have paid for a ride for part of the journey. On and on he went, pushed about by the crowds of people in the streets, and nearly run over at some of the crossings. On reaching Holborn he felt very tired and hungry; his feet were sore and blistered, and once or twice he sat down on a step and rested for a few minutes. The shop windows, lining the streets, mile after mile, interested him exceedingly. He wondered wherever all the goods dis-

played for sale, and all the people who were expected to buy them, came from. In his progress down Newgate Street he saw a child, younger than himself, accidentally knocked down by a drunken man. He ran to the child's assistance and helped her on to her feet again. In doing so he himself got knocked down and received a bad bruise on his knee, causing him a deal of pain. But he did not mind the pain, and felt pleased that he had been of some service to the child. Along Cheapside, the Poultry, Cornhill, Leadenhall Street, and Aldgate Charlie trudged, half bewildered with the crowds of people, so many thousands of different faces, the roar of the traffic, and such a variety of shops and public buildings, he almost forgot his blistered feet and aching limbs. In Whitechapel he hastened on as fast as he could, for he knew he was now getting towards his journey's end, and was eager to find Mrs. Clarkson, thinking how surprised and glad she would be to see him again. He was now in Mile End, which was, of course, quite familiar to him; he noticed several streets and shops which were well-remembered. He soon discovered Paradise Gardens, and almost ran down the narrow street, so excited

was he with the pleasure in prospect. He reached the house where Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson used to lodge. Three single raps with the knocker was the usual summons which always brought down Mrs. Clarkson to answer the door. Charlie, just able to reach the knocker with the tips of his fingers, gave three loud raps. A few moments elapsed, which Charlie thought very long ones; then he heard footsteps descending the stairs. He stood at the side of the door out of sight, so that he might suddenly dart forward when his friend made her appearance. The door was then thrown open, and Charlie rushed forward. Oh, how his face fell when he saw a woman who was not Mrs. Clarkson stand before him! She was untidy, dirty, and cross-looking—so different to his friend's appearance. Charlie's rushing forward gave her the idea that he was running away, and that he had only knocked just to trouble her to come downstairs for nothing. So she seized Charlie by the collar of his jacket.

'I've caught you this time, you good-for-nothing brat!' Then she boxed his ears. 'A-bringing people down three flights of stairs all for nothing, you wicked vagabond!'

Then she shook Charlie, almost like a dog shakes a rat. 'You won't do it again in a hurry, that's certain; for I'll keep yer till the p'liceman comes along, and have yer locked up, you saucy varmint!' Then she hit Charlie on the head, knocking his cap into the gutter.

Charlie did not struggle in the least to get away; which rather surprised the woman; for all other boys whom she had at various times caught and punished in a similar manner had made violent efforts to release themselves from her grasp. She noticed, too, that Charlie was fai better dressed than most of the street urchins, who were the torment of her life and whose favourite amusement was playing tip-cat in Paradise Gardens.

As soon as Charlie had a chance of speaking he said, 'I didn't knock and want to run away; I came to see Mrs. Clarkson, and thought she was opening the door, and not you.'

'Don't try and gammon me; I don't swallow no artfulness, so you needn't try that game with me. Don't make things wuss by telling lies.'

The angry blood rushed into Charlie's face at being

accused of falsehood, for he had never told a lie in his life.

'I'm not telling lies; I'm speaking the truth,' said Charlie, looking straight at the woman.

The woman seemed to relent a little, for she removed her hand from Charlie as she said, 'There ain't no Mrs. Clarkson living here, so come now!'

'Not living here!' said Charlie, with surprise; 'why, I used to live here with her.'

'Well, then, lies or no lies, she ain't a-livin' here now, that's certain.'

'Where has she gone too?'

'How on earth can I tell, seeing as 'ow I never heard of such a party?'

'Are you quite sure?'

'Stop a bit. Clarkson—Clarkson, did you say?'

'Yes, Clarkson.'

'Of course, of course—I remember; why, Mrs. Clarkson from over the way is dead and buried—only last week; and her husband died a week afore her of small-pox.'

'Dead and buried!' exclaimed Charlie, dismay and grief depicted on his face.

'Yes, dead and buried. I can't stand here all night a-talkin' to you ; there's my ole man's supper a-spilin' all on account of you. So be off ; and, if I catches yer a-bringin' of me down again for nothing, off to gaol you goes.'

Then the woman slammed the door and disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

'A PERFESSIONAL SINGER.'

'DEAD and buried!' Charlie picked up his cap, walked a few steps, leaned against a window-sill, and covered his face with his hands to hide the tears that now fell fast.

'Dead and buried!' And he would never see his dear, kind friend again! And if he had only come a week earlier, he thought, he would have seen her. All his hard usage at Bayswater was nothing compared to this great trouble. He felt that everybody who had been good and loving to him was being taken away, one by one, for ever. And thus he stood against the window-sill for some time, his great and sudden sorrow making him forget everything else.

It was now dark, and the rain began to fall. Then Charlie began to wonder where he should go, and what he should do. Paradise Gardens was a 'blind street,' that is, there was only one entrance to it, and no way at the other end to get out of it. Charlie turned and began to walk down the street. He thought at first that he had better go back to Bayswater immediately; but when he began to walk he could scarcely put one foot before the other, he was so stiff and tired and full of pain. Then he thought that the best thing he could do would be to find some quiet, out-of-the-way corner, sheltered from the rain, where he could sit down and rest for a few hours before attempting to trudge back to Bayswater. He walked a little way up the main road, looking about for a place of shelter and rest. The pastry and ham-and-beef shops reminded him of his hunger; but he had no money to buy even a penny roll with, and he felt he could not ask anyone to give him food or money. Presently he came to a narrow, short street, in which some of the old houses had been pulled down and were now being rebuilt. At one of these houses he discovered a short flight of steps, above which, at the first-floor window, there

were several planks supported on scaffold poles. This was just the place he wanted; it was quite sheltered from the rain; and no one taking refuge there would be likely to be disturbed. So Charlie sat down on one of the steps, making himself as comfortable as he could against the wall. There was an empty lime-sack lying near, which he made use of by wrapping it round his legs. On the opposite side of the street, where stood several empty houses, there was a gas lamp, which Charlie thought was quite a companion for him.

Too tired to sleep, he sat, with his head against the wall, looking at the flickering light. He was soon lost in thought. In the flickering light he pictured many faces and many scenes. His mother; the dreadful fire; his falling into the tarpaulin in front of the burning house; his father; Mrs. Clarkson; his stern, cruel grandfather; the harsh governess; the kind cook; the angry, slatternly woman who had treated him so severely but an hour ago;—these were some of the images and pictures which his thoughts conjured up. Then he thought that there were many boys even worse off than himself—many whose mothers had never been so good and kind as his had been. Then the tears began to fall again

when he thought of his fresh loss. Oh, if he could only have seen Mrs. Clarkson once more, he thought, before she went to heaven

Now and then someone passed down the street, but without observing Charlie. A policeman walked down leisurely and stood for a moment a few yards from where Charlie sat, but did not see the boy. Charlie felt half-inclined to ask him to take him to the station for the night; but just then the man moved away.

A neighbouring church clock chimed half-past ten. Then a sound as of someone singing fell upon Charlie's ear. Nearer and nearer the sound came. Charlie thought it was a girl's voice. Soon he distinguished some of the words of the song that awoke the silence of the street.

'I've travelled about a bit in my time,
And of troubles I've seen a few,
But found it better in ev'ry clime
To paddle my own canoe.

Then love your neighbour as yourself,
As the world you go travelling through,
And never sit down with a tear or a frown,
But paddle your own canoe.'

The girl ceased singing, and came to a standstill on reaching the steps where Charlie sat. She was a singular-looking little being. In height she was about the same as Charlie, but in age a year or two older than he. Long dark brown hair hung over her shoulders; her face was pale but pretty, with bright brown eyes, long eyelashes, and a nose and mouth such as artists like to put on their canvas. Her head was covered with a white straw hat decked with a bunch of poppies, marguerite daisies, and cornflowers, which had long lost their freshness and had braved the smoke, and rain, and dust of London for many a day. From neck to heels a 'waterproof' cloak enveloped her, which was once grey, but now rusty with age, and, being two inches too long for her, dragged in the mud.

She carried a green silk umbrella—of which she was very proud—that had seen better days. It might once have belonged to a real duchess or even a princess. If only it had been gifted with a tongue, what a tale it could tell! Alas! its glory had departed. Two or three of its poor old ribs were broken at the joints, and stuck out close to the end of the stick. The silk cover was torn in many

places, whilst the stitches here and there had given way. Its days of usefulness were nearly over, for it could afford but little shelter to anyone now. If it only had feeling, it would experience some little satisfaction from the fact that, although its outward covering was perishing and doomed to destruction, yet its ribs and stick were of the very best quality, and would some day or other be re-covered with stout alpaca or even smart green silk, and might possibly in the course of time find its way again into the hands of a West End duchess or princess. Good umbrellas have far longer lives than most people imagine.

And then the girl, with the umbrella over her shoulder, suddenly came to a standstill. Charlie had moved his head in order to obtain a better view of the minstrel; and the movement attracted the girl's attention and startled her a little.

'Goodness gracious me! Whatever are you? And whatever are you doing? A-frightening young ladies like that! I thought you was a big black dog a-going to jump at me, and, after all, you're only a little boy!'

Then the girl went a little nearer to Charlie, and

tried to close the umbrella; but it wouldn't close; so she placed it on the ground open, and, walking up the steps, sat down at Charlie's side.

'Why, you *are* smart; you've got a velvet jacket, I do declare! You're *somebody's* child, I know. Why, your face is as white as a ghost's, and your eyes all red! You've been a-cryin', I know you have. There's a drop on yer cheek now. Now, don't say it's the rain—'cause it ain't—it's tears. Fancy a big boy like you a-cryin'! Why, I never cry; and I've had lots o' trouble—a good deal more than most people of my age gets. What's up—what's the row? Lost your way—turned out into the streets 'cause you've been naughty? Come, tell us all about it, little un. Have you got into a row, or what?'

'No, there's no row,' said Charlie.

'Well, what is it? Out with it; I'm dying to know.'

'I walked here all the way from Bayswater to find Mrs. Clarkson, a friend of mine; and they tell me she's dead and buried.'

'Oh, that's it, is it? It's b'reavement; well, b'reavements do make us cry. I lost a terrier dog once; he

got run over; and I didn't leave off cryin' for a whole week.'

'Why, you said you never cried.'

'Ah, but that was a long, long time ago, when I was a little girl. It's no use grieving about your friend, you know; she's gone to the good place, I've no doubt, and so she's far better off than she was down here.'

'Yes, but then I loved her so.'

'Well, you can still love her, can't you, although you can't see her? You'll see her again by and by in the beautiful place up above, if you're only a good boy, and you love God, and ain't cruel to nobody.'

'Yes, I know that.'

'Very well, then, cheer up like a brave little man. "What's the use of repinin'?" as the song says. You ain't agoin' back to Bayswater to-night, I guess?'

'No, I'm too tired, and too hungry.'

'And you ain't got no friends about here to take you in?'

'No.'

'Well, then, look here; I like being kind and doing a good turn for anyone when I can. I've got a home, which you ain't got—at least, to-night. You come along with me; I'm very respectable, so you needn't be frightened: if old Mother Stubbs will only say "Yes," you shall have my clumsy old bed, and I'll sleep on the hearthrug—least, it ain't a hearthrug—we can't afford that—it's only a tatur sack. My bed ain't up to much, yer know; it's only a couple o' sacks sewn together and stuffed with straw, and a blanket made of old newspapers. But that'll be better than a-sittin' and a-sneezin' here all night. So come along with me.'

'I'm very much obliged,' said Charlie; 'it's very kind of you.'

'I don't know whether it's kind or not; it's my natur, so I can't help it. Come on, now; don't waste time, and get yer death o' cold.'

'Thank you; I will go with you. But I haven't any money to pay you.'

'Money! Bother the money! I don't want none o' yer money, even if you had it. You'll offend me directly, if you don't mind; and then we shan't be

friends no longer. Come along; you shall have a nice supper of bread and best beef drippin', and p'raps a cup o' coffee. But it all depends on Mother Stubbs. If she ain't good-tempered, and won't take you in, why, then, I shall have to find someone as will take you in. Come on.'

They both rose and came down the steps.

'Where's your umbrella?' asked the girl.

'I haven't got one,' Charlie replied.

'I have, though—a fine silk one—look! You shall have half of it.'

The girl proudly held aloft the umbrella, and then, drawing Charlie close to her side, set off with him down the street.

'Stop a bit,' said the girl; 'you shall have half my waterproof.'

Then she unbuttoned the cloak and wrapped part of it round her companion. Then the two started off again.

'Now don't cry any more, little man; cheer up; I'll stick to yer and take care of yer.'

'What's your name?' asked Charlie.

'What's my name? Well, I've got lots o' names.

Some people calls me the "little old mother;" some "old Mother Hubbard," 'cause I wears a big bonnet now and then; some calls me "Skylark," 'cause I'm always singing and always cheerful; some says I must be Sims Reeves's daughter, 'cause I've got sich a beautiful voice. What my real, right name is, I really don't know. Mother Stubbs ain't my proper mother, you know. I belong to her, but she ain't my mother. I don't know nothin' about either my father or my mother. Very likely they're in heaven—least I hope so. If they're living, it ain't likely they'll ever see me again. I hope I'll see them when I gets to heaven — least, I'm not so sure about getting there, 'cause I've got sich a vile temper—least, people says so, and I s'pose I must have. But I'm good-natured —I knows *that*; and I don't like to see people in trouble without trying to help 'em.'

'What do you do? Do you go to school, or what?'

'Go to school! Bless the child! Why, my schooling was finished years and years ago! I'm a singer—that's my business; least, that's my perfession; I'm a perfessional singer, I am. I don't

go a-singin' in music-halls and such hot, close, nasty places, but in the open air—that's where *I* shine. In the streets, standing on the curb or in the gutter, in all weathers, a-singin' all sorts o' pretty things—that's how I gets my living. But I don't go alone, you know. I generally goes with some man or woman, who tries to join me in the choruses, and who are supposed to be my father or mother out of work, and obliged to take to singing to get a living. Sometimes when I goes with an old man or old woman people suppose I'm their granddaughter. Now and then I goes out with a man and woman and a lot o' brats, from a baby in arms right up to me; but I'm not a brat, you know. Then we are supposed to be the starving family of the man and woman. But I don't like that sort o' work; the brats put me out in the singin', and they're such a dirty lot: then it's so deceitful, ain't it? Perhaps it's wicked, too, to try and make people believe what we are not.'

'Then you earn money by the singing?' enquired Charlie.

'Of course. You don't suppose *I* sing for nothing! This is how it's done. You see I belong to Mother

Stubbs; she gives me food, lodging, and clothes; and she lets me out on hire, generally for two or three shillings a day (sometimes more), to go and sing with poor ragged people in the streets. All the money we gets goes first to the people I sing with; then at the end of the day they have to give Mother Stubbs the two or three shillings, and me twopence. Sometimes I goes with an old man who's nearly blind and plays a fiddle. I like going with him best, 'cause it pays best, and it's more perfessional-like. He gives me threepence for myself, and once or twice he's given me sixpence. But he's plagued with rheumatics, and can't stand all weathers; so he's often at home, and then I have to go with someone else. He's a nice old man, and sometimes I go and clean up his room for him. I can sing no end of nice songs and hymns, yer know: "Hark the herald;" "Paddle your own canoe;" "Home, sweet Home;" "Abide with me;" "Sun of my soul;" "Christians, awake;" "Cheer, boys, cheer;" "Last Rose of Summer;" "Coming through the Rye;" "Auld lang syne;" "I do believe;" "God bless the Prince of Wales;" and lots of others. I say, what's your name? You ain't told me yet.'

'Charlie's my name—Charlie Russell.'

'Charlie—why, that's my favourite name—ain't that sing'lar now?'

'Yes, rather.'

'What sort of home have yer got? And what are yer parents and brothers and sisters like?'

Then Charlie told his story from as far back as he could remember. He was interrupted again and again by exclamations of surprise and pity from his companion, as the two trudged along through the muddy streets.

When Charlie's story came to an end 'the little old mother' said, 'I say, youngster, can you sing?'

'Yes, a little.'

'What can you sing?'

'Several hymns.'

'Well, then, look here; the best plan for you is to go in for my perfession, and earn your living by singing in public. You would like it so much. You gets a crowd round yer, and they listen to what your a-singin', and then when you've done they shouts out "Bravo, little un," and then they flings their coppers into the hat. What I don't like about it is the

winter nights—although they pays best, it's true—but I do get nearly frozen to death with standing so long in the cold. I wonder what your disagreeable old grandfather would say to your becoming a singer.'

'He wouldn't let me.'

The pair now arrived at Mother Stubbs' abode. She and Skylark occupied two rooms on the second floor of a rather dilapidated building in a Whitechapel alley. She got her living by taking in washing and letting out Skylark on hire. In former times she had several children, whom she 'loaned' out for singing or begging purposes. But the youngsters had either grown tired of their 'profession,' or preferred to launch out into some other line. At all events, they had freed themselves from Mother Stubbs' control. Skylark was the only songster whom she now possessed, having been her 'property' for about two years. The chief points in Skylark's history are soon told. When a baby she had been found wrapped up in a shawl on the towing-path of the canal. It was feared her mother had either fallen or thrown herself into the water. The corpse of a woman was found some days after-

wards a long distance from the spot where the child was discovered ; but no one could say positively whether it was the body of the child's mother. The baby was taken to the workhouse ; then, in a year or two, she became the adopted child of a lady and gentleman who had no family of their own. She was well cared for, and had the best of training. When old enough to learn she was taught the elements of ordinary knowledge as well as the simple truths of the religion of Jesus Christ. Misfortune and death suddenly overtook these good people, and Skylark, at six years of age, was again homeless, and once more cast upon the world. The child was then taken charge of by poor people. They did the best they could for her ; but bad times occurred, no money was being earned, and it was a difficult matter to know how to feed all the mouths of the family. Skylark was fond of singing, and had a sweet voice. Mother Stubbs happened one day to hear her sing, and there and then undertook 'to look after and care for her.'

Mother Stubbs was not a bad sort of person in her way ; she was kind-hearted, but rather miserly, and full of curious whims, and too fond of strong drink.

Her kind-heartedness, though, did not prevent her from allowing Skylark to go out singing on a bitterly cold winter's night. 'Business,' she used to say, 'must be attended to under all circumstances;' and so Skylark had to brave the pitiless easterly wind, driving snow, and biting frost, because it was 'all in the way of business.'

'Mother,' said Skylark, as she threw open the door on the second floor, 'I've brought someone home; a poor little boy, who ain't got any home for to-night, and who's had more trouble than ever any little boy had in the world. Will you be a good, kind mother'—and Skylark threw her arms round the woman's neck as she sat darning stockings—'as you always are, and give the poor little chap a night's lodging only just for once? Now don't say "No," Mother Stubbs, or I'll fly into such a temper!'

'What do you want to bring home hungry brats, when it's as much as we can do to feed two mouths?' said the woman.

'I didn't say I'd brought home "hungry brats"; I said it was only just one poor little chap who's had lots and lots o' trouble. Just you see him,

he's such a little gentleman,' added the girl in a whisper.

'Stuff and nonsense!' said the woman. 'What's he going to pay?'

'He's got nothing in his pocket, not a penny; so he can't pay nothing at all. But, look here, Mother Stubbs; you shall have my twopence if you'll give him a night's lodging and something to eat.'

'Where is he?'

'Charlie, boy,' the girl called out, 'Mother Stubbs wants to look at you.'

Then Charlie walked into the room.

'Charlie's your name, is it?' asked the woman, after a brief inspection of the boy.

'Yes, Charlie Russell.'

'Well, you look as if you were a good boy, so you shall have a lodging in the kitchen just for to-night.'

'Thank you,' said Charlie.

'Thank you,' exclaimed Skylark; 'you dear, darling old Mother Stubbs!' And the girl flung her arms round the woman, hugged her, and kissed her yellow, wrinkled face.

Charlie enjoyed his supper of bread and dripping and coffee, and then went to bed on a bundle of old clothes in front of the fireplace in the room which the woman called her 'kitchen.' He did not forget to say his prayers, and to thank God that Skylark had been so kind.

CHAPTER IX.

FEATHERS TIPPED WITH LIGHT.

CHARLIE had a singular dream that night in Mother Stubbs' kitchen. He thought he had lost his way in London, and found himself in a dark, damp, icy-cold cavern. He began to fear he would never get out again. In the darkness he saw his mother's face looking sadly down upon him. Suddenly he heard a bird singing, singing more sweetly than ever he had heard a bird sing before. Then he saw a light which seemed to come from the bird's eyes and wings. Then the light became more intense, and the bird seemed to grow larger and larger, and to be as white as snow. Every feather was tipped with brilliant light, so that the cavern appeared illu-

minated everywhere, and the icicles which hung from the roof sparkled, and beamed, and shone with all the colours of the rainbow. In fact, the cavern seemed transformed almost into a splendid palace. Then the beautiful, large, white bird became an angel, with a kind, heavenly face, such as Charlie had seen in the Family Bible. Then the angel raised Charlie from the ground and bore him away. Just as he was leaving the cavern he thought he saw his mother's face directing towards the angel a look of gratitude and joy. Then he awoke.

He pondered over his dream, and called to mind the sweet voice of Skylark falling upon his ear as he sat shivering on the cold stone step of the unfinished building. Skylark was the angel, he thought, who had come to him in his forlorn condition, had pitied, cheered, and gladdened him, and taken him to a place of refuge and comfort. And his mother's face, looking so grateful and thankful, seemed to mean that his mother knew Skylark had been kind to him.

And Charlie was not far wrong. We do not know whether our loved ones who have gone to 'the better

land' see us on earth and are acquainted with our joys and sorrows; but we do know that truly kind actions done to us are like the acts of good angels. Kind deeds are, as it were, full of heavenly light; they dispel the darkness of trouble and care, fill our hearts with gladness and gratitude, and seem to make our surroundings bright and cheerful.

Mother Stubbs came into the kitchen to light the fire and prepare the breakfast. Skylark went out to buy a Yarmouth bloater, with her own money, for Charlie. When the fish was cooked and placed before Charlie, and Charlie saw that Skylark was going to have only bread and dripping, he cut the bloater in two, and passed the better half to Skylark. The girl at first declined to share the fish, but, on seeing a little cloud of disappointment come over Charlie's face, she consented, saying that 'it was the first time she had been honoured by going halves with a gentleman from the West End.'

Mother Stubbs was very plain-spoken; so when breakfast came to an end—and it did not occupy many minutes—she said to Charlie, 'Now, Master

Russell, it's about time you were off, ain't it? Your rich old grandfather 'll break his heart, and think you've gone and drowned yourself if you don't get home sharp.'

'Yes, I'll go, please,' said Charlie.

'It strikes me, Mother Stubbs, that Charlie's rich old grandpa ain't got no heart at all. His mother or his nuss forgot that part of the business when they were a-bringing him up. *His heart's the strap.* That's my opinion; and I've been about a bit in my time, and I know a thing or two, and I haven't been before the public all these years without learning something.'

'Oh, yes; you're a wise-head, I daresay,' said Mother Stubbs to the girl; 'you think you know everything.'

'No, I don't,' rejoined Skylark; 'that's just where you're wrong, Mother Stubbs. I don't know where I was born, nor who my mother was—I wish I did—nor who my father was; and I don't know,' she added, after a pause, looking very serious and thoughtful, 'whether I shall ever see this young gent again.'

'Oh, yes, I shall see you again,' said Charlie, 'if only grandfather will let me come.'

'Your grandfather let you come to Whitechapel to see old Mother Stubbs and "the little old mother!"' exclaimed Skylark. 'Why, you might as well think of jumping over the moon! But, I tell you what, Mr. Russell; if you *should* happen to see me up your way some day in the gutter with a little family party or the blind fiddler, just give us a nod, will yer? You needn't shake hands, you know; you might interfere with the melody, and make a fuss amongst the public if you did that; a nod's all I want; a nod goes a long way with "the little old mother."'

