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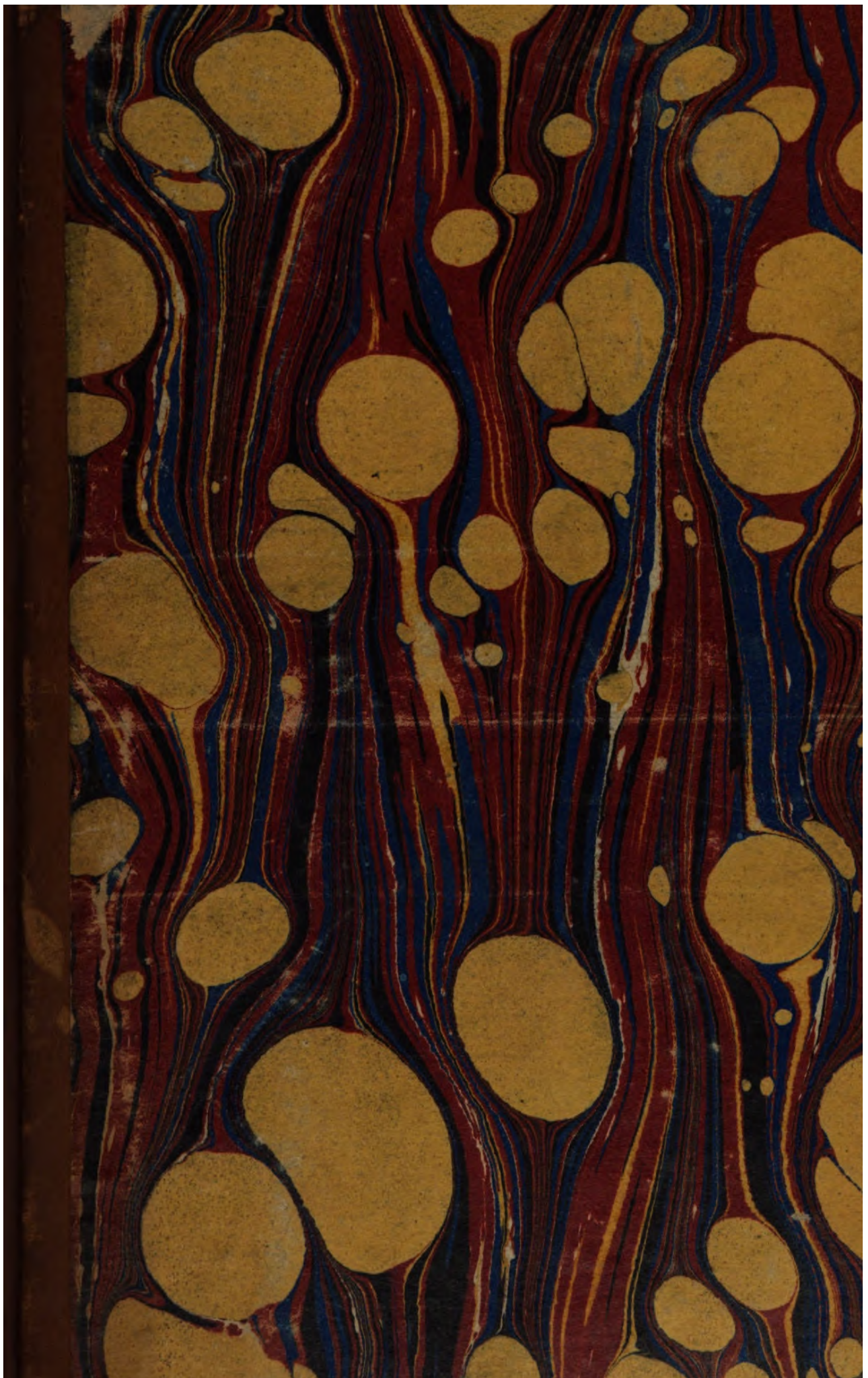
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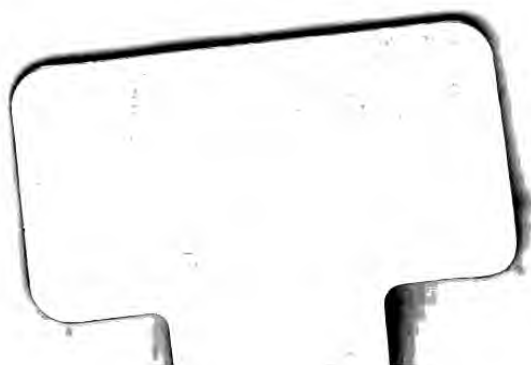
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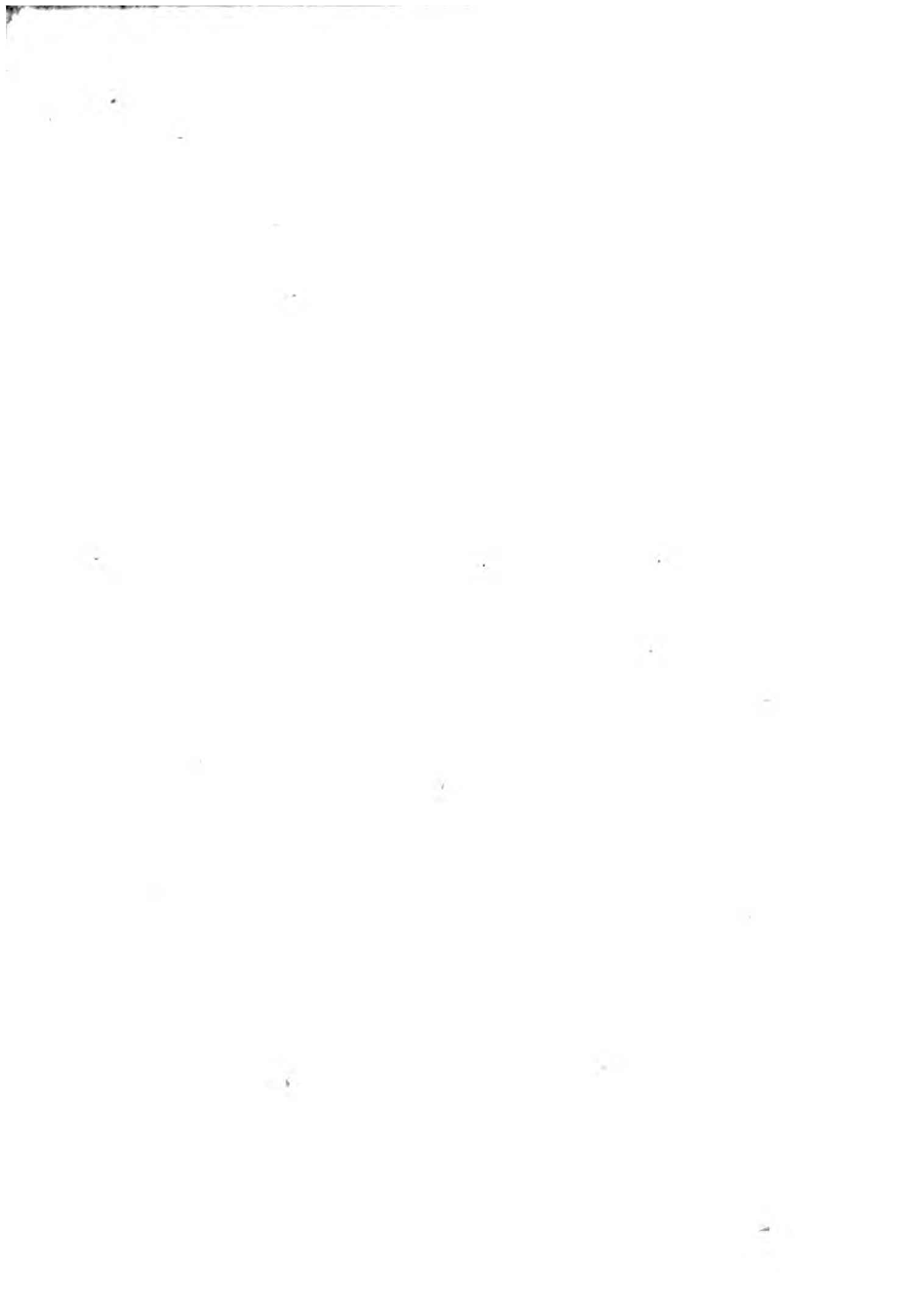


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# HARRY AND ARCHIE;

OR,

FIRST AND LAST COMMUNION.

by  
*Edw. Manro M.A.*



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# HARRY AND ARCHIE;

OR,

FIRST AND LAST COMMUNION.

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**Y**OU'LL water my geranium, Nannie, dear, when I'm gone, won't you? and think of me when you do it; eh, dear?" and the little lad brushed a tear from her cheek, and looked up so lovingly in Nannie's face.

"Hist! hist! Harry, boy; you're a foolish lad; you're always for making me cry with your talk. Water the geranium! aye, to be sure; and why shouldn't I?" and Nannie looked as if she laughed; but it wasn't quite a laugh either.

"I'll be far away this time to-morrow, Nannie, dear;" and the little boy's voice choked with tears, and he burst out crying on his sister's neck.

It was a small window, four pair of stairs, in a back attic, in one of the dingiest alleys of St. Giles's. The hot September sun was sinking behind the red tiles on the other side. The top row of miserable attic-windows overlooked the room from the houses on the other side. A few half-withered flower-pots stood out scorched up on the sooty window-sills. Down in the street below, which seemed a dizzy depth underneath, a few squalid women were quarrelling, with their dirty cap-strings untied, and their arms covered with huge and tattered plaid shawls. The intense heat of the summer day had dried up the last little pool of water which had served for two dingy hens to drink out of



the last week ; and a stall, where a woman was selling plums and pears, completed the scene from Nannie's window. The sky looked as blue as it can look in London, over the opposite roofs ; and the rays of the sun were dazzling and scorching from the ruddy tiles and gaunt, irregular chimney-pots.

Nannie had just lost her mother, and she and Harry had followed her poor funeral that day week. It was a poor funeral ; first, the coffin and the dirty white of the pall, looking as if it had covered many and many a one in their last journey ; and behind it Nannie and Harry drest up in what odd black things the neighbours would lend them. She had been at work, poor girl, night after night, to put together the pieces and bits of black she had scraped together ; and a strange, tattered concern it was ; still she was proud of it. It had cost her so much work, so many toilsome hours, while the tears ran down her cheek, she felt quite proud of it ; and even little Harry smiled for the first time since " mother died," to see himself dressed in the patch-work black trousers which Nannie had bought at a clothes-shop and mended up, " For they would put dear mother in the ground respectable." It moved along the hot dusty street, and the two orphans behind it ; and holding up their white handkerchiefs to their eyes, they truly did cry, though more than once Harry stole a glance round, to see if no one noticed his black things. No one seemed to care for or heed him ; and he soon began to cry again behind his handkerchief, because " mother was dead, and he did love her so !" So the poor funeral wound on, street after street ; some stared after it from curiosity, and a few from pity ; and Harry at last found that they were not looking at his black.

When the funeral was over, and they came back, the house did look so desolate ; there was mother's bed, just where she lay, and all the things about, and the little bed she lay on—the only little bed they had—and it looked just as if she was there now ; and the

place where the minister knelt, and just the way the pillow was put to help her lie easier.

“ Oh, Harry, Harry, isn't it just as if she was there still ; isn't it like when her white face was alive, she spoke about our First Communion, and all just after she had taken her Last Communion ? And didn't she speak sad-like to us, brother ; eh, Harry, boy ? ” and Nancy burst out crying.

“ First Communion ? yes, ” said he, “ yes ; I will prepare for it with my whole, whole heart. ”

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It was dreary work to come back to the old room again where she had lain, and not to have to nurse her any more. To see just the bed stand up in the corner where she had been so many weary nights, with the dim light of the rushlight shining on her pale face, which Nannie used to love so to watch, and feel so thankful when it was quiet in sleep. But it was all past now ; and the room was so still, and looked so sadly clean and tidy,—the very patchwork quilt had been washed. When they came into the room, the two orphans stood a moment without speaking. They seemed to be having the same thoughts with each other, and the silence was broken by Harry bursting into tears on Nannie's breast.

“ Oh, Nannie, Nannie, what shall I do ? what shall I do ? I can't bear it ; I can't bear to see the bed. Oh, mother, do come back again ! ”

“ Hist, hist, Harry, boy, ye mustn't take on so, boy ; for hear what she said to ye the last thing—to be patient in God's hand, and to try and follow her ; and now you're not patient, Harry, boy. ” She did get to the end of what she said without breaking down, but it was all she did do.

“ Oh, but Nannie, Nannie, ” said the little boy, “ how can I go away and leave you ? What shall I do when I am so far off ? You'll have the old room to be in, and the old things to look at, and mother's grave to

go to. But I shan't have any body out there. I shall be so lonely."

"Now, Harry, you mustn't take on so. If mother's in the room now, she wouldn't love you for it; she'd frown upon you, and wouldn't have the sweet smile she had when she died." This thought seemed to comfort the little boy, and he was calm.

"Well, Nannie, then I won't take on so. I'll go happy. But you know I must get ready for my First Communion, as she said I was to lose no time; and how shall I ever get ready for that among strangers?"

"Why, isn't the same God every where, Harry; and can't He keep you there as well as here?"

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The train was just going off from the Great Western station. It was a hot September day. There were numbers of people going, of all ranks and kinds. One little boy was leaning out of a third-class door; a bundle tied up in a red handkerchief lay by his side,—it held all Harry had he could call his own. The figure of a girl with a tattered red cloak stood near the door; pushed and jostled by the crowd, she still persisted in her few last words to Harry. "Now, mind ye be good, and write a line, and come home and see me at Easter a day if you can; and you'll be rich, then, Harry, a great man by Easter," said she with a smile.

"Yes," choked out the boy. "Yes; and if I'm bad, maybe you'll come and see me, Nannie, dear?"

"Move off, move off, there," said a policeman roughly, pushing Nannie away as he spoke. The girl stared up timidly, and little Harry, though he was past fourteen, was too sad to feel angry with the man. A man came in, and took Harry's place by the window, thrusting the boy towards the centre, with a stare and a frown. Harry did not heed it. His eyes were fixed on the red cloak, the dear red cloak; it was all he cared for in the world just then.

The train moved. Harry leant forward; he caught

the sight of the cloak through the crowd, and he kept looking at it till the tears would come so thick he could see no longer; he kept looking out of the window after the train had started, and he fancied he saw the red cloak once more as it went along under the bank outside the station.

He went rolling on in the corner of the third-class carriage, with his bundle under his arm, musing on fifty things, one after another. Now of "mother, how she lay under the ground," and all she said about his "First Communion as she lay dying;" then the tears came, and then something took off his attention on the road, and he was taken up with it, and forgot his sorrow. But these came back all the more upon him presently; and he thought of the red cloak, and the little back window, and the geranium, and Nannie watering it, and the red tiles opposite with the house-leek growing on them, and the tears would come again.

It was to a small village among the hills that Harry was going; an uncle of his had sent for him when he heard of his mother's death, and promised him work and support. He had employment in connexion with a factory, a hard man, who only seemed to think what he could squeeze out of those he employed, and cared for neither soul nor mind so as work was done. He had sent for Harry, because he felt he must, as some years before he had deprived Harry's mother, who was his sister, of a large sum of money; and he knew he might be called on to make it good if any one rose up to take part with the poor orphans; so this seemed the easiest way to avoid the difficulty.

Harry was fourteen years old: he had been his mother's favourite, and he was tall and thin, with very pale blue eyes and sunk cheeks, and very pale hair; his body looked weak and sickly, and his hands little fit for factory work. There was a cast of melancholy about his brow and face which made many take an interest in him. He was solitary in his habits, and seemed to love being alone.

The village which was now going to be his home lay among some high hills, the heathy edge of which pressed their brow against the blue sky, as if they were made to shut it in from the world outside ; on one side, a little wood, with a brook running through it, led out on to the more open country. The brook found its way down the middle of the village, and hollowed out its passage through the village street until it escaped out into the green pasture land which filled up the valley among the hills. The factory stood out of the village, under the hill ; and in the evening, when the factory people were out, the village and fields were full of youths and girls, who, with their sickly faces, their eyes full of the expression of concealed bad intentions, and a degraded fear, strolled about, as if bent on some evil scheme of vice or deceit. There were few redeeming points among the faces of Harry's future companions—their whole moral being seemed in a state of depression ; and their stunted figures, stupid talking, and heartless unsettled eye, made them look a different race of beings to those who lived around them.

Long long weary days did the factory people work in the close rooms of the large building, and their tongues, going as fast as their wheels, seemed to be devising mischief, while here and there you might see, in some remote corner, some quiet, solitary spirit, who worked on in solitude, unnoticed and unnoticing. In general, the line of figures gave the appearance of mechanic movements and listless minds ; and the desire to elude, by cunning and art, the harsh master, whose loud, violent voice, coarse and wicked language, only bore out the impression which his dark piercing eye, sunk in his brow, and the aid of no agreeable expression, gave to those who saw him.