'I know I shall see you some day, Skylark; and I shall never forget you, for you've been so kind.'

'Fiddlesticks!' said Skylark.

'And you've been very kind, too, Mother Stubbs.'

'You've got to thank the young woman, not me.'

'Now, young gentleman, come along with me,' said Skylark, 'and I'll put you on the road to Bayswater.

I'm much obliged for your company, and I feel all the better for it; but the best of friends must part, you know.'

So Skylark and Charlie made their way out of the alley into the main road. They walked together a short distance, and then Charlie said he was sure he could find his way by following the Bayswater omnibuses. 'Well, then,' said his companion, 'I s'pose we must part. Look here, little man, I've written down on this bit o' paper my address, "Skylark, 23 Sycamore Alley, Whitechapel." Put it in your pocket; and if you ever want a friend to stick up for your rights or do you a good turn, just you come to me. Don't be afraid of coming; and don't be too proud to reckon the poor perfessional amongst yer friends.'

'I told you I should never forget you, Skylark, and all your kindness; and I hope I shall be able to do something for you some day. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye, Charlie; keep up your heart, and never despair.'

Charlie went on his way westward; Skylark returned homewards. There was a little moisture in

her bright dark eyes as she turned; but she quickly stifled the rising emotion, walked on briskly, and sang cheerily as she went along,

'Then what is the use of repining,
For where there's a will there's a way;
And to-morrow the sun may be shining,
Although it is cloudy to-day.'

Charlie trudged onwards, not nearly recovered from the previous day's fatigue, and trying to guess what his grandfather and the governess would say to him. He began to wonder whether he had done wrong by leaving his grandfather's house without asking permission, and whether his grandfather would refuse to take him back. If such a thing happened, Charlie thought the best thing he could do would be to join Skylark and become a street singer; only he feared his voice was not good enough for the purpose.

He had passed the corner of Commercial Street and was approaching Aldgate when he had a great surprise. Who should he see coming along right in front of him but Mrs. Clarkson!

'Well, my dear child! Whoever would have thought

of seeing you down here! Wonders never cease!' exclaimed Charlie's old friend.

'Why, mammie, they told me you were dead and buried!'

'Who told you?'

'Why, the woman at Paradise Gardens, at the house where you used to live.'

'However could she make such a mistake!'

'I don't know, I'm sure; that's what she said.'

'Ah, I recollect now; I think I see how the mistake arose. A Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson died in that neighbourhood within a few days of each other; it was a very sad case; but they were not related to me. So it is easy to understand how it was that the woman thought the poor people who died were my husband and I. You see, Charlie, I'm alive and well, and so is my husband, thank God!'

'I'm very glad it was all a mistake; for when I heard you were dead I felt so miserable, and thought everybody I loved was being taken away from me.'

'There are some left still, Charlie; and there are

not many people who love you more than I do. Now, tell me how it is you are down here in Whitechapel, and where you are going to now.'

Then as the two walked westwards Charlie told his story: how his grandfather had treated him, and all his adventures since leaving Bayswater on the previous day.

Mrs. Clarkson, whilst deeply interested in the story, was distressed to hear of the cruel treatment Charlie had received at Bayswater, and, at the same time, was touched at the thoughtful kindness of Skylark. She felt half disposed to take the boy home with her, but feared this step would only get him into further trouble; so she decided, much against her inclinations, to see him safely back to Bayswater, try to obtain an interview with Mr. Smythe, and soften his displeasure as much as possible at Charlie's absenting himself from home.

She and Charlie got into a 'bus and rode as far as the Marble Arch. Charlie was pleased to hear that his father was considered a little better, although he seemed 'sometimes better and sometimes worse.'

On reaching Victoria Mansions Mrs. Clarkson grew very anxious, being afraid that a severe punishment was in store for her young friend.

She rang the servants' bell and asked to see Mr. Smythe. The footman took her name upstairs, and told his master Mrs. Clarkson had brought Charlie home.

Mr. Smythe declined to see Mrs. Clarkson, and sent down word that she would be summoned at the police-court for enticing Charlie from his home. Mrs. Clarkson, indignant at such a false accusation, told the footman to inform his master that she had never tempted the boy to leave his home, that he went away thinking he was not doing anything wrong, expecting to return in a few hours; and then, getting angry, finished her message by saying that if Mr. Smythe 'didn't take care he would be summoned to the police-court for cruelty to his grandson.'

The cook was delighted to see Charlie once more, and promised Mrs. Clarkson she would let her know now and then how the boy was getting on, and would do her best to look after his comfort and save him

from bad treatment. She said that since Charlie's disappearance on the previous day Mr. Smythe had been 'going on like a madman,' 'storming' at the governess, and 'awfully angry' at his grandson's 'base ingratitude,' as he termed Charlie's act of going away. He had sent off Mr. Flint in search of Charlie, instructing him to employ detectives to go in all directions looking for the boy.

Whilst the conversation was going on in the kitchen a message came down from Mr. Smythe that 'that woman,' meaning Mrs. Clarkson, was 'to go about her business immediately, or he would order a constable to take her in charge.'

Mrs. Clarkson thought there was no use in her attempting any further to see Mr. Smythe, or to stay longer, so, saying a few cheering words to Charlie and telling him to bear in mind Skylark's parting advice, 'keep up your heart, and never despair,' she left the house, fearing the worst respecting the punishment awaiting the boy. She was concerned, too, to find such a change in Charlie's appearance; he looked so much paler and thinner than when in her care at Mile End.

On getting back to the East End Mrs. Clarkson went straight to Sycamore Alley, to make the acquaintance of Skylark and Mother Stubbs, and to express her thanks for the shelter given to Charlie.

CHAPTER X.

SINGULAR PUNISHMENTS FOR 'WICKED BOYS.'

SKYLARK was about right when she said that 'Mr. Smythe's heart was his strap.' This man knew little, at least by practice, of tenderness and love. He had no feeling, no sympathy, *no heart* for the wants, sorrows, and weaknesses of others.

There are still a few 'Mr. Smythes' left amongst us, but not very many, we are glad to think.

Mr. Smythe, who prided himself on never doing anything in a hurry, took several hours to decide the kind of punishment Charlie was to receive. He deferred the matter till the next morning, but, in the

meantime, ordered that Charlie should be locked in his little bedroom in solitary confinement. Charlie had no sleep that night, and began to fear that his grandfather was very displeased with him. He would far rather have been lying on the hard bundle of old clothes in Mother Stubbs' kitchen than in his chamber at 6 Victoria Mansions.

Morning came, and with it a summons for Charlie to appear instantly in the study. He knelt a few moments before going downstairs, and perhaps he asked God to help him to carry out his mother's admonition 'to be good and brave.' Then as he followed the butler to the study door the parting words of Skylark gave him courage, 'keep up your heart, and never despair!'

Charlie told his grandfather that he was sorry he had grieved him, and didn't think he was doing wrong when he went away from the house. But Mr. Smythe was very angry, and administered a severe flogging to the boy.

Charlie stood all the punishment bravely. He could not believe that he deserved it, for he had not disobeyed any order either of his grandfather or gover-

ness in walking out of the house. He knew he had made a mistake in supposing he could walk all the way to Mile End and back to Bayswater before dark; but he thought that mistake did not merit so severe a chastisement.

Weeks and months passed on. Charlie grew taller, and made progress with his studies, finding less difficulty in mastering the French verbs, but receiving little encouragement or commendation either from his grandfather or governess.

Once or twice every week the strap was administered for trifling errors; but Charlie was getting quite used to such treatment, and he always tried 'to keep up his heart' when the signal was given for a thrashing.

The only really kind words he heard in that house were from Martha, the cook. Whenever he went out, not only the governess but also the footman accompanied him, in case, as his grandfather said, 'he should be wicked enough to try and run away again.' He was watched and followed about the house as if he had been a desperately bad boy and always seeking for an opportunity to get into mischief. He was not permitted to read any books except those which Mr.

Smythe chose to lend him, and which were far beyond his years. Books on etiquette, on the manners of polite society, on distinguished noblemen, on the county families of England, on the history of the House of Lords—such was the dry stuff which Charlie was told to read. His only real pleasure arose from his thoughts; and they were thoughts of the past—of the kind people he had met with—his mother and father, Mrs. Clarkson, and Skylark. He was always on the look-out for Skylark when he went down Oxford Street; but, never seeing her, he was giving up all hope of meeting her again. It was nearly six months since the two parted in Whitechapel.

One bitterly cold day he was walking down Oxford Street with the governess and the footman when, in the distance, he observed two people standing in the gutter. On approaching nearer he found they were an old man and a girl. On getting nearer still he was delighted to find that the girl was Skylark herself. She had on the same long, old, threadbare, faded waterproof cloak, and the same straw hat with the bunch of artificial wild flowers. The man she was with had white hair, appeared to be blind, and played a fiddle.

Whilst the old man played, the girl sang sweetly 'Comin' through the Rye.' There were five or six people standing listening. Charlie's two custodians paid little attention to the street musicians, and were walking on. But Charlie stopped. The governess and footman took hold of Charlie to compel him to walk on, and tried almost to drag him; but Charlie would not be dragged; he was quite prepared to risk a flogging when he got home if only he might have a word or two with Skylark. He managed somehow to slip out of his attendants' hands, and, pressing his way between the little knot of people, soon got on to the curb close to Skylark, and just as the melody came to an end.

'Skylark, how are you? Do you know me?' said Charlie, holding out his hand.

'Know you? I should think I did, *rather*. I'm quite well, thanks; how's yourself?'

'Not very happy, but trying to "keep up my heart," Skylark.'

'That's right, young gent. How's "old Strappy"?'

Charlie was going to reply, but the footman pressed forward and took hold of him by the shoulder.

'Wait a minute, please,' said Charlie to the man; 'have you got a penny?'

'A penny, no—not for beggars,' replied the footman.

'They're not beggars,' said Charlie, 'they're trying to earn their living as much as you do.'

Then Charlie appealed to the governess for a penny, and she said, 'I couldn't think of such a thing.'

Charlie turned again to Skylark with a disappointed look upon his face.

'Never mind, Charlie,' said Skylark; 'don't bother. You're a plucky little chap, I see; but you'd better be off with them two swells, or you'll get into an awful row. Good-bye, little man; keep your pecker up.'

So Charlie went away with his custodians, feeling angry that he couldn't have five minutes with his friend.

The little group of people who stood around the 'perfessionals' in the gutter were highly interested in the scene that had just taken place, and made remarks about the footman and the haughty-looking governess that were not at all flattering.

Skylark collected a few coppers, and then sang

another song. In the middle of it she was ordered to 'move on' by a policeman. So she 'moved on,' leading the blind fiddler to another spot.

It was a wonder poor Skylark had not long since moved *off* the London streets and the stage of life for ever. Out in all weathers, badly fed, and badly clothed, one would have thought that a few months of such a life would have been sufficient to carry her off to a better world—where there is no easterly wind, no biting frost — to join the heavenly singers, who are never ordered to 'move on.'

But Skylark took care of herself in her own way, and that rusty old waterproof did wonders for her. We are afraid as much cannot be truly said about the crazy green silk umbrella.

And perhaps Skylark's Heavenly Father was taking care of her on purpose that she might do work for Him amongst her fellow-creatures by-and-by. We shall see.

Charlie *did* get into 'an awful row' when he reached home. His conduct in Oxford Street was duly reported to Mr. Smythe. Of all the wicked things that Charlie could be guilty of, the most

wicked was, in Mr. Smythe's estimation, 'mixing with the lower classes.' Now, he had decidedly 'mixed,' or, at all events, had attempted to 'mix with the lower classes' that day, and, therefore, a severe punishment had been richly earned.

Mr. Smythe, as we have already said, never did anything in a hurry; he thought a great deal of that characteristic. So on the present important occasion he took time to consider the just and proper penalty for the youthful culprit. Charlie was locked in his room for an hour, whilst his grandfather stamped about the study, trying to invent some new punishment for wicked little boys.

At last Charlie — we call him by that name, although Mr. Smythe always called him 'Augustus'— was summoned to the study. He had made up his mind to explain to his grandfather who Skylark was. So as soon as he entered the room he began to explain, saying the words he had prepared beforehand; but he only made matters worse, whilst he stammered and grew very nervous.

'Now, sir,' said his angry relative, standing on the hearthrug, his legs apart, and his thumbs stuck in

his waistcoat armholes, 'don't attempt to make excuses; excuses don't go down with me. You've done wrong—you know you have—you, you, you, you villain!'

'No, I don't,' stammered out Charlie.

'Silence, sir!' and Mr. Smythe stamped his heavy foot on the ground; 'don't add sin to sin by telling a falsehood. You've done wrong, very wrong—very wickedly, in fact; you've tried to spoil my generous and kind endeavours to make a gentleman of you by talking to beggars in the street! Now, sir, for such outrageous and ungrateful conduct I'm going to punish you. Don't think you're going to have the strap; oh, no, that's too good for you. Rutland Smythe knows what he's about, especially with wicked boys. Now, then; first, you'll have to go without your dinner for a week; second, you'll have to learn by heart the names, titles, honours, crests, and mottoes of twenty of the most distinguished noblemen of England; and, third, you'll have to make a solemn promise, with your hand on the Bible, that you'll never, on any pretence whatever, speak to beggars, or mix with the lower classes. The third part comes

first; that's the easiest, I should think. You'll have to make the solemn promise now. There's the Holy Bible; bring it here on to the table.'

'But I can't make that promise, grandfather.'

'What, sir! you can't!'

'No, grandfather, I can't. It would be worse than telling a lie to make such a promise, because I couldn't possibly keep it. I like poor people, and when I'm older I intend to do them good and be their friend.'

Charlie had 'put his foot into it' now, with a vengeance.

'What, sir!' roared Mr. Smythe; '*you like poor people*, and intend to mix with them when you grow older!' As he spoke, he seized Charlie by the arm and shook him. 'Are all my pains, and care, and anxiety, and generosity to be thrown away? Oh, it's too bad, it's too bad!' And Mr. Smythe looked as if he was going to cry; but he didn't, though. Then he walked towards a bookcase for the strap; he couldn't resist making use of it, after all. The strap always hung on the bookcase, close to the Bible. And down the weapon came on Charlie's back.

'Keep your pecker up!' Skylark seemed to whisper, as stroke after stroke fell upon 'the little chap's' long-suffering body.

'Be good and brave,' his mother's words, came also to strengthen him in his time of need.

Mr. Smythe did not throw away the strap until he began to pant for breath, and the perspiration streamed down his red, puffy, round face.

When Mr. Smythe had partly recovered his breath, and dried his face with his twenty-one-shilling pine-apple-pattern silk handkerchief, he said to Charlie, his voice trembling with agitation and anger, 'Now, sir, put your hand on the Book and make me that promise.'

'I can't, grandfather; I can't, really, make it.'

'Wh—at!' The way that word is divided means that Mr. Smythe's voice dwelt upon it for three or four seconds, whereby intense astonishment was expressed. Then he took hold of Charlie's arm again, and, whilst he shook him, said, 'You—you—you—you—you—you—you—;' he was trying to think of some word or name which would appropriately describe his grandson's disobedience 'you — you — you—you viper!'

Charlie could not see at all in what respect he was like a viper; he thought that reptile was something like an eel, and wriggled and twisted about into all sorts of shapes, and stung anyone who touched it. He knew he did not wriggle and twist and sting, and thought the black strap was a good deal more like a viper than he was; for that *did* sting—'rather,' as Skylark would have said—and it twisted about into all kinds of shapes.

'You won't make the promise?'

'No, grandfather; I would if I could.'

Mr. Smythe now turned white with rage, and paraded the hearth-rug, making the boards creak with his heavy step. Charlie had never seen him look so peculiar. Then Mr. Smythe stretched out his arms, and, with his hands doubled up, shook them as he slowly advanced again towards Charlie.

Charlie felt a little alarmed, and stepped back a yard or so.

Mr. Smythe was fuming with passion. He followed the youngster as he retreated, and then with his open hand gave him a blow which sent him staggering against a carved walnut sideboard, containing precious

works of art in china, earthenware, and porcelain, bought for a fabulous sum at a nobleman's sale to please Mrs. Smythe.

As Mr. Smythe withdrew his hand his toes caught in the edge of the Turkey carpet, and he was thrown heavily on to the floor.

Mrs. Smythe, hearing a noise, entered the room, and found her husband in the above undignified position, her expensive ornaments scattered on the floor, many broken in pieces, and Charlie lying on the ground with his head against the sharp corner of the sideboard.

'Oh, my precious ornaments!' exclaimed the lady. Then she thought of her husband. 'Whatever are you doing?'

'Can't you see I've fallen down and can't get up without assistance? Help me up and send for brandy, do.'

The lady rendered the desired assistance, and rang the bell. Then she thought of Charlie.

'What's Augustus lying there for? What's he broken the Duke of Kensington's priceless heirlooms for? Augustus! Why don't you speak? you wicked boy! Is he hurt?'

'Of course he's hurt, ma'am,' said a voice in the rear. It was Martha's. She had come to answer the bell, and discovered in dismay what had happened. 'Can't you see the blood running down his face, ma'am? Mr. Smythe 'll kill him one of these days; then perhaps he'll be satisfied,' she continued.

Then, stooping, she gently raised Charlie in her arms and carried him away.

Mr. Smythe, sitting in his easy chair, was too much exhausted and upset to say a word. What followed between him and his wife on Charlie's exit we know not.

CHAPTER XI.

'A MADMAN' WINS THE DAY.

CHARLIE was badly hurt, but recovered in a few days. The wound he received from the fall against the sideboard left a scar which was never removed.

He still firmly refused to make the promise required by Mr. Smythe. He began to understand how it was some people hated one another, and felt that if ever he did hate anyone it would be his grandfather. But he tried to stifle this feeling, because he remembered his mother's teaching that it was wrong to hate anyone. He was sure his grandfather hated him, and thought of the words of Jesus Christ, 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which

despitefully use you and persecute you.' He knew he could try to do good to his grandfather, and pray for him too, but was sorry that he did not know in the least how he could possibly love him. He thought he would ask Mrs. Clarkson, the first time he saw her, if she could help him in the matter and show him how he could love this 'enemy' of his.

As for Mr. Smythe, he was almost at his wits' end to know what to do with Charlie. He was coming to the conclusion that he would never be able to make 'a gentleman' of him, that his great object of securing an able representative in Charlie amongst the 'upper ten,' whereby the name of Smythe might secure a leading place on the muster-roll of England's worthies, was destined to utter failure. Moreover, a suspicion arose in his mind for the second time, that he might possibly have been going on the wrong tack in his training of the boy. He had almost decided to get rid of Charlie, and advertise for a promising, good-looking youth to take his place, when a new idea occurred to him. He had heard of Eton and Harrow, and, knowing that the aristocracy send their boys to these schools, thought if Charlie became a pupil at

one of them he would lose his 'low and vulgar ideas,' and imbibe the manners, notions and characteristics which he deemed were the peculiar property of the 'cream of society.' He therefore set Mr. Flint to work to ascertain all particulars respecting the terms, fees, &c., at both Harrow and Eton.

About this time John Russell, Charlie's father, so far recovered that he was dismissed from the asylum. Going straight to Mrs. Clarkson, he heard what had become of Charlie. Mrs. Clarkson did not tell him everything; she thought he was in too weak a state of health to hear all the ill treatment Charlie had suffered. At first he thought it was great kindness on Mr. Smythe's part to provide a comfortable home for the boy, but when he learned that it was a purely selfish motive that had induced the retired grocer to take charge of him, and that Mr. Smythe had been very unkind, his feelings changed.

Then he decided to go to Bayswater at once, see his son, thank Mr. Smythe for providing the boy a home, and request that he might be allowed, now that he had recovered, to take Charlie under his own charge.

On reaching Bayswater he sent his name up to Mr. Smythe, and asked the favour of an interview. Mr. Smythe, who happened to be in an unusually bad temper, declined to see him.

Russell sent a second message, to the effect that he would feel much obliged if he could spare five minutes, as he had something important to say, and allow Charlie to come down and speak to him.

This message roused Mr. Smythe's indignation.

'The idea,' he said to himself, 'that this common working-man should dare to come here, and expect me to talk to him! and expect to see Augustus, too! It's infamous!'

'Tell the fellow,' said he to the footman, 'that I consider he has grossly insulted me, that I can't allow him to see Master Augustus.'

It was John Russell's turn now to feel indignant and angry. However, he kept as cool as he possibly could. He was determined not to go away without seeing both his father-in-law and Charlie.

'Please ask Mr. Smythe,' he said to the footman, 'where I shall find Mr. Flint.'

The footman demurred to carrying a third message, but at last consented.

As the man retired Martha appeared at the kitchen door.

'Follow him, quick!' she whispered; 'it's your only way to see the master. I'll tell Charlie you're here.'

Russell, adopting Martha's suggestion, went after the footman, who failed to hear the footsteps behind him, the stairs being covered with such thick carpets.

On opening the study door the footman was startled to see Russell slipping by and entering before him.

'Wh—at!' exclaimed Mr. Smythe, at the very top of his voice.

'Good morning, sir,' said Russell, with as much calmness as he could command. 'Wishing particularly to see you, I have ventured to come upstairs, contrary to your wishes.'

Mr. Smythe made an effort to prevent the 'common working-man' from saying any more, but Russell went on.

'I am much obliged, sir, for the interest you have shown in my son, and giving him a home during my

long illness. Now that I have recovered, and am able to work for my living and take care of Charlie, I am unwilling to be parted from the boy any longer, and respectfully request that you will allow me to remove him to a home of my own. I am in no great hurry for the change to take place, so long as you will permit me to see my son for a few minutes now.'

'Be off at once, you insolent fellow! I want nothing to do with a madman escaped from the asylum!'

Mr. Smythe kept at a distance from Russell, as if he was half afraid the 'madman' would produce a knife or a pistol and destroy the rich man's valuable life.

'I am not mad, Mr. Smythe; neither have I escaped from the asylum. I was discharged perfectly cured, and am as sane as you are. I do not wish that there should be any unpleasantness between us, Mr. Smythe; and I desire the sad recollections of the past, before my dear wife was taken away, to be buried and forgotten. I wish to live in peace with you and with everyone.'

Mr. Smythe's passion rose higher and higher. He deemed it a fresh insult that Russell should think there was any relationship whatever, even of peace and goodwill, between his noble self and 'a common working-man.'

'Do you hear what I say? Be off, sir, instantly!'

Russell had hard work to keep his temper. 'I have a right to the control of my son, and therefore demand to see him.'

Mr. Smythe, springing forward, flew to the bell-handle, pulling it unmercifully for several seconds, until, in fact, the footman and Saunders appeared in the room out of breath with rushing upstairs.

'Saunders, put this man out: be careful, he's mad. If you can't manage him between you, fetch a constable.'

'Very well, sir,' answered Saunders.

'As you are resorting to force, Mr. Smythe,' said Russell, 'and you refuse me the custody of my son, I give you notice that I shall see a magistrate forthwith, and obtain an order to compel you to deliver up my boy.'

Saunders and the footman were clumsy and incompetent hands at ejection. The one was fat and bloated, and the other thin and melancholy; and neither had been accustomed to athletic exercise. So they bungled very much. They began by trying to imitate the way a policeman takes a man in charge; but the imitation was anything but perfect. Saunders took hold of one arm and wanted to turn Russell round his way; the footman took hold of the other arm and wanted to turn 'the madman' round his way. So it was an awkward piece of business; for poor Russell could scarcely be expected to accommodate both parties by cutting himself in halves.

'Hands off!' exclaimed Russell. 'I'm not a felon, nor yet a madman. I'll leave this house; but I'll soon get redress, for the law is on my side.'

Russell turned to go.

'Keep hold of him!' shouted Mr. Smythe. 'He'll be rushing about the house committing murder.'

The three men were now descending the one flight of stairs leading to the front door, with Mr. Smythe in the rear. Saunders and the footman laid their

hands again on Russell's arms, this time with anything but a bold grasp.

They had now reached the middle of the hall, and Mr. Smythe was standing on the first step at the foot of the staircase. Russell turned to address his father-in-law. The servants possibly thought he was going to attack their respected master; so one seized him by the arm, and the other rammed his fingers between the back of his neck and collar.

'Mr. Smythe,' said Russell, 'if you mean by this treatment—' He did not finish what he intended to say, for an individual, about three feet and a-half in height, in knickerbockers and stockings, came darting downstairs. It was Charlie himself.

'Father!'

The boy was just on the point of flying into his father's arms when Mr. Smythe pushed him backwards so that he fell on to the stairs.

'Coward!' exclaimed Russell, with a look which Mr. Smythe was not likely soon to forget. 'Charlie, my boy, my darling, are you hurt?'

Russell caught up his child, hugged him to his breast, and smothered his face with kisses.

'Saunders! are my orders to be obeyed, or are they not?' yelled Mr. Smythe. 'Fetch a constable! Do you hear?'

But the servants dilly-dallied. The butler opened the door, and looked up and down the road; whilst the footman seemed more melancholy than ever. Perhaps they began to think that their master was the madman.

On the first landing stood Mrs. Smythe, looking over the banister, much interested and a little agitated. She knew she was better out of the way.

On the second landing, looking over the banister, stood Martha, her handkerchief at her eyes, but thankful that Russell had secured possession of his son.

On the third landing the governess and housemaid were likewise looking over the banister, the one fearing she was going to lose her pupil and her situation, the other rather thankful at the prospect of having one bedroom less to clean out and keep tidy.

'Mr. Smythe,' said Russell, with Charlie still in his arms, 'neither you, nor your servants, nor constables shall part me from my child. That coward's blow separates you from us for ever! Make way!'

And the servants made way, opened the door wide, one standing on each side, as if the Prince of Wales himself was taking his departure, whilst Russell walked out with a clear conscience, and Charlie, in the best of all places—close to his father's heart.

CHAPTER XII.

ROBBED AND RUINED!

ON the evening of the day on which Charlie was released from 6 Victoria Mansions, Martha presented herself to Mr. Smythe in the study.

'Well, Martha, I didn't send for you. It's too early to think of to-morrow's dinner.'

'I just wanted to say, sir, that I intend leaving to-morrow.'

'Intend leaving to-morrow! What's the matter? Has something dreadful happened?'

'It's only right, sir, I should tell you why I am going; although the telling of it may prevent you giving me a character.'

'Come, whatever is it?'

'Well, sir, I'm very grieved at the unkind and cruel way in which you have treated that poor boy and his father.'

'Stuff and nonsense! What's that got to do with you? Mind your own business!'

'Well, sir, I mean what I say; and now Master Charlie's gone I'm going too.'

'Then I shan't pay you your wages, nor yet give you a character.'

'Very well, sir; I didn't expect you would pay them. I'll willingly forfeit a month's wages to get away from the place.'

'You great ——'

Martha did not hear what her master called her, for she straightway left the room to begin packing up.

The next day the melancholy-looking footman timidly knocked at and opened the study door.

'If you please, sir,' said the young man, clearing his throat, and with a good deal of humming and hahing, 'I wish to give you a month's notice to leave from to-day.'

'A month's notice! Another inferior going! What's the matter? What's up?'

'Well, sir, I ain't quite comfortable; that's all.'

'Ain't quite comfortable? What do you mean, fellow? You get your wages paid regularly; you have as much as you can eat and drink, and you get one night off in three weeks; ain't *that* comfort? You shall not go unless you give a proper reason.'

The young man was in a fix; he had a reason, but was unwilling to divulge it, for fear his master should refuse to give him a character. He did not possess the inventive faculty; and it would have taken him a day or two to invent an untrue reason which he could state to Mr. Smythe without faltering. He was not addicted to telling great falsehoods; there was certainly that much in the young man's favour.

'Now, then, out with it! If I don't know the reason you shall go without a character.'

'Oh, that's it, is it?' thought the young man to himself. 'It'll be no character, anyhow.'

'Well, sir, I must be straightforward ——'

'Quite so.'

'Even if I give offence. I'm not quite comfortable.'

'That's what you said just now, you idiot!'

The young man's mind was *now* quite made up. What little temper he had arose.

'Well, sir; fust, I ain't bin used to be called bad names by anybody; and, second, I've bin used to the hupper succles; and the tradespeople is a-beginnin' to say among themselves that you ain't no gentleman.'

'Wh—at!' bellowed Mr. Smythe, starting from his chair, and frightening the candid young man, who beat a timely retreat to the door. '*I ain't no gentleman!* You scoundrel! You—you—you—you—you ——'

Mr. Smythe could not think of a second name bad enough, so what did he do? Why, he flew to the bookcase for the strap! On seeing this movement the footman hastily, though prudently, retired, leaving his master to discharge his wrath by beating poor Charlie's shadow with the strap—provided he believed in such things as people's shadows and ghosts.

* * * * * * * *

'Saunders, I can't understand what's become of

Mr. Flint. He ought to have been here three days ago with Monday's rents. He's always so punctual and regular; he's never missed once calling every day until this week. I'm afraid he must be ill. Just walk up to St. John's Wood—you know the address—and make enquiries.'

'Very well, sir.'

This anxiety about Mr. Flint arose in Mr. Smythe's mind a few months after Charlie's departure.

After the lapse of an hour Saunders returned, looking flurried and perplexed.

'Well, Saunders,' enquired Mr. Smythe, 'what's the result of your visit?'

'Please, sir, the 'ouse is empty, and a board up for it to be let.'

'House empty! Surely Mr. Flint would not change his residence without informing me. Are you certain you went to the right house?'

'Quite certain, sir. I enquired of the neighbours, who told me Mr. Flint began to move about ten days ago, and cleared out for good last Friday. They hadn't no idea where he'd gone to. Then I went to the 'ouse-agent; but he was wuss than the

neighbours, for he didn't know nothing at all. He said the landlord lived an 'undred miles in the country, but he wouldn't give me the address unless I wanted to take the house. That's all the information I've got to tell you, sir.'

'Well, I suppose he's gone to another house, and he's taking these three days to get straight again. But he's certainly neglecting his duty by not calling with the rents and telling me of the change in his arrangements. He may have written, you know, and the letter got lost on the way; or perhaps it's been delivered and never brought up to me. Just you go downstairs, Saunders, and make strict enquiries of all the servants.'

'Very well, sir.'

The servants denied all knowledge of any letter delivered and not sent up to the master.

Mr. Smythe was just a little anxious; but nevertheless he slept well that night, snoring so loudly, in his usual way, that the people in the next house thought of sending in a complaint and requesting that the nuisance might be abated. Mr. Smythe had the utmost confidence in the integrity

of his 'man of business,' and felt sure he would 'turn up' on the morrow.

The morrow came, and Mr. Flint did not 'turn up.' Something else did, though.

Amongst the letters on Mr. Smythe's study table was the following:—

'REGENT STREET.

'W. Vintage and Co. present their compliments to Rutland Smythe, Esq., and beg to inform him that having made repeated applications, through his agent, Mr. Flint, for their account (*£249 16s. 6d.*) without obtaining a settlement, they will be compelled to instruct their solicitors to take the usual legal proceedings to recover the debt, unless payment be made forthwith.'

Mr. Smythe was, naturally, thunderstruck; in fact, he had never in his life received such a shock. He had drawn a cheque for this account of Vintage and Co., who were his wine merchants, several months back.

It is not to be wondered at that he had no appetite for his breakfast. He felt seriously ill.

Scarcely had the untasted mutton chops been cleared

away (Mr. Smythe always breakfasted alone; his wife always having her breakfast in bed; that, she considered, was one of the luxuries of the 'upper ten') when who should make his appearance but the landlord, with a respectful request that the last quarter's rent, long overdue, might be paid without further delay. Another shock for poor Mr. Smythe!

Mr. Smythe referred to his cheque-book, and showed the landlord that the rent had been paid within a week after it was due.

'Then I've never received it, sir,' said the landlord.

'Never received it!' exclaimed the alarmed tenant.

'No, sir.'

'Something dreadful has happened! I don't know what, I'm sure. Mr. Flint has not been here for four days! Give me time to make enquiries, will you?'

'Oh, certainly, sir. As soon as convenient the money will be acceptable. Good morning, sir.'

Mr. Smythe grew at last suspicious concerning the upright character of his 'man of business.'

Several other applications arrived for overdue bills; and matters reached a climax when the following note, marked 'Private,' was put into his hands.

'THE BANK OF BELGRAVIA.

'RUTLAND SMYTHE, ESQ.,

'DEAR SIR,

'I beg to intimate that your account at this Bank has been overdrawn to a considerable amount. Your early attention to the matter will oblige.

'I am, dear sir,

'Yours obediently,

'MONTMORENCY FITZ-GEORGE.

'Secretary.'

Mr. Smythe never perspired so much in the course of his varied career. He owed many thousands of pounds.

To make a long and painful story short, Mr. Smythe was utterly ruined! Mr. Flint had 'bolted' with every sovereign and every penny he could lay hands upon belonging to his over-confiding employer.

It was found that he had been carrying on his roguery for more than a year. Whither he had gone no one knew. Some said Spain, others South America. He had been favoured with a whole week to get clear away out of the reach of the law. The case was put into the hands of the police; but no clue whatever could be obtained of the thief's whereabouts.

All that remained to Mr. Smythe were his houses at the East End, and furniture, carriages and horses at the West.

The large creditors were disposed to be lenient, and to give the debtor time to pay his debts; but the smaller ones, who hated Mr. Smythe with deadly hatred, would not hear of leniency.

So Mr. Smythe was made a bankrupt. His houses, furniture, horses and carriages were sold by auction, by which means his creditors received two shillings in the pound.

Mr. Smythe, much altered in appearance, left Victoria Mansions, and took up his abode in cheap lodgings in a third-rate street off the Edgware Road.

Mrs. Smythe, declining to share her husband's sorrows, went down to her friends in a remote Buckinghamshire village.

Mr. Jim Smythe went hopelessly 'to the dogs,' to which end his course had been tending for many years. He left the country in disgrace, and no one ever heard afterwards what became of him.

Mr. Smythe, with his hundred thousand pounds vanished for ever, knew not how to get a living. He

had no money to re-open a grocer's shop, and he had too much silly pride to seek employment in his old trade. He had no friends. And a man or woman without a friend in the world is one of the most grievous and pitiable of spectacles. It was Mr Smythe's own fault, it is true, that he was left in this friendless condition. Had he used his wealth aright, got rid of his foolish pride, and shown kindness, thoughtfulness and unselfishness towards others, he would have gathered around him troops of friends, whose sympathy and help would have been freely and gladly rendered in the hour of his misfortunes.

Some people with no heart, like Mr. Smythe himself, or with very little of it, said, 'Serve him right;' some said, 'Poor old Smythe!' which meant there was a spark of sympathy in their breasts. A few sincerely pitied him; amongst them were Charlie, his father, and Skylark. Charlie wanted to go and see his grandfather, and tell him he was very sorry for what had happened; and Skylark wanted to go with him; but no one knew Mr. Smythe's address, or where he was to be found, and so their wish was not gratified.

Hopeless, friendless, despairing, without employment, and without an object in life, Mr. Smythe went on to a worse ruin than that which had already befallen him. He took to drink. He spent his days and nights in low public-houses, getting people to treat him to beer and spirits.

In this miserable condition we leave this human wreck for the present.

CHAPTER XIII.

JUVENILE PHILOSOPHY.

'This life is a difficult riddle,
For how many people we see
With faces as long as a fiddle,
That ought to look shining with glee.
I'm sure in this world there are plenty
Of good things enough for us all,
And yet there's not one out of twenty
But thinks that his share is too small.'

SO sang a cheery voice as its owner mounted the stairs, and then came a rap at the door.

'Come in,' said Charlie Russell; 'I know who that is.'

'Do you, now?' said Skylark, entering the room. 'That's the worst of being a public character; everybody knows yer wherever yer goes.'

'You don't mind that, I know.'

'How do you know I don't?'

'Well, I *do* know.'

'That's only a gal's reason. You're a young gent who ought to have a reason with a proper—now, what's that word?—what they builds houses upon, you know.'

'I'm sure I don't.'

'*F'undation*, that's the word.'

'A reason with a proper foundation? I think I see what you mean.'

'Well, give us a proper reason, then; 'cos I likes to know the why and wherefore of everything.'

Skylark, unfastening her waterproof at the neck, and placing her umbrella in the corner by the fire-place, sat down in a second-hand but comfortable easy chair to hear the 'young gent's' reason.

'You don't mind everybody knowing you, because you've nothing to be ashamed of; you never seem to do wrong.'

'Oh, my gracious me! I never do wrong? You should jist hear old Mother Stubbs go on, that's all! then you'd know better. Why, haven't I told you o' that vile temper I've got, and the way I tears my clothes, and the way I spends all my money afore the week's

out, and the names I calls the little vixens as won't keep in tune when I'm a-leadin' "a family party" in the gutter, and the rows I gets into with Mother Stubbs 'cos I can't wash my clothes properly, and lots and lots more.'

'But look here, Skylark; you talk of spending all your money, but you don't spend it on *yourself*, you know.'

'How d'ye know that, sir?'

'Because I know.'

'A gal's reason again!'

'Well, I'll tell you, then. I've seen you more than once go into that pie-shop in the road and buy a sausage-roll for a hungry, starving-looking child.'

'Oh, you nasty, prying feller! I shall call you Peter Spy.'

'No, I wasn't prying, now then. I was passing, and couldn't help seeing you.'

'Oh, yes, I *daresay*. And I expect you went straight to another pie-shop and bought *two* rolls for some starving kid with her nose flat as a penny against the winder! Ah, ah, ah, Master Russell! I've got you there, my child!'

'Did you say Mother Stubbs got angry with you sometimes?'

'Oh, yes; you *are* artful! You want to change the subject, I see! Well, she do get angry, horful angry, just like a tiger! Sometimes she says she'll box my ears. But *I know she won't*, though. Nobody's ever boxed *my* ears, Charlie; and, what's more, they never will!' As Skylark said this she rose to her feet for a moment, tossed back her head, and, raising her arm, shook her forefinger vigorously, as if she really meant to shake it off.

'You see, Master Charlie,' she went on, 'I've got a sperrit. It ain't wrong to have a sperrit, is it, Charlie?'

'I should think not. I wish I had a spirit, that's all.'

'Why, so you have. It's my opinion—and I know a thing or two—you've got a splendid sperrit.'

'But, then, you see, Skylark, my ears have been boxed, and a good many times, too.'

'Ah, but that wasn't your fault, don't yer see? You couldn't help it. Sarcumstances alters cases. My sarcumstances 'as bin more favourable, don't yer see? *I* think you're a plucky little chap, and, if you don't die, you'll grow up to be a fine young man, and I ain't

a-flatterin' of yer; flatterin' ain't in my line a bit; I says jist what I thinks, and what I thinks I knows.'

'How do you know I'm plucky?'

''Cos I *do* know.'

'Well, but that's "a girl's reason."' Charlie burst out laughing.

'Well, *ain't I a gal?*' asked Skylark, demurely.

'I suppose so,' answered Charlie. 'But then, you know, some people call you "the little old mother."'

'Ah, but that's only a nickname, one o' th' noomerous nicknames that people christen me with. Talking about boxing ears, how's the bruises, Charlie?'

'Oh, I don't think of them now.'

'Except when you see 'em, then yer bound to think of 'em.'

'Well, you know what I mean.'

'Yes, I 'specks I do. You're a brick, Charlie!' Skylark arose from the easy chair and slapped Charlie on the shoulder when she called him 'a brick.' 'I see,' she continued, 'you wants to "forgive and forget;" that's what *I* call *noble*. But 'ow about that scar on yer cheek, Charlie? You won't have to look in the glass as long as yer live, or you won't *ever* "forget."'

'I shall get used to it, and never think anything about it.'

'I tell yer what, Charlie; if I'd bin your grandfather's granddaughter, wouldn't I have given him a piece o' my mind, that's all!'

'I rather think you would, Skylark.'

'*Rather!* Perhaps it's just as well I wasn't. Have yer heard yet what's become o' th' poor old chap?'

'No, we haven't. Father's been all about the Edgware Road and Lisson Grove lots of times, asking for him; but he can't hear anything at all about him.'

'P'r'aps he's changed his name again. He's fond o' changing names; in fact, it's a pecooliar weakness of his. Fancy calling you "Augustus!" Puffickly ridic'lous! He might just as well have called yer "Albert Edward Prince o' Wales" whilst he was about it. I 'specks it'll be a case o' th' pie-shop some day.'

'What do you mean?'

'Why, you or I 'll see him with his poor old red nose flat against the winder, and we'll have to out with a copper for a sausage-roll.'

'I hope he won't get as badly off as that.'

'No telling. Lots o' people come to wuss than that,

who used to drive, as proud as peacocks, in splendid carriages. What are yer looking at?'

'At my slate.'

'What's on yer slate?'

'Sums.'

'Bother sums! But then I s'pose it's part of a boy's eddication. 'Tain't in my line, anyhow. Wish I could help yer; but I can't, so there. Anything very difficult?'

'Yes, rather.'

'Oh, you'll manage the 'orrid things right enough.'

'I mean to, somehow. Do you remember what you said to me, Skylark, a long time ago when we parted in the Whitechapel Road after I'd slept in Mother Stubbs' kitchen?'

'Not I. I say such lots o' things—too many by half.'

'Why, you said, "Keep up your heart, and never despair!"'

'Did I, though? Well, that's good advice, ain't it?'

'Very good advice; and I've never forgotten it. I *have* kept my heart up, Skylark; and I never despair of doing anything I ought to do.'

'That's right, Charlie. Stick to it. There's nothing

like it in this world. If folks 'ud only keep up their hearts, they'd all get on; but they don't and won't, and so they don't get on. Why, where do you think I should a-bin if I hadn't kept *my* heart up?'

'I don't know, I'm sure.'

'Why, in my grave—long enough ago—and a *pauper's grave*, too, Charlie! What d'ye think o' that? No stone, no name, no nothin'! It won't bear thinking on.'

'No, it won't.'

'I don't want to come to that.'

'Well, you *won't*.'

'I should just like a stone, Charlie—with my name on it—and just a few flowers on the grave—poppies 'ud do—or marguerites.' Skylark spoke slowly and softly, and looked sad and very thoughtful.

'Look here, Skylark; you're not keeping up *your* heart—talking about graves!'

'Good gracious me! no more I'm not. Why, I'm only a young woman yet, and I'm talking about dying! What a creature I am, to be sure! Oh, Charlie, you ought to slap me for being so silly.'

Charlie was highly amused at Skylark's very sudden return to a cheerful frame of mind.

'I say, Charlie, whatever did I come here to-night for?'

'Just to see how I was getting on, I suppose. You said you would come now and then.'

'I didn't come to-night to see how you were getting on, so you're just wrong. I came for somebody else. Lor'! whatever was it? How have I bin a-gossiping, and a-gossiping, and a-gossiping about one thing and another, and a-interferin' with yer eddication—no, that's wrong—ed-u-cation—that's it. Oh, Charlie, I do get to talk so badly, and I forget all my manners; in fac', it's quite a trouble to me. Why, I used to talk ever so much better when I first saw you than I do now. But there—it all comes of keepin' bad company.'

'Why, you don't keep bad company, Skylark.'

'Oh, don't I, though; that's all *you* know about it. Isn't it keepin' bad company when all the folks you mixes with never pernounces one single word proper? That's 'ow I've got into the same bad way. Lor', Charlie, afore I went to Mother Stubbs, when I was bein' took care of by that lady and gentleman who died, I used to talk that beautiful people were quite taken with me. But now I'm another person altogether.'

'Well, it's all right, Skylark; don't bother about it.'

'Who said I was bothering?'

'Well, you were just going to.'

'No, I wasn't. Mind *you* don't keep bad company, or you'll come to what I've come to. Look at poor old Smythe, for instance; he's come to what he's come to all through keepin' bad company.'

'But he had no company at all at Bayswater; nobody ever came to see him.'

'What about Flint, then? Wasn't he company?'

'Oh, well, yes, I suppose so.'

'You see I'm right. Flint was a bad 'un; and it's puffeckly 'stonishin' what mischief one bad chap 'll do. But look here, Charlie; what on earth am I talking about? I came here to-night to see your father. Where is he?'

'Oh, he's working overtime at the yard, and won't be home till late.'

'Then I can't see him?'

'He might be home soon now. You had better wait a little longer.'

'I want to ask his advice on a *very serious matter*.'

'What's it about?'

'Me.'

'What about you?'

'Oh, you're too young to give advice. But look here, Charlie, if you'll promise to keep it quite dark I'll tell you.'

'Of course I will.'

'Well, I know you will if you say you will. If folks was to know of it, or had the least bit of 'spicion that I was a-goin' to retire from the perfession, I should go mad—I know I should.'

'I don't know what you mean.'

'Well, I'll tell yer; here goes.'

CHAPTER XIV.

SKYLARK DECIDES TO BE RESCUED.

'P'R'APS you ain't aware that a real live lady 'as bin a-visitin' me and Mother Stubbs.'

'No, I hadn't heard.'

'Well, you know now. And I know who sent her; it was your father. I do like your father, Charlie; I like him as much as if he was my own father. He's *genwin*—that's jist why I like him. There's no gammon with him. And then, although he ain't rich, he tries to do good to poor folks and ragged kids. Well, he knows this lady. She's got such a pretty name—Lady Blanchflower. She goes amongst the poor and does all sorts o' kind things. Orphans and sichlike she sends off to 'sylums, 'omes, and them sort o' places, where children are looked arter and brought up proper.

Well, the lady says to me, "Skylark, would yer like to be rescued from the streets?" Charlie, you might a-knocked me down with a feather! I felt that queer, Charlie—well, you don't know how I felt. That vile temper o' mine was a-goin' to get me into trouble, and I was jist on the pint of sayin' something about mindin' her own business—the words was jist on the very tip o' my tongue, but thinks I to myself, "She means well," and so I said, "I don't quite know what yer mean, yer ladyship." Yer see, I knows how to talk to grand folks. Then she began explainin'. She says she thought I must be very uncomfortable and wretched. I said, "Not at all, yer ladyship; I was never happier in my life." Then she said she'd like very much to have me educated, and have my voice trained, and then I should be able to sing before large audiences and in church choirs. Well, I didn't know what to say to that; so I just told her I was much obliged and 'ud think about it. Then I said I had a 'gagement, and must go. So I went. But I bobbed my head in proper style afore goin'; in fac', Charlie, I caught my 'eels in my waterproof and down I went whop on to the floor. But I didn't mind that, no,

not I. Look here, Charlie, this is what I want to know, and what's a-tryin' my feelins: *Do I want to be rescued, or don't I?* Is that clear?'

'Yes, I understand. Wouldn't it be much better to do as the lady wishes than remain as you are?'

'Well, I dunno about that. There's objections, *very serious* objections.'

'Tell me one.'

'Here's one. For all these years I've bin doing jist as I like—I've bin my own missus; and if I go and do as Lady Blanchflower wants me to, all that 'll have to stop, and I shan't be any longer my own missus.'

'Well, that isn't much to be frightened about.'

'Oh, ain't it, though; that's all *you* know. Then, look here, Charlie; I don't want to be a "charity girl." You've seen them, haven't yer? walking two and two, all dressed alike, with a brown horfully ugly straw hat and a yard o' ribbon at a hap'ny a yard round the crown. On their shoulders there's a ugly somethin' or other, and then they've got ugly frocks; in fac', Charlie, them girls is ugly altogether. And I don't want to be a "charity girl;" no, that won't suit Skylark. Just

fancy *me* in one o' them tup'ny-hap'ny hats, Charlie! Why, you wouldn't know me. You'd think I'd gone mad. No, them hats wasn't intended for Skylark.'