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“ Come, sir, this won't do—this won't do. You're an idle hypocrite, sir, that's what you are. You sit here, pretending to be so good and silent, and all the time you

are the idlest little dog that ever crossed threshold. It won't do, sir, I say," and the angry words were followed by a blow upon the fair bent head of the orphan boy, who had been toiling hard, and in silence, in his remote corner, under the little window, through the partly-closed panes of which he was able to look out on to the green hills beyond.

Harry loved his quiet corner, and would not have changed it for worlds; and he had worked there, hour after hour, through the long days, thinking of Nannie and mother's death, till the big tears rolled out of the large full eye of his, so that he made many a slip in his work, though his thin fingers had got strangely accustomed to the work, and moved almost as mechanically as those around.

"It won't do, sir, I say," repeated the overlooker, adding another blow, as Harry meekly bent under the first, without giving way to a sharp answer, as most were used to doing in the factory.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he said.

While muttering an oath, the man passed on, saying secretly between his teeth, "his work did not do for the like of them."

Harry looked up as his persecutor moved off; and his poor fingers were soon again running their mechanical traces through the threads, and his eyes on the green hills through the partly-closed panes, and his thoughts on Nannie.

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More than a year and a half had rolled away, and Harry worked on still, in the same place, under the same window, and with the same thoughts; he heard often from Nannie, and her letters were always so kind. It made Harry do his work badly for the day after he had them, as the tears would come. But he had never seen Nannie yet; he did so long to see her; but it was so very far off.

Harry lived in a small ragged cottage, where, in a

low, broken back-room, or outhouse, he slept on a bed whose tattered and dirty condition, littered on the ground, was thought good enough for the orphan by his uncle. In this room another boy slept before Harry came. He was a very different boy to the orphan ; much gayer and merrier, and seemed to have far fewer cares upon him than Harry's serious face shewed to be on his mind. He had a healthful expression of countenance, and was the favourite among all who knew him, young and old. His eyes were dark and sparkling, a fresh colour rose into his face when he was gay, and his whole face was full of laughter ; still there was occasionally a look of sadness that crossed his brow, which gave a shade of melancholy to his face, that added much to its beauty. His voice was always the gayest among the gay ; and when any sport or merriment was going on, he was in it ; yet at times he would shrink from the crowd and love being alone.

Harry soon formed a friendship with the lad, and, like boys, they were pleased with their new friendship, and promised never to break it. His name was Archie, at least he was always called so. The boys were strangely different. While hour after hour Harry would sit under his dull green pane of glass, Archie's voice would sound merrily and gaily among the others at work, and his laugh would echo through his end of the long room, while his fingers went swift as lightning through his accustomed work. The boys would walk out in the summer evenings over the hill, and talk of all that each had seen and been used to in his own home. On these occasions Harry was always the more thoughtful and serious one, and Archie the light one ; and often in the middle of their talking he would break away and rush over the hill, laughing at Harry for always talking so gravely—" It makes one wretched dull."

Harry was a quiet boy, and did not always feel inclined for the incessant gaiety of the other ; besides he was often sickly and weak, and this made him stiller in his manner.

Both of them were good boys, and always knelt down to pray, morning and evening, in their bed-room; and gay as Archie was, he never laughed at Harry for many of what he called his "old-fashioned ways;" but would often follow them, and do as he did, afterwards. Harry's soul was full of his mother; and though months had now begun to glide away, he was continually thinking of her last words to him and Nannie about his First Communion. There was a church a little up the valley; and on Sundays Harry would always go there, and very often Archie would go too, and, by Harry's influence, he became more regular in going; and in spite of some ridicule and laughter they got from others, the two boys would set out together up the valley. Harry with his fustian jacket he had had new when he first came, his patched black trousers he wore at "mother's funeral," which he always wore on Sundays, and his cap, which Nannie had made for him the night before he left her, telling him "He'd look quite dandy-like among the country boys when he went to church on Sundays." Archie was better off than Harry; his parents were both alive; and with his cloth clothes and decent hat on Sundays, he used to set out to church.

Archie roused Harry from many of his solitary habits, and made him more cheerful, though he was one of a sorrowful spirit usually, and it seemed excitement to him when he did move out of it. A Confirmation was to take place at last in the neighbourhood, and Harry tried to summon courage to go to the clergyman about receiving his First Communion. His whole thoughts seemed bent on the solemn preparation. The influence he held over Archie had led him to come forward too; and though it was sure to bring down much ridicule upon them, still the two lads persevered in preparing. Harry often felt a fear lest Archie should fail before he came to the point. His light gay spirit, his love for being liked by others, his easy good-natured heart often caused his young companion trouble, lest, after all, temptation might be too much for him, and he might fall.

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“ Harry,” said Archie, as they were walking across, one Sunday morning, from the church to the factory together as usual, and the orphan was walking more silently than usual by the hedge-side, “ Harry, you’ve grown dreadful silent lately. I have my doubts about taking the Holy Communion ; I think I’m too young ; and then it makes one so gloomy.”

Harry looked up quickly, “ Oh, no, no, Archie, don’t say that. If I am sometimes silent, don’t put it down to that ; it’s my nature, you know, not to say much ; and then as to too young—why you know you are not too young to sin or to die, therefore you are not too young to get help against sin. Dear Archie, don’t let bad people persuade you away from that,” said the orphan, drawing up, and taking hold of his companion’s hand.

“ Not I,” said the other, rather sharply. “ Don’t think other people can persuade me ; I’m not so easy as all that, whatever my faults are.”

“ There, now, I’ve made you angry,” said Harry. “ I didn’t mean to find fault ; I only meant, you are so goodnatured sometimes, you let it lead you away. And as to the Holy Communion, why you know, Archie, all good men have ever taken it, and it’s only bad men who stay away ; and then to think you’ve got ready so long, and to give it all up, would be so sad, Archie.”

“ Well, well, you always do talk like a parson, Harry. I’ll think about it.” And the lad began to sing, as if he would shake off his deeper thoughts. Harry felt anxious, and feared for his young companion, but saw it would do more harm than good to press the matter further then.

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Days passed after days, and the orphan became more and more intent on the coming event. The factory boys often laughed at him when they saw him going away to church on Sunday morning ; and very often his walk was alone, for Archie’s courage would fail him when he

saw them collect on the road to mark his going. But Harry seemed to care for nothing. You might have seen his quiet figure, with his sweet, pale, thoughtful face, as he took his walk to the church, and his patched pair of trousers, which seemed to talk to him of mother, week after week as the time came round, wrapped up in his own still thought of getting ready for "First Communion."

Harry set off one evening, when the sinking sun shot its slanting rays along the seedy tops of the high grass, over the field-path to the house of the clergyman. "Will he speak to me," thought he, "a poor factory boy, and no one to say a word for me?" And Harry stopped at the stile, and sat pulling off the tops of the hay-blossom, and watching the rapid movements of a dragon-fly, as he darted over the tops of the hedge after the flies. "What shall I do?" thought he. "Mother did say so much about First Communion, I must do what she said." So he went on. He was dressed in the best dress he had; still he looked like a factory boy. As he walked along the field-path, he thought of Nannie, and wondered if she still sat in the old garret-window, and whether the geranium was still alive. "Poor Nannie, she's the only one belonging to me; when I'm a man Nannie shall live with me." And Harry sighed.

By this time he had reached the parsonage: he felt more frightened and doubtful than ever, and putting up his hand to the bell, he tried to pull it, but could not. He had not the courage to try again, but began to walk away, when the kind voice of the clergyman called after him,

"Who are you, my little lad? did you want me?"

Harry started; but he was encouraged by the kind manner, and turned back.

"Please, sir, I'm a factory boy."

"And what have you to say to me?"

"Please, sir, I came to say as how I'd like to be confirmed."

"And what made you think of that, my boy?" said

the minister kindly, surprised at such a request from a factory boy.

“ When mother died, she bade me, sir.”

“ And when did your mother die ?”

“ A year ago.”

The clergyman bade him follow, and Harry went into the house.

Mr. Morris—that was his name—talked long with him, and was much, very much satisfied with all he saw of him.

“ Oh, sir,” said Harry, as he left the house, “ I am so much obliged to you ; I feel as if it would be too great a blessing to be allowed to receive my First Communion. You do not think that my being where there is so much bad around me is a reason against my taking it ?”

“ Of course not, so as you yourself do not take part in their sin.”

“ No, sir, I try and pray not. But it comes on my mind sometimes like a doubt, when I see so many persons who have been confirmed, yet have never received their First Communion ; and some, when they do, make very little of it, and never appear to think there is more in it than common.”

“ There is nothing in that, Harry. There are but few who will be saved, very few ; and it is sad to think how little use good people of late seem to make of First Communion. It is plain how great a change it must make in their life to receive His precious Body and Blood into themselves for the first time. From that time they become the disciples of the HOLY GHOST in a special manner ; and though to receive First Communion makes no difference to our outward eye, to an angel’s eye how great the difference must be !”

“ It is very awful, sir, to think it.”

“ It is, indeed, Harry ; for, no doubt, after our First Communion every sin becomes more exceeding sinful, and is much deeper in dye than the same sin committed before it.”

“ Then, sir, is not that a reason against receiving it, as some say ?” said Harry, hesitatingly.

“ Surely not ; we are not choosers in the matter. GOD has ordered it, and we have no more power to decide whether we will receive it or not, than whether we will ever enter a church or not. Both increase our sin, and both are duties we cannot escape if we would be saved. I cannot think how people can answer that. How can those who object to receiving communion come to church so easily ? They seem to forget that that too is an exceedingly awful act, which increases our condemnation if we are not blessed by it ; and yet the worst and most careless men come to church with utter indifference, and with no more concern than if they were doing a merely trifling act, which left them as it found them ; whereas, in truth, any man who comes into a church is a step nearer heaven or hell when he leaves it.”

Mr. Morris gave Harry prayers to use every day with reference to his First Communion, and self-examination questions, so that his First Communion might be always in his mind, and that he might get well ready for it.

This was Harry's prayer.

*“ O Lord Jesus Christ, who gavest Thyself for me, and hast given us Thy precious body and blood to eat and to drink, prepare me for that blessed privilege ; it will be, indeed, a new life to me. Oh, may I hate sin more, and shun it more earnestly from that day ; may I feel how dreadful any fault will be which I commit in a body which has received Thee ; may I put away childish things ; may it be the first step towards a saintly life. May every prayer and every devotion receive a larger supply of grace after my First Communion, and may I long more earnestly for God and Heaven ; may it be my guard against impurity, vanity, and rebellion, and all the other sins of youth ; and fit me after my Last Communion to be admitted into Thy presence, where I may drink of the vine in Thy heavenly Father's kingdom. All this I ask for Thy promise's sake. Amen.”*

These were his self-examination questions at night :

*Have I thought of my First Communion to-day ?*

*What sins in myself have I seen which I must strive that my First Communion may put away ?*

*Am I prepared to lead a much stricter life, and to be more watchful, after my First Communion ?*

When Harry got outside he crossed the stile. He was thinking deeply as he walked along of all that had passed, when Archie's voice sounded merrily behind him, "Why, Harry, where have you been? All this time with the minister?"

"Yes, Archie."

"Well, now, what did he say? that we ought to be confirmed?"

"To be sure, Archie; you know that."

"Well, as to that, I see no objection to being confirmed; but I am afraid of that Communion after it. I could not make up my mind to take that."

"Why not, Archie?" said Harry, looking still at the tall grass through which he was walking.

"Why not! why because it would be so dreadful to take it and do wrong afterwards; and how could I help doing wrong afterwards in that factory there?"

"Well but, Archie, as the minister has just been saying, if we are trying not to do wrong, that is what God expects. For no one can be sure of not doing wrong for an hour: and our blessed LORD gave the Holy Communion to St. Peter and the rest, all of whom did do wrong that night; for they all forsook Him, and St. Peter denied Him. They meant right at the time, and though He knew they would fall, He gave it them."

"Well," said Archie, "there is something in that; I never thought of it."

"Oh, Archie! how I do wish you would be grave and thoughtful; time is so short, and our life, Archie, may so soon be past. Oh, do think of it; you may never have another opportunity of receiving your First Communion."

Archie was very thoughtful. He determined he

would be confirmed, and do as Harry wished him ; and nothing could go on better than he did for days and days : he prayed by Harry's side, and read with him every evening. He went several times with Harry to see Mr. Morris ; and would often cry at the earnest way in which he spoke to him.

“ Oh, Harry,” he would say, as they came home, “ what should I do without you ! you are my kind, dear friend ; if you were to go what should I do ? I know, I am quite sure, I should not be good any longer.”

“ Oh, Archie, you must lean on the grace of God to make you good ; nothing else can, and that will never fail you.”

“ Ah well, Harry, I know I should fail directly, if I had not you. I have no trust in my own self.”

Archie and the orphan had many walks together about the hills, and many long talks. Archie seemed fond of Harry, and had many good feelings, which, when he was talked to, came out ; but he was changeable, and governed by the feeling of the moment. He loved to think of the more beautiful things in religion, and to talk of another world, and how happy it would be to be ready for death ; and when he spoke of these things his eyes would fill with tears, and he would press Harry's hand in his, and determine to do whatever the orphan boy told him. When religion bid him subdue his quick temper, and give up pleasures which stood in the way of his duty, he did not like it ; and by degrees it became more and more irksome to him.

“ Indeed, indeed, Harry, I am too young for First Communion. I shall never keep to it ; I wish I could ; but I never shall. I must wait till I am a little older and more settled.”

“ I can't reason about it with you,” said his companion, “ for it is not my place. But I know what I've read in books, and it says, that while we neglect it we are living in wilful sin, and have no hope, and that is very dreadful.

“ Well, I can't believe it was ever meant for one so young as I.”

“ But surely, Archie, if you are not too young to sin, you are not too young to get help against sin ; and besides, I can't see why we are not bound as much to take the First Communion as we are to say our prayers and go to church, and you would not hesitate at that ; and still, to do this, if you were not fit, would be very wrong.”

“ Well, well, Harry, you can talk me over to any thing ; I wish I were like you ; I wish I was always with you ; but when I get among those others, I am so easily led away.”

Archie went on preparing for his First Communion, and Harry was happy.

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Meantime Harry's troubles did not grow less. He was no favourite with the overlooker, and the neglect his uncle shewed him became a cause for others to neglect him.

He still worked on in his solitary corner under the dull window pane, and often used to cry by himself when he thought how very long it was since he had seen Nannie. And then Archie continually disappointed him — Archie would go much oftener than he used with other boys and youths whom Harry knew were light and bad ; but Archie's gay heart, and bright merry manner, won the liking of all who came in his way, and it became his great and sad temptation.

At length Harry noticed a marked change. His little friend grew more and more distant, and drew away from being with him. Matters of discontent had grown up among the workpeople, and many secret meetings were being held at night and after dark. Whisperings and low murmurs were continually going on in the long factory-room ; and especially when the overlooker came in, many angry and discontented faces were turned towards him ; signs and nods were changed from one

to another; and they seemed to be hatching an outbreak. All this state of things only made the overlooker more severe and overbearing still. It was quite plain to Harry that Archie was mixed up in whatever there was which was wrong: his silent uneven manners and frequent glances at the orphan, the very way in which he seemed to avoid him, and steal away from his notice, —all convinced Harry things were not right.

Matters grew daily worse: when the overlooker came in, there was a sudden hush and feint, like a storm quickly going down, and nothing but the whirr and whizz of the engines and machines were heard, where just before the noise of low murmuring, talking, and whispering had almost drowned the other. Every eye was fixed directly at the work, as if one common feeling and impulse led them all on; and no hand moved quicker, or eye seemed more intent than Archie's. The overlooker, of course, noticed all this, and walked along the room, looking vexed and irritated, which he shewed by his manner, which was quick, and sharp, when there was no seeming reason; which only stirred up still more the feeling against him.

Harry saw what was coming, and dreaded the consequences for Archie.

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One night he lay in his little bed in the corner of his room, where he always slept. He did not sleep; his mind was uneasy; the summer moon shone into his face, and the stars of a hot night hung their coloured lamps in the sky, out of the window. Archie had not come to bed yet; and still it was late, very late; much later than it should be. Harry felt very uneasy and unhappy. He had said his prayers; he had looked out to the world where the peaceful moon was; he had prayed about his First Communion; he had prayed for Archie; he lay wakeful and uneasy: at last a footstep was heard treading softly under the window. Harry listened and counted; there were more than two. The figures



seemed approaching the room where he was ; he thought he knew Archie's footstep ; a strong inclination led him to keep awake and pretend to sleep, to hear what might pass ; perhaps he might save Archie from ruin ; he had not long to hesitate, for the door gently opened, and the figures entered. Harry's eyes were closed ; but his heart beat high, enough to choke him. He could perceive that more than three came in, by the very quiet whispers which he overheard.

"Is he asleep?" said a very low voice.

"Fast," was the answer. "Maybe he's not though."

"Oh, yes, he is : he's not the lad to pretend."

Harry did not know what to do ; he did not feel right in pretending to sleep, while he did not ; but yet he longed to hear any thing which might enable him to help or warn Archie.

They came up close to his bed, and put the lamp near his eyes ; Harry was obliged to decide on a sudden, and he pretended to sleep.

"Stow them away under the bed," said a voice. "They lie best there."

"Suppose they catch fire?" said the low voice of Archie.

"Well, there will be a blow up before the time," said the other.

"There they'll be safe enough ; good night, Archie, boy."

"Stop, stop," said Archie. "Do you know I think I'd rather not."

"Rather not what, coward?" said the same harsh voice which had spoken before ; "rather not what ? You won't go and peach now, will you ?"

"No, no ; but I thought I should like to ask some one."

"Ask some one what ? I suppose you'll go and ask that sleeping fool yonder ?"

"No, not that."

"Well, well, Archie ; see, he's stirring. Remember to-morrow evening at the sunset, out in the three-corner

field. Don't you fail, or you know the consequence; bring all the things along with you. We shall have work enough to fire the corner of the factory which they've given us."

"Well, but," said Archie, again hesitating. "It seems hard to let Harry have a chance of being burnt, all for not knowing."

"Why, whose fault is that, silly; whose but his own; for being such a fellow we can't trust? Good night, Archie; keep up to the scratch."

And the figures went off, leaving Archie standing alone and thoughtful in the middle of the room. The moon shone in through the broken lattice, and fell full on Harry's pale sick face; Archie was standing in the middle of the room, he bit his lips, and looked anxious; his eye first fell on Harry's, then on the moon; the bundle of combustibles lay on the ground. Harry's quiet face looked paler and thinner than ever against the white sheet; and his thin and keen brow made the shadow fall so darkly on his eyes, that his face looked more thoughtful and pure than ever. Archie looked at him, and Harry felt he was looking at him. Archie sighed: "If he knew all," said he, in a low voice, "what would he say?"

"I do know all, at least I guess all," cried Harry, starting up in his bed: "Oh, Archie, Archie, listen to me, Archie: we have been friends but a little time, in that little time I've loved you well, Archie, boy. I have no other to care about me here; and you've spoken many a kind word, and given many a kind look, on the poor orphan Harry, as they call me. Therefore I've loved you, and would do you good service. Archie, you shall not go on this wild, wicked work. You'll make the great GOD angry, and you'll come to some sad trouble."

"Hush! Hush!" cried Archie, looking cautiously round; "do lie still, Harry, and I'll talk;" for the orphan had started from his thin and tattered bed, in his anxiety about Archie.

The two lads stood talking a long while. The moon

all the while sailing through the thin fleecy clouds. Archie hung down his head sadly, as Harry seemed pressing some point of view he had been placing before him.

“ You remember all you felt and said about your First Communion. Oh, Archie, Archie, you were getting ready for it, and your heart was set on better things; and I shall kneel alone at the Confirmation, and alone at the holy Altar, and you'll be away who should have been at my side.”

Archie was evidently hesitating. He had many a good feeling in him, and loved Harry.

The orphan's thin cold hand pressed Archie's in his, as his full blue eye looked him earnestly in the face. “ You'll give this up — say you will — won't you, Archie? just say it, for I know you won't break your word. I'll kneel down by my bedside and pray for help for you for a better purpose.” And Harry dragged Archie on his knees.

For hours, till day had fully broken, Harry talked with Archie, pleaded with him, and entreated him. Archie listened attentively. He did love his orphan companion; and while he looked in Harry's face and earnest eyes, he thought he could not go against what he wished. He thought of all they had talked of together about their Confirmation and First Communion, and his better feelings woke up in him.

His first impulse was to open all his heart to Harry. His tale was full of alarm. The next night it had been agreed by a hundred of the more desperate factory-men to set fire to the factory at different parts; they had trapped Archie into their number. His gay thoughtless spirit and pliable disposition had made him an easy victim. They had laid, and so far carried out, their plot so quietly, that no knowledge of it had got abroad, and the owner, as well as the master of the factory, was in utter ignorance of it all. A signal was to be given at a settled moment, which all engaged would understand, and the place for meeting was appointed.

“What shall I do?” said Archie, in despair. “They would kill me if they thought I would say a word.”

“What do?” cried Harry, starting from his bed. “Why, come with me, and tell all you know to the owner. What do? why save life, Archie, and make amends for all you meant to do wrong by doing right.”

“But I say they will kill me,” said the other.

“And better die than do wrong,” said Harry. “No, no, Archie, follow me;” and the boy had already crossed the doorway in his eagerness to save Archie’s taking another step in the direction of ruin and sin.

“Stay a moment,” said Archie, in perplexity.

“Not a moment,” said Harry; “if you do not come, I’ll go and tell all.”

“You will, will you, young man?” said a voice in the dark doorway, and at the same time a heavy blow on his head stunned Harry, and stretched him senseless on the ground. “Dead men tell no tales.”

Archie started back. “What have you done to Harry?” cried he. “Shame on you, what have you done to the poor boy?”

“What I’ll do next to you, if you don’t hold your tongue and keep secrets.”

Archie followed the man out of the house into the short lane which ran up outside, towards the open fields.

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It was some hours before Harry recovered from his senseless state, and when he did his head was confused and his thoughts wandered. He thought of Nannie, and he saw her home; he imagined his mother by his side, and speaking to him as she did when she was dying. When he quite came to himself, he found himself lying on the ground of his room. The morning sun had risen high, and some hours he knew must have passed since the men and boys had gone to work at the factory. Harry made the best of his way to the scene of his daily work,

and on reaching the door met the master. He looked angry and more stern than usual.

“Where have you been, sir? These are high doings; here’s the sun high up at noon, and at least fifty of you away from work. And where’s that young rascal, Archie? of course, if there’s a row he’s in it; but he shall know the rights of it. I tell you what, sir, I tell you what, Master Harry, with all your quiet looks you’re none too good; you’re full of your mischief: but I’ll send you back to your sister, that’s what I’ll do. It was only for that mother of yours——”

“Don’t speak against mother, uncle,” said Harry, quickly, and the colour mounting to his cheek; “she was your sister.”

“Do you teach me, sir? off to your work, and keep your place;” and the master lifted his hand to strike Harry.

But the boy avoided the blow, and went towards his solitary corner. What was he to do? Should he tell what he knew of Archie and the rest? He knew, or all but knew, what was going on; and when he looked down the long light factory-room, and saw the many empty places there were, and noticed the many whisperings and winks which were going on on all sides, he was sure mischief was brewing. But what could he do? If he said any thing, he broke his word with Archie; and truth was dear to Harry. His hands moved quickly and mechanically through his work, for his eyes were continually wandering down the room and out of the window.

One o’clock struck, and two of the places were still empty. Archie had not appeared. The master came in several times, and looked anxious and suspicious; but the moment he appeared, there was a general hush down the room, and a number of significant looks, which only served to make him more vexed. Evening came, and no Archie. Harry’s mind was made up.

The master’s house lay a short way from the factory: it was a wooden house, and a small garden round it.

Harry had not often been to it; for though he was his uncle, he had shewn him no attention on that account. The overseer of the factory was away, so that the only person in authority was the master. He had two little children, with whom Harry had sometimes played when he passed his uncle's gate. He was very fond of them; and though he was but a ragged and friendless boy, his kind and gentle manner won the children's love, and they would run out to meet the orphan boy when they saw him coming back from work in the evening, and entice him to play with them, though their father did not know it.

The master was a hard and strict man, who had raised himself by his hard work, and despised every one who had not done the same: the highest point of his religion seemed to be that he was independent and could support himself, and was beholden to no one but himself for it. He had but one relation, a sister, and she was Harry's mother. She had struggled a few short years against all the sorrows of deep poverty, and had at last sunk under it, leaving her two children orphans.

Her many applications for help had lain unheeded on her brother's board; and when he heard of her death, his conscience stung him, and he sent for her boy, offering to give him work and to pay his journey.

Having done this, he thought he had done all he need, and his conscience was at rest. He soon returned to all his selfish and hardened feeling towards his sister's family, and seemed to hate her orphan boy, for no better reason than that he was the one object in the world he ought to have been kind to.

Harry bent meekly and gently under his uncle's unkind reproaches, and bore them without a murmur. Young as he was, his mother's death had sunk deeply in his heart, and he tried to live as he thought she would have had him.

It was on the evening I have mentioned that Harry was coming home much quicker than usual towards his uncle's house: as usual, the little girls were at the gate,

peeping through the pales for the appearance of the orphan.

“ Harry, here comes Harry !” cried the younger one, starting forward and jumping for joy.

But Harry did not seem inclined to play this evening.

“ Is uncle at home ?” asked Harry, pushing past them into the garden.

The children looked surprised.

“ No, no, Harry ; father’s just gone down to the mill-pond. You can stay and play with us to-night ; Mary and I should like it so. Don’t look so grave, Harry,” said the little girl, taking his hand, and looking up in his face.

But Harry’s face gave no encouragement.

“ Which way did uncle go ?” asked he again quickly ; “ which way did you say, Lucy ?”

“ Down there by the mill-pond, and he said he shouldn’t be back till late.”

At this moment a number of factory men passed quickly by the garden. They were talking quickly and low ; their faces shewed no good purpose ; and Harry noticed most of them were armed. He caught several words as they went by : “ Strike, strike for wages. Fire house and factory ; won’t it burn well ? Keep up to the point.” The men were in large numbers, and walked fast by. Harry felt there was no time to be lost, and he broke from the children, and darted across the garden in the direction of the mill-pond. The evening was fast drawing in ; all the way as he ran he heard the distant tread of men and the suppressed buzz of voices, and he felt more and more sure that some great outbreak was at hand. He never ran so quickly before : it was at least a mile and a half to the mill-pond, and field, lane, and ditch fled before Harry’s feet. On turning a sharp corner of a lane, he suddenly came in front of a boy who was walking quickly. On seeing Harry, the boy stopped, and seemed inclined to turn. It was Archie.

“ Archie, Archie !” cried Harry, panting for breath,

“stop; hear me one word, just one word;” and he was so out of breath he could not speak more; but seizing Archie by the arm, held him tightly. The other struggled in vain. “No, no,” cried Harry, “I will not let you go, you shall hear me. You’re going a bad course, you know you are; this night will be your ruin if you don’t hear me. Archie, Archie, you did love me once, you did hear me once! oh, hear me once more, this once, just this once, and give up your wild work to-night.” His manner was so earnest that the tears started to his eyes, and his voice became so full of real meaning that Archie ceased struggling, and was still. He had a conscience, and he did feel it speak within him. Harry saw the power he was gaining over him, and was on the point of using it to the full, when five or six men suddenly turned the corner. “What, Archie, you fool, you’re been going to be made a saint of in that way? Come along with us!” and with a loud laugh the men dragged him off. The being laughed at was too much for Archie, and he yielded without resistance. Harry gave one bitter, sorrowing look after him, and darted off on the work he had to do.

Every thing which Harry had seen or heard on his way convinced him more than ever that bad work was going on that night. His uncle had gone to a small house near the mill-stream to speak to a neighbour. Harry met him coming out.

“Uncle, uncle,” cried he, “make haste; there’s mischief, sad mischief! There’s a strike in the mill: all will be up if you don’t make haste!”

His uncle met Harry as surlily as usual, but was startled at his stern face and earnest manner.

“Ask no questions, uncle, but come with me; every minute is worth gold.”

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Long before Harry and his uncle had reached the village the outbreak had begun, and the wildest confusion filled every thing. The evening had closed in,



and the dark sky served to shew here and there the flames of pale light going up through columns of smoke, where in different parts the workmen had fired the mill. Loud cries and voices were heard all round: "The master! find the master; throw him on the fire if you can find him; who knows where he is? to his house! let us sack his house; he's somewhere hid there, I'll warrant."

Such were the alarming cries which met the master's ear as he rushed towards his house. He had to pass by several groups of men, and was only saved by the darkness and confusion from being found out.

The fire now broke out at every part of the mill, and being of wood, it burnt rapidly. The scene was terrible: the little village, lit up by the lurid glare of the fire, which now curled and flared towards the sky, lighting up every cottage and tree around, and throwing its pale light on the slopes of the hills near; the figures of numbers of men standing tall and dark against the light of the flames, as they strove to spread the devouring fire,—all made up a picture of terror.

The master had made straight for his house, while Harry had left his side, and darted down the street after a figure he fancied was Archie's.

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"My children, my little girls! for pity's sake, save them, my poor, poor children!" was the cry Harry heard, as, hot and breathless, he came back from his useless pursuit of what he thought was Archie. His uncle was standing distracted outside his house, which had been set fire to; and being built of wood, instantly caught. A number of men were making their way down the street towards him; while he, utterly careless of what happened to himself, was standing in silent agony looking at his burning house. "My children, my children!" cried he.

"Look to yourself, uncle," cried Harry, "I'll save

them;" and then the boy dashed into the volumes of smoke which burst out from the house.

The men who were making towards the master stopped on seeing the act of the orphan, and stood gazing at the flames he had entered so boldly. Wild and fierce as they were, it seemed to damp even their fury to see the courage Harry shewed. "Save the lad, if you've any feeling in you," cried a voice from the crowd, which was now swelling thickly from the crashing and falling factory round which they had been gathered. The men seemed to hesitate; the master stood by utterly regardless of his own safety, watching the point at which Harry had rushed in. At this moment a boy came up and joined the crowd, and he was black with smoke and dirt, and seemed bleeding; he looked as if he had been using violent exertion. He went up to one of the men who were looking at the flames half-frightened at the work they themselves had done. "I've done it," said he. "What are you all standing here for? Where's the master? you'd better secure him, for the red-coats are coming down upon us, and they say they're not two miles up the road. I've done my work, any how."

"What work?" said the man whom he addressed.

"Why, stove in the master's door, and set fire to all the stores, and there is not a fraction of the lower house but is set blazing."

"Brute!" shouted the master, rushing at Archie, who had not seen him to this moment. "Inhuman wretch, then you've killed both my children, and Harry with them;" and making a clutch at Archie's throat, he fell forward, overcome by the agony of his feelings.

"The children and Harry!" said Archie in dismay. "I was told there wasn't a soul above or below, and it was only the old house I should burn. The children and Harry!" said Archie, making a start towards the burning house.

At this moment the wind blew away the flames which curled round a window, and for a minute left the

opening clear into the room, shewing only the blackened edges of the scorched frame.

Harry rushed to the opening : one child was on his arm, and the other clung round his neck ; he had tied it to him with some sheeting from the bed ; the boy appeared scorched and blackened with the flames which were rolling round him. " Save the children," shouted the gallant boy ; " catch me if you are able."

So saying he disappeared for an instant ; in that instant the mass fell in with a crash ; but not before Harry had taken his spring and leapt from the falling casement out into the street ; the fall was not great, but he was heavily burdened, and he had to use no small dexterity to fall so as to save the children.

A shout of admiration was raised by the men as he fell, and in a moment a crowd had gathered round him.

He fell on a stone, and was stunned by the fall ; they took the children from him ; they were too frightened even to cry ; and some said Harry was dead.

" Make way, make way !" cried Archie, pushing through the crowd ; " Harry's dead, and I've killed him ! Harry, Harry, look up and speak to me, there's a good lad ; do look up and say I'm not a murderer." And Archie bent over the pale face of the orphan, and held his cold hand between his own. But Harry did not speak or move.

" He's a fine fellow," cried one of the men ; " who would have thought he had so much spirit in him ?"

" No ! that pale face of his never seemed to speak much for him in that way neither."

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It was night, and Harry lay upon his straw bed ; a rushlight burnt in the room, and flared and flickered in the gusts of air, which rushed through the broken panes. Harry lay as still as death ; he had not opened his eyes nor spoken ; his face was pale as death, and his thin hair lay out on his ragged pillow ; his hands were folded on his bosom ; the light just fell on the orphan's face ;

Archie was kneeling by his bedside ; his face leant on his hand, and his eye was fixed on Harry's face so earnestly, he looked as if he had not moved for hours ; you could hardly say who seemed the stillest, Harry or Archie. Archie did not speak, he did not open his lips ; he seemed listening for Harry to breathe, and he was afraid of moving lest he might miss the slightest sound of it.

Outside all was still ; it was two nights since the riot ; the ringleaders had been taken, and would be tried next assize. The master had taken his children to a relation who lived a few miles off. The factory was burnt to the ground, and six hundred people thrown out of work.

Harry had been carried back to his own house, and Archie, who, from his youth, had been spared, had never left him. The doctor had said he might live, but it was not likely ; and he had not yet spoken. It was strange, though all had admired him for his courage, there was no one to nurse or see after him but Archie ; Archie did it all. There had been a sort of collection made among the men. Nannie had been sent for, for Archie knew about Nannie ; he had often heard Harry talk of her.