'It wouldn't matter what you wore.'

'Oh, wouldn't it, though. There you are again; you don't know nothin' about it. You're not me, or else you'd know better.'

'Well, I don't know much about girls.'

'No, you're only young yet. Then there's another objection, Charlie. Lady Blanchflower says I must have a proper name when I go to school. I said my name was Skylark. She only laughed, and said it was very pretty, but it wouldn't do to go to school with. Now, Charlie, what's your 'pinion? Do you think the lady wants to call me "Stubbs"?'

Charlie laughed at the idea of his friend being christened Stubbs.

'The lady didn't say that was to be your name, did she?'

'No, she didn't say so; but I 'as my 'spicions. Oh, Charlie, fancy me bein' called Stubbs! It 'ud make me ill; I should die, I know.'

'No you wouldn't.'

'Don't contradict. Of all names in this world, Stubbs is the very wust that ever was made. And I won't be called Stubbs, so there!'

'Well, there are plenty more.'

'Oh, yes, I know that. Mother Stubbs brought out that sock that I was a-wearin' when they found me on the towing-path when I was a mite of a baby. Just fancy *me* bein' a baby!' And Skylark's merry laugh rang through the room.

'I wonder if you cried much.'

'I know I did if I had that same vile temper as I's got now. Well, you know, that sock's got "M. W." darned on it in red cotton; so Mother Stubbs says somebody must give me two names, one beginning with M, and the other with W. Charlie, I wish you'd think of one beginning with M that 'ud do for me—a pretty one, mind.'

'I know plenty beginning with M. "Mary"—how would that do?'

'Not at all; it's too common.'

'"Martha?"'

'No, that sounds too old.'

'"Mabel?"'

'Oh, my! No, I should think not: that's a West-ender.'

'Well, then, how will "Marion" do?'

'I dunno. It's rather pretty.'

'I saw it in a book I was reading the other day.'

'Get the book, please; and just read to me what they say about her.'

Charlie soon found the book on a modest set of shelves in a recess by the fireplace.

'Here it is. And this is what they say about her, on the very first page: "The child Marion, about ten years old, had a pretty rosy face, with dark grey eyes—"'

'Not like mine, then.'

'"And a mass of light brown hair tumbling over her shoulders."'

'I cut mine short.'

'".She was unfortunately troubled with a bad temper—"'

'That's me!'

'"Which often got the better of her, and made matters unpleasant at home."'

'Quite true.'

'"But notwithstanding this rather painful feature in her character—"'

'*Very* painful, I should say.'

'"She had many attractive qualities, which endeared her to those around her. She was kind and attentive to her brothers and sisters—"'

'Well, I ain't got no brothers and sisters.'

'"And it was her great delight to amuse and nurse her youngest sister, a little baby."'

'I don't like babies, so there.'

'"Her father was a Member of Parliament—"'

'Oh!'

'"And she often had a drive in her father's carriage—"'

'Oh!'

'"When he went to attend the debates."'

'Shut it up, Charlie. "Marion" won't do at all. Try again, there's a good boy.'

'I don't think I know of any more beginning with "M."'

'Oh, yes, you do; try.'

'I know. You're fond of marguerite daisies, Skylark.'

'Yes.'

'Well, I think "Marguerite" is French for "Margaret." How would that do?'

'"Margaret"—"Margaret"—"Margaret"—a trifle too long—too much to spell; and I'm a bad speller, Charlie. Stop a bit. Ain't "Maggie" the nickname for "Margaret"?'

'Yes.'

'That'll do, then, splendid. I like "Maggie;" I look like one, don't I? "Maggie"—yes, I think that'll do. I like it better than any of the others.'

Charlie was not quite so sure. He repeated 'Maggie' several times, to see how it sounded.'

'That's enough,' said Skylark. 'I shall be Maggie, and I begin to feel a different person already.'

'I shan't call you "Maggie," you know,' said Charlie.

'Why not?'

'Because I like "Skylark" better than any other name.'

'But that ain't a name.'

'Well, I like it, and I shall always call you "Skylark."'

'Very well, have your own way; you're obstinate—

that's your failing. I say, Charlie, I do believe I should like to be "rescued," after all.'

'I'm very glad you feel like that.'

Skylark leaned back in the easy chair, looked pensively up to the ceiling, and was silent for a few moments.

Then she said, 'Charlie, I want to be good.'

'Well, you are good—very good.'

'No, I'm not; so don't say I am.'

'You're not bad.'

'Yes, I am; least, I'm not as I'd like to be. Charlie, I'm a queer gal. I've got a lot in me that I want to bring out, and I can't. I know you don't understand, but that don't signify. You think I never cry; but I do, though. Now, don't go and blab, there's a good boy. I never said such a thing to any creature in this world afore.'

'No, I won't blab, Skylark.'

'No, I know you won't. Well, I do cry sometimes, but all on the quiet, when I gets away from everybody and begins to think. Thinking don't agree with me, 'cos it affects my sperrits. Well, I cry when I think of what's happened, and what ought to a-happened, and

what might happen. I cry when I think that I never had a mother and a father like yours, and what a difference it would a-made to me. And I think about the future, and whatever's to become of me if ever my voice goes, as some people's voices do. Mother Stubbs wouldn't have me no longer, and I'd have to go and 'awk flowers, or papers, or matches in the streets. And I should break my heart if I came to *that!* Then the people I mixes with are not at all my style; they don't do me no harm, but they're such a rough lot; and they don't care what becomes of 'em. I *do care* what becomes of *me.* I want to mix with nice people—people who like what's nice and beautiful in the world, and ain't for ever cursin' and swearin' and usin' bad grammar; people who think more of each other than they do of themselves, and are kind, and thoughtful, and obligin', and ain't cruel to cats and dogs and horses and donkeys, and keeps themselves clean and 'spectable, and don't beat children nor yet their wives, and don't make fools o' themselves in the publics, and try to make other people happy and good. That's something like what I mean by nice people; but it ain't all; there's lots more I'm thinking of that I don't know how to put in words.'

'Can *I* help you, Skylark?' asked Charlie, who was now sitting on the table, one end of the slate on his knees, and the other under his hands and chin—looking straight at Skylark, listening attentively to every word that tripped off her tongue.

'No, child, thanks; you can't help me. I really don't quite know what I do want to be; but I want to be something I ain't. Tell you what, Charlie,' she added, after a pause, 'I do believe I should like to be jist like Lady Blanchflower.'

'I've never seen her, so don't know what she's like.'

'Well, she's nice—real nice. She can sing, too—lovely. If I was only like her I do believe I should be 'appy. Not that I ain't 'appy; but you know what I mean, Charlie. If I was like her I should never cry—least, never no more about myself. *She* must cry sometimes, 'cos of the horful sights she sees amongst the poor; she couldn't help it, 'cos she's so tender. *I* shouldn't mind crying about other people—not everlasting blubbering and looking dreadfully un'appy, 'cos that 'ud give poor people the shivers and make matters wuss; but now and then, you know, all on the quiet, when something dreadful's happened, or when people

won't be good, spite of all you do for 'em. Didn't Jesus Christ cry sometimes?'

'Oh, yes.'

'It couldn't a' been about Himself, 'cos He couldn't be better than He was. It must a-been about other people, I guess. Charlie, don't I wish Jesus Christ was living now, that's all! I'd let *Him* rescue me in a minute. I shouldn't have the least bit o' 'spicion about *Him*. He'd let me have my liberty, I know, although He did rescue me. He was the nicest Man that ever lived—I do know that much. He was so tender, you know, and so loving to children and people who'd got into trouble, and so wonderfully good, and so clever, and He spoke so kind to everybody, 'cept them 'orrid fellers that thought 'emselves so mighty good and all other people horfully wicked. My goodness! wouldn't I have given them a bit o' my mind! Just fancy them fellers thinkin' they were better than Jesus Christ! It jist shows what pride comes to. Oh, Charlie, I never told what happened some weeks ago one Sunday.'

'No, I don't think you did.'

'Well, I'll tell you. I was lying down on the grass

in a shady place in Victoria Park, looking straight up at the sky. It was blue nearly everywhere; and I wondered what it was made of, and what there was beyond it. And, whilst I was a-lookin', and a-thinkin' all manner o' things, a cloud—not very big—came to the very place I was looking at and stopped. Then it slowly changed its roundish shape into the figure of a large cross. It was black at first, then turned red, then gold, then white, then it seemed to go away suddenly, and I never saw it again. But just before it went away I saw a little black speck that seemed to come out of it. The speck came down and down, nearer and nearer, and I wondered what it could be. Then I heard something singing, and I looked into the trees close by, but couldn't see no birds. Then I looked up to the sky again, and saw the speck 'ud got very much nearer; then I saw it was a bird—a skylark, really and truly—singin' his hardest: down and down, nearer and nearer he came, till he settled close to my very feet. The little chap didn't stay long; he soon sailed away again—up, and up, and up, and up, right away, and I wished he'd carried me with him. Now, Charlie, wasn't that sing'lar?'

'Very. Just as if the skylark brought a message to you from the cloud, from the cross, from ——'

'From Jesus Christ. That's what I thought, Charlie, really. I'm not sooperstitious—not a bit; but it did happen, and there's no tellin' why it happened. And there I was a-thinkin' and a-thinkin', until at last I got up to go home. I nearly walked right into the water 'cos I was a-thinkin' so much; I told yer thinkin' didn't do for me. Well, Charlie, I've been a-thinkin' about the dear little chap's message that he brought down to me from that cross, and wonderin' what it means. What do *you* think it means?'

'It means a lot, I think,' Charlie replied. 'I wish I could paint what you saw and make a picture of it.'

'How could you possibly do that? The cross changed its colour, you know, from black to red, from red to gold, from gold to white, and from white to nothing at all 'cept the pretty little skylark. How could you paint all that?'

'It couldn't be done and make one picture of it.'

'That's jist my 'pinion. There's some things, Charlie,

that can't be painted. But what do yer think of the bird's message, what does it mean?'

'I think it means that Jesus Christ knows all about you, and He wants you to keep cheerful and happy, because better days are coming.'

'Do you think it means that?'

'Yes, I do.'

Skylark was silent for a few moments as she leaned forward, resting her head on her hands, gazing at the carpet, but busy with her thoughts.

Suddenly starting up she exclaimed, 'Charlie, I've made up my mind to let Lady Blanchflower rescue me; I b'lieve she's a pertic'lar friend of Jesus Christ, and so 'll rescue me properly.'

'I'm very glad, Skylark, you've made up your mind; I'm sure you won't be sorry.'

'Well, I've made up my mind; and when I've once made up my mind there's no moving me; so there, Charlie. But I must go; whatever 'll Mother Stubbs say to me stayin' all this time; a pretty kettle o' fish there 'll be, I know.'

'Can you spare just a minute to sing something before you go?'

'Well, I always like to oblige a friend when I can. What 'ud you like?'

'I don't mind a bit what it is.'

'Well, you shall have a new 'un; only sang it once yet in public, and it drew a crowd, I can tell yer. It's a reg'lar topper, but it's 'ard; all things are 'ard that's toppers; least, that's my opinion. The blind fiddler sent a queer old chap with long black hair to teach me this song; and it takes a lot of learnin', I can tell you. Now then.'

Skylark stood against the table, looked up at the ceiling, and warbled out this song—'The Blind Girl to her Harp.'

'My Harp! my own beloved Harp!
My fingers o'er thee stray;
And wake the sounds that bear my thoughts
To brightest realms away.

In sorrow unto thee I turn,
So touching is thy tone;
That, listening to thy fitful woes
Makes me forget my own.

I cannot see thee; but thy touch
Thrills through my ev'ry vein,
And feelings half-forgotten start
Back, back to life again!

I sing of skies both blue and bright,
Of flowers of varied hues,
Of sunny smiles, of beaming eyes,
And diamond-glistening dews.

All meaningless would be my song,
And were it not for thee;
But thou dost well interpret all
Their thousand charms to me.

My heart from sorrow passes
To glory's proudest theme;
And in thy martial music
Ten thousand warriors gleam.

I hear their falchions clashing,
I see their banners wave,
I join their shout of victory,
And triumph with the brave.

But then a low dull moaning
Falls from the tuneful strings;
And Sympathy awaketh
Her sad imaginings.

I hear the vanquished flying;
I see the wounded dying;
And Pity learns to mourn too late
The orphans' and the widows' fate.

My Harp, my Harp, oh! never more
Awake thy stirring thunder,
Nor nerve the warrior's arm to tear
Our dearest ties asunder.

But be it thine, with gentlest tone,
O'er sorrow's bosom stealing,
To wake the ruthless heart to love,
And kindle human feeling.

My Harp, my Harp! my own beloved Harp!'

'Thank you, Skylark; I'm very much obliged: that's a very pretty song, but difficult,' said John Russell, who had entered, unperceived, during the progress of the melody.

'Lor', Mr. Russell! you did frighten me!'

'I'm sorry; but never mind; you'll soon get over the fright.'

'Yes, just as I do everything else that upsets me. That's a trying song, Mr. Russell; trying for the voice and for the feelin's too; once a day'll be quite enough for it. It ain't quite my style, it's too serious, and yet I likes it. I seem to forget all about myself when I'm a-singin' it; in fac', I begin to fancy I'm the poor blind girl herself. I wish I played the harp; I play nothin' at all; I'm a reg'lar dunce. The old blind fiddler says we'll 'ave to be content with the fiddle; harps is so expensive, and a pianner's quite impossible. Mr. Russell, don't you think that music, and the harp in per-

tic'lar, is meant to speak thoughts and feelin's as we can't find no words to tell?'

'I do think so, decidedly. The best music expresses the heart's deepest feelings, that no language can fully express.'

'I was only saying jist now to Charlie that even a poor thing like me 'as a lot in my mind that I can't get out. But when I 'ears good music—the organ, now, at church—it seems to go right through one, and brings out jist exactly what one wants to say, and so it's a great relief. No wonder people are so fond of music. It must do a mighty lot o' good in relievin' people's minds. It was very kind of God to let people 'ave harps, and organs, and fiddles, and sichlike. What *would* people be without 'em? It strikes me we should all go mad!'

'Very likely, Skylark. Music is one of God's great gifts to man. And it would indeed be a sad, gloomy, broken-hearted world without it.'

'I say, Mr. Russell, I'm a forgettin' all about what I came for; I came to ask your advice, but it's too late now; Mother Stubbs 'll go crazy if I don't get home sharp.'

'I can walk with you a little way, and hear what you have to say.'

'But you're tired and want yer supper.'

'Not too tired to go a few yards with you, Skylark. Charlie, put the kettle on, there's a good boy; I want a cup of coffee when I return.'

'Well, I feels honoured, Mr. Russell; for it ain't often I gets a gent to 'scort me home. Good night, Charlie, boy. Tell your father I've stopped yer doin' those 'orrid sums.'

'All right, Skylark; good night, and come again soon.'

CHAPTER XV.

DOING A GOOD TURN

AS will be understood from the last two chapters, Charlie and his father were living together in lodgings at Mile End. Mrs. Clarkson came in once or twice a week, to tidy-up the rooms and to do anything that was necessary for a woman to do.

Charlie attended a day-school, where he tried his best to make up for deficiencies in arithmetic and other subjects which his grandfather had foolishly forbidden him learning because they were so 'vulgar.'

John Russell had obtained employment at a large builder's, and his health was, happily, perfectly restored.

He was deeply interested in the intellectual, social,

and moral improvement of his own class, and occasionally addressed meetings of working-men. He became known to Lady Blanchflower, to whom he related Skylark's history, with all her good and clever qualities, expressing a hope that her ladyship might be able to rescue her from the perils to which she was exposed, and place her in some Children's Home where her training and welfare would be attended to.

Lady Blanchflower, tall of stature, winning in manners, with a striking and attractive face, and a heart full of sympathy for the wants and sorrows of the poor, had devoted her life to doing good in the East End of London.

Not yet in the prime of life, and connected with one of the highest families in the kingdom, she had suffered many bitter sorrows and keen disappointments, which, whilst they caused a revolution of feeling with regard to the round of gaieties to which she had been accustomed in fashionable West End circles, where her presence was courted and her amiable character and pleasant disposition were admired, opened a deep fountain of sympathy in her heart for

all who had to contend with misfortune and trouble, especially amongst the poorer classes. Although fully able to appreciate the pleasures and privileges which wealth and rank can secure, yet she felt that, in order to carry out thoroughly and successfully her benevolent intentions, she must break away from society, and be entirely free from all its demands on her time and attention. So, bravely facing unfriendly and slanderous comment, she left the charmed circle of fashion, to devote her life and wealth to the wants of that much larger circle, where ignorance and crime, sickness, starvation and destitution rule with iron hand.

We already know from Skylark's own lips the proposal that Lady Blanchflower made to rescue her from the streets, together with the girl's final decision on the matter.

The fulfilment of her ladyship's wish respecting Skylark was hindered by a serious occurrence, threatening to destroy all the girl's hopes of becoming 'jist like Lady Blanchflower.'

Skylark had been singing one day for several hours on and off, with a woman and a boy, in the neighbour-

hood of Bloomsbury, Fitzroy Square, and Portland Place. A fine afternoon was followed by a wet evening. The 'party' faced the rain for some time, but, there being no prospect of it ceasing, they determined to close their day's performance and go home. The three were walking together down a street leading into Tottenham Court Road, when Skylark's attention was directed to a little crowd of boys and young men on the other side of the street. Ever eager to discover the why and the wherefore of a crowd, she ran across to see what was the matter. She found in the centre of the group a miserable-looking elderly man, wretchedly clad, and without a hat. He seemed to be more silly than tipsy. His clothes were covered with mud and filth, and the boys were hooting and jeering and pelting him with rotten vegetables.

'What's the matter?' exclaimed Skylark.

'Oh, he's drunk,' said one.

'He ought to be locked up,' said another.

'He's crazy,' said a third.

'Then you ought to be ashamed of yourselves, every one of you!' cried Skylark, her hot blood

rising instantly at the sight of the poor fellow being thus cruelly treated.

'Get out of the way!' said Skylark, as she pushed past some big boys.

'Who are yer shovin' of?' gruffly asked one of the boys.

'I'll show yer who I'm shovin' of, parcel o' cowards! You ought to be hung for treatin' the old man like this! I'd 'ave yer all locked up if I only could!'

A volley of rude laughter greeted Skylark's words.

'I don't care for your laughing, not I! You'll all laugh the wrong side of yer mouth some day!' said the girl.

Skylark had got her poor old green silk umbrella open; this also excited the boys' ridicule.

'How much for the new gingham, old gal?' cried one; but Skylark did not hear. She had reached the miserable-looking man, and was trying to make him understand that she wanted to be friendly and to take him home. Grasping his arm, she induced him to walk a few steps.

'Where do yer live?' she asked.

After staring at the girl for a few moments the man muttered, 'Dials.'

'Oh, the Dials, that's it, is it? I know the Dials well, and it's jist the way I'm going, so come along with me, old chap. Cheer up; we shan't be long going home.' Then, turning to the boys who were following, she said, 'Now, then, be off; d'ye hear? or I'll tell the first p'liceman that you've nearly murdered the poor feller.'

She soon reached Tottenham Court Road, leading the old man by the arm. The boys had now all dropped off one by one, and the woman and boy who had been singing with Skylark had disappeared. The rain came down in torrents. Skylark, observing that her companion was so badly clothed, and that his thin, ragged coat was next his shirt, unfastened and took off her waterproof, exclaiming, 'Look here, old chap; just you put my waterproof round yer, that 'll keep yer as dry as anything.'

The man made no reply, but allowed his 'friend in need' to throw the cloak around him.

Then the two went on again. It was toilsome work, plodding through puddles and mud. The man could

only shuffle along; and Skylark heartily wished he would make an effort to mend his pace. She urged him once, but it was of no use. Still he shuffled on, never opening his mouth. They crossed Oxford Street and were entering the Dials when a bright-looking fried-fish shop attracted the attention of both. The old man seemed hungry, and directed longing eyes towards the brown steaming fish which customers were eagerly devouring.

'I say, old chap, let's go in and have a jolly supper. Come on. I've got threepence.'

The 'old chap' did not decline.

'Penn'orth o' fish and penn'orth o' bread for the old 'un, please, and a penn'orth o' fish sep'rate for me.'

Quickly did the supper disappear at the hands of the hatless one; and when he had finished Skylark passed him a portion of her own 'penn'orth.'

'Now we're done,' said Skylark; 'sorry there's no drink for yer; we've got it all outside us to-night for a change. Come along.'

In a few minutes the two reached a court, at the opening of which the man stopped.

'Oh, that's where you live, is it?'

The man nodded.

'Well, then, I'll say good-night; and don't let them boys get a-foolin' yer again; so mind.'

Having waited till the man had got well down the passage Skylark hurried off. Not until she reached Oxford Street did she remember that she had forgotten to ask for the return of the waterproof. She was on the point of walking back, but, on second thoughts, made up her mind to do without it, and believed it might be of more use to the old man than to her. She would make her umbrella do for her, she thought. So she set off down Oxford Street, tramping through the pelting rain. Of little use was the umbrella, for the water poured through the rents. Again and again Skylark took shelter in a doorway; but on reaching Newgate Street she resolved not to take shelter again because it was getting late, and Mother Stubbs would wonder what on earth had become of her.

On and on she tramped, and long before arriving at Whitechapel she was wet to the skin. Glad enough she was to reach Sycamore Alley, and glad

enough was Mother Stubbs to see her. But Mother Stubbs gave the girl a good scolding for throwing away her waterproof on a tipsy old man.

This was not the first time, by any means, that Skylark had 'seen people home.' Often had she come to the rescue of some silly fellow whom she knew by sight, and who had been spending his earnings in the public house. She would lead the fellow home, and earn the gratitude of the ill-used wife for having saved her husband from being locked up at the police-station and fined for drunkenness. She was well known and much liked by the poor people in Whitechapel; and if anyone threatened to do her harm she would instantly have been supported by a host of defenders.

For several mornings Skylark was missed by the people who had become accustomed to her friendly nod and cheerful 'How d'ye do?' 'What's become of the "little old mother"?' said one to another.

The cause of her non-appearance was soon ascertained, and much lamented. Skylark was lying at Mother Stubbs' dangerously ill in a high fever.

Getting wet to the skin, and going out the next

day in her damp clothes, brought on the illness. Mother Stubbs wanted her to stay indoors until her clothes were quite dry; but the girl knew Mother Stubbs owed a week's rent, and she was determined to go out and earn the money that would make up the required amount. So she went. But her heroic conduct, first on the old man's account, and then for the sake of helping Mother Stubbs, caused this illness, which everybody thought would soon bring her to the grave.

All who knew Skylark were very anxious, and particularly her near friends, such as John Russell, Charlie, and Mrs. Clarkson. Charlie was in a terrible way, and went to Sycamore Alley two or three times every day to enquire after the sick girl. It was little he could do for her, but he would willingly have done anything in his power to save her life. He often took a few marguerites and other flowers, which she could look upon when not unconscious. He thought it very hard that Skylark—so cheerful, so clever, so kind, so good, and so anxious that her future life should abound in usefulness to others—should die, for everybody said she would. He, like

many others older than himself, could not understand at all why so many good people should die early, whilst so many bad ones lived on and on till they were old and grey. Notwithstanding the gloomy view that everybody took of Skylark's case, Charlie clung to the hope that his dear friend's life would be spared, and every day he prayed with all his heart for her recovery.

The illness from which Skylark suffered was not infectious, so that the only reason for keeping visitors out of her room was that she might not be disturbed. But even this reason seemed no longer to exist, for the invalid had taken no notice of anyone for several days.