Two o'clock struck by the church clock, and the doctor had said there would be a crisis ; he would either die or speak then. And what would Archie give to hear him speak ; to feel he was not a murderer ; and, above all, the murderer of Harry !

Two o'clock struck, and Archie still knelt at the bedside, and watched Harry's pale, motionless face. You might have heard Archie's heart beat all round the room.

"His First Communion," said Archie to himself. "Poor Harry. How he talked of it : and I've done it. Wretched I"—as he buried his face in his hands.

The room was so quiet,—only Archie's breath, and the flicker of the rushlight, as the thin air crept through the patched panes of the broken window.

Every now and then a footstep passed in the lane underneath, and Archie heard it twice as long as he ever heard a footstep go up the lane before. The moon looked through the little diamond lattice-work of the window; and Archie felt it was like an eye which smiled on Harry's pale face, but looked away from him. He looked up at Harry, but there was no more of sign of life or consciousness. He lay like a waxwork, and his thin hair spread out on the pillow; his long thin fingers rested on the sheet, just where they were three hours before. Archie would look away from the face, and look down on the bed, and count the threads in the patchwork before him, till he had counted them twenty times, and did not know the numbers yet, if he had been asked. He had never known so long a night, or so deep a stillness. He tried to pray, and he did for Harry; but he could not for himself.

He looked up at the moon. "Archie," said a low, gentle voice. If an arrow had shot him, he could not have started more. Harry's eyes were open, and looked at him, and those fingers had moved.

"Where am I?" said Harry. "Mother—oh, I've had such a dream—I thought you were dead, and I was gone away."

And he kept his eye fixed on Archie.

"And Nannie, too; I thought you were very far away; oh, so far;" and kept on looking at Archie.

Archie did not dare speak, he was choking; he was almost afraid of being alone with Harry.

"Harry," said he.

"Oh, where am I?" said the orphan, putting his hand up to his head. "Where am I?" he shut his eyes for a moment, and then his thoughts seemed to recover themselves; he put out his hand to Archie.

"Archie," said he, "I shan't live two days out; I am going to die. I should like to see the minister, and I want Nannie." The mention of his sister's name brought tears into his eyes.

"And Archie, dear Archie, I want some very serious

talk with you before I leave you," he said very earnestly ; and half lifted up his head on his pillow ; but it sunk back directly, he was so weak.

Archie held his hand, and his hot tears dropped on it.

" Oh, Harry ! I can't talk to you."

But the dying boy meant to talk, whether Archie wished it or not.

" Archie, you know how I did long to be confirmed, and receive my First Communion. But how can I now be confirmed ? It's too late. But I should like to receive my First Communion. And that's why I want the minister to come, Archie. I'm so glad, so very glad, I have been getting ready for it : for I feel, somehow, as if I didn't mind dying now, though I am so young. I am so thankful GOD has given me grace to get ready. I shan't work any more at the factory, Archie ; and I don't mind that neither, for the factory's a bad place ; and I wish you were out of it, Archie, dear. But now I've one thing to beg of you, Archie,—one thing, one last thing—" and the dying boy raised himself up as he spoke, and fixed his eye full on Archie,— "one last thing : that you'll be confirmed, Archie, next Monday. Maybe it will be the day I'm buried ; and I feel as how I shan't live till to-morrow morning. And then maybe you'll take your First Communion the Sunday after it, if the minister will. And oh, Archie, Archie, never, never, leave it off till you come to where I hope I'm going." Harry spoke so earnestly that it overcame him, and he sunk back again exhausted.

Archie could not speak. He only sobbed bitterly. There was a long silence.

And Harry broke it again.

" Archie, you've been led away of late by bad lads and men, but you do know what's right, and I know you wish to do it ; don't believe them, mind your own better feeling ; it's GOD put it into you. Mind your better self, and thank GOD He hasn't brought you to die before you were ready. Take a warning from me ; I'm a dying

boy, Archie, who say it; and you should mind me: you used to mind me when I talked to you out at yonder fields, and you should mind me still more now I'm a-dying."

His manner being so earnest, Archie thought he had never heard any one speak like it before. "No, not even a minister in the church," as he said.

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Harry was right: when the doctor came the next morning he said the orphan was sinking, and that a few hours more would end all. He told Archie so as he stood with him under the window, looking out into the road, to see if his horse was being minded by the boy he had put to it; but on Archie's ear these words fell cold as a stone; and as he looked towards the calm face of the patient sufferer, whose breath grew heavier and heavier, he felt as if all the world would be empty when Harry was gone;—and yet who in the wide world would miss the orphan, except Archie and Nannie?

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The minister came very early, Harry knew his foot-step down the lane, and a light of joy awoke on his face. He counted each step as he came to the cottage, and tried to smile as he entered the room: but he could not. "Oh, sir," said he, as he stretched out his hand, "I'm so glad you've come—so glad. You see I'm going. I'm so much obliged to you for all your kindness to me, who was a poor orphan. God will reward you, sir; me and mine can't. Oh, there is one thing more, sir—my First Communion."

"Thank God!" said the factory boy, faintly. "And now there's only one thing more—Nannie. I hope, I do hope she'll come, I should so like to see her, and to make all right, and to put the world out of my mind. When she comes, she'll have my Bible and Prayer-book, sir, which you gave me. And, Archie, you'll take my

little linnet and the cage, and take care of it—eh, Archie?” and Harry smiled.

The dying boy talked long with the minister, and Archie was there. Harry wished it.

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That afternoon was fixed for Harry's First Communion, for his strength fast failed him. The clergyman went home, and Harry lay anxiously waiting for Nannie; he did so want to see her. Archie was at the window watching.

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The third-class train was about to start from the Great Western terminus; crowds of people were there, and persons of all kinds were pushing and jostling each other on the platform. There was one girl with a red cloak on, which was very worn and patched, and a bundle under her arm tied up in a ragged shawl. She did not quite seem to know what to do, and the people pushed her. What is there in a girl with an old red cloak among a hundred people for any one to think of? Oh, how little we know the deep story of joy and sorrow each one of a crowd might tell, whose faces often look sick and cold, and their dress worn and ragged. The girl at last found her place, and sat down with her red cloak and bundle in a corner of a carriage. It was the same red cloak which, two years before, Harry had watched so sadly from the window of the train.

“Please, sir, don't push me so, you'll break my flower,” said Nannie to a rough workman, who was pushing his way past her with a bundle of tools.

“What do I care for your flowers!” said he, “you shouldn't bring flowers to railroads. Ha, ha!” cried he, bursting out into a laugh as he pulled aside her cloak, and saw the pot she was trying to hide; “why the girl's going to carry an old geranium down to the country. Bless the girl, you'll find lots better down there.” And the whole in the carriage joined in a loud laugh.



“ It’s Harry’s, sir,” said Nannie, looking up timidly, and drawing the little broken pot and smoke-dried plant closer to herself.

Oh, what were all the geraniums in the world to Nannie compared with that! “ You’ll water my geranium when I’m gone?” Harry said that to her the day he left her. “ Yes, *that* I will; when you’re *gone*, Harry, and I’m left all alone in the wide world,” thought Nannie to herself, and the hot tears came up into her eyes; for she had a letter that morning to say “ Harry was dying, and she must come quick if she wished to see him alive.”

It was a long, long journey to Nannie; she had never been nearly so far in her life; she scarcely knew the blue sky except as it looked over the red tiles opposite the garret-window; and she was half-surprised at the hot and dusty flowers which blew along the banks on each side. She had thought almost there was no flower like to Harry’s geranium, which had stood in her window day after day, and had on it one long thin red flower; but she looked at it under her cloak, and thought none were so dear as that.

It was late in the afternoon before Nannie reached the station to Harry’s village. She felt quite frightened to get out, and thought every porter and man she saw knew all about Harry, and was waiting to tell her he was dead; but no one took any heed of her. She was jostled with the crowd, and very soon the patched red cloak was the only thing left on the platform; and Nannie had learnt a new lesson of life, that her troubles and her interests were only troubles and interests to her; and that “ her Harry,” as she called him, was truly “ *hers*,” for he belonged to no one else, and no one else belonged to him in the wide world, except indeed Archie; and Nannie did not know of him.

“ Pray, sir, can you shew me the way to where Harry lives, who was hurt in the riot? he’s my brother, and I’ve come all the way from London to see him before he dies; for they say as how he’s like to die.”

The man stared, and was inclined to laugh; but he happened to be a feeling man, and saw the poor girl was ignorant of the ways of the world. "No," said he; "but maybe I'll find out for you."

"Thank you very kindly; for I'm a poor lone girl; I haven't no one belonging to me but Harry; and when he's gone I haven't never another brother."

"That's a pity," said the man, as he good-naturedly turned off to find Nannie the way. It would have touched a harder heart to have seen the poor girl and the old patched cloak and dirty straw bonnet, the rims of which were quite hanging loose, with her little geranium under her cloak.

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The clergyman had left Harry's room, promising to be back in the afternoon to administer his First Communion to him. The dying boy's whole soul was fixed on that; and Archie thought he had never seen Harry's pale face look so beautiful as it was when leaning against his pillow, with his hands folded before him, and his long hair wet with the damp of dying, and his eye fixed on the little broken window waiting to catch the minister's figure as he might turn the corner of the lane outside.

"Oh, he did look so heavenly!" these were Archie's words. "I shall never forget him as he looked so kind at me, and said, 'Archie, dear Archie, we shan't take our First Communion together; but you'll think of me where I am when you receive it; oh, my Saviour, may I indeed be there.'"

"Archie," said the dying boy, laying his hand on Archie's, "you'll promise me, won't you? you'll give up your bad set, and go to the minister's, as you used to go with me, over the hill; don't you remember? You know he's so kind; and you did promise me then you'd be confirmed. Don't break your promise, Archie."

Archie would not promise, but only cried, and said, "Maybe you won't die, Harry." "Oh, but I shall,"

said Harry ; “ there’s no harm in saying that ; and my death’s your warning. I should be so glad to think if it was.”

“ Oh, Harry, Harry,” said Archie, “ I would promise, but I daren’t ; I have so often broken them.”

“ But it’s never too late to begin again while God gives us time and grace,” said the dying boy.

---

The hours passed away, and his strength fast failed him. He continually asked for Nannie ; but she never came. He was always talking of her : he had got her letters under his pillow, and made Archie read the last to him, where she said, “ As how Harry would be a great man some day, and have a fine house, and her live with him ; and how he must be good, and remember mother, and all she said about his First Communion.”

Harry smiled, and said something, but his voice was very low ; and Archie thought he caught something like the words, “ a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

At last the minister came. Harry could not say how glad he was ; he only looked it.

---

“ There’s the cottage,” said the man who had found the way for Nannie ; “ it’s none of the best ; I wish you may find your brother better.”

Nannie found a penny she had left, and, with tears in her eyes, offered it to the man ; she said she was so much obliged for his being so kind.

“ No, no, keep it yourself, girl ; it’ll get something for your brother.”

Nannie’s heart beat high as she began to go up the crazy staircase. Her hand got so cold, and she was half choking ; the excitement of seeing Harry made her half forget what to expect. She heard a voice ; a door half open stood before her ; she stepped aback. It wasn’t

Harry's voice—no—it was so solemn it must be the minister's—then Harry must be very bad indeed; and she began to cry, but she kept it in.

Still she stood a minute and listened. It certainly was the Communion service the minister was reading; then had Harry been confirmed without telling her? had he received his First Communion? She longed to touch the door, but she dared not; she feared to see Harry; she thought she'd better hear him speak first. But he didn't speak, and the minister's voice went on, and every thing else was so still. Her heart beat so she couldn't stand any longer, so she touched the door; it slowly opened.

Oh, there was Harry, her Harry; but Harry was dying; so pale, so thin, she wouldn't have known him. There he was, propped up on the pillows, with that very large and pale eye of his looking full at the minister; and the light was on his face, which was so thin, just what it used to be, but so much thinner, and his hands standing up, joined together, and another boy kneeling close by him, with his hand under Harry's head.

Nannie's heart was full; she was ready to burst, but she tried hard to keep it in: happily the shadow she stood in by the door was so great that no one saw her. There stood Nannie with her old red cloak, and her torn bonnet, and the little geranium in her hand, which she had brought all the way from London, and her face all over tears as she stood looking at her brother, "her Harry, the only thing as belonged to her, and he lay a-dying."

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Harry received his First Communion, and Nannie crept in and knelt down close by the minister; she would take it too with her brother; the minister guessed it was Nannie—he had heard of her; and Nannie received it with Harry, but he never saw her.

His First Communion was over, and Harry turned his head to the window. "He felt so happy," he said;

“he wished Nannie *would* come ; he wondered where she could be.” Nannie did not speak or move. The orphan’s eye was still on the window. “Archie,” said he, “is that a star that shines so ? Oh, think of going beyond the stars, Archie !”

“Yes, dear Harry.”

“Oh, Archie, I wish you could be with me there, if I may go there, through JESUS CHRIST,” said the dying boy ; but his sight was all but exhausted, and his mind wandered ; his eye was still on the stars. “The star, beyond the stars,” he continued. Nannie was still near him, but he took no notice.

“Harry, don’t you know Nannie, your Nannie ?”

“Nannie and stars,” said the dying boy, looking sweetly up in his sister’s face.

“Oh, he doesn’t know me !” said Nannie, throwing her arms round Harry’s neck.

“Mother told me to take it,” said he ; “didn’t you, mother ?”

“I’m not mother ; I am Nannie, your Nannie, Harry, boy,” said the poor girl.

“Stars, Archie, boy—stars—mother told me.”

“Harry, Harry, do speak to me ; do you know your own sister ?”

“Yes, yes ; my own sister : she is in London—a very long way off. The stars—it is done now —mother said so.”

Nannie took out the geranium ; she thought a sight of it might recall Harry’s recollection. She drew it out from her old red cloak ; she placed it close to him ; his pale blue eye looked earnestly at it for a moment, and then at Nannie’s face, then at the geranium again. He put out his finger and touched the leaf ; and then looked up at his sister’s face a long while and very steadily, while his finger stayed on the geranium-leaf ; a look of recollection came over his face, and in a low soft tone he said “*Nannie.*” He shut his eyes as if to recall his mind.

He did know her—she was Nannie ; he had not seen

her for two years. It was the old red cloak — the very same ; and Nannie had come in time to see him die.

It was almost too much for him. The thread of life was almost snapped ; the last sand was nearly run out.

“ Oh, Nannie ! isn't it a blessed First Communion, just before I go away—my First and Last Communion. Oh, Nannie dear ! mother didn't think when it would be ; she did not think I should so soon follow her—did she ? My First and Last Communion—so blessed through Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

“ But what shall I do ? Harry, when you're gone, I have no one else.”

Harry took his sister's hand, and pressed it with his cold fingers.

“ Dear Nannie, I could wish to stay for your sake. But do follow me and mother. Don't fret, Nannie, every day you'll be nearer the end, and you'll think of me. Oh, Nannie, I'm so happy, so happy. Take care of the geranium for my sake, and think of me when you water it. I did long to see you ; but I didn't think it would be as it is—at my First and Last Communion.”

The factory boy sunk back and closed his eyes. His breath grew fainter and fainter. The clergyman stood a little away, waiting the end.

There was a deep silence, and all eyes were on the orphan's face. The faint breath grew fainter. No one dared move. The soul was passing. The priest knelt down and offered the Commendatory Prayer and the LORD'S Prayer. Harry's lips moved.

“ Blessed are the dead that die in the LORD,” said the clergyman.

“ Through JESUS CHRIST,” said Harry very eagerly, and opened his eye and smiled.

He closed his eye, and did not open it again. Nannie thought he looked at her last. She felt a slight pressure of her hand. There was a long, gentle sigh and the orphan's soul had passed away.

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•Harry's mortal scene had closed, and the pale, still body lay on the pillow. Archie still leant over his face, but he didn't cry.

Five days after was the Confirmation, the day Harry meant to be confirmed. But long before that hour the orphan boy was among the blessed dead.

Archie was to be confirmed; he saw Mr. Morris, and settled to go with the rest to the church on the day fixed. His soul was taken up in Harry. There was no one who was left on earth he cared for like him who was gone. All the long conversations about Confirmation and First Communion they had had together, came over and over to his mind; and he sat for hours on the stile where they used to sit together, and try and think of all he used to say. He determined and wished earnestly he could become a different character: the same evening, as he walked home, some men laughed at him for his "being turned saint since Harry died;" he did not care; he felt proud of it; and felt as if Harry was by his side, and pleased at him.

The Confirmation-day was also fixed for Harry's funeral. It was a very bright morning when all the people set off to the church where the bishop was to be, which was four miles off; and all looked gay, and glad, and bright. Archie walked there alone, and he said he would go there the same way over the field-path he used to walk along with Harry, that he might think of him all the way he went. Before he set off he went to see the last of the companion he was to walk with no more on earth. The coffin lay on the same bed where he had died. The white curtains hung down over the window; and all over the room a golden light from the bright sun, which blazed in the sky. The birds were singing blithely and sweetly. The coffin-lid lay over the corpse. Archie opened the door, and found the room empty; he took off the lid, and there lay the orphan boy, as still and calm as he had been in his life, and in his dying hour, except that the deeper hollow of his cheek gave a somewhat darker

shadow to his face; but he was most beautiful. The wasted hand lay on his bosom, and on it were a few flowers Nannie had picked that morning from the hedge-row.

“Harry used to be very fond of flowers,” she said; “it seemed natural to lay them on him.” Archie noticed that the scarlet blossom of the geranium was among the flowers in his hand. Nannie said “She had taken great care of it for Harry’s sake, and it grew in the window where he had so often watched it, that he should have its only flower for his burial.”

Archie knelt down by Harry’s side, and said a prayer he really meant. He thought the quiet face smiled on him; he took his last look of the orphan; and placing the lid over his face, left the room. It was the same room he had slept in with Harry the first night he had come from London. How many hours had passed there between them. How much had happened there Archie would never forget. More than once he looked back at the window of the cottage as he went down the lane; “And if it hadn’t been for me,” he said, “he would have been walking with me to the Confirmation.”

The Confirmation service was late; and long before Archie could leave the village, he heard the bell tolling for Harry’s funeral. As he came to the last stile the funeral wound round the corner.

It was a plain funeral: four men carried the factory boy’s coffin—men who had worked at the factory,—it was a custom among them—Nannie followed,—and that made the funeral. There was the red cloak, and some crape fastened on to her bonnet; a neighbour had kindly offered her a bonnet of her own, but Nannie would not have it; she said, “her bonnet had followed mother, and she’d have no other for Harry.” The church bell was tolling quickly as Archie reached the stile, and saw the funeral wind round the last turn in the lane under the deepened shadow of the trees. Poor Nannie sadly cried; she was left alone in the wide world; she had just waited to see Harry buried, and then she would go back to gain



her hard-earned livelihood in the garret. Archie followed the funeral.

There were several people in the churchyard; and when all was over they made way for Nannie to look into the grave.

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The next day Nannie went back to London: she took the geranium with her; it was a sweet and dear memorial of her brother. Often on the journey she felt the hot tears come up into her eye, and she felt ready to choke; but she pressed the geranium to herself, and felt relieved. If there had been any one there to care, they might have seen the old red cloak going along from the Great Western under the bank, as it had done two years ago, when Harry noticed it out of the window; but no eye was on it now. There was no one in the world who loved Nannie,—she was one of a crowd; yet there she was walking back with the flower under her arm.

Two years ago she had come to see Harry off to make his fortune, and now she had been to his burying; two years ago there was one to care for her in all the world, there was no one now. “But never mind,” said Nannie, looking up through her tears at the blue sky, “never mind, my Harry’s got a better home; and now I’ve got to follow him and mother.”

She came back to the old garret; she unlocked the door; no one had been there since she had been there last; the window stood open, and the hot red tiles on the other side looked as red as ever; she put back the geranium into its old place, and stood a few minutes, and burst into tears.

I have heard that for long, long after, Nannie’s head was seen at the window, as she sat there at her daily platting, and the little geranium at her side. The people loved it, and often watched it, and its little broken pot was never changed; and when once or twice she was asked why she took such care of it, she would say “she

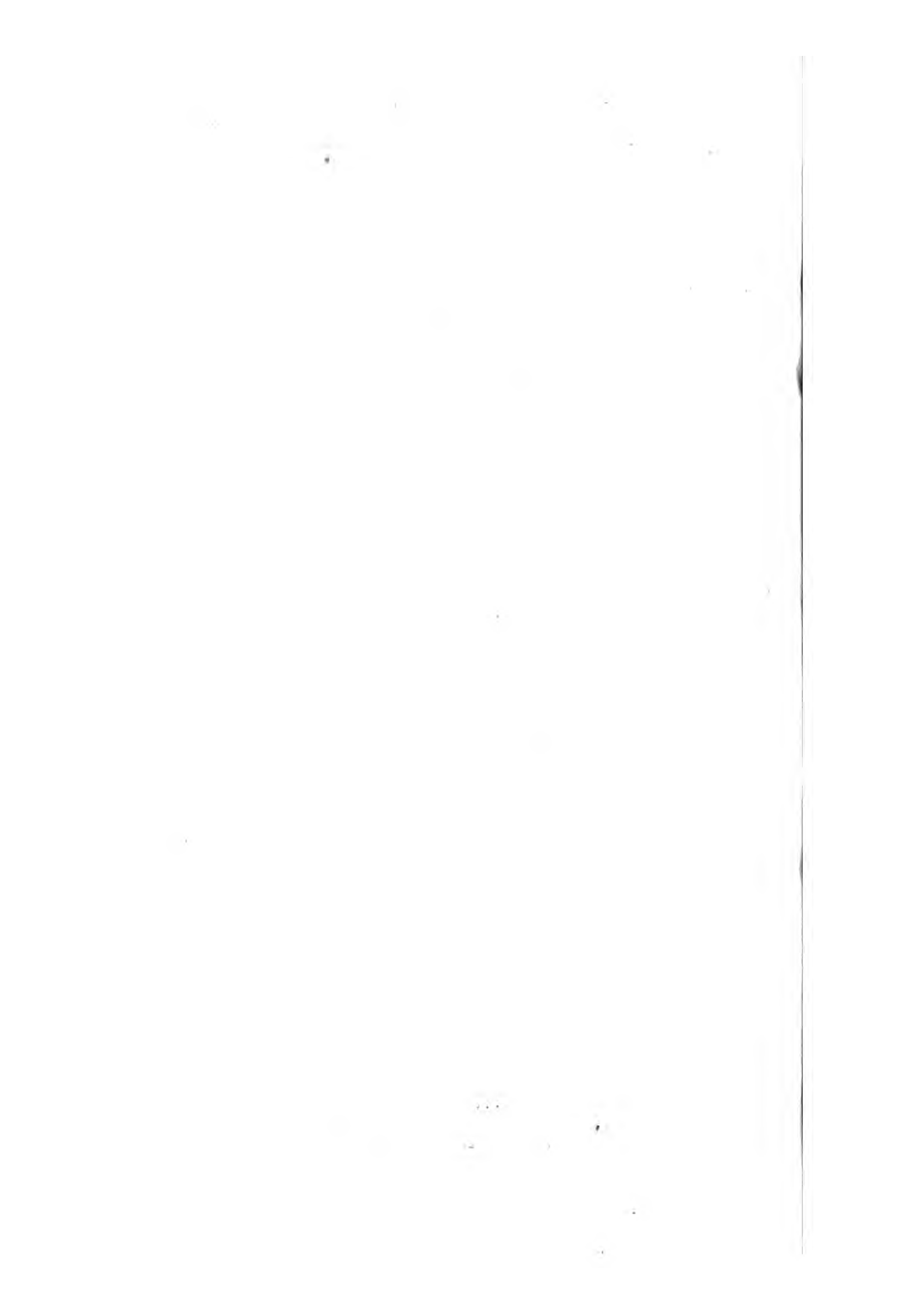
had a reason; it seemed to make her feel she was still doing something for Harry." How many a half-withered flower in a London garret may have as deep a tale to tell.

More than once Nannie might have got a better place, but she would not go; that garret was her home; it talked to her of those she loved and were gone. "No," she would say, "I want nothing more, my plating earns me enough, and here I can sit and think of mother's death and Harry's First Communion."

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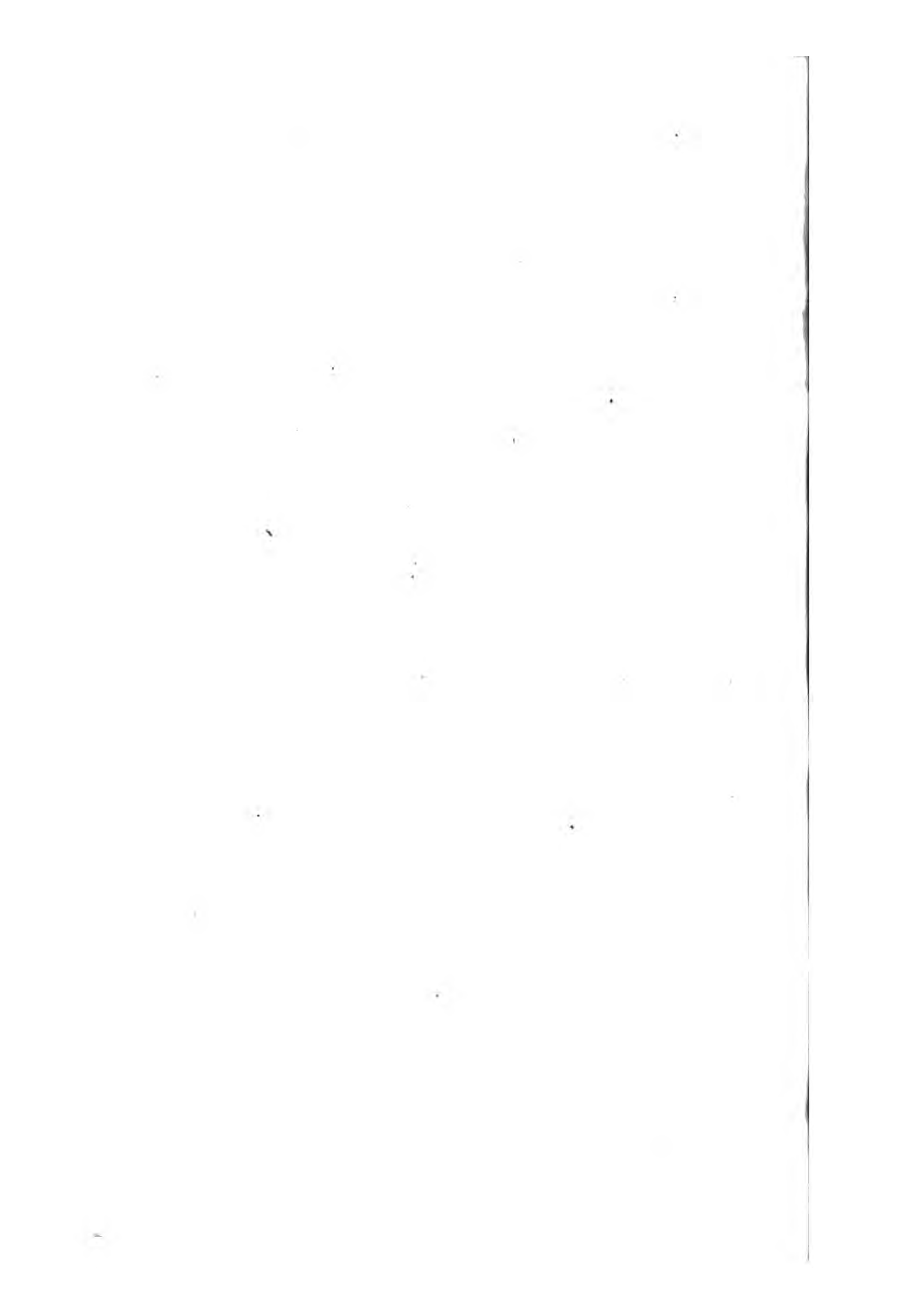
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PART II.



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# HARRY AND ARCHIE.

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## PART II.

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IT was many a day before Archie could get Harry out of his mind : that dying hour was always before him. Archie loved to think of him ; he would walk alone for hours making up his mind to give up his whole life to follow Harry's steps. "Mind you receive your First Communion." "Yes, that I will, dear, dear Harry, if only the good God will give me grace to get ready ; I wish you could hear me, Harry. Oh, I wonder if you do ;" and Archie's voice would choke with tears as he walked talking to himself. Archie watched Harry's grave daily, saw it turfed, and kept the brambles tidy ; and many in the village, as they went through the churchyard path, got quite used to seeing the boy by the side of his little friend's grave.

"Ah, Harry's death made a mortal great change in him yonder : I wouldn't have believed, if I hadn't seen it, one could be so altered," said many. And Archie was a changed boy ; his whole life was an altered one. In the open seats, among the lads who came to church, none were so regular as Archie. There you could see him Sunday after Sunday, just where Harry used to be, near the Font, with his black jacket and his bunch of flowers ; and if there was evening prayer late in the



week, Archie was there, though sometimes he was the only one, yet there he was, preparing, as he said, for his first communion; for Mr. Morris had told him one thing he should do in preparation, was regular attendance at church: and he was so reverent and attentive; and after service he would always walk round by Harry's grave.

"Oh, Harry, how I wish you were back again with me, I'm so solitary, so solitary without you, but I know I deserve it all, I didn't mind you as I should when you were here, and God took you away." So he would talk.

And Archie would go home to his silent room, for his parents lived a long way off, and were too poor to support him, so he stayed to get work where he was known.

So days and weeks slipped by, and Archie did not receive his first communion, for the Clergyman wished him to wait awhile till he was fixed and settled in his mind, for Archie was a changeable boy, and that Harry knew and often warned him of. But though it was delayed, still he led a very careful life, and used daily the little service for first communion, which Harry used to have.

The boys of the village laughed at him, and jeered him for having turned saint; but he did not mind; he seemed to be glad of it; it made him feel that he truly was trying to do good, and to please Harry still. Though they abused him they were all fond of him, and always were trying to get him among them, for he used to be a very happy boy, and his dark cheerful eye and happy laugh made every group gay.

If there was one to start a game, it was Archie who did it best; if there was one wanted to climb a tree, none did it so quickly as Archie; if they wanted one to invent some mischief, none could do it with so quick a wit and merry an eye as Archie. He was the favourite of all the village round; all loved him. Often in the summer evenings when work was done, and the troops

of happy boys would meet on the heathy common or at the corner of some sunset lane, you might have heard Archie's happy laugh loud above them all, as their shouts came merrily on the evening air.

And if you had stayed to distinguish the voices, you might have heard: "Let Archie be it," "Archie's the best," "Oh look at Archie, hasn't he done it well!" If they bathed, no one swam like Archie, and among the cricketers on the common when the red evening sun shone warm and light, slanting along the close turf and gilding the golden fern, Archie was the best player by far of all the boys round for at least two miles.

And while he was the best at all merry things he had such a kind heart, "he was so feeling-like," he would not pass a little bird which lay trembling on the bank with a hurt wing without taking it up to soothe it. And if a little child came crying along the road, Archie could not be happy until he had dried his tears, and reached him a willow wand from the hedge to make him happy. His eye was the brightest, his voice the gayest; young and old loved Archie the factory boy.

And now he was in trouble they often missed him, and wished he would come back again; the game wanted life without him; no one knew how to begin the game; "I'm afraid he'll never come back again to us. Harry's gone and Archie cares for no one else."

So matters went on awhile, and the boy did indeed promise well; every fault he ever had was mending, and at Harry's grave, and in the corner of the church which shadowed it, Archie made resolutions over and over again to give himself to God; he left every bad companion, and anxiously and carefully governed his words.

But Archie had not yet quite learnt to know himself. He did not know how weak he was, and how soon he might fall, and be led away. Vanity and love of praise had been the leading errors of his

character, and these were the most likely to be his ruin.

It was on an October day, that a recruiting party came to Archie's village. Their red coats and fluttering ribbons had drawn off several idle stragglers from the village round, who were wanting something to do and were struck with the glory of going abroad and seeing the world. Oh how many a recruiting party has broken a mother's heart, and made a home desolate! It was time of war, and they were glad to get any young fellow they could.

It was late in the afternoon, and the warm red sun-beam glowed on the tower of the church. Archie had come away from work a little earlier, and had been as usual to Harry's grave; he heard a sound in the road which attracted him, and he looked up; the soldiers were coming along, and he walked to the churchyard gate to gaze at them.

There was a party of lads in smockfrocks coming behind; their hats covered with coloured streamers told on what errand they were bent: one young woman was coming up with a little infant in her arms covered over with a ragged shawl; her bonnet was torn and soiled, and she was walking quickly, her step was hurried, and the tone of her voice was as of one in trouble. "Joe, I say Joe, do stay a moment, I want to speak one little word; oh, do! I don't wish you to think of me, though I am your married wife, and I don't know how I've hurt you; but I don't ask for my sake, I ask for his sake as is here, your baby's sake," said she taking up the shivering little one from her thin shawl, and holding it up towards her husband, "I don't ask you for my sake, I know I am a poor worthless thing; it is for baby's sake. I can't take care of him; he can just say your name, Joe, you taught him to, oh, you can't leave *him*. Call father, there's a boy," said the poor thing as with her hurried step, and a voice of agony, she strove to keep up with a figure, a little way before her, of a man, who with his hat slouched over his face, and his hands

in his smockfrock, and his streamers in his bosom, was following the sergeant. It was her husband; she loved him, but he didn't care much for *her*; he did love his child, and would have stopped when she spoke of him, but he did not dare meet her eye; he had enlisted, and was determined to go, and she must go to the Union. Archie was watching this scene, when the Sergeant touched his arm; Archie started from his deep thought; "Young man," said the Sergeant, "you're a fine looking fellow, what do you say to going to the wars, and be the king's servant?"