One day the doctor, Mrs. Clarkson, John Russell, and Charlie, as well as Mother Stubbs, were in the room, expecting that the end was approaching, and that Skylark's sweet voice would never again be heard singing the songs she loved, and cheering and helping the sad-hearted and weak. There, on a little old-fashioned, ramshackle bedstead, lay the poor girl, her eyes closed, and her face thin and white. Charlie stood near the bed looking at the white face,

the tears running down his cheeks, for he could not bear the thought of losing his dear friend, who had been so kind to him. The doctor stood near the window talking to Russell in a low voice, shaking his head and saying there was no hope. Suddenly a voice came from the bed: 'I say, doctor, what's the use o' you shaking yer 'ead like that? you're only a-makin' matters wuss!'

Everybody turned, surprised and gladdened at the sound of Skylark's voice once more.

'Oh, I see you're better, young lady,' said the doctor.

'Of course I'm better; you all think I'm going to die, but I'm *not*, so there!'

'Well, you must keep quiet, you know, dear,' said Mrs. Clarkson, 'and not distress yourself.'

'Well, ain't I bin keepin' quiet long enough?' exclaimed Skylark, feebly.

'Yes, yes, my dear,' said the doctor; 'we'll bring you round again, even yet.'

'*Rather.* I say, Mother Stubbs, you ain't done with my vile temper yet, so I tells yer straight! You ain't gone and got another gal in my place yet, 'ave yer?'

'There ain't none to be got like you, Skylark,' Mother Stubbs replied.

'I should rather think not.'

'Now try to go to sleep, my dear,' said the doctor.

'Well, you *are* a doctor, 'pon my word! Here I've bin a-sleepin' and a-sleepin' for goodness knows how long, and you want me to go on at the same old game—well—well—'

The girl was exhausted; she closed her eyes and seemed to doze.

John Russell and Charlie, deeply thankful at the signs of improvement in the invalid, were preparing to leave. The doctor, although feeling rather amused at Skylark's remarks, was still of opinion that his patient was too low and weak to rally for any length of time.

Charlie was just on the point of going, when Skylark, opening her eyes again, said in a low voice, 'I say, Charlie, I want jist a word with yer before you go.'

The boy quickly returned to the bedside.

'Come as near as you can, Charlie; I want to whisper something.'

Charlie bent his head over the bed, and he took Skylark's hand. (Oh, how thin and wasted it was !)

'Charlie, boy, jist a word,' the girl said, whispering. 'I know I'm going to get well and ain't going to die, 'cos I feel I'm not goin' to, although I'm horful bad. But look 'ere, Charlie; if I do die—but I'm not going to, you know—I shall know for certain what that little bird's message meant. It 'ud mean that Jesus Christ Himself was goin' to rescue me—and rescue me *quite*—goin' to take me out of the world, to sing in that beautiful place where there ain't no night, and no pouring rain, and no cold winds. If that's what the message means, Charlie, you'll think of Skylark sometimes, won't you? and be a good boy, Charlie, and keep up yer heart. I can't say no more, Charlie; I'm horful weak, and no mistake.'

Skylark paused, and again closed her eyes, but the two hands were still clasped.

After a few moments the feeble voice whispered again, 'Just one word more, Charlie. If I do die—but I ain't a-goin' to, you know—you won't forget

what—I said—about my grave—and the stone—and the flowers, will yer?'

'No, Skylark, I won't forget.'

'And don't—let 'em cover me—with—a black pall—I hate—black palls; let it be *white*, Charlie—white—you'll remember.'

'Yes, Skylark.'

'And—you'll—try and find—"poor old Smythe."'

Then before Charlie could say anything the girl loosed his hand, and dropped off to sleep. Charlie went home with his heart nearly broken.

CHAPTER XVI.

SEVEN YEARS AFTER.

'WELL, John, and how's trade?'

'First-rate, I'm thankful to say; at least, in our firm.'

'Ah, yours is a big and wealthy firm; things are not so brisk with smaller firms, I'm afraid.'

'I'm sorry to say they're not, Martha. Several of the smaller ones have been turning off numbers of their hands every week for some time past.'

'I heard so from two or three of the tradesmen, who are alarmed at the way their returns have been falling off lately.'

'I fear there'll be much distress amongst tradesmen as well as amongst working-people during the coming winter.'

'Another cup of tea, dear?'

'Well, just half; and don't forget the sugar, please.'

'Oh, yes; I know you've got "a sweet tooth."'

'I confess I have. I like as many of the sweets of this life as I can get; and when I get the "sours" and "bitters" I try to make the best I can of them.'

'I believe you do, John. It's just as well we do get the "bitters" sometimes, or else we shouldn't appreciate the sweets.'

'I say, Martha, you've forgotten the sugar, after all!'

'Well, I never! so I have. That's through talking about the "bitters."' A merry laugh rang through the room. 'There, help yourself.'

'Thanks.'

'Well, John, isn't there a lesson to be learned from my forgetting the sugar? You know you often say there are important lessons to be learned from the little things of life.'

'Just so. This is the lesson, then. We mustn't think too much about the "bitters"—the troubles of life, and so forth—or else we shall forget the "sweets"

—the pleasant things that lie close at hand waiting for our use and enjoyment.'

'There's a good deal in that, John.'

'You *can* make a good cup of tea—there's no mistake about it, Martha.'

'Of course I can. There are just three things I'm a little bit proud of. I can make a first-rate cup of tea; I can grill a chop to perfection; and I can boil a potato that can't be beaten anywhere.'

'You're quite right. Those are some of your minor good qualities. If all the wives of working-men were as good cooks as you are, there would be less drunkenness and misery.'

'That's perfectly true. All men with a spark of taste in them like their victuals cooked nicely, I know.'

'That reminds me, Martha; I should like to help some of those chaps who are out of work—fellows with large families.'

'By all means, John; let us do what we can.'

'We can't do much; but a little's better than nothing at all. There's Tom Kelly, the Irishman; he's a decent sort of fellow, only he takes a drop too much

sometimes. I'm hoping bad times will teach him sobriety. He has a wife and four or five young children. Look here, Martha, suppose we promise to send him a nice joint of meat every Saturday as long as he's out of work?'

'Capital! What sort of wife has he got? Is she a good cook?'

'I don't know, I'm sure.'

'Am I to show her how to cook the meat?'

'Well, perhaps it would hardly do to interfere about the cooking; it might be awkward, and lead to unpleasantness. Some women don't like to be told how to cook; they all think they know how to do it. That's a weak point with many of them.'

'Oh, indeed, sir. Then I suppose it's the case of the "sweets" and "bitters" over again. If we hadn't got our weak points, you men wouldn't appreciate our strong ones. Is that right?'

'Quite right.'

'John, I really think I'm getting quite as much a philosopher as you are!'

'When women begin in that line they usually get far ahead of the men. So I know what to expect.'

'It's just as well to be prepared. Now I must clear away and wash up.'

'Wait a bit; let's have just a few quiet minutes over the fire before you begin.'

'Well, you *are* a man for your fireside!'

'It's about the best place for a working-man, isn't it, Martha?'

'I suppose you're right again.'

'Particularly when there's a kind and loving wife to keep the fire bright.'

'Now, you're beginning the sentimental, you know.'

'Well, we can't get on without a little of the sentimental, Martha. That's one of the "sweets" that *everybody* in the world can enjoy, for it can be got without money.'

'Well, I must say, I like your "sentiments," John. But, tell me, now; you didn't marry me because I happened to be a good cook, did you?'

'Why, you know I didn't.'

'Of course I knew you didn't.'

Then John got *very* sentimental; he went up to his wife, put his arm around her, and gave her a hug and a kiss—perhaps two!

'I married you, Martha, because you had been so kind to Charlie, because of your goodness of heart, and because I loved you for yourself.'

'Well, John, this much I'll say—I never have been happier in my life.'

'God grant you may be able to say the same thing year after year as long as we live!'

'Amen, John. And may *you* be quite happy too. Not as happy as when your Ellen was alive; that you can't expect, because one's first love is always the deepest.— But I must really wash up; then there's Charlie's supper to get ready, you know.'

'He's late to-night.'

'Yes; he said he thought he would be late, because they're very busy preparing the pictures for a new *Life of Christ*, and a lot of pictures for an illustrated paper.'

'I met the vicar to-day; he asked after Charlie, and was pleased to hear he was getting on so well. He thought I had done right to put him to a trade for which he manifested a liking as well as talent. Some time since I showed him those drawings that Charlie did, and it was his opinion that, though rough

in workmanship, they displayed decided marks of genius.'

'Charlie will become a celebrated draughtsman or artist some day.'

'Well, I hope he may continue to make progress. The vicar also enquired after Mr. Smythe, and was surprised that we had not yet been able to discover him. He thought it very probable that the old man had found his way into some suburb or a town near London, and was being kept at the workhouse. He was very interested when I told him Charlie had spent so many Saturday afternoons and evenings in making enquiries in all the low quarters of London. I begin to think the old man must be dead.'

'Here's the dear boy.'

'I'll open the door for him.'

John Russell arose and answered the bell, letting 'the dear boy' in.

'Well, young man, you want your supper, I should think.'

'I should think I do, father. There was no time for tea to-day, so I'm as hungry as a ploughboy.'

'Oh, yes, I daresay,' said a voice in the kitchen; 'if you go on like that you'll eat us all up!'

'All right, mother; you needn't be frightened; I'll leave a bit for you and father, at all events.'

'Well, sir,' said Mrs. Russell to Charlie, as she entered the parlour, 'and what do you think I've got for your lordship's supper?'

'I haven't an idea.'

'Guess.'

'Pease pudding.'

'Pease pudding! No. Apple dumpling.'

'That's the style, mother; you know my likes and dislikes. Is it as big and as nice as that dumpling you brought me when I was in bed in that attic at Bayswater, about ten years ago?'

'I don't know, I'm sure; I've forgotten all about that.'

'But I haven't, mother; I shall never forget that supper as long as I live.'

'Well, you *must* be a good cook, Martha,' said John Russell, laughing.

Charlie was soon hard at work demolishing the supper placed before him.

'I say, father, whoever do you think I saw to-day?'

'Your grandfather?'

'No; Saunders, the ex-butler.'

'Indeed! What had he to say?'

'Nothing very good, I'm afraid,' said Mrs. Russell.

'You're right, mother; it was nearly all very bad. I was walking along the Strand, and saw a man staring at me. Then he came up to me and said, "Mr. Augustus Smythe, I believe." I recognised him, and burst out laughing, and said, "No, I'm not Augustus Smythe; I'm Charlie Russell." Then he said, "Well, I thought you might like the fashionable name now you're older, although you didn't like it when you were younger." Then he talked a lot of nonsense about my being tall, and flourishing in the world. Then he said, with a wicked sort of look in his face, "You're having your revenge fine now on the old man." "What do you mean?" I said. "Why, your grandfather—he's getting his punishment pretty hot for treating you so unmercifully." "That's not having my revenge, is it?" I said. "Well, you see you're saved the trouble; the punishment's all being done for you." "It's nothing to do with me," I said; "and

I'm sorry the old man's got into such trouble." "Sorry!" said he, his great bleared eyes looking as if they were going to jump out of their sockets; "well, you are a queer un! I should have thought you ought to have been thankful he's got his deserts." "Well, I'm not thankful; so there," I said. "It's all gammon, my young friend," said he; "and you'll be glad enough to have the chance one of these days of paying him out yourself for the way he used that strap on your back." "Look here, Saunders," I replied; "if I had that strap in my hand now, do you know what I should do?" "No," he answered. "Why, I should do my best to lay it about *your back* for your impertinence; that's what I should do. Good morning." Then I walked off, leaving the fellow looking as if he'd like to eat me up. I'm sorry I didn't try to get some information from him about grandfather; I feel sure now he knows where he is, and what he's doing; but I got so angry with the fellow for talking as he did that I quite forgot everything else.'

'Perhaps you'll see him again,' said Charlie's father.

'I might. I shall look out for him, at all events.'

'If you should see him again, Charlie,' said Mrs.

Russell, 'mind he doesn't lead you astray. He's about as bad a man as ever I knew; and he tries to make others as bad as himself.'

'All right, mother; I'll take care.'

'The police suspected him of being an accomplice of Flint in robbing Mr. Smythe; but they had not sufficient evidence,' said Russell.

'It's my firm belief Saunders and Flint were hand in glove,' said Mrs. Russell.

Suddenly there came a loud and sharp rap at the street door: rat-tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat. It sounded a good deal like 'Cheer, boys, cheer; no more of idle sorrow!' played at double-quick time.

'Whoever's that?' exclaimed Mrs. Russell.

'Why, don't you know, mother? *I do.*'

And away rushed Charlie to usher in the visitor.

CHAPTER XVII.

'HERE WE ARE AGAIN!'

'WELL, here we are again!' said the cheery voice of Skylark, as the young lady entered the parlour, and presented herself to Mr. and Mrs. Russell. 'I hope you're quite well, Martha—oh, I beg your pardon—Mrs. Russell, I mean. I wish you much joy and many years of it; and you too, Mr. Russell.'

'We are much obliged to you, Skylark, for your good wishes,' said Russell, 'and hope you'll often come to see us now you've returned to London.'

'Thanks. I'll come now and then; but I shall have a lot to do, you know, in one way and another. Lady Blanchflower intends to work me hard, I can tell you.'

'Well, it's work you like, isn't it, Skylark—or, I should say, Miss Margaret Western?'

'Oh, *don't*, Mrs. Russell: call me Skylark or Maggie, do. Yes, I like the work, and it likes me; see how I've grown!'

'You ought to be growing now, Skylark; you're getting on in life, you know,' said Charlie.

'Oh, indeed, sir; but I didn't give *you* permission to call me Skylark.'

'That's what I'm going to call you, anyhow.'

'There's obstinacy for you!' exclaimed Skylark. 'Mrs. Russell, I'm afraid you're spoiling that boy.'

'He's got beyond spoiling point, I think,' said Mrs. Russell. 'He's a man of business now, you know.'

'Oh, dear, dear, dear; how many people do get up in the world, to be sure! Well, I've come to invite you all to a concert, where, Lady Blanchflower says, I'll have to sing four songs. It's at a hall or chapel in St. Giles', and it's for costermongers and their wives and as many thieves as can be got hold of.'

'Well, but we are not costermongers nor thieves, are we, Maggie?' asked Russell, whilst everybody laughed.

'Good gracious! no—I never thought of that. You won't be admitted, then.'

'Oh, we'll try and get in somehow.'

'Will you, really? That will be kind of you; I want to see somebody I know there. 'Tis a great help to catch sight of people one knows and likes. Lord Shaftesbury's to be there, and he's to make a speech, as well as two or three other important people. I shall be fearfully nervous, I know, with such grand people close by. But I'll do my best, anyhow. If I should break down you won't laugh, will you?'

'No,' said Charlie; 'we'll cheer you all the more.'

'But I don't want to be cheered if I don't get on; so remember, Charlie. Mrs. Russell, I do like to please people—there's no mistake about it; and, moreover, I like to know they're pleased. I've met with many people who have such cold hearts that it's utterly impossible to tell whether they're pleased or not. I can't get on with such folks. Perhaps they think it imprudent to praise others — particularly young people, because they would make them vain and conceited. Mr. Russell, I don't believe in such stuff.

A word of approbation goes a long way with young folks like myself. And as to getting vain and conceited—well, I don't know what *I've* got to be vain about. God has given me a pretty good voice, which I am trying to use and improve for the sake of pleasing people. And the more I can please them the more I shall be pleased; but there's no vanity in that, is there, Mr. Russell?'

'Not in the least,' replied Russell. 'I quite agree with every word you've said. It's very hard indeed to do our best, and to do well, and yet everybody to be dumb. I know some men, and some women too, who have tried, in the face of much difficulty, to do well, and have succeeded; but all their trying and doing meeting with no approval from anybody—perhaps only fault-finding — they have grown careless, given up all effort to do right and well, and gone to ruin.'

'It's a good thing,' said Mrs. Russell, 'when we can go on trying and trying, doing our best in every way, without looking for praise from anybody.'

'It is indeed, Martha,' said Russell; 'that's the highest kind of heroism.'

'I don't possess that quality,' said Skylark. 'I shall never be a heroine,' she added, with a sigh.

'But there are various kinds and types of heroism, Maggie. The highest kind, in my opinion, is that just mentioned by Martha, where people continue, without failing or faltering, doing well, doing the right, doing their best *just for the love of doing it*, uninfluenced by what other people say. Such characters are comparatively rare, and they are to be found more often amongst your sex, Maggie, than in mine—so I think. Lady Blanchflower, now,—she's one of those characters.'

'Indeed she is,' said Skylark. 'Many people grumble at her ways of doing good; and she receives more blame than praise; but she doesn't mind the least bit. I do like her so much; she has done me a world of good. She tells me my faults and failings so kindly; and she doesn't forget to give me a word of approval when she thinks I deserve it. Oh, I quite forgot to tell you—she's coming here presently, to call for me on her way home to Stepney; so clear away those supper things, Charlie, quick!'

Up started both Charlie and Mrs. Russell.

'Upon my word, Maggie, you are naughty!' said Mrs. Russell. 'Suppose her ladyship had come in whilst the room was in this untidy state, whatever should I have done?'

'Well, I would have told her it was all my fault,' said Skylark. 'I'll help; we shall soon have everything straight. Now then, Charlie, look sharp!'

With six hands hard at work the room was made tidy in a very few minutes. And then Lady Blanchflower arrived.

'Good evening, friends,' said she, on entering the parlour; 'I hope you are all quite well. I congratulate you, Mr. and Mrs. Russell, on your marriage, and trust you may have many happy years together.'

'Thank you, my lady,' said Mr. and Mrs. Russell together.

'And how are you getting on, Charlie?' asked Lady Blanchflower.

'Very well, thank you, my lady. It's uphill work sometimes, but I don't mind that.'

'Of course you don't. There's no real success in life without hill-climbing. It's good for body, mind

and soul to have difficulties to encounter; and it's as well that they begin when people are at your age. Persevere, Charlie, and--keep your heart up. Isn't that good advice, Maggie?'

'Yes, my lady,' answered Skylark, smiling.

'Cheerfulness helps us through many troubles and difficulties; just as the band of music of a regiment keeps up the soldiers' courage. Whatever would soldiers be like without their music? What do you think, Maggie?'

'Well, my lady, I fancy they'd all "strike," to begin with; they wouldn't fight, at all events.'

'No, I'm sure they would not. If boys and girls would only begin life with cheerfulness in their hearts and the love of God as their watchword, they would be sure to get on. Now, Mr. Russell, one of my objects in calling to-night is to ask you to do me a favour.'

'I shall be very pleased to be of any service, your ladyship.'

'I've undertaken to provide a singer and a speaker for this meeting at St. Giles' to-morrow night. Maggie has promised to be the singer, and I want

you to be the speaker. A working-man is wanted; and I thought you would be the very man.'

'Well, your ladyship, I don't profess to be a public speaker, although I do talk in public sometimes, as you know, just to a few working-men.'

'And very nicely you do talk, Mr. Russell,' said Skylark.

'But he is so nervous, your ladyship,' said Mrs. Russell.

'Well, I find that nervous speakers are generally the best speakers; because what they say comes from the heart, and they *mean* what they say,' rejoined Lady Blanchflower.

'I will try and do my best, your ladyship.'

'Thank you. You'll all try and come, will you not?'

'Oh, yes, they are all coming,' said Skylark.

In a few minutes Lady Blanchflower and Skylark departed.

This chapter and the last will have shown some of the things which happened during the seven years which we have been compelled to pass over, for fear of making this story too long.

After a struggle between life and death Skylark

recovered from her illness, much to the satisfaction and joy of all her friends, and in spite of the doctor shaking his head and giving up all hope. Then Skylark was 'rescued' by Lady Blanchflower, by whom she was sent to a country cottage to regain her strength, and afterwards to a small home for girls not far from London, where her training and education were attended to. Three years later she was placed in a larger home, where she busied herself by looking after poor rescued girls younger than herself, and gave what time she could spare to her own mental improvement. Never did she regret that she had allowed Lady Blanchflower to rescue her, and often thought of the skylark's message from the cloud-cross, regarding it as a message of hope and love from heaven itself. She loved and almost worshipped Lady Blanchflower, and strove to become like her in goodness, kindness, and Christian charity. She came to London sometimes to see her friends, such as the Russells and Mrs. Clarkson, and was always anxious to hear from Charlie if he had been able to discover his grandfather. She retained her cheerful disposition and droll ways, whilst her sweet

voice, with training and care, now promised to vie with that of many a professional singer who won the applause of thousands. 'Maggie,' the name selected by Charlie and herself, was now her Christian-name, and 'Western' her surname. The latter she had chosen because an orphan girl-friend, to whom she was much attached and who died, was so called.

With regard to Charlie, the first portion of the seven years he spent at school, where he made rapid progress, and showed a decided talent for drawing. On leaving school, his father met with an opening for him in a firm of draughtsmen and engravers in Fleet Street. Here Charlie found work congenial to his tastes; and it soon became evident that his father had made a wise choice in putting him to this trade.

Charlie's great concern was to ascertain what had become of his grandfather. Both he and his father had made enquiries again and again in all parts of London, but without finding any definite trace. The only conclusion they could come to was that the unhappy man had fallen a victim to destitution and disease, and was buried in a pauper's grave.

And yet Charlie was not without hope that some

day or other he would see this man again—the man whose cruel treatment of him had left marks which would remain for life, the man for whom he felt it was impossible to cherish a spark of love, but whom he desired to find, so that he might 'pay him out,' not in the way the butler suggested, but by returning good for evil and 'heaping coals of fire upon his head.' This hope was always fostered and encouraged by Skylark, who felt as much interest in the recovery of 'poor old Smythe' as Charlie himself felt. The hints thrown out by the butler had considerably increased Charlie's hope that the old man would yet be discovered. Charlie felt that his mother in heaven, if she could only speak, would urge him to use every effort to rescue her unkind parent from misery and want. Her influence and teaching still played an important part in the formation of his character; and as he grew older he set a higher value than ever on her love and all she had done for him.

He was not sorry that his father married a second time, and chose Martha, the former cook at Bayswater, to share his home.

Soon after Martha left her situation she asked John Russell to allow Charlie to spend a few weeks down in Berkshire at her father's farm. Charlie went, and enjoyed himself thoroughly; whilst the change of air and good living brought back his former healthy appearance, which he had lost in his grandfather's house. Then John Russell went down to the farm to fetch his son; and by-and-by went again, chiefly to see Martha. And so it came to pass that he asked Martha to be his wife, and was not refused.

Although John Russell married Martha he never forgot Ellen. He and Charlie visited the grave now and then, to tend the evergreens and flowers which made it look bright and fresh.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SANDWICH-MAN OF NOBLE BLOOD.

CHARLIE was looking forward to the concert with much pleasure. He had arranged to go straight to the Mission Hall from business, and obtained permission from his employers to leave earlier than usual, so that he might be in time for the tea with which the guests were to be regaled prior to the meeting and concert. This being Skylark's first appearance before a London audience in a large building, Charlie was very anxious to be present. But his anticipations were thwarted.

It was still daylight when he set off. He turned up Chancery Lane, and then down Carey Street. At the end of Carey Street he was just entering a dirty, dilapidated court when he thought he heard

some one say, in a thick, husky voice, 'Augustus.' He turned; but at first could not make out where the sound came from. Then he saw someone sitting in the doorway of an uninhabited house. The door stood some feet back from the street. Charlie now perceived plainly that the person sitting down, with his legs stretched out at full length in the lobby, and his hands in his pockets, was a 'sandwich-man.' A pair of boards, containing some theatrical announcement, was strung across his shoulders. He had white whiskers and a long white matted beard. On his head was a battered old high hat that had seen much better days, and had suffered considerably from many tumbles in the mud. His coat and trousers were in the last stage of raggedness and decay; whilst from the points of his leaky boots his bare toes peeped out. His hat was pulled over his forehead; and Charlie could see only the lower part of the man's face.

As Charlie stood looking into the dim recess, the same hoarse, feeble voice said again, 'Augustus.' Then Charlie knew it was this wretched creature who spoke. He went forward, stooped in the doorway, and said, 'Did you speak to me?'