The man's manner was cunning, and he forced his suit; Archie listened a moment as the Sergeant finished his flattery, "There wouldn't be a finer lad in the whole regiment than you, I'll warrant you."

Archie started, and moved away; it reminded him of temptation, and he walked to Harry's grave. The party moved off, and as they did so there was a loud laugh; Archie felt it. He walked quickly; he passed Harry's grave without looking on it, he scarcely knew why; he could not have done so before. But something was in his mind, and he was uneasy; the Sergeant's remark was in his ears, and he could not get it away.

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When the night came on the noise from the tap-room of the village inn was so great from the shout of the soldiers, and the merry-making of the recruiting party, that a whole group of little children were gathered outside the door to peep and listen.

Archie, lured by the noise, came amongst the group of idlers to see the gay scene within. The first room of the village inn was full to crowding; youths and lads were dancing to the sound of music, and the hot air came out laden with the fumes of tobacco and beer.

On the cap of one who stood near the door streamed the many coloured ribbons of the recruit, while his

flushed face and sparkling eye showed he was highly excited by drink : he leant against the wall near the door, and was stupidly staring at the rest who were whirling round in the dance. Archie stood close to him at the opening of the door. At the end of the room were the soldiers, and their coloured dress and gay appearance riveted the eye of Archie.

“Mother, there’s father,” cried a little feeble voice close behind Archie, in the passage. “There’s father ; father, father,” continued the child as its squalid hand was pushed past Archie to try and lay hold of the smock-frock of the recruit.

Archie looked round ; a miserable woman stood in the passage, a pale blue shawl with its colour washed out, and ragged, hung over her shoulders which it barely covered, and a pale and dirty infant at her bosom, while another little one clung to her gown, was standing close behind him. She was trying to attract the attention of the drunken recruit. “Joe, Joe, do come,” said she, in a voice so bitter as made a tear rush to Archie’s eye. “Do come, please do, that’s a good man, I’ll never be cross again to ye, I’ll make the home as happy if you’ll only come.”

The man turned round, Archie saw a look of some kind he could not quite understand flash across his face, and the man slipped away into the crowd.

“Oh ! he’s gone,” screamed the wretched woman, and dragged back the child, who was still trying to push after its father. Archie never could forget that cry and the agony of that woman’s face.

“That’s my son, my Edward, my only prop and staff of my old age,” cried an agonized voice of a woman, who making her way through the crowd, now tried to thrust herself into the room after a tall and fine looking youth, who with the streamer in his hat was beginning already to join in the dance.

“Oh, Edward, Edward, you’ll not leave me, I know you won’t. You said you never would. I’ll never, never speak cross to you again.” And she stretched out her

old wrinkled hand to catch at the coat of her boy. Archie knew the youth well, and his tender heart was touched to the very quick. He seized on the unheeding youth. "Stop, Edward, stop, don't you hear your mother?"

"What, are you turned methodist?" said the youth with a sneer, as he walked away.

"Stand back, my good woman, stand back a moment, the dance is not made for you, you've had your chance, you must let others have theirs," said a man, who pushing the poor creature roughly aside thrust forward to the door. "There's a young rascal of an apprentice of mine got away among those 'listing fellows, and I must find the young fellow out."

"That's a fine youth," said the sergeant, placing down his mug and pointing at Archie; "he'd make as fine a lad for a soldier as any in the regiment. Come in, my fine lad, what would ye say to wearing a red coat and fighting for the king?"

Archie shrunk back; he felt the man was one he should not speak with, but still his vanity was flattered; he longed to hear him speak again.

"Go," cried one or two lads who were envious of the way Archie had been singled out. "Go, he'll make your fortune, don't be a fool."

For a moment conscience struggled with vanity, but the latter overcame, and Archie placed himself again within the reach of the sergeant's eye. Archie could not resist; a voice like Harry's seemed to speak in his ear that he should turn back, that he was going to his ruin. But his vanity was too strong, and he yielded, yet he hung his head down and looked ashamed.

All eyes were on him as he approached the table, and many was the youth there who envied him the grasp of the sergeant's hand, and the cry of "There's a fine fellow; I knew you were too brave a lad to be afraid of speaking to the king's soldiers."

Archie took the glass that was offered him to drink; the contents of it gave him spirit, and he seemed to

gain courage each moment ; his colour mounted to his cheek, his dark eye flashed brightly, and he was soon gay among the gay. The oaths of the men around him shocked and held him back at first ; but he soon got used to them, and very soon joined them. The sergeant saw his advantage, and plied his victim with wine and flattery. Archie was soon quite overcome ; he joined the dancers who beat their feet to the tune of an old fiddler who sat behind in a corner of the room.

Outside the door the group of women and children still jostled each other, striving to get a hearing of husbands and sons who were within. And that woman, with the little one clinging round her squalid neck, still stood there crying, and every now and then trying to get a hold of the wretched man, who dead to all feeling had joined the recruits.

The work was soon done. Archie enlisted, and returned to his home drunk, unconscious, and a soldier. He flung himself on his bed and slept till morning ; at the first grey streak of light he woke up ; as usual his first thought was of Harry, but a strange cloud hung over his mind, he could not recollect what it meant ; his eye fell on his hat, which lay on the table, and the coloured ribbons in it ; the truth flashed on his mind ; he was no longer his own master, all his happy schemes were gone ; his visit to Harry's grave, he had so loved ; his attendance at church ; his quiet thoughts of his dear companion as he walked home over the cornfields ; all over ; oh, how heavy his heart felt as he gazed on the gay gilt which had now faded away into the rose colour of sunrise. He started suddenly from his bed, and rushed to his window, he flung it open ; the birds were singing sweetly outside.

Archie buried his face in his hands, and burst into tears ; his first idea was to get free from his engagement. He rushed to the house where the sergeant was, but the sad faces of one or two outside told him how vain his errand was.

The sergeant was wholly changed ; nothing but a sum of money he could never hope to get paid could set him free again ; and with an aching heart Archie retraced his steps to his lodging to prepare for his journey. On his way he met Edward, the boy he tried to get to attend to his mother's bitter cry in the public house.

"What, Archie," said the boy, "are you deserting the good cause already? you look right downcast."

"It's no good cause to me," said Archie sadly, "I've left the good path now, and GOD knows how I shall ever return."

"What folly!" said the other, "why there's time enough for such as we to think of religion ; when's a man to enjoy life if he may not while he's young?"

"Edward, we shall repent this," said Archie solemnly, "there's he as lies there in yonder grave has told me how it would all be ; and I only wish I was where he is, you know who."

He was only answered by a laugh as his companion moved off. He had little time to get ready, two days at farthest. He had no one to leave he cared much for in the village, and he felt as if he would hardly be missed by the neighbours ; he felt though he was leaving Harry, Harry's grave, and Harry's home.

Poor Archie, it was late in the evening when he set out alone to take leave of that quiet spot in the churchyard. It was very still ; the evening air was calm, and the moths were making their noiseless flight over the tops of the long grass ; and small gnats chased and darted after each other on the tall tapering tips of the trees ; the dew was on the grass, and the flowers had closed up for the night. Archie flung himself on the grassy mound, oh, he had so loved it ! and now he had a feeling he never should see it again.

There was no sound in the churchyard, no one around it, and Archie felt alone with Harry.

"Oh Harry ! Harry, do you hear me?" cried he, "if you do, oh how bad you must think me. I'm leaving



you, and the blessed Church, and my First Communion, and all I promised you when you died. Oh Harry, if you had been here I should not have done this."

He stopped, and seemed almost to expect he should hear Harry answer him ; but there was no sound on the still summer evening, except from an owl or two which flew round the grey church tower. Archie prayed, and prayed earnestly too, with all his heart. He gave one last look at the solitary grave, and at the church, he felt as if he was to see them no more. He lingered at the gate, the deep stillness of the summer evening all sunk into his mind, he gave one last look at the corner of the churchyard where the shadows had shrouded the grave, and returned to his solitary home.

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In a few days Archie was on the wide seas ; he had had but a little time to take his leave of his home. These days were days of confusion and bustle ; and thrown as he was among the worst companions, Archie had but little time for better thoughts. His voyage was not long, but it lasted two or three weeks, and during that time he went through many changes of mind. The thought of Harry often came like sweet dreams over him and made him start when he had been yielding too much in some scene of vice and blasphemy ; but it wore off soon.

Archie's sparkling eye, and cheerful face, and merry laugh were sure to bring him admirers and flatterers, and he could not stand flattery. His good thoughts became fewer and fewer ; the shadows of evening seemed fast closing in around poor Archie's soul.

The whole scene of life was new to him, but he became accustomed to it at last. The troops were landed at length after a short voyage, and it was expected they would have to be soon in active service.

The country to which Archie had gone, was one, in which for some time a war had been going on, and all

the horrors of war were to be traced on every side. The people of the country were disturbed and harassed by the passage of soldiers, and their quiet homes were continually broken up by those who had no regard for God or man. Archie's regiment was quartered in a village about five miles from the sea, and was waiting orders for marching, which were expected every day.

It was late one evening, as Archie was strolling home alone along a road down which he had been sauntering, that he saw coming along the figures of two or three men whose dress told that they were soldiers. The middle one of the party, which seemed to be in deep conversation, was Edward. Archie thought he knew his voice, and as he came nearer quickly recognized him.

Edward met Archie heartily and kindly, though Archie observed one or two signs made between the soldiers he did not understand.

"Archie, my boy," said the youth, "we have a thing to propose to you, it's a bit of fun, but I know you used to be up to that years ago."

"Well," said Archie, "and what is it? I've no objection."

"Well," said his comrade, "you know how our colonel treats most of us more like brute-beasts than men; well—we won't stand it, that's what we feel, and Joe Wilson has put us up to a way of defending ourselves, don't you see? and he says he'll make sure of success."

"Well?" said Archie, doubting which way all this would lead.

"Why we intend next time he comes on parade to show him some of our mind, that's all, and you'll join us, won't you? that's a fine fellow."

Archie, whose mind appeared just then to be a little graver than usual, hesitated and was silent.

"Why you haven't turned methodist, have you?" said the other, scornfully, "you are going to be like that thin-faced boy, Harry, as they called him out at home yonder."

There is sometimes strange power in a name, especially in reviving old feelings. The mention of Harry's name even in scorn touched Archie to the quick, he was not shallow, and his feelings however smothered were deep; Harry's name had never met his ear for many a day. He had thought of him most days; but a name often gives a life and form to thoughts, which without it are nearly dead.

Archie started, a good thought seemed to come into his soul. "No," cried he, "I can't join you," and Archie walked quickly by them.

"Well, I never saw the like of that," said the other laughing, and looking after Archie, "I never saw a lad so changed for the worse, but I won't let him off so easy either."

Archie overheard the beginning of this remark, he had not viewed himself a changed character for the better, in fact the contrary; but hearing that he was looked upon as changed, he thought he was so, and it made him feel better. In this mood he fell in with the sergeant, who was a good man, and one who had done his best to promote real religion among the soldiers.

"Will you have a walk this evening?" said the sergeant to Archie. Archie consented, and they went off together.

"It's a pity that some of us can't get together and make some stand for what is right in the regiment," said the sergeant, "it only wants a beginning, and I feel sure there's many a one will quick enough turn from their bad ways they are following. But there's none to make a beginning."

Archie was silent, it was a good moment with him, and he prayed silently to God. Harry came before him.

"I'll do anything you wish, and can tell me," said the boy frankly.

"That's a fine fellow," said the sergeant, "but will you stick to it? will you go on if you begin? there's the point."

Archie again hesitated, he well knew his own wayward mind. "I think so, I wish so," said Archie.

“You can’t say more than that,” said the other, “only remember, my good boy, that the grace of God will do anything, and help the feeblest intention.”

Archie sighed deeply.

“I’m thinking,” rejoined the other, “if some of our men would only come forward to receive holy communion, it would be so good an example.”

“I never did receive it,” said Archie, thoughtfully; “but I wish to do so, and meant to do so long ago, only I put it off from time to time.”

“Ah, that putting off,” said the sergeant; “but better late than never. Well, what do you say to beginning now?”

“I should wish very much if I were fit,” said Archie.

“Well,” but said the other, “as I believe, all are fit who really intend, and wish to lead a good life, and will leave off sin.”

“I’m so afraid of falling afterwards,” said Archie.

“Yes,” but said the sergeant, “who is there in this wide world will not? it seems a mistaken view of yours; there’s no harm done if you should, you have but done your best, and gone to God’s ordinance for help as He bids you. I do not see but how that would be a reason in the same way against saying your prayers, or using any other means of grace.”

“I so fear myself,” said Archie.

“Right, right,” said the sergeant, “but so you should, and lean on God’s blessed grace: but remember, you’ll be laughed at.”

“I think I can bear it,” said Archie.

“Well, I’m glad to see you cautious,” said the other; “for I well know what you have before you,—laughter, and being told you’re a hypocrite, and being reminded of the faults you really have in you; all these are hard to bear.”

So the good sergeant talked with Archie, till the evening sunset had sunk into twilight, and that had given way to the stars.

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Archie returned to his rest full of good feelings, and earnest intentions. He never meant better, and never was more fully resolved. He saw all the difficulties which were before him, but earnestly hoped and prayed to meet them.

As I said, it was time of war and a battle was daily expected. Archie's regiment would be engaged, as it was thought, and he as well as many young soldiers were full of anxiety at the idea of witnessing their first battle.

Edward, the youth mentioned above, was in the same regiment ; he was a boy of open and generous disposition, but turbulent and wild, and had been led away by some other spirits worse than his own to join a party who were determined to revenge themselves on an officer who had had to punish a man for drunkenness. Into this plot it was determined to draw Archie.

Edward knew his character of old, and when he failed in persuading him to join them in their evening walk, he was bent more than ever on getting hold of him.

With this mind Edward retired to his rest: the two went to bed that night bent on different courses. It remained to see who would succeed, he who was bent on evil, or he who had formed for the twentieth time a good resolution.

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The regiment to which Archie and Edward belonged lay encamped near a town which they were expecting to attack : it was occupied by the enemy, and was strongly fortified. One portion of the hostile army was known to be in the neighbourhood, and was almost daily expected to come in sight for the purpose of relieving the town from the state in which the troops placed it. Some causes had combined to make the troops discontented. The necessary discipline in time of war, and that after long peace, when there was not the same need of severity, was amongst others the cause.

As we have seen, Edward was among the murmurers, and having been more than once corrected, he had thrown the whole force of a violent temper and high spirit into the scale of mutiny and rebellion. His object now was to entrap Archie, who he knew had a spirit not unlike his own. When Archie woke next morning, the first thing he heard of was, that the enemy had been seen, and that battle might soon be expected.

Every youth burns for his first battle, and yet every one, except the more hardened and reckless, has his misgivings. These contending feelings occupied Archie's mind at the prospect of being so soon within the reach of death. His first impulse was one of gratitude for the good purpose with which he had gone to rest the night before: he had not used the prayers of his earlier boyhood with greater feeling and truth for many a day than he did that morning.

The name of Harry was uppermost in his mind, and he had knelt down quietly to read from Harry's Bible, and to think of dying. He was employed at this when a voice called his name: he looked out, and Edward stood below the window of the little room in which Archie was quartered.

"Hollo! Archie," said he, "have you heard the news?"

"I hear the enemy are near," said the other.

"Yes, but have you heard—but stop, let me in, I have something to tell you."

There was no one whom Archie less wanted to see at that moment than Edward, but feeling he never had been more able to meet him without harm, he rose and opened the door.

"Archie, boy, sit down here, I have a good deal to say to you. There's such fun going on down there, and you'll be just the one to join it with us. For the colonel of our regiment—well, he's insulted me, you know, and one or two men, and we are going to have our revenge."

“Stop, stop,” said Archie, “if you think to get me you mistake your man. I’ve nothing to do with these schemes, and Edward, Edward, I advise you to have nothing either; you don’t know what’ll come of it; you’ll regret, that I know: do, do be persuaded.”

But Edward laughed at him, and finding it hopeless to persuade him, turned away. Archie had then made one firm stand, and who could say what effect that would have on his character? He had taken Harry’s path, and, following his footsteps, he had resisted evil. The scoff and sneer he cared little for: it was his nature rather to triumph in that:—what he found far harder work was to resist the wish to please others. Archie’s rather vain mind was always desirous of pleasing others, and to forego it was real pain to him.

All were now full of the advance of the enemy; it was so long expected, and every smaller consideration was lost sight of in that. Archie was all anxiety: his conversation with the sergeant had determined him to take the right line, and to receive his first communion the very first opportunity. But he felt there was a wide and hazardous gap between himself and that, and he could little tell the effect and force of the impending fight.

Archie was quartered in a cottage. The whole evening of the day we have been speaking of, the men had been getting ready. Columns of the enemy had been seen advancing, and they fully expected a general attack. Archie had lain down that night, and he had scarcely been two hours asleep, when a signal was given, a gun fired, and the shot fell just behind the cottage where Archie was sleeping. The heavy and long continued echo started him up, and he had scarcely got up in bed before the horn blew and the drum beat to summon the men to arms. Archie hurried on his clothes and was going, when a gun shot fired from the enemy’s advancing column struck a wooden wall just opposite Archie’s window; the light flash

which shone in the dark night, the crash of the falling wall, the echo of the trumpet, were awful ; but there was no time for thought. The summons was again repeated, and Archie stood in the street of the village. The night was very dark. The men were soon under arms, and a body of some two thousand were presently drawn up in a field outside. Archie was hurrying to his place by the side of a youth when another shot, fired at random, struck the ground a short way before them, and the bound of it struck his companion on the head, and carried it off ; its bleeding trunk sank on the earth heavily. Archie shuddered : if that had been he, what hope had there been of him, and his first communion still unreceived ? he lifted up an earnest prayer from his heart, and took his place.

He was indeed in a new situation, and every moment seemed a year. The advance of the enemy could not be known except by the sound of the heavy and regular tread of the slowly advancing column. The slow advance in the distance, the roll of the cannon wheels as they were being brought on in the stillness, all added to the awe of the scene. The men were drawn up in as good order as the nature of the ground, and the absence of light would admit of ; when presently a long line of yellow flame burst out in front of them, followed instantly by a roll of smoke, whose white folds were lit up with the lurid glare. There was the pause of a second, and every eye and heart was fixed in anxiety to see what would follow, when in an instant the ground was torn up before them in a hundred places, and the earth and dust were scattered over their faces. Some of the balls bounded over the heads of the soldiers, and a few struck their lines without bounding, and made here and there a long lane in their close body, where a row of men had fallen dead or wounded. A deep groan was all that followed, as the men instantly took the place of their comrades. Archie shuddered and prayed. Two close behind him fell at the fire, one dead and the other severely wounded. He had to fill the place



of one of the killed, whose body was drawn into the centre of the square.

Those who were in front knelt, the row behind bent their shoulders with their muskets, and the third stood. Archie was among those who knelt, and with his bayonet in his hand he took his position. After the first roll of cannon there was again a stillness, and the dark night seemed more than ever awful; but no actual attack was again made, and the men remained under arms all night, ready at a moment's warning to receive charge. It was a terrible night to Archie: his neglected communion, his broken intentions, his many loose and bad habits, all came before him. He thought of Harry's dying charge, and almost wished the battle might begin that he might forget himself. At one time a house in the town, which had caught fire from some of the firing, sent up a red and lurid blaze into the air, and showed the columns of the enemy close before them, and the few pale faces of the dead which lay amongst the troops, here with the arm thrown over the forehead, and there with the hand laid on the breast where a ball had pierced the heart.

Both parties kept back through the night: when morning broke the enemy were close before them drawn up in lines. The cannon again roared, and the square were told to prepare to receive charge. A body of cavalry were expected to attack them, and their horses pawed the ground with impatience for the onset.

At length the signal was given, and at full gallop the cavalry charged. The foaming horses bending their necks in arches as the riders held in the reins, their long black manes, the gleam of drawn swords, the nodding of the white plumes, the flash of polished breastplates, all gave a terrible appearance to the charge. On they came, and Archie thought they must overwhelm them, but he held his post, and firmly grasped his bayonet. The cavalry rolled over the ground before the square, the foremost soldier had touched with his horse's head the point of Archie's bayonet, before the signal was

given, the swords were up to strike, and Archie felt all was over, when the word was given, and they fired. Riders unsaddled bit the dust in the agony of dying, some were carried away by their terrified horses over the fields, in vain trying to hold them in; while a few galloped their horses back, with the fire hotly following them. The soldier whose horse was close on Archie reeled in the saddle, and his horse striking his front leg into the earth, suddenly turned round, and dragging his rider, whose feet hung in the stirrup, over the fields, dashed through the advancing columns of the enemy. Archie did not know whether it was his gun did the work, but he trembled: death was terrible.

But while he thought, they were to prepare for a second charge. The cavalry again charged, and again the line remained firm. The line of horses was brought furiously up to the bayonet's point, turned again, and reeled. The volley poured on, and horse and rider rolled upon the turf. Horses rushed madly away with their empty saddles, or dragged their riders at their stirrups, and in wild confusion flew back on the ranks of their own army. The fight was long contested, the struggle was violent, but when day dawned the English were masters of the field. Archie had scarcely moved from his place. The infantry were kept on the hill till near the end of the day, when the signal was given to charge, and he had to take part in it. He bore himself bravely, and won many a high word from his officers around him. The plain was strewed with the dead, but Archie, who had shuddered at it in the morning, had got accustomed to it by the end of the fight.

The battle lasted many hours, and was obstinately disputed on both sides. The roar and roll of cannons, the continued volleys of musketry, the shouts of men, all so confused Archie's brain, that there was not found a moment that he had time to think of Harry, or the peril of his situation. His detachment were ordered to pursue, and in the pursuit he had to pass the field of battle. The ground was strewn with the dying

and the dead ; so ghastly a sight he had never before seen or conceived ; and he could scarcely be hindered by his orders from straggling to relieve some of the sufferers who groaned around him. What but the long-suffering mercy of God had saved Archie from being one of that number, and if he had been, how little was he prepared !

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About two hours after the troops had entered quarters in the village near the scene of the fight, Archie was standing by himself at the door of a farm house in which some other men were stationed, when a soldier came up. "Here comes a set of our fellows round the corner yonder with a fine business in their hands,—a deserter, as far as I can make out, and some others who have been fools enough to run their necks into a noose for nothing,—striking the colonel, as I understood," continued he, "and that just on the eve of battle."

"What will be done with them?" said Archie, looking up quickly.

"Done, man? why shot, to be sure, dead as a ducat."

"And who are they?" said Archie anxiously, for his suspicion began to be aroused.

"You can judge for yourself," said the other, "for they are turning the corner now."

Archie looked up, and, as he suspected, the party which came in contained Edward. Archie's first impulse was to speak ; but the painfulness of Edward's position made him hesitate.

They passed the house where Archie was standing ; and as they passed, Edward hung his head and did not meet Archie's look and eye. His hands were cuffed. Archie turned to the sergeant ; he implored to be allowed to see Edward. "Impossible," said the sergeant, "it's against all rule : he will be before the court martial in half-an-hour, and then you will be allowed to see him."

Archie put forward the plea of his being of the same

village, and having known him at home, until at length the sergeant consented: but the interview must be brief and quick. With his heart beating high, and trembling with dread at the prospect of the interview, he went to the door of the cottage where the unhappy youth was awaiting his dreadful trial.

The room where Edward was was low and dark. In the corner sat the figure of the poor youth; his head sunk on his breast, and he himself rocking to and fro in the attitude of despair. There was no one else in the room; Archie approached him closely before he looked up. "Edward," said Archie.

Edward slowly lifted up his head and met Archie's eye, and then quickly dropped it again. "My poor mother!" said the youth, "my poor mother!"

"Cheer up," said the young soldier, "there's no harm done yet; God knows which way the trial may go."

Edward shook his head. "There's no doubt, there's no doubt about that, Archie. I have been a fool, and I am a lost boy. O Archie, Archie, I'm lost and undone more ways than one;" and he stretched out his hand and seized Archie's. It felt cold and clammy, and Archie shuddered, and did not know what comfort to give, for he felt the case was very hopeless. "Oh my poor mother, my poor mother, that's what I think of," said Edward; "I've been a fool and deserve my fate."

"Don't talk so about your mother," said Archie; "if anything is to happen, do think more of your own state; think how you are fit for death." It required some effort and courage in Archie to say this, but he did.

Edward looked up in Archie's face with a look of inexpressible agony, and said, with a bitterness which thrilled through him, "Ah, it's too late for that now."

"Oh Edward, Edward," said Archie, "why did you put it off so long? I told you so, I knew how it would be, that some day you would repent it."

"Don't talk so, Archie, don't make a poor fellow more miserable than he is."

“ I didn’t mean to make you miserable ; I wanted to comfort you and to help you. I know that if you will repent now, it is not too late.”

“ Don’t talk of repentance,” said Edward, “ I tell you it is too late, too late,” pressing his hand to his brow. “ I only want to think of mother.”

“ Oh don’t say so,” said Archie, “ pray don’t say so ; think of your own soul.”

“ Archie,” said he very solemnly, and laying his hand on Archie’s, “ I tell you I can’t and won’t ; you don’t know all, I *can’t*. I have cursed God, and openly vowed I hated Him and all His ways, yes, I swore to it, and the thing’s done ; I can’t draw back. You’ve heard of the sin against the HOLY GHOST :” and he fixed his eye with such a vacant wild stare on Archie as he said these last dreadful words, that he started and trembled. “ There, now I’ve told you all,” said Edward ; “ now you may tell me as much as you will ; I don’t care whether I live or die.”

Footsteps were heard outside the door, and the door opened. They had come to convey Edward to his trial. He looked with a gaze of utter despair on Archie as he went out. He was handcuffed and led away ; he made no resistance : his companion followed him to the door, and watched him till he was out of sight. He then returned. He was alone ; he flung himself on the ground and buried his face in his hands. “ Oh, how near have I been to that,” said Archie, “ how near, and how do I know I am not like him now ; resisted conscience over and over again. Oh Harry, Harry, happy Harry, what would I give if I could be like you. ‘ Can’t repent,’ he said, and how do I know I can ; I’m no older than he, and I’ve resisted good feelings, a hundred, hundred times broken my promises, and after all never received my first communion.” Archie remained absorbed in thought of that painful interview for some time ; so that he had not noticed how the time went. He was roused from his silence by some voices of the passing villagers under

the window. "Poor fellow, he's very young," said one. "I hear he has a mother at home," said another. Archie grew cold and hot alternately, these few words terrified him. A few minutes more, and shadows were cast across the window; the door opened, and Edward, in the custody of two men, entered. The look of deep despair which was settled on his face showed Archie what had happened. The men were kind who guarded the prisoner, for his feet were chained together. "Poor fellow," said they, "he's very young, but it's the chance of war."

"What was it?" said Archie.

"What?" said one of the men, "why, he's found guilty, and guilty enough to be sure he was; and a court-martial is no light thing to go before, and just after a battle."

"Well, but—," said Archie, impatiently.

"Well," said the man, "he's to be shot dead in two hours time."

Had a thunderbolt fallen from the sky, Archie could not have been more terrified. He gazed with a wild stare at Edward, then at the men: he felt as if it was his fault, and as if he ought not to live if Edward died, as if he were the worst criminal of the two.

The men left the room, saying to Archie, "Come, young man, you mayn't stay here, it's against orders." Archie felt afraid of being with Edward alone; he was glad to be obliged to go; yet he lingered to look at the wretched figure, which, with his face between his hands, again sat rocking himself to and fro on his seat, as far as his cuffs would let him. As Archie approached the door, Edward looked up. "Archie," said he, "do stay with me." His voice was like the voice of one from the grave. Hearing him speak dispelled half Archie's fear, and he begged to be allowed to stay; the men hesitated.

"It's as much as we are worth," said they, "without leave and all. But one can't say nay, seeing a poor fellow in such a plight. We will stay outside, and mind you come the instant we call; and young man, remem-

ber, two hours more, when the clock strikes seven ; God have mercy on your soul." They went out and closed the door.

" Archie," said Edward, in a deep and heart-rending voice, " oh, Archie, two hours more, and then ! you have life, life, blessed life before you, life to repent ; oh, Archie."

" Edward, Edward," said the poor boy, for he was bewildered, " pray."

" No, no, my heart's a stone. No, Archie, there's one thing I want, one thing."

" What is it ?" said Archie eagerly, thinking he was going to say something which he might be able to do easily for him.

" Oh, Archie," said Edward, grasping his hand, " do, do try to save my life." Archie started.

" Save your life, Edward, why how can I do that ?"

" Oh, Archie, go, go and beg them to spare me ; tell them how young I am ; tell them I'll never, never do it again, tell them I was led away, tell them, Archie, of my poor old mother at home. Oh, Archie," said he, springing up and looking full in his face with an expression full of anguish, " oh, do see if you can't save my life."

" But who shall I go to ? they won't listen to me."

" Yes, yes, they will," said he, in a deep sepulchral voice, " yes they will."

" I'll do anything," said Archie, moving away.

" Oh go, and the kind God will reward you ; make haste, only two hours more ! and I'll wait here at the window, counting every moment till you come back. Oh, Archie, think what you'd feel in my place."

Archie was deeply distressed : he saw the case was hopeless, but he could not refuse to make the trial ; he went to the door, it closed behind him, and as he passed the window he saw Edward's figure moving towards it as well as his cuffs would let him, and presently his head was leaning against it, waiting till Archie's return. Poor Archie ! which way was he to go ? and what was

he to do? He did not dare take another glance at that sad and anxious face at the window. He determined to seek the sergeant; he accordingly directed his steps to his house; he had not gone far when he met him. The sergeant almost smiled when Archie told him his sad business.

"My poor lad," said he, "the case is hopeless, it's indeed dreadful; but the discipline of war is severe, and such cases must be for example's sake; it's very dreadful, very," said the good sergeant, passing his hand over his brow.

"Oh, but he's so young," said Archie anxiously, "so young."

"But it's not a first offence," said the other.

"But oh," said Archie, "his soul! so unprepared!"

"Ah!" said the sergeant, "that was another matter: unprepared indeed. Poor fellow!"

How was Archie to go back to Edward? how could he meet that face of despair? and to return and have nothing to tell him but that he must die. But there was no help for it; and he slowly and sadly returned to the house. A long way off he saw Edward's face in the inside, looking for his return; and he hesitated more than once whether he would enter. At last he reached the house, Edward opened the door, and with a look Archie never could forget, met his face.

"Tell me, tell me, Archie, I know I shan't die; isn't it so? I'm too young, too young for them to kill me! No, I know I'm not to die, Archie, boy."

Archie turned pale, and could not speak.

"Edward, I've no good news for you, I wish I had."

"Oh," cried Edward, "don't, don't say I'm to die, I can't die, it's too dreadful."

No words can describe how terrible the few moments were between Archie and the criminal. All his hope was gone, all his seeming recklessness; he only thought of himself; his mother, his home, all seemed gone. To meet GOD in two hours, with sins unrepented and unforgiven, and the having put off over and over again



his known duties, and only two hours to repent in! "Oh, Archie, happy Archie! you have time to repent, time to turn. Oh, what would I give to be you!" said he, as the scalding tear fell down on Archie's cheek. "It is so dreadful to be now talking with you, and to think that in two hours time I am to be with the great God! Oh, my God, my God, have mercy on a poor lost boy!" cried he, as he threw himself in an agony on the ground, and tore his hair with grief. Archie was utterly perplexed; he did not the least know how to act; his own distress was nearly as deep as Edward's.

"Oh, Archie," said he, "you know how I tried to laugh you out of being good, and against your first communion; take a warning by me, and don't put it off another day, another hour."

Few appeals could have so affected Archie; whose changeableness of disposition had been to him the cause of his many falls. He felt it peculiarly; his life was most changeable; so full of resolutions made and forgotten.

"Even," said Edward, "if you could get a little while for me, just one week to repent in, and I'll willingly die; but to die now!"

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There was a common outside the cottage where Archie's troop was quartered. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun shot across the few low flowers and grass which blew about on the worn turf. A little way off twelve men were drawn up in a line, with their muskets leaning on their shoulders, and most of them had their eyes on the ground. On the other side some figures were standing, among which was one who seemed more anxious than any of the rest at what was going to happen. At length some men were seen advancing from a house not far off: they were soldiers leading a youth whose hands were bound, and his feet fettered. His face was pale, and his lips had scarcely any colour

left. As they led him along they passed Archie, and Edward saw him; he moved his bound hand, and Archie understood the movement. He followed them, but he felt so bewildered he scarcely knew which way he was going, or what he was going to do. The little company at last reached the spot which had been marked out, and in the middle of it Edward was placed. He did not speak, he did not cry or sigh; he looked before him, and only once turned round to see if Archie was following; his lips seemed fastened together, and his voice unable to find utterance or vent. The men prepared their muskets, and Edward saw and heard the whole process, but seemed scarcely to know what was going on; he looked at the men, and he looked at the guns, and looked off them, and fixed his eye on Archie's face, who was standing close beside him as if he had seen nothing.

"Archie," said he. Archie went near. "Archie, when I kneel down pray for me; I shall say the LORD'S Prayer, and you say it with me."