'Of course I did,' was the man's reply. 'Don't you know your poor grandpa?'

'Why, grandfather, is it you? I should never have known you again!' After examining the man's features closely Charlie now recognised his grandfather.

'But I know you, don't you see! I've seen you many and many a time in Fleet Street and the Strand, but you didn't see me; or, if you saw me, you didn't know me.'

'Well, I wish you had made yourself known. I've been looking out for you—and my father too—for years, and—'

'Oh, you've been a-lookin' out for me, have yer? And what for, I should like to know?'

'Because—'

'Now don't interrupt. I won't be interrupted by nobody. D'ye think a gent, a-occupyin' the lofty position I once did, 'll allow himself to be dictated to? No, indeed!' The old man spoke very slowly and feebly whilst he thus attempted to assert the privileges of his former 'position.' He made an attempt, too, by shaking his head, to display some of the energy which used to give weight to his

utterances in years gone by. In doing so he shook his hat right off, and it rolled to Charlie's feet.

'Now, take care of that hat; it belonged to a real lord, and I wouldn't have it injured for a thousand pound.'

'All right, grandfather; here it is. You had better put it on again.'

'Now, be careful! Don't brush the nap the wrong way,' said 'old Smythe,' as Charlie tried to improve the appearance of the hat with his coat-sleeve. 'Now put it on,' he continued; 'not straight, just a *leetle* down on one side; it improves one's appearance and looks upper-tennish; not too much, now, that 'ud be vulgar.'

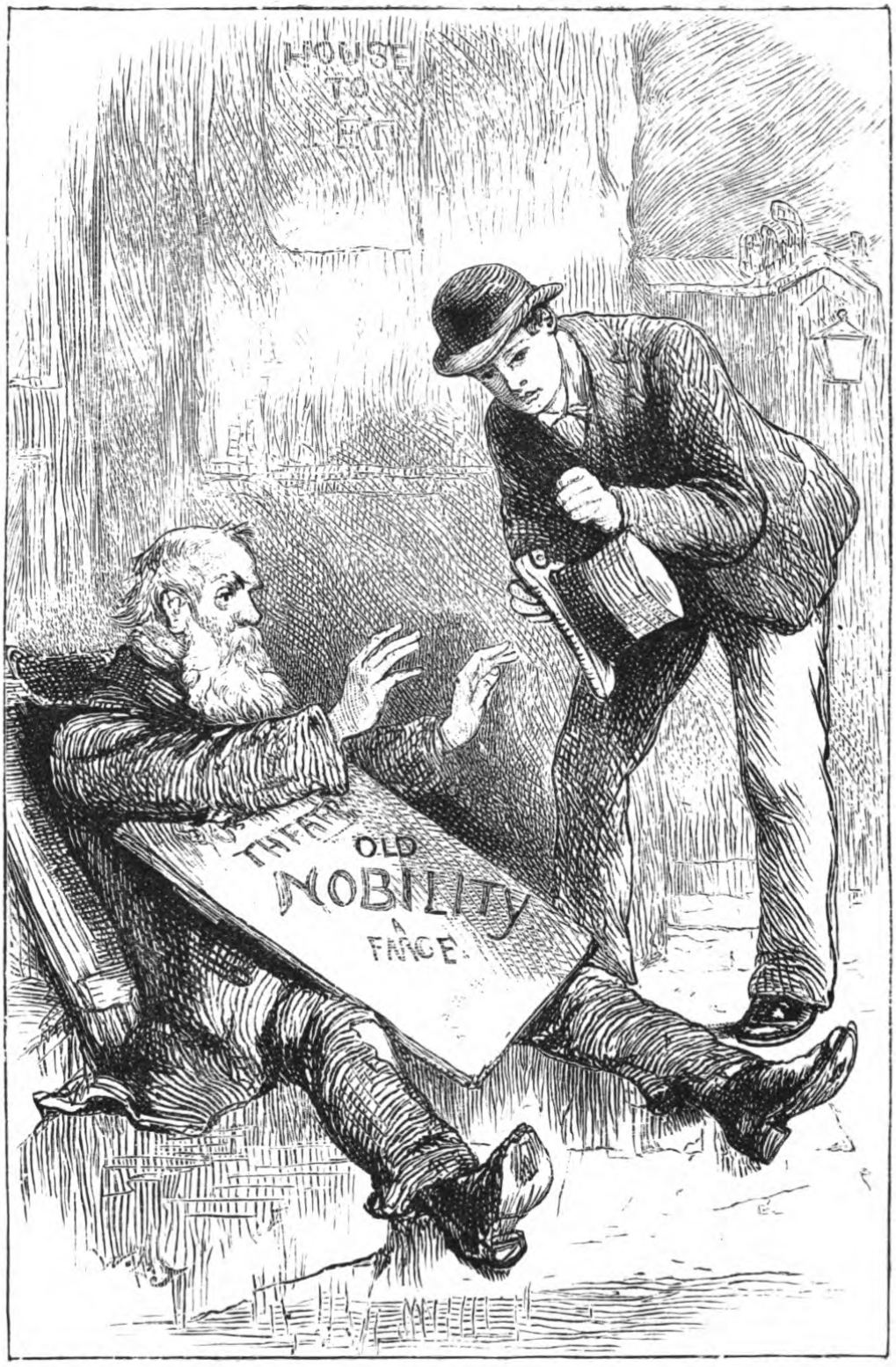
Charlie placed the hat on his grandfather's head in the way he was requested.

'It's all right, grandfather.'

'Well, I'll take your word for it, as I don't happen to have a mirror about me at the moment.'

'Won't you try and get up?' said Charlie.

'Didn't I say I wouldn't be dictated to? Now, look here, Augustus, you wished to know why I 'adn't made myself known to you long ago. I 'as my reasons, good reasons. One's pride—pride o' position; I ain't lost it, although I've come down in the world. I'm


HOUSE
TO
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a wictim, Augustus, a wictim of sarcumstances; but I've got the proud blood in me still, the blood o' the aristocracy, Augustus. It's a-coursin' in my veins at this moment; I'd show yer what it's like if I could, but I can't. 'Taint the money as makes the gent, Augustus, it's the *blood* as does it! I'm a gent, every inch o' me! And it's pride, the pride o' position, what's kept me from making myself known to them as knew me when I was better off. But there's a reason number two. Saunders, that, that—scoundrel—that, that, that infamous person—he told me you were mad to have yer revenge on me for a-tryin' to make a gent of yer in yer infancy.'

'He told a lie, and—'

'Now, don't interrupt! you forget yer manners. 'Alf an hour ago, feelin' queer and shaky, I said to myself, says I, "Rutland, yer on yer last legs; yer doomed; yer'll drop in the street, and be shovelled up like mud, and be buried with the lower orders—the very lowest o' all. That won't do, Rutland," says I to myself; "you were born for a granite tombstone or marble, at least; you'll 'ave to make yerself known to Augustus, and chance revenge and everything, and

see if he won't show proper respect to noble blood by standing the expense of a strikin' funeral and tombstone." Talkin' to myself like that I dropped down, done for, in this 'ere doorway. Who should come by presently but you yerself? Says I to myself, "It's now or never, Rutland." I makes up my mind in a twinklin' it shall be "now;" so I calls out "Augustus." So 'ere I am, a-ebbing away fast; and you can jist do what yer like to me; pay me out! 'ave yer revenge! kick me! punch me! squeeze out my breath 'twixt these two blessed boards! fling me into the gutter! I don't care a straw! Only, when you've paid me out and done with me, and Rutland Smythe's no more, my last will and solemn testament is this—give me a proper funeral, and put me where the upper ten are buried. Now, then, pay me out! It won't take five minutes to finish me off; only take care o' the hat, there's a good boy.'

The old man looked really as if he was dying. He closed his eyes, and a deathly paleness spread over his face.

Charlie's feelings may very well be understood. He was astonished at this sudden and unexpected meeting with his grandfather, grieved at finding him

in such a miserable plight, amused at his queer notions, and alarmed at his deathlike appearance.

'Grandfather, where do you live?' asked Charlie, as he bent over the old man.

There was no reply. Charlie repeated the question.

'Where do I live? Why, 6 Victoria Mansions, Bayswater, don't I?'

'That's where you used to live; but where are you living now?'

'What's that to you where I'm residing? Why don't yer begin to pay me out and finish me off?'

'I'm not going to pay you out. I'm going to take care of you.'

'What! going to *make a bill of fare* of me! You, you, you, you, you cannibal! Never mind; it don't signify; do what you like.'

'I said I was going *to take care of you*,' said Charlie, speaking loudly.

'Going to take care of me? Oh, yes—in gaol or the workus, I s'pose. The gaol I don't mind, but the workus never—*never!*'

There were two or three boys and girls gathered round the door, curious to see what was going on.

Charlie asked one of them to run and fetch a four-wheeled cab.

'I'm not going to take you to either of those places. I'm going to take you where you'll have a comfortable bed, and something nice to eat.'

'You're a-tauntin' of me, Augustus, that's what you're a-doin'. How can a grave be a comfortable bed, even though it is amongst the nobility?'

'You're not going to die yet, grandfather, if I can help it.'

'Oh, you're a-goin' to torture me, are yer? Kill me inch by inch? Going to take yer time about it? That's what yer up to, is it? Well, you'll 'ave to be pretty careful, 'cause there ain't many inches 'twixt me and the grave.'

'You won't understand what I mean. You're going to be treated kindly, and all your wants supplied.'

'You're only a-mockin' of me. I know what's what. You mean to pay me out in some way or other, so don't try and impose on me. Wish I 'adn't 'tracted yer attention, then I should a-died 'ere as I am, in peace and quietness, without bein' taunted by a bit of an upstart grandson, who won't be a gent.'

At this point the cab arrived.

'What's that?' enquired the old man. 'P'lice-van, 'earse, or workus-cart?'

'It's neither,' answered Charlie; 'it's only a cab. I want you to come home with me.'

'Come home with you? Where? What home?'

'Where my father and mother and I live, at Stepney.'

'Wuss and wuss! Your father! I see—you want him to help you to murder me! You both want yer revenge! He ain't forgotten what 'appened at the Mansions! And yer mother! Ellen! What d'ye mean? Where am I? What's up?'

'Poor old Smythe' fell back against the door, his head drooped over the board in front of him, and he seemed quite exhausted.

Charlie removed the boards from his shoulders, putting them on the roof of the cab. Assisted by the cabman he managed to get the old man, who seemed insensible, into the vehicle, which then set off for Stepney.

Evidently Mr. Smythe had been for a long time thinking about his cruel treatment of Charlie, and of Charlie's father and mother, and brooding over the idea that his grandson and his son-in-law would have their revenge if they ever discovered him. When the

ex-butler told him that he knew Charlie had determined 'to pay him out,' if he ever had the chance, his fears were confirmed. Having no practical acquaintance with the divine law of returning good for evil, he dwelt only on the unrighteous law of returning evil for evil, unkindness for unkindness, cruelty for cruelty. Tired of life and with seven years' struggling to exist, believing that his days on earth were numbered, and unable to trudge along any further with his fellow 'sandwich-men,' he left the ranks, dropped down in the shelter of the doorway, heedless of what became of him. As Charlie passed on his way to the concert the thought suddenly struck the old man that the best way out of his misery would be to make himself known, let Charlie have his revenge and 'finish him off,' trusting to his respect for his former 'position' that his grandson would see that he was 'properly buried' amongst the rich and great. Even though at the last stage of destitution, he clung to the foolish pride of bygone days, being still under the delusion that he was a member of the 'upper ten,' notwithstanding that he was down in the world.

CHAPTER XIX.

PAYING HIM OUT.

DURING the journey to Stepney 'poor old Smythe,' although recovering his senses, seemed half dazed, and exclaimed again and again, 'Where am I? What's up?' At times he seemed quite comfortable and easy, and, placing his feet on the seat opposite, imagined, perhaps, that he was riding in his elegant brougham of former days. On reaching Whitechapel he became very uneasy, and began to expostulate with Charlie for bringing him into such 'a vile neighbourhood,' as he called it. Then he ordered Charlie to stop the cab and set him at liberty. But Charlie did his best to pacify him, and continued to keep up a conversation until the cab stopped at his father's door.

A difficulty now occurred that Charlie had not thought of. Mr. and Mrs. Russell having gone to the concert, leaving no one at home, Charlie could not get into the house. He soon, however, thought of a way of getting over the difficulty. Borrowing a table-knife from a neighbour, he slipped the window-fastening, threw up the sash, entered the parlour, and opened the front door. In spite of angry remonstrance, the old man was soon taken into the house by Charlie and the cabman, led upstairs, and placed on Charlie's snug bed.

Then he broke out furiously. 'Look 'ere, Augustus,' said he, 'I'm not a-goin' to stand this. You want to murder me, and then bury my corpse in the back garden like a dog! I'll 'ave justice, I will! I'll fetch the police; I'll go to a magistrate—a West End un—and I'll tell him you want to murder me, all because I did my best, like a kind grandfather, to train yer for society, and you turned out an ungrateful traitor, and won't be a gent! Police! police! Murder! murder!'

Then the old man, exhausted, sank back on the comfortable bed and closed his eyes. Charlie, seizing the opportunity, ran downstairs, and making a cup of

coffee, in a few minutes brought it, together with some meat and bread, to his grandfather.

'Now, grandfather, here's a slice of tender beef and a cup of coffee for you.'

'A cup of coffee, indeed! How do I know it's not poisoned?'

'Poisoned!' Charlie exclaimed with astonishment. 'I'll drink some of it myself.'

'Oh, yes, that's all very fine! The poison settles at the bottom! I'm up to yer tricks!'

Charlie gave the coffee a vigorous stir with the spoon, and drank off half the contents of the cup.

'Will that satisfy you, grandfather?'

'Well, let's 'ave a drop. It smells good, anyhow. I shouldn't so much mind if you used poison of the best quality, but you—*you* 'ud use warmin-destroyer, and I'm not warmin, though it looks as if I was, from the ungrateful way you've been a-treatin' of me.'

The coffee and the food combined had a soothing effect, and presently the old man went off into a sound sleep.

Mr. and Mrs. Russell were not anxious at Charlie's non-appearance at the concert. They concluded he

had been too busy at Fleet Street to get away in time for the entertainment.

On their arrival at home they soon learned, much to their surprise, what had happened.

Mr. Russell was very pleased at Charlie's conduct, and told him he could not have done anything better than bring his grandfather to Stepney.

Charlie slept in a chair at his grandfather's side that night. The next morning he went into the kitchen and carried back a good breakfast. When the old man awoke he eyed the breakfast very suspiciously, and nothing would do but Charlie must drink half a cup of tea before his grandfather would touch it.

The next event was the appearance of Mr. Russell in the room.

'Good morning, sir,' said he to his father-in-law.

On seeing him, 'old Smythe' in alarm dropped the cup which he was in the act of raising to his lips. He made a move to get out of bed, but was prevented by Charlie.

'So you've come to 'ave *your* revenge, 'ave yer? Thought as much!' said Smythe. 'It wasn't my fault

Ellen was burnt to death. If she'd done as I wished, she'd a-been a duchess by this time. I didn't tell Saunders to kick yer out of the house, did I? And why wasn't Augustus more careful in coming down them stairs at the Mansions, then he wouldn't a tumbled against me and 'urt himself? If he'd only been a good boy and learnt his French, he'd a-been a gent long afore now. But what's the use o' talkin'? You've made up yer minds to pay me out, so begin at once, and put me out o' my misery.'

'You are under quite a wrong impression, Mr. Smythe,' said Russell, and was going to say more, but was interrupted by the old man.

'That's jist it! I *am* wrong. Fact is, you're a-goin' to fatten me up afore you finish me off, so that you may torment me all the longer.'

Both Charlie and his father laughed at this new idea of Mr. Smythe.

'Yes, you may laugh; that's only part of your willainy.'

'Mr. Smythe,' said Russell, 'you are altogether wrong. We wish bygones to be bygones. We wish to forgive and forget.'

'Pack o' lies!'

'We are anxious to make you as comfortable and happy as we possibly can, and want you to make this house your home. My wife—'

'There you are again! I told you I couldn't help the fire.'

'I was going to say that my wife—my second wife, whom you will recognise presently—will prove to you that she desires that your last days may be your best and brightest.'

'You're only a-tormentin' of me, you know you are, you, you, you, you scoundrel!'

Russell went to the top of the stairs and called out 'Martha.'

Martha soon appeared, to the intense astonishment of Mr. Smythe. After staring at her a moment or two he exclaimed, 'So *you're* in the plot! 'Ow many more to foller? Saunders 'll be the next, and then the footman. *You* want to have a finger in the pie! And what have I done to you that *you* want revenge? I didn't strike you, did I? You had yer wittals, and all yer wanted, didn't yer?'

'Oh, yes, sir. I only wish to say that I'm very

pleased we've found you at last, and I'll do all I can for your comfort.'

'Oh, dear, dear, dear! Like the rest of 'em! Why don't some of you be honest and straightforward and tell me 'ow yer a-goin' to torture me? I won't stand it any longer. I'll be off 'ome, I will!'

Smythe scrambled out of bed, and got his feet to the ground; but, finding he was too weak to stand, was glad to get under the sheets again. Dropping his head on the pillow he exclaimed, 'Oh, dear! What is to be will be! Do yer wusst!'

Whilst he slumbered Charlie and his father went off to their work, leaving him in charge of his former cook.

Charlie rode on the top of a 'bus, taking the sandwich boards to their owner. He tried to ascertain where his grandfather had been lodging, but without success.

For many days Mr. Smythe continued in the same frame of mind—suspicious of Martha as well as of her husband and Charlie, believing that they were only making preparations for some dire revenge. His conscience was troubling him exceedingly. He knew he deserved to be punished, to be 'paid out,' for his cruel

conduct in the past; and he felt sure that he was going to get his deserts from Russell and Charlie. That was the rooted idea in his mind, and nothing seemed to shake it.

One day Skylark, having heard that 'poor old Smythe' had been discovered, called to see him at the Russells'.

She spoke to him kindly, but he took no notice. Before she left, Charlie asked her to sing something. She consented, and sang one of her favourites, her voice full of the old pathos and power. It was this:—

'I was wandering and weary,
When my Saviour came unto me;
For the ways of sin grew dreary,
And the world no more did woo me;
And I thought I heard Him say,
As He came along His way,
"O simple souls, come near Me:
My sheep should never fear Me;—
I am the Shepherd true!"

At first I would not hearken,
And put off till the morrow;
But life began to darken,
And I was sick with sorrow;
And I thought I heard Him say,
As He came along His way,
"O simple souls, come near Me," &c.

He took me on His shoulder,
  And tenderly He kissed me;
And bade my love be bolder,
  And said how He had missed me;
And I'm sure I heard Him say,
As He went along His way,
  "O simple souls, come near Me," &c.

I thought His love would weaken,
  As more and more He knew me;
But it burneth like a beacon,
  And its light and heat go through me;
And I ever hear Him say,
As He goes along His way,
  "O simple souls, come near Me," &c.

Let us do, then, O my brothers,
  What will best and longest please us—
Follow not the ways of others,
  But trust ourselves to Jesus.
We shall ever hear Him say,
As He comes along His way,
  "O simple souls, come near Me," &c.'

When Skylark had gone, Smythe asked of Charlie 'Who's that gal?'

'Her name is Maggie Western; but we call her Skylark.'

'Skylark! Augustus, look 'ere; you've often asked where I lived. Now I'll tell yer; 'cause I want my

luggage fetched. No. 2, Berner's Buildings, Seven Dials. Do you understand?'

'Oh, yes, grandfather.'

'Well, then, go there—to-morrow 'll do—and ask for my luggage; it's under the bed, in a 'amper. I owe the landlud a few weeks' rent; give him an I O U in my name. Do you understand that?'

'Oh, yes. I'll go to-morrow.'

'Now be careful about the luggage, 'cause it's important and walable.'

'I'll be most careful.'

'Top floor landing, don't forget; and say the "prince" as lived there is a-wisitin' his relations, but opes to return shortly.'

'All right, grandfather.'

Charlie was very glad to have the address. His grandfather had as yet steadfastly declined to give any information regarding the way he had lived during the past seven years; and now Charlie thought he might hear a few particulars at the house in Seven Dials.

After business the next day he found his way to that neighbourhood. Having gone through a labyrinth of

dirty narrow streets and courts, he at last arrived at Berner's Buildings. He found No. 2 to be a common lodging-house of the lowest class. The door being open he ascended the stairs, and at the top discovered what he supposed to be his grandfather's lodging. It was only a portion of the landing, about three yards square, roughly partitioned off. He tried the door, but found it locked. Presently he heard a gruff voice calling out from downstairs, 'Now then, what do you want? Trying to break in, eh?'

The man who spoke soon reached the top.

'I've come about "the prince,"' said Charlie.

'Oh, 'ave yer? Then I hope you've got the rent with you.'

'Who are you?'

'I'm the landlord's deputy.'

'How do I know that?'

'How do you know that? That's what I call impudence. But I s'pose you're quite right to be particular; for there's a queer lot loafing about here. That's my authority,' the man added, showing Charlie a printed card. 'And here's the key of the "prince's" room. We had to break open the door when the

old fellow didn't turn up, for fear he might a-been dead in his bed. Pretty savage the landlord is, I can tell yer, that he's been done out of his rent for all these weeks.'

'Well, I'll pay the rent,' said Charlie; 'but I want the "prince's" luggage.'

'The "prince's" luggage! That's good! Ha, ha, ha, ha! That's like him. I wonder he didn't tell you to fetch his diamonds!'

'He's ill, and not likely to return, and is very anxious to have what he calls his "luggage."'

'Why, there ain't a penn'orth o' stuff in the room. There's an old hamper containing bits o' rubbish; that's his "luggage" I s'pose.'

'No doubt.'

The man then opened the door. A miserable, dark room it was, more like a prison cell—at least, far worse in many respects. The bed was a mattress placed on a rough framework, which answered the purpose of a bedstead. There was no table and no chair. Litter of one sort and another covered the floor. A much-soiled portrait of the Queen was pinned to the white-washed wall, and underneath the bed was 'the luggage.'

A shaky old hamper, tied round with bits of rope and string, inclosed 'the prince's' belongings. Charlie did not open it; he tried its weight, and found it very light. The rent of the lodging was a shilling a week. There were ten weeks owing. Charlie, having settled the debt with money his father had given him for the purpose, put a number of questions to the deputy.

'Why is he called "the prince"?' said the man, repeating Charlie's question.

'Why, he came here about two years ago, and said he was a prince of royal blood; but, having been robbed of all his money, was ashamed to make himself known to his royal relations. He said he hoped that the landlord and the other lodgers would show proper respect for his "position." People laughed at him, and told him he ought to go to the workhouse. This made him very indignant, and said it was a gross insult to suggest that a person with the blood he had in his veins should mix with workhouse folks. Nobody here knows what his proper name is, or anything about his history. But you appear to know something of him.'

'Yes, I do; he is my grandfather,' said Charlie.

'Oh, then, you're one of his royal relations!'

Charlie laughed and said, 'It's quite true he has been robbed of his money, but he's not a prince.'

'Anybody could tell that.'

'I have been doing my best to find him for years.'

'You'd better keep him now you've got him; he's worth keeping; he's a genuine curiosity.'

'How has he got a living?'

'In all sorts o' ways: selling matches, cadging, carrying sandwich boards, trying to sing "Rule, Britannia" in the streets on winter nights, playing a penny whistle, selling water-cresses, and so on. He used to drink a lot; and lately he seemed to me to be on his last legs. Once or twice he dropped on the stairs half dead, and we thought it was "a case." I shouldn't a-been surprised to a-found him dead in his room. He always kept himself aloof from the other lodgers, in order, as he said, that "his blood shouldn't get contaminated"—"'taminated" he called it.'

Charlie, having obtained all the information possible, departed, carrying the hamper.

And what did the hamper contain?

CHAPTER XX.

THE LUGGAGE OF A PRINCE.

DR. SMYTHE would allow no one but himself to open the hamper. So it was placed on the bed. There was quite a party in the room; Mr. and Mrs. Russell, Charlie, and Skylark.

After much ado the old man managed to unloose the rope and string, and then proceeded to unpack his 'luggage.' The first thing he took out was a cracked and bent penny whistle. Holding it up, he said, 'There, Augustus! you see I've 'ad a talent for music; but it wants plenty o' wind; and I ain't got enough of it; that's my failin'.'

Then he produced a quarter of a sheet of grimy note-paper, containing the crest and motto in which

he had once so much gloried, 'an arm in armour, *rampant*;' 'Truth and Strength.'

'Oh, dear, dear!' said Smythe, as he gazed sadly at the paper. 'What I once was, and what I now am! But present sarcumstances don't alter the blood; once a gent, allays a gent. Ah, Augustus! if you'd only a knowed what was good for yer! But it's too late now; you've got a-mixin' with the lower classes; and there you'll stick!'

The next article was a small paper packet. It contained a tuft of black hair.

'Ah! that's walable, that is. It's a lock o' 'air from Tiger's mane. Tiger was one o' th' 'osses that them willains sold; and I cut off this lock 'cause Tiger once belonged to a duke. What're yer all a-laughin' at?' There was a smile on everybody's face; for it seemed a comical idea to preserve this tuft of hair because the horse was once the property of a nobleman.

'None o' yer's got the proper sperrit o' regurd for the hupper ten!' said Smythe. 'Yer all coarse—yer all low!'

'All right, grandfather,' said Charlie, 'we won't laugh again; sorry we offended you.'

'Oh, yes, I daresay! Yer don't get over yer grandfather *that* way.'

Then there came out of the hamper half a tea-cup of very old-fashioned design. Charlie very nearly laughed again.

'That belonged to the Duke of Kensington afore I bought it. And you,' pointing to Charlie, 'broke it, you, you, you, you low boy!'

'It was very unfortunate,' said Charlie.

'Now don't make matters wuss,' said the old man.

The next piece of 'luggage' was not produced quite so readily as the others, and seemed to give Mr. Smythe some trouble to bring to light. When it did appear Charlie and Skylark were compelled to turn their heads to hide the laugh rippling on their faces and threatening to break from their lips.

What was it? Why, the instrument of torture—the old black strap that had been laid heavily on Charlie's back many and many a time, and which Charlie once thought resembled a viper much more decidedly than he did. Slowly and solemnly did the old man draw it out of the hamper.

'Ah, Augustus!' said Smythe, holding up the

strap as high as his feeble, trembling arm would permit, 'you may well turn yer 'ead! Ain't yer ashamed o' yerself? To think o' all the trouble you've caused me, and all the pusspiration, and the pain in this 'ere arm that trembles now from weakness caused by a-thrashin' of yer; yes, Augustus, you've a-weakened my constitooshion, and all for nothin'! Oh, it's too bad of yer, Augustus, it's too bad! And after all my trouble and care you're a-goin' to pay me out—a-goin' to 'ave yer revenge — and all 'cause I was too kind! If you'd only been a good boy, and learnt yer French and the manners o' perlite society you'd a-been a lord by now, and a-doin' credit to yer grandfather's name. Look 'ere, you Russell, if yer don't want that boy to go to the gallows, you jist lay a 'orse-whip or a hinch strap about 'is back now and then. It's the best trainin' for such as 'im. "Spare the rod and spile the child." What he'd bin now if it 'adn't bin for what this strap's done for 'im, I dunno. D'ye 'ear what I say, you Russell?'

'Yes, sir; and I'll bear in mind your advice.'

'Yes, and that's all you'll do—you, you carpenter!'

Smythe placed the strap carefully on the bed between him and the wall. Then his hands dived into the hamper once more for further 'luggage.'

What's this he's bringing out now? Is it an old coat? It looks something like it. It's something made of rusty black, or mixed black-and-white, cloth, at all events.

When Smythe had brought a portion of the article to the top of the hamper he beckoned to Skylark. ''Ere you gal,' said he, 'I want yer.'

Skylark went to the bedside.

'What's yer name?' he asked.

'Maggie Western.'

'Why, Augustus said yer name was Skylark. He's been a-tellin' me a lie, then!'

'No, he hasn't, sir. My name is Skylark as well; at least that's what I used to be called.'

'You're sure and sartin?'

'Quite sure, sir.'

'Well, then, look 'ere.'

Smythe drew out the cloth article a little further. Then, pointing to a name worked in scarlet wool near the neck, he asked, 'Is that yer name?'

'Good gracious me!' exclaimed Skylark, 'it's my old waterproof!'

'However did grandfather come by it?' said Charlie.

'You don't remember nothin' about it then?' said Smythe to Skylark. 'I'm wrong after all; and you're not the gal I took yer for.'

'Oh, yes, I remember now!' exclaimed Skylark. 'Why, are you the poor old fellow the boys were pelting and hooting at near Tottenham Court Road one wet night a long, long time ago?'

'I'm the very same gent,' replied Smythe.

'It's very singular,' said Charlie.

'And to think that I should have made the acquaintance of Mr. Smythe without dreaming that he was your grandfather. I remember, now, I didn't ask your name, did I, Mr. Smythe?'

'No, you didn't; and you wouldn't a been told if you 'ad asked. Now, I daresay you all think it strange I've kept this vulgar-lookin' thing for so long. Well, I'll tell yer; and let's 'ope it'll be a lesson to yer all. Skylark, seein' me in a bit of trouble on that wet night, interfered and hoffered to see me

'ome safely, which hoffer I didn't decline. It was rainin' cats and dogs; and the gal took the cloak off her shoulders and put it round mine to keep the wet off, and talked a lot of stuff that made me feel cheerful for a bit and drove away my troubles. She 'ad an umbrella for 'erself.'

'A grand one, too, wasn't it, Mr. Smythe?' said Skylark.

'I was too shaky and queer to take any 'ticklar notice. When we parted the gal didn't ask for the cloak, so I kept it. And why did I keep it? That's jist what I'm a-comin' to. Thinks I, "That gal knows a gent when she sees one; she must a got a drop o' the true blood in her."'

'You're quite wrong there, Mr. Smythe; my blood is of a very common description, I believe—not at all aristocratic.'

'I know better. D'ye think I ain't got my eyes and my senses?'

'Skylark got wet through that night, grandfather,' said Charlie; 'took a dreadful cold, and nearly died.'

'Ah, that was all the fault of the umbrella, you know; it wasn't perfect,' said Skylark, smiling.

'She knows a member o' the hupper circles when she sees one, anyhow; and she's a far sooperior person to any of yer; and I ain't to be contradicted. So I kept the cloak jist as a reminder that there was one creature in this blessed world as 'ad some respect for my persition. When the gal gave us that song t'other day something in the voice set me a-thinkin'; and when Augustus said her name was Skylark, I knew it was the very same gal as did the honours to me on that wet, cold night, many a year ago.'

'The prince' was now seized with an attack of coughing, which compelled him to cease talking.

Skylark put on the moth-eaten, rusty old cloak, bringing back forcibly to her recollection the days of the past when she stood in the gutter singing to the public. Charlie was reminded, too, of one night long ago when he shared with Skylark the shelter of the same cloak on the way to Mother Stubbs'.

But Skylark's trying on of the ancient garment very much discomposed Mr. Smythe. He thought she intended to take it away with her, and whilst he was coughing shook his head at her and looked displeased.

When able to speak again, he said, 'Take that thing off hinstantly; it's mine, and you ain't a-goin' to steal it. You left it with me, and never claimed it, so it's my property.'

Skylark at once removed the cloak from her shoulders, and returned it to 'the prince.'

'It's goin' back into the 'amper,' said Smythe, 'and all t'other things, too.'

Slowly and deliberately the old man replaced each article in the hamper, which he then re-corded.

'Now, then, take notice, all of yer,' he went on; 'when yer've 'ad yer revenge and finished me off, this 'ere 'amper's to be put in the grave alongside of its owner. Augustus knows all about the marble tombstone; and if he don't do as I've hordered 'im 'e'll find 'imself in the wrong box when he comes to '*is* end. So, Augustus, jist you take care, or something 'orrible 'll 'appen to you.'

'All right, grandfather, I'll take care.'

Mr. and Mrs. Russell, having silently witnessed what had been going on, now advised Mr. Smythe to lie down and rest, whilst Skylark prepared to depart.

'Good-night, sir,' said Skylark to the old man. Then she kissed the wrinkled forehead. That startled 'the prince.'

'What's that—what's that?' he exclaimed.

'Only a kiss, sir,' said Skylark.

'A kiss!—kissing *me!*—well, that's queer!—don't know if it ought to be allowed—kissing *me!*—well, I'm muddled—that's sartin.' Murmuring thus, 'poor old Smythe' fell back on his pillow exhausted. No wonder that kiss 'muddled' him, being quite a fresh experience to him. Many, many years had passed since he had received such a tender token, perhaps never since his daughter Ellen tried to move his heart and win his love at the old home in Whitechapel.

CHAPTER XXI.

VERY MUCH 'MUDDLED.'

MR. SMYTHE remained for a long time in the same frame of mind respecting the intentions of those about him. He looked upon everybody, except Skylark, with suspicion, believing that some plot was being hatched to torture and then to kill him. Skylark was the only person whom he regarded with friendly eyes, because he was impressed with the notion that she had 'a drop of the blood' in her veins, that she was of aristocratic birth, from the fact that she came to his rescue on that wet night many years ago.

It was only by very slow degrees that his suspicions lost ground, and at last were entirely removed.

He was treated by Mr. and Mrs. Russell as if he had actually been a prince. Every nourishing delicacy

that might tempt the old man's appetite was procured, the best medical advice was obtained; in fact, Russell was rapidly spending his savings in order to provide for the comfort and prolong the life of his father-in-law.

The doctors said that Smythe's health was past recovery, and that his death was only a question of a month or two.

Of all the persons who tried to interest him and secure his attention in conversation Lady Blanchflower was the most successful. Being impressed with the fact that she belonged to one of the highest families in the land, and had nothing but the 'proper blood' in her veins, he showed great respect towards her, and listened eagerly to all she said to him. The good seed thus sown in his heart began to bear fruit before long; for he became less and less suspicious and less ungrateful.

Skylark also seemed to have great influence over him. Whilst her talk was always sensible and earnest, it was flavoured with cheerfulness; and often she made the old man laugh outright by her curious stories and her quaint, droll way of putting

homely truths. She told him the story of the cloud-cross and the skylark, and whilst making him laugh at her carelessness in walking into the pond, she thought she saw tears in his eyes when trying to explain to him the message which she supposed the bird brought to her from Jesus Christ.

The old man often asked her to sing. Sometimes she would sing a common-sense popular song; and the old man would make a feeble and unsuccessful effort to join in the chorus. At other times her sweet voice would fill the room with some simple, touching melody about the love of Christ, and man's need of a Redeemer.

The vicar came and talked and prayed, trying to open the old man's eyes to all he lacked and all he might yet experience.

By these various means 'poor old Smythe' became more amiable, and more inclined to regard the efforts of all around him as intended for his comfort and happiness instead of 'to pay him out' and 'finish him off.'

His cough was very troublesome, and he seemed to grow weaker and weaker.

Charlie used to spend the greater part of Sundays with his grandfather. On one of these days he was sitting at the bedside, talking and reading, when Mr. Smythe's share in the conversation began to assume a subdued and serious character never shown before.

'I say, Charlie,' said he (this was the first time he called his grandson by that name), 'I've been a-turnin' one thing and another over and over in my mind, and I don't believe yer a-goin' to 'ave yer revenge after all.'

'I'm glad to hear you say that,' observed Charlie.

'Least, it seems as if you and your folks were 'avin' yer revenge in a rum way. You're a different kind of people to what I expected. Charlie, I'm muddled and bothered. There's one thing and another on my mind. There's the strap—that's on my mind; and I want it hoff.'

'Don't let that worry you.'

'But it *do* worry me; and I won't stand it no longer. Charlie, undo the 'amper, and take out the strap.'

'Very well, grandfather.'

Charlie at once proceeded to uncord the hamper, and, taking out the strap, handed it to the old man, who, holding it at full length, looked at it silently for a few moments with a singular expression of pain and displeasure on his face.

'Charlie, that's been my cuss! Ever since Jim was a child it's been my cuss! To think that a bit of animal's 'ide should play sich mischief! Jim was brought up with it; and a precious lot o' good it did 'im. It sent 'im to the dogs; and it might a brought you to the same condition. Tell yer father I want 'im.'

Charlie summoned his father, who very soon entered the room.

'Look 'ere, Russell. Whoever it was who said "Spare the rod and spoil the child" didn't know what he was talkin' about. Never you lay a rod on Charlie's back. The strap ain't done 'im a penn'orth o' good; and it's done me and others pounds and pounds o' harm. So, jist you mind what I say, Russell; and never you thrash that boy, nor any other boy. That's all; you can go, Russell; I've got something to say to Charlie.'

'I shall certainly carry out your advice, sir,' said Russell, as he turned and left the room.

'Now, Charlie, get a knife—a sharp 'un.'

'Here's a sharp one,' said Charlie, taking a knife from the mantel-shelf.

'Now, then, cut up this old cuss into a 'undred bits.'

Whilst Charlie was engaged in the operation of 'finishing off' 'the cuss,' his grandfather looked on with satisfaction.

When the operation came to an end, and the fragments of leather were piled up on the table, Smythe said: 'Now, take all the pieces downstairs and pitch 'em on the dust-'eap. That's one thing off my mind. Come back soon; I've got more to say to yer, Charlie. Oh, dear, dear! there's my cough a-comin' on again.'

Charlie soon returned; but his grandfather was obliged to rest for a while before he could continue the conversation.

By-and-by he said, 'Charlie, it's my opinion Lady Blanchflower's a reg'lar "topper."'

'I never knew such a pleasant and kind-hearted lady.'

'And she belongs to one of the noblest families in the land, you say?'

'Yes, she belongs to the Duke of ——'s family.'

'Well, Charlie, I did think, somehow, that I should get amongst the hupper circles before I died; and yer see it's come to pass.'

'So it has, grandfather.'

'But she's very diff'rent to what I thought the hupper circles was like. Why, she talks to me as if I was 'er own father; and she knows well enough, without bein' told by anybody, that I'm only a—a—a—a—a low person. But you'd think she didn't know, for all that. She hactually laughed and joked with me, and then she talked about religion jist as she'd talk about anything else. And she gave me my beef-tea, and combed my beard, and put the piller straight. Charlie, I'm puzzled; I'm in a fog! The hupper ten ain't a bit like what I thought they was!'

'There are kind people to be found amongst all classes, grandfather.'

'So it seems. But what makes her ladyship so kind? And what makes all you folks so kind? That's what muddles me. I never did nothing kind to any

of you; and this is the way yer a-treatin' me. I've been unkind, unfeelin', stoopid, cruel to everybody.'

'Oh, that's all forgiven long ago.'

'Forgiven! What d'ye mean? Now, don't go and muddle me more and more, or you'll turn me crazy. It's been nothing but muddle, muddle, for many years.'

'Why, I mean that we all forgave you a long time ago for all you did to us. Isn't that plain?'

'No, it ain't. You've forgiven me! I never asked yer forgiveness; I 'ad too much sperrit for that!'

'No; but you were forgiven all the same.'

'Can't understand it,' murmured the old man, with a sigh.

'Perhaps not; but you can *believe* what I tell you. And if you can only believe, grandfather, and realise that we've all forgiven you, why, then, there will be a burden removed from your mind, and you'll feel happier than you do now.'

'It's a riddle; I'm muddled—muddled, that's sartin. It's very queer—forgiven by everybody!'

'It's quite true that we've all forgiven you.'

'I say, Charlie, do yer think yer mother's forgiven me?'

'Oh, yes, grandfather; and her greatest wish, long before she died, was that you should be truly happy.'

'I'll try to believe it. I say, oughtn't I to apologise, or something, to you and everybody?'

'Well, perhaps you would feel easier if you said you were sorry for the past.'

'Well, I am sorry, Charlie, 'pon my honour as a—' 'gent' he was going to say, but checked himself and stopped without calling himself by any title. ''Pon my honour, I'm sorry,' he repeated. And as he spoke Charlie saw that his eyes were very moist.

Presently he said, 'Well, bring 'em in, bring 'em all in—Russell, Martha, Ellen: you can't bring Ellen.' Tears now fell on the counterpane.

'Charlie, Charlie, what mightn't I a-done if only I 'ad been kind! Well, fetch 'em up—don't lose time.'

Charlie thereupon summoned Mr. and Mrs. Russell.

'Grandfather has something to say to you,' said he, when they appeared.

'Yes, so I 'ave—something very partic'lar.'

'I hope you're not talking too much, sir, and over-fatiguing yourself,' said Russell.

'The doctor will be very cross with us for not keeping you quiet,' joined in Mrs. Russell.

'Bother the doctor!' said Smythe; 'he can't do *me* no good. Look 'ere, Russell, Martha, and Charlie, I've be'aved like a brute to yer all, and to Ellen, poor gal! But I 'umbly apologise, and I'm horfully sorry—'pon my honour, I am.'

'We have no doubt of it, sir,' said Russell; 'pray keep your mind quite easy.'

'Let all bygones be bygones,' said Martha.

'All we wish now is that we may be of some service to you,' said Russell.

'Yes, it seems like it,' faltered Smythe; 'you ain't a-goin' to 'ave yer revenge after all!'

'Well, you see, sir, we are having revenge in our own way,' said Russell.

'Well, it's a rum way—very rum—very.' Saying this, the old man dropped his head upon the pillow and closed his eyes.

CHAPTER XXII.

INTO THE LIGHT.

A FEW days after the scene in the last chapter, Charlie was sitting one evening at the bedside of his grandfather, talking, and listening to what the old man had to say. It was only at intervals any conversation could be carried on, for the invalid was rapidly becoming weaker, and much talking was quite out of the question.

'Charlie,' said he, 'I've been considerin' matters seriously, and I've come to a very important conclusion.'

'What is it, grandfather?'

'Well, yer know I tried to make a gent of yer, and failed; but the fact is I didn't know what a gent wus. I thought I was one, and mighty proud

I felt. But, after all, I've come to the conclusion that *you're* the gent, and I'm a—a—a—a fool! If you'd become what I wanted to make you, you'd gone the same way as Jim, most likely. It's a mercy you didn't. If it 'adn't been for yer mother yer would.'

'Yes, I owe my mother a great deal.'

After a long break of silence Smythe spoke again. 'Charlie, it ain't *the blood*, after all, as makes the gent, it's the *'eart*.'

'Perhaps you're right, grandfather.'

'Right? I know I'm right. I might a-been a gent if I'd gone the proper way to work; but it's too late now, I shall never be one in this world.'

By-and-by, after another interval, Smythe said, 'Charlie, never mind about the marble tombstone. Anything 'll do. Just lay me by the side o' Ellen—we've been separated long enough.'

'We'll do as you wish,' said Charlie; 'but we hope you will not be taken from us just yet.'

'Oh, but I shall be, though. This cough's finishin' me off fast enough.'

Again there was silence, which was at length broken by the old man speaking.

'Charlie, there's another thing I want to say.'

'What is it, grandfather?'

'Why, I want yer to put Skylark's cloak over my coffin, and let it be my pall.'

'Very well; that wish shall be carried out.'

'Skylark's got the right sort o' 'eart, Charlie; so 'ave yer all—all but me.'

'Yes, grandfather, Skylark's heart is of the right sort, as you say; she's always ready to do a kindness, and always anxious to make people happy.'

'About the 'amper, Charlie. I've changed my mind about it; you needn't put it in the grave. Pitch everything it contains, except the cloak, on to the dust-'eap. D'ye understand?'

'Yes, I quite understand.'

'And tell Saunders he'd a-been a better man if he'd 'ad a better master.'

'I'll be sure to tell him the first time I see him.'

There were many pauses during this conversation, for attacks of coughing frequently distressed the old man. But he would persist in talking now and then, although Charlie tried to persuade him to keep quiet.

Presently there was a knock at the door, and Skylark entered the room.

'Good evening, sir,' said she; 'how are you feeling to-night?'

'Bad—queer—very; breaking up fast.'

'Well, we all have to come to that at some time or other; and it's a good thing when we are not at all afraid of it, believing that there's a better life for us on the other side the grave.'

'A better life—ah!' murmured Smythe, 'well, there's room for improvement. But it ain't for me, Skylark; I ought to a-begun thinkin' about it years and years ago. I'll jist let matters take their course now.'

'Don't say that, sir; you've got a fit of melancholy, it's evident. Why, don't you know, Mr. Smythe, that death is only the gate of life? It's just like passing out of a tumble-down, gloomy old house into a lovely sunny garden, full of all kinds of beautiful trees and flowers, and sweet perfumes, and pretty birds singing delightfully. It's just like that, if we only have a right heart and are trusting in Jesus Christ.'

'Ah! that's the point, Skylark; that's where the

shoe pinches. I ain't got a right 'eart, don't yer see. It's all *wrong*—allays 'as been wrong; it's been neglected too long now to be put right.'

'Why, Mr. Smythe, I'm sure it's ever so much better than it was a few months ago!'

'Gammon!'

'It's not gammon. It's true.'

'Don't provoke me! I'm breakin'-up, I tell you—'eart and everything! Look 'ere, Skylark, I want to borrer your cloak for my funeral pall.'

Skylark half turned her head, unable to repress a smile, not so much at the request as at Mr. Smythe's way of putting it.

'I thought you said some time ago, sir, that you regarded the cloak as your own property, as I had not claimed it.'

'So I did—so I did.'

'Then of course, being your property, you can do what you please with it.'

'S'pose I can.'

'You seem to like that rusty, moth-eaten old cloak, sir.'

'Yes, I do.'

'And do you think you like just a little bit the person who once owned it?'

There was a pause for a few moments; and then the old man murmured, 'S'pose I do — just a little bit.'

'It's a little bit of love isn't it, sir?'

'What's love? That ain't in my line.'

'Liking anybody is the first step to loving that person. And there are other people whom you now like, or love, a little. Charlie, now, you like him?'

'Yes.'

'And you wouldn't thrash him now for anything.'

'Thrash him!' exclaimed Smythe, starting up in the bed; 'I'd sooner 'ave this arm sawn off at the elbow!'

'You see, then, Mr. Smythe, there are at least two people in the world whom you like or love a little; and that proves what I said just now to be correct, that your heart is ever so much better than it was. You know, Mr. Smythe, there was a time when you loved no one in the world except ——' Skylark paused.

'Who do you mean?' enquired Smythe.

'I'm afraid I was going to be very rude.'

'You can't be rude, Skylark. Tell me what you was a-goin' to say.'

'Well, if you will excuse me being very plain, there was a time when, I think, you loved no one but *yourself*.'

The old man, now lying down again, closed his eyes, meditating silently for a few moments.

'Myself! Loved myself! Yes, that's puffickly correct.'

'And now you're beginning to love other people; and that's a sign your heart is much better; and soon, Mr. Smythe,' — Skylark now bent her head over the bed, and added in a low voice—'you will begin to love God; and then you will be happy.'

''Appy? Well, there do come over me sometimes a queer feeling, different to what I ever felt.'

'Then, too, I heard downstairs that you had been apologising for what happened in the past. That's another sign that your heart is improving wonderfully. But I must go, sir; I've stayed too long, and have talked till I've wearied you. There's Charlie sitting there as quiet as a mouse.'

'I've been too much interested in the conversation to interrupt it, Skylark.'

'Oblige the old man by singing something afore you go, Skylark,' said Mr. Smythe.

'Certainly; what shall I sing?'

'Anything.'

'"The Realms of the Blest?" You'll like that, I think.'