Edward knelt down, and his eyes were blindfolded. Archie drew away, and in another moment the contents of four of the men's muskets were lodged in Edward's body. Without a groan he sunk on the ground, and his spirit went at that summons to the GOD that gave it. The soldiers had drawn off, and the gazers lingered for a moment and moved off too. Archie still lingered. Edward's body had not yet been removed, and he went up to it. He knelt down by his side; one shot had pierced the brain, and made death instantaneous. Archie half expected he would speak; he could not believe death would be so quick, and that any one could so suddenly go out of time into eternity. Deeply fervent were the prayers he offered to GOD for pardon and grace to abide by his full resolution—a resolution which had been so often repeated before. As he knelt there a step approached, and looking up, he saw the sergeant behind him. The good man had been looking for Archie, and guessed where he was.

“ Oh, sir,” said he, springing up and seizing the hand of the other, on which fell the first tear he had been able to shed.

“ Ay,” said he, “ poor fellow !”

“ Oh,” said Archie, “ but it’s cruel work.”

“ Well,” said the other, “ but we must all go sooner or later, and it’s a mere question of who’s readiest ; we haven’t much warning anyhow, but we know what we have to do plenty of time beforehand.”

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Days and weeks went by, and at length it was determined to attack a town into which the enemy had thrown themselves, and where they had held out for several days. The power which was to attack them was not large, and the town was known to be well walled and well supplied with food. The walls were strong and fortified, and it was known the attempt to take the town by assault would be attended with very great danger and loss. But it was at length determined on, and all were in full expectation of the siege being brought to an end. Who was to be in the forlorn hope ? who should enter the breach ? and many other questions were talked of among the men. Archie did not want his share in the excitement and interest. The events I have just mentioned had cast a deep shadow of sadness over his spirit and face ; his unprepared, fickle state had been a cause of great grief and anxiety to him. He often talked with the sergeant, who was a kind friend to him, and did all he could to urge him on in the good path he saw he was inclined to follow.

“ I don’t know how it is,” said Archie one evening to him, “ but I seem to get very cold and careless about religion ; I don’t feel a bit what I used to feel when Harry used to talk to me, and yet I don’t know that I have given way to any particular sin lately, I have tried to keep myself strictly.”

“ Then,” said the sergeant, “ why should you not

join us who will receive the Holy Communion next Sunday; we have found an English Clergyman here who will administer it to us, and would see anyone alone, and you might see him too and receive it with us."

"I will," said Archie, sadly, for strange feelings depressed his mind, and he could not rouse himself. "I will gladly: oh, how I long to do anything which may fix me in the religious way, and take away my changeableness."

"The LORD grant it," said the Sergeant, "and may you be guided into the right way, my poor lad," for there was something in Archie's manner which struck him as having a peculiar sadness in it.

One night Archie returned to his rest as usual with some six companions who used the same room. It was a dark night, and the town lay exactly opposite, a wide ditch opened between them, for the town itself stood on a slight eminence. He threw himself on his bed with his cloak wrapped round him; having prayed to God earnestly to be prepared to give himself to Him more than ever for the future. A strange boding filled his mind, he knew not why or of what. He had scarcely been asleep long, when a hurried footstep entered the room, and one man entered, "Up, my men," said he, "the assault is ordered immediately, and two in this room are ordered on the forlorn hope." In a moment all sprung up, and Archie was the first; his name was one of the two to serve in the awful assault. For a moment a feeling took hold of Archie's mind, he scarcely knew what it was; he knew he was no coward, and he felt the flush of pride rise into his face as he heard he had been appointed to the dangerous work. But there was something very awful to Archie's mind at the idea of perhaps so soon meeting the Eternal. There was, however, no time for thought, the summons were peremptory. All seemed on the move, still every thing was silent and quiet; behind were placed the heavy guns, that a

breach might be effected. Archie was soon in his place, a heavy mist lay on the town and the space between, so that they could scarcely even see the point of attack. At length there burst a long bright flame of yellow light which split the air like a tongue, a heavy cloud of white smoke, and a sudden whiz through the air of the balls, and in a second the roar of the volley rung through the air, which was made more terrible, owing to the stillness of night. The line of light showed clearly the little band who were drawn up under the guns, and immediately the wall which was struck by the roll of balls, sent out a cloud of dust, and scattered fragments into the air. Volley after volley resounded, and flash after flash showed in front the advancing band who moved slowly while the breach was being made. At length repeated firing effected the purpose, and a breach became visible in the wall, which in this part had been selected on account of its weakness.

Under the cover of the fire the little storming party advanced, Archie kept his footing. He was close to a man whom not long before he had heard swearing, and whom he had rebuked, but had ridicule in return: his own thoughts were fixed on the awful peril of his situation, when a sudden noise close by his side startled him, a voice behind said "Poor Eliot," and Archie looking round saw his companion in the act of falling back to the earth; a musket ball had struck his throat, and he was killed on the spot with scarcely a groan. Archie shuddered at the thought of his swearing the night before; but there was no time for thinking; on rolled the men, and on rolled volley after volley of musketry and cannon balls.

They at length reached the breach, it was desperately defended. The breach bristled with bayonets, and the first five or six men among the foremost of Archie's column were instantly levelled with the earth by the musket balls or the bayonets. Archie was now nearly in front; he advanced boldly to the attack, when as he planted his foot on the wall, a man flung himself on him

with his bayonet; the boy was brave and fearless, he rushed at the man amid the cheers of his companions.

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The battle was over, the town was taken, and the stillness of an autumn afternoon had succeeded to the heat and confusion of the day; all around lay the dying and dead, and the stillness was the more striking by its being broken by the groan of some dying man, or the last sigh of some wounded warrior.

The setting sun shot its red slanting rays across the field of battle, and shone on many a face which lay cold and white with death, with the hand under the head, and the other hanging lifeless by the side. Here were two or three lying heaped on each other, with one scarcely gone, waiting for the last struggle of exhausted nature to end his agony and his thirst. There lay a wounded soldier with his pale face leaning against a stone to which he had crawled, struggling to draw the breath which fast ebbed from his breast. Close to him lay one whose spirit was fled, with his arm thrown across his face, cold and still: here and there were heavy groans and deep sighs, and quick breathings of men who were fast yielding their spirits to God Who gave them.

An officer had ridden out on the evening of the battle, and was deeply engaged among the multitudes of slain and dying men; there were so many who needed aid, that he dismounted from his horse, and leaving it to graze on the grass of the common, proceeded to help some of the sufferers. He was engaged in this work of mercy, when a deep sigh struck on his ear, and a few faint words accompanying it, "Oh, Harry, Harry, how different is my last hour to yours!" Startled and struck by the earnestness of the cry, he turned to the direction from which it came. The sun was now reaching the horizon and over the rim of a dark cloud it was shooting its red rays across the plain, and sending the long shadows of objects far over the heath.

Leaning with his head against a stone, with his face turned towards the setting sun, lay a boy; he seemed wounded; he did not move on the soldier's coming up to him, but lay as if in deep anguish, gazing at the departing sun. His shirt and coat being torn open, a gunshot wound in the chest was shown by a small spot through which the blood was fast running, and against which the poor boy had in vain placed a handkerchief to stay the blood; his hair which was long and dark lay on the stone, and here and there was marked with blood; and his eye, in which still the expression of deep feeling lay, was fixed full on the departing sun; his hands were folded on his breast, his cheek was sunk, and his lips fast losing all the colour of life: his quick and heavy breathing, his look of anguish, his agonized expression showed he was dying. His expression of face and eye, his extreme youth, and the touching sorrow of his cry, drew the officer's attention to him.

"My poor lad," said he, "you are badly wounded."

The boy slightly turned his head, and fixed on the officer a look of deep anguish, "Dying, sir," said he.

"You called just now for some one, you called for Harry, can I bring any one to you?"

"Harry's in heaven, sir," said Archie with a sigh which brought tears to the officer's eye.

The answer of the boy threw him back for a moment, and he scarcely knew how to proceed. "I thought you called some one."

"I said his name, sir, it's a name I love," said Archie, "I am fast going away."

"I hope you are going to meet him, if he is in heaven," said the officer, who was himself a good man.

"No, sir, never," said Archie, "I shall never see him again that I spoke of. Has the sun gone down, sir?"

"Not quite," said the officer.

"I thought I should have gone first," said Archie, "I have been watching it so long, my eye has grown dim."

"Can I do anything for you?" asked the other.

“ A little water, sir,” said Archie.

“ There’s some not far off,” said the officer, “ I will go and fetch some.”

Archie was again alone, the sun was gone, and the cold, dull shades of evening were shed on the plain of dying and dead ; he was very patient.

“ Oh, Harry ! Harry ! how differently I die to you, no first Communion, no friend to close my eye,” and the tear which fell gave the poor sufferer relief. “ My first Communion, my neglected first Communion. Oh, my God, have mercy on a poor sinful boy !”

By this time the officer had returned ; some water in a shell slaked Archie’s burning thirst.

“ Thank you very much,” said he, turning his dying eye on the face of the soldier.

“ Can I do anything more ?” said he, kneeling down by Archie’s side, and holding the handkerchief to the wound to staunch the still flowing blood.

“ Oh yes,” said he, “ one thing if you would ; oh, would you ?”

“ What is it ?” asked the officer, “ I will do it if I can.”

“ Could you find a Minister of God,” said Archie, “ who would give me the Holy Communion before I die ?”

He spoke it so earnestly, and the request was so unusual, that the kind soldier was again a moment silent.

“ Indeed, my poor lad,” said he, “ I will do what I can, but I much doubt if it is possible.”

“ Oh, sir,” said the dying boy, “ if you knew how much I long for it, if you knew what it is to die, and feel you have neglected everything till it is too late, you would do all you could.”

“ That I will,” said the other, “ but you must first be carried to a better place than this, I must find some cart to carry you to some house.”

“ No, thank you,” said Archie, “ I would die here in the open air.”

The officer saw there was no time to lose ; he went into the town, and on his way he passed a small tumbrel, a



man or two were idling near it, the men were French ; the officer gave his orders to them, and pointed out the place where Archie lay, he bid them go and carry him to a farm which he knew stood on the brow of a hill near to which he intended to bring the minister if he found one.

A town after siege was not the most likely place for such a discovery ; but the kind man went off earnest on doing his best for the poor sufferer.

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The sunset glow had given way to twilight ; on the brow of a rising hill stood a farm house, the people in it were French, they had barred up all the windows from terror of the battle which they had heard roaring in the distance. The household consisted of an old woman, two young women, and a lad ; they had not yet retired to rest, a candle still shone through the window, and hearing the tumbrel approaching up the uneven brow of the hill, half frightened, half curious, they undid the window, and looking out they saw beneath the starlight the cart, being pulled by three or four men ; the dog in the yard set up a low bark. " Don't shake it so, pray don't," said the voice of a boy. But it was a useless request, for his language was not understood by those who carried him. As the cart passed by they saw the figure of a wounded boy, his head was supported on his soldier's cloak for a pillow, his breast was open and his coat thrown back, with his hand he was in vain trying to ease the motion of the tumbrel which the thoughtless movements of the men made constantly painful to him, his face which was as pale as death looked calm and placid when the agony of the uneasy motion was for a moment relieved. "*Pauvre Blessé,*" said the men looking up at the farm window, and setting down the tumbrel in a quick careless manner ; the appeal to admit the poor boy was not heeded, but the window was quickly closed and the figures drew in ; the men

now knocked at the door, and after some time one of the inmates came down to it, and a dispute in French arose between the parties.

The women protested they were alone and unprotected, and afraid in such dangerous times to admit any one, particularly the soldiers. The men pleaded the perilous condition of the boy and the order of the officer, adding that they would be well paid for their admitting him; after several disputes the door was opened, and Archie was admitted amid much grumbling and murmuring. A room up stairs was the one into which he was taken and laid in the bed.

“Oh, my God, I thank Thee for this undeserved mercy,” said Archie.

The elder woman seemed to pity his state, and spoke to him in words he could not understand, but the tone was evidently kind, and she proceeded to dress his wound, a work which she seemed to understand; the relief it caused was great, and poor Archie poured out his heart in gratitude to God for His mercy. But one thing was still pressing on his mind, “his first Communion. Oh would the minister arrive in time to give it him before he died!” but no one came. How Archie did lie and count the sounds outside, hoping he might hear the footsteps of the messenger of peace. Fever was high, and his pain was great, but he bore it without a murmur, he longed to bear patiently what God would give him, so that he might show how deeply penitent he was. He felt lonely; no one was with him who could speak one word to him. “Oh, Harry! would I had never left your blessed path, it is hard, hard work now, I have put it off so long, and if I am not to receive my first Communion before I die, God’s blessed will be done; I deserve it, but may He accept my poor soul, through the merits of my REDEEMER.”

By degrees he sunk lower and lower. His eye was fixed earnestly on the door as it opened, and the officer entered, there was no one else, and a look of disappointment spread over his pale features.

“My poor lad,” said the officer, “I have tried in vain, I have just heard of a clergyman who lives a mile from this; two men are gone for him. Pray God you may live till he arrives.”

Archie shook his head.

“Oh,” said the dying boy, “what would I give if I had never put it off so often. I shall die now without my first Communion, and I shall meet Harry in the other world, and we shall be divided. O will God forgive a poor sinful boy, sir, do you think, who has over and over again turned from Him and forgotten Him, do you think He will?” and the dying youth turned his eye on the officer. He was evidently a good man, but utterly unaccustomed to administer comfort or consolation at such a scene as this; but he deeply felt for the boy, and the scene was one which made a lasting impression on his mind; the women had drawn away to the end of the room, and in deep attention were watching the end.

“God is merciful,” said the officer.

“Yes, sir, I know it, I know it; but can I who have so much sinned against Him, hope for His mercy! what hope have I He will forgive me?”

“You are truly sorry for the past,” said he, “and cast all on the mercy of our Blessed LORD,” said the soldier.

“Oh yes, yes, that was what Harry said when he was dying, ‘all on CHRIST,’ yes that I do, indeed I do,” said Archie, “all my trust is in CHRIST; what have I else to lean on? what else? All my poor life has been so full of putting off and changing; I have nothing to lean on but Him. Yes, Harry said that. Do you think, sir, there is hope?” said he, turning his pale wan face on the officer.

“I fully believe it,” said the officer, wiping away a tear which trickled down his weather-beaten cheek. “I firmly believe it, I have always found it very great comfort myself to lean wholly on the hopes of a SAVIOUR, and though I know but little how to teach

others, that is my support, my poor lad. But who was Harry you spoke of so?"

Archie was lying with his head on the pillow, with his soldier's coat still on him, and his breast lying open to enable him to breathe more freely; they did not dare take off the coat, lest the wound should bleed again; one hand lay on the wound, and the other lay off the pillow, while his arm supported his head, and his dark eye was fixed on the officer anxious to catch every word. At the question, "Who was Harry?" a light burst on his pale, death-like face, a fire flashed from his sunken eye, and he half started from his pillow.

"Who was Harry?" said he, "who was Harry? Oh he was all, all to me, sir, he was the one dear friend of my whole life, my one friend, I never had another! he taught me to love God, and he is now in heaven. He received his first Communion before he died, and he died, sir, with me by his side, just as you are now, and he died, oh so peacefully! Who was Harry? Oh, sir, what would I give if I was where he is; yes, I was with him when he died, and I am dying all, all alone; but I deserve it all." Archie sunk back; he closed his eyes, and opening them again, he stretched out his hand to the officer, "I did not mean to say all alone," said he, "you are very, very kind to a strange boy, and God will reward you. When I said alone, I meant without anything to do with home. Oh, sir, if you had known Harry, wouldn't you have loved him; he and I got ready for our first Communion together, but he received it, and I shall die without it; ah, sir, it is like one taken and the other left; but CHRIST have mercy on a poor wanderer. Sir, when I am gone, and I shan't last long now, of course I must be buried here; it doesn't much matter where I lie, though I should have liked to lie by Harry's side under the dear church tower, where we have been so often together; but I deserve it all, no one will know my grave. But will you promise this one thing before I go? when you go back will you see to Harry's

grave and see it kept tidy, and do not let it be trodden down, I used to do it; and sometimes go, if you are near, and look at it, for under it lies what remains of him, whom I loved more than I can tell."

His hands fell on his bosom, and his eyes closed, once or twice he opened them when he fancied there was a footstep, as if his soul were still on his first Communion, but no one came; his breathing grew deeper, and at longer intervals: a footstep was heard, and the door opened; he had come at last, but too late; Archie opened his eyes and looked at the door, there seemed a slight effort to move, but his spirit passed in the effort; the officer seeing his lips move, leant down to catch his last words, he heard him whisper, "JESUS, JESUS, pardon, pardon," and as he said them he pressed his hands together, and with these words his spirit went away.

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The officer left with the regiment, but before he went he had a plain rough stone placed to mark the spot where Archie's body lay.

Archie lay far away from Harry, but their hope was one; Harry's grave still was green beneath the church tower. The good officer never forgot it, and never went to see it without shedding a tear at the thought of Archie's dying hour. "They were friends in life," he used to say, "and in death their hope was one, the love and mercy of Him Who died to save them."