Then Skylark began singing that well-known melody. She had finished the first verse, when Smythe said, 'Try something else, Skylark; that's a little beyond me; that's for people who've got proper 'earts. Sing that song about the Shepherd; you know what I mean—what you sang soon after Charlie brought me 'ere.'

'Oh, yes, I know. You've not forgotten it, then?'

So Skylark sang 'The Shepherd True,' with melting tenderness, throwing heart and soul into the simple but eloquent verses. Her voice sank almost into a whisper as she told of the wanderer's life darkening with sorrow; then tears sprang to her eyes when the Shepherd took the wanderer under His care; and on

coming to the verse telling of the Shepherd's mighty love—

> 'But it burneth like a beacon,
> And its light and heat go through me,'

her voice became filled with animation, her face flushed, and her eyes beamed with the gladness that the words aroused; whilst 'poor old Smythe's' heart was touched to the core.

'Thank yer, Skylark,' faltered the old man; 'that's good; but that kind o' love ain't for sich as me to feel.'

'Oh, yes, it is, though; and you *will* feel it before long, and then you'll be quite happy. Never despair! Good night, sir.'

'Good night, Skylark; you're a good gal.'

'Skylark,' whispered Charlie, smiling, as his friend was taking her departure, 'the old "heart" is on the dust-heap in a hundred fragments, and a new heart, human and tender, has taken its place.'

'The old "heart," then, is quite "paid out," and the new one proves that you have had a "sweet revenge."'

As Smythe grew weaker Lady Blanchflower became a daily visitor, and explained to the old man the

simple truths of the Gospel. She presented these truths in such a plain and forcible manner that before long Smythe gave evidence of his sincere penitence for the past and his trust in Jesus Christ. She had no doubt that his sorrow was genuine, that he really felt the love of God in his heart, and that he began to realise the 'peace of God which passeth all understanding.' Sometimes Lady Blanchflower, on stepping noiselessly into the room, found the old man praying. Although quite willing and pleased now to hear Skylark sing 'The Realms of the Blest,' he protested that he was not worthy to enter heaven. Lady Blanchflower soon relieved his mind, showing him that heaven was attained through no worthiness of our own, but through the worthiness of Jesus Christ.

At last the death-summons came, and 'poor old Smythe' passed away. The threadbare, rusty waterproof was the funeral-pall. People stared, and wondered what it meant. By the side of his daughter the old man was laid to rest, all his 'muddles' over at last. Heartily thankful were Charlie and his father that they had been able to surround the last months of their relative's life with attentions and comforts, so

little deserved. Heartily thankful, too, were they that the old man's eyes had been opened to discern the evil and sorrow he wrought by his conduct in former years, and that he had been led to express his regret and penitence.

Years passed away. Mr. Russell succeeded in establishing a small business of his own, whilst Charlie, with industry, perseverance, and the cultivation of his talents, reached almost the top of the tree in the house of business in Fleet Street. The right principles with which he started life were still his guide and strength; and, whilst he had failings, like everybody else in the world, he won the affection of many, and the respect of all around him. The memory of his mother remained ever fresh and sacred in his heart.

Mrs. Russell continued to make an excellent wife, and learnt by repeated experience that it was not simply her good cooking that had secured John Russell's affections.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson, who had so kindly befriended Charlie in his early days, were still amongst the most intimate friends of the Russells.

'Old Mother Stubbs,' what became of her? She was amongst the first to whom Skylark proved a friend and helper after becoming Lady Blanchflower's assistant and lieutenant in works of charity at the East End. She gave up her old mode of earning a livelihood—in fact, Skylark was the last girl, the last 'perfessional,' whom she sent daily into the streets in all weathers to solicit the pence of the public by the exercise of her vocal powers. When old age and infirmities were beginning to tell upon her, she was removed to one of Lady Blanchflower's homes in the country, where, in peace and comfort, she spent the remnant of her days.

Skylark, far from regretting that she had allowed Lady Blanchflower to 'rescue' her, appreciated more and more as time went on her ladyship's kindness and care. Her education and training did not destroy the cheerfulness and drollery which, in former days, seemed ever to ripple on the surface of her character, and which, in her case at least, were indications of a warm heart and generous disposition. Passing from girlhood to womanhood, a wide choice of occupations was offered her by Lady Blanchflower.

It did not take her long to make up her mind. She decided to remain with her ladyship as her assistant in works of charity and mercy, feeling that she could meet with no employment more congenial to her tastes. She could easily have earned a living by singing at public concerts; but she declined to sing anywhere except on behalf of a charity. People who were almost strangers called her Miss Western, or Maggie Western; but she was still called Skylark by those who had known her for a long time, and, indeed, a more appropriate name could scarcely have been found. She still had what she persisted in calling 'a vile temper.' The impulsiveness and fire of her nature often found vent when she met with instances of cruelty, unkindness, selfishness, and ingratitude on her daily rounds in the East End. The wife-beater, the drunkard, the slut, lazy good-for-nothings, and people who were cruel to animals, came in for their share of Skylark's indignation. She would lecture the fellow who beat his wife and spent his evenings at the public-house with a torrent of fiery words that made the man quail before her. Having thus employed her 'vile temper,' she would

next use persuasion and pathos, until, frequently, her object was gained by the fellow becoming a reformed character. Wherever she went she was held in high respect, and rarely was she subject to a word or act of insult. When such a thing did occur, we may be sure that Skylark spoke her mind very freely and appropriately, so that the insult was never repeated.

Skylark and Charlie remained fast friends. When the former wanted a man's assistance in her labours, the latter was always ready to help.

It was Skylark's birthday. How did that come to pass, seeing that neither she nor anyone else knew the date of her birth? This was how it was. Skylark thought she ought to have a birthday. Everybody else had one, and why shouldn't she? She *would* have one. Lady Blanchflower suggested that Skylark should herself select her birthday—any day she liked best. Skylark, pleased as well as amused at the idea, selected the 1st of May, when Nature puts on her bright spring dress, and her cheerful friends the skylarks mount joyously heavenwards, singing their anthem of praise.

So the 1st of May came round. Just as Skylark was setting off to her work a parcel was delivered, addressed to 'Miss Maggie Western.' It was opened, and found to be a water-colour drawing. It represented a little bit of Victoria Park on a summer day. There was the figure of a girl lying on the grass, with arms thrown back and hands clasped behind her head. She was looking at the blue sky, under which floated here and there light feathery clouds. One cloud, partly white and partly golden, appeared to form the rough outline of a cross. And out of the cloud there came, not one, but a whole troop of birds, directing their passage to the spot where the girl was lying. In the extreme right-hand lower corner of the picture Skylark, after a time, perceived faintly the letters 'C. R.'

Again and again had Charlie tried to paint the incident in Victoria Park, which Skylark described years ago, but was never pleased with his work. This last effort appears to have been more successful. Skylark thought it was perfect, and fully approved of the idea of introducing a troop of birds instead of one only; 'for,' said she, 'that solitary little chap,

who sailed so merrily down to me, would have far more work than he could possibly do to tell all the glad messages that come from the cross.'

* * * * * *

A few more years passed away, and then—well, it was reported that Charlie and Skylark, resolving to share each other's joys and sorrows for the rest of life, got married, and were very happy. If so, let us all say, 'God bless them!'

THE END.

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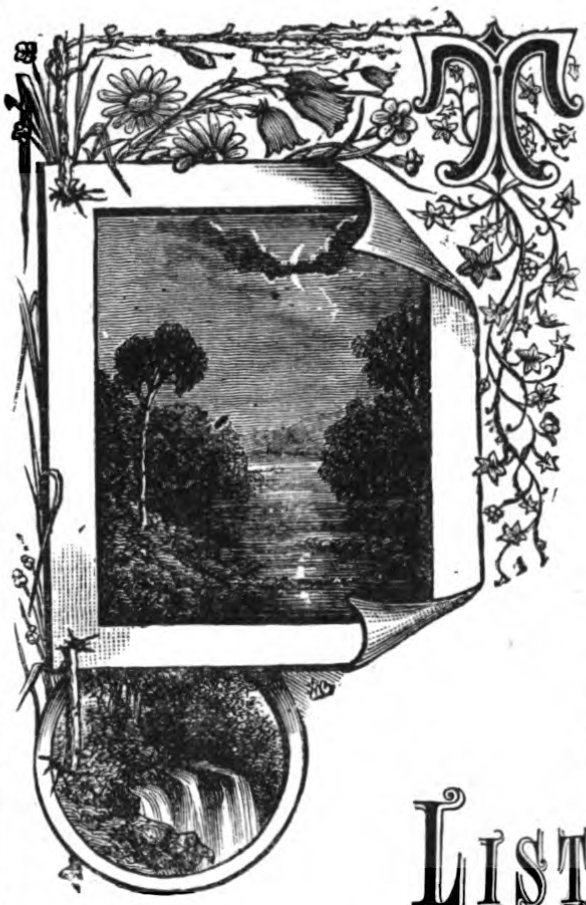

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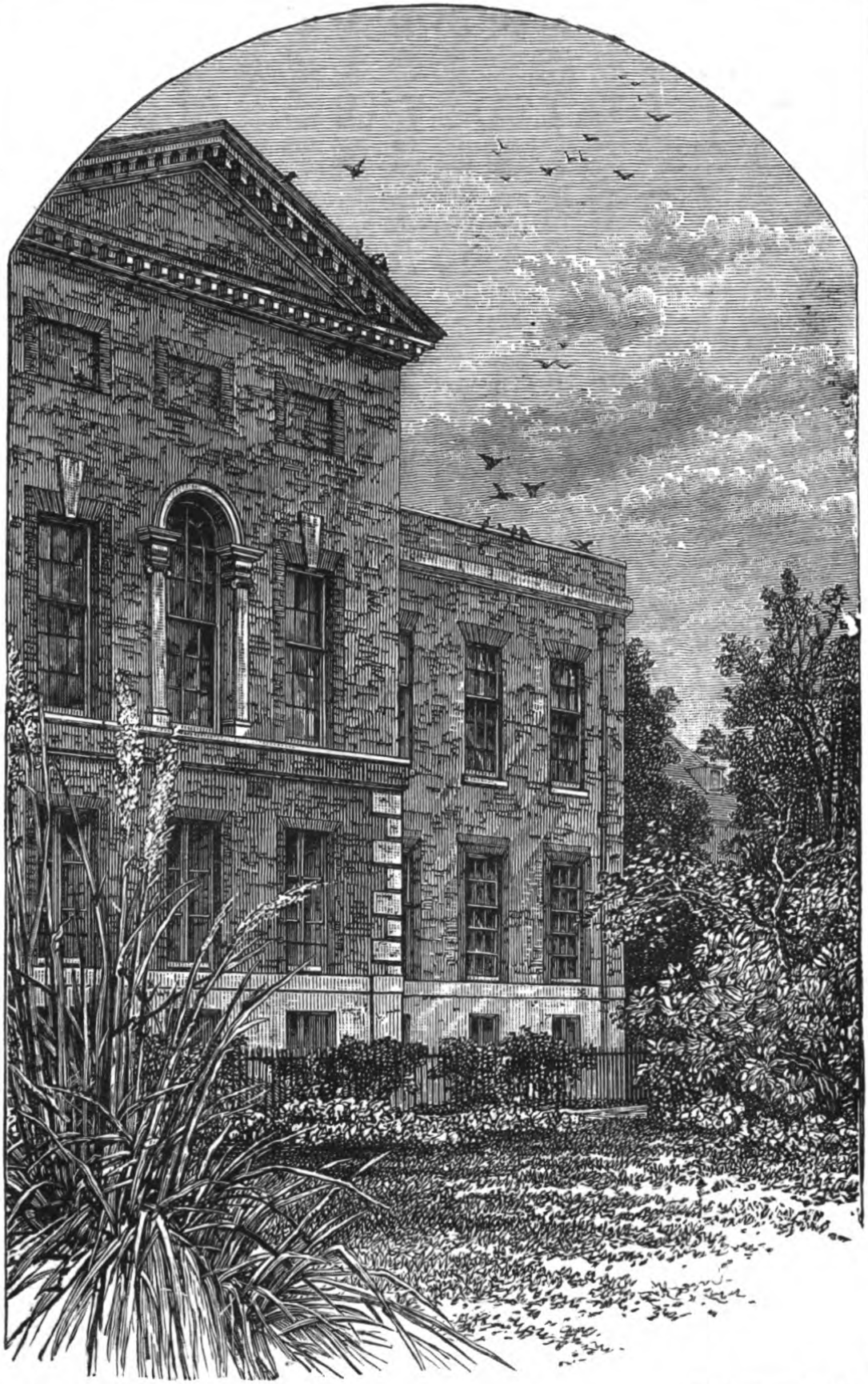

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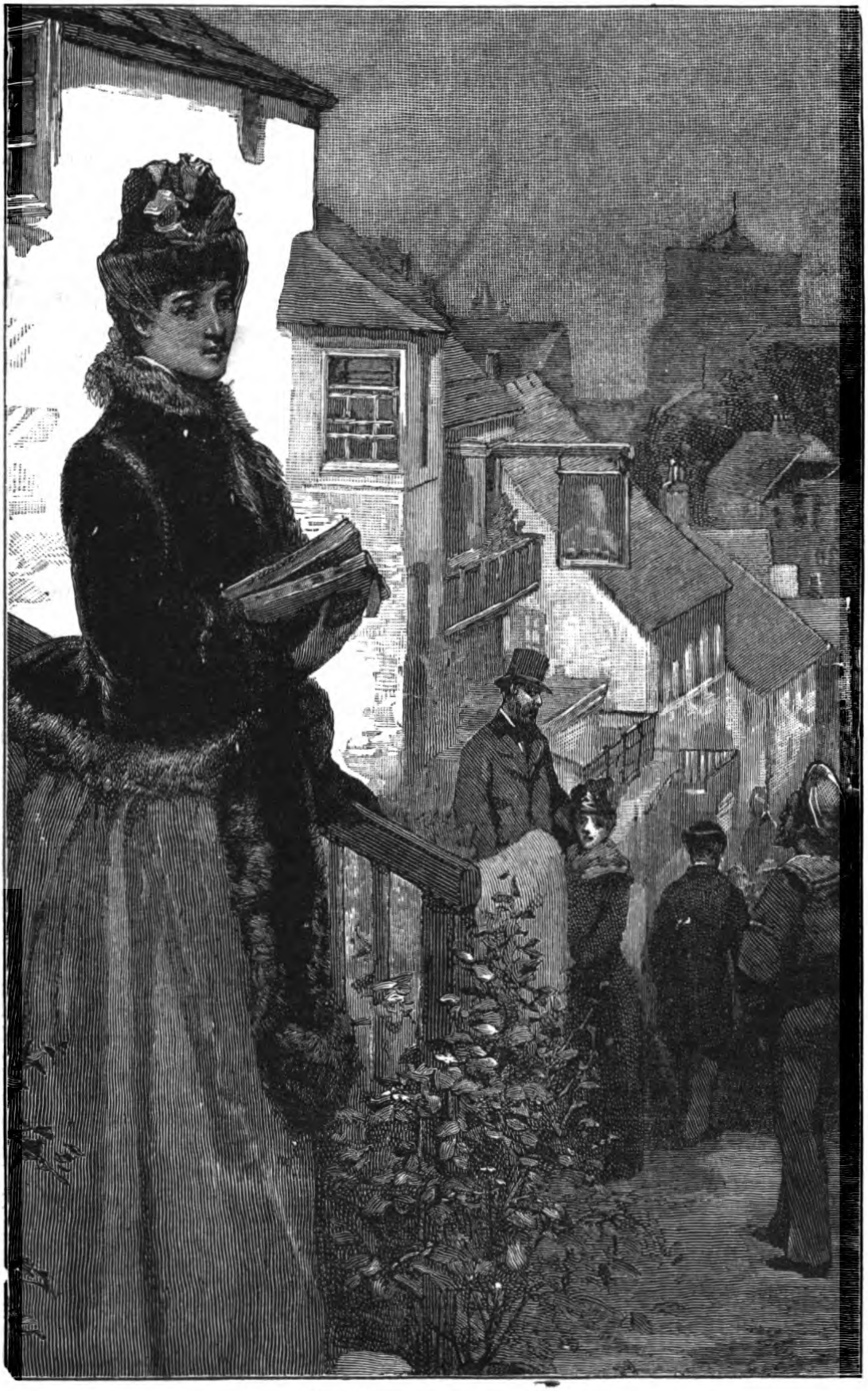

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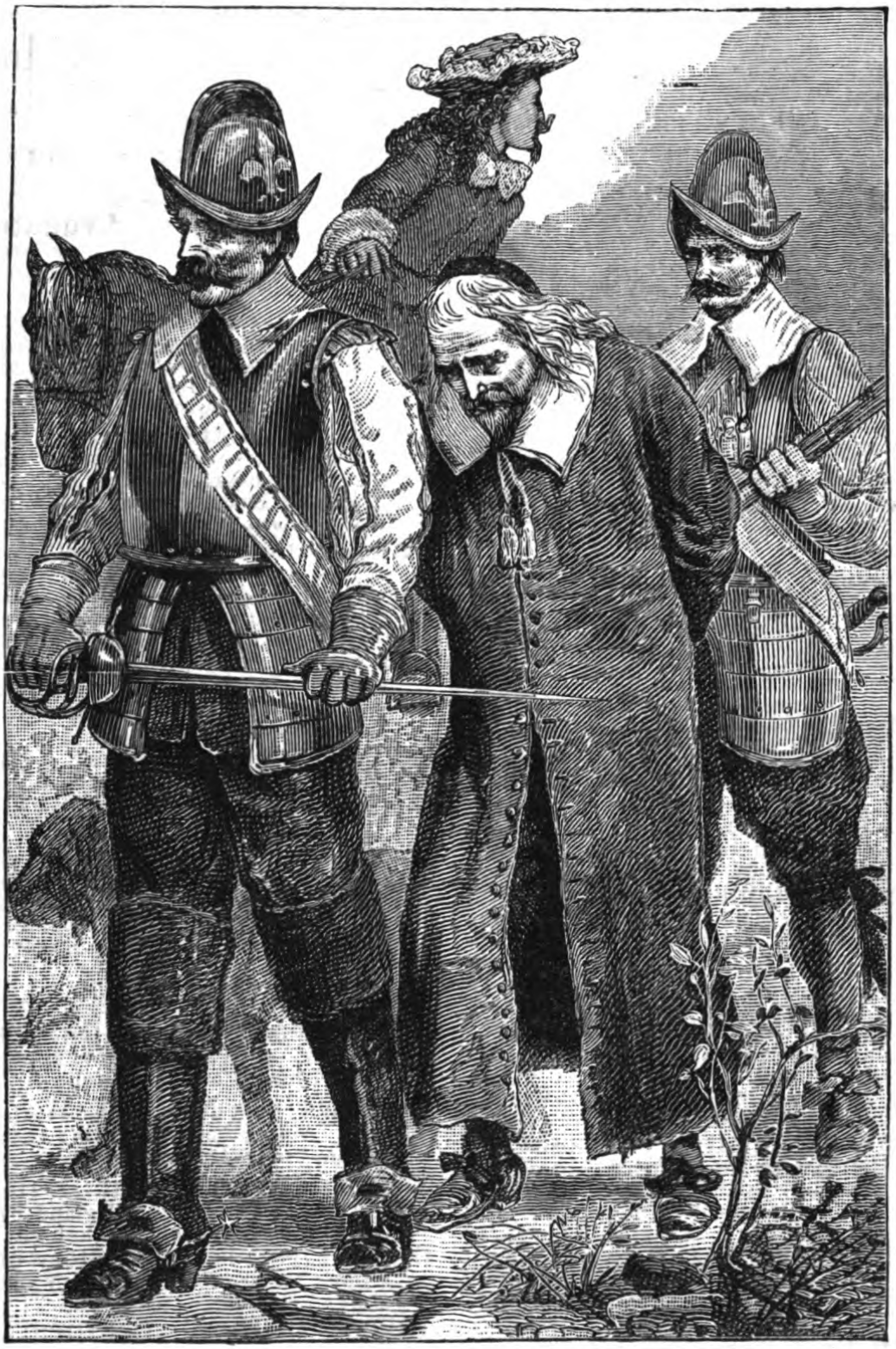

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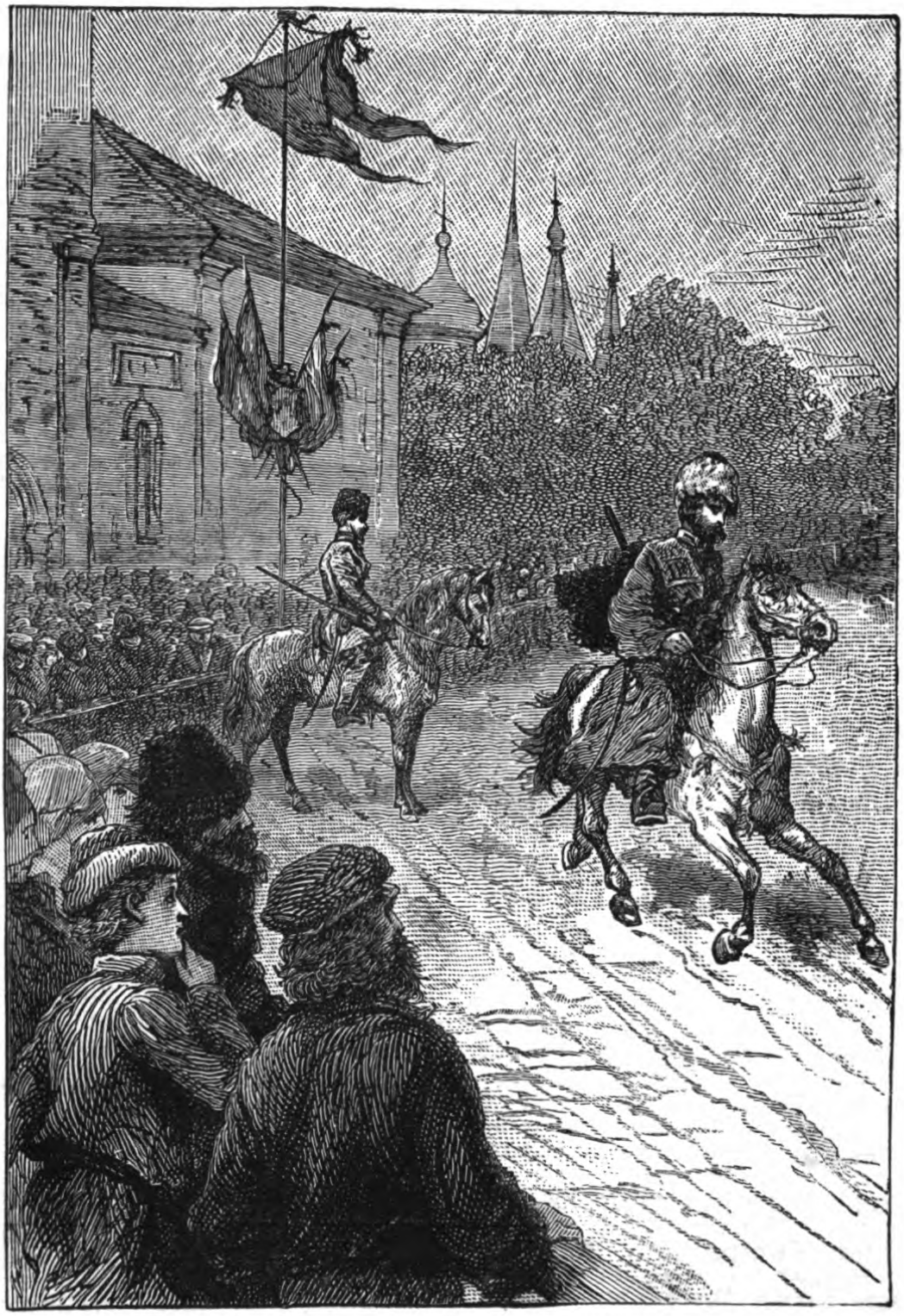

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