

Shades Christ's Children.

SHADES of night are creeping, creeping,
Dark and darker grows the day;
Little ferns are robbed for sleeping,
Little hands are raised to pray;
Jesus, thou who watch art keeping,
Listen what the children say;

"We are little children, Jesus,
By thy footstool bending low,
And we know thy goodness sees us
While we think and speak and go;
In the school-room, in the wild-wood,
In our troubles, in our glee,
Thou who know'st our earthly childhood,
Let the little children follow thee.

"We are little travellers, Saviour,
And the world is wide and long,
Very weak is our behaviour,
But thine arm is and kind strong;
Hold our tender feet from falling,
Keep our spirits free from sin;
From thy throne in heaven calling,
Take thy little travellers in.

"We are little Christians, Father,
Little soldiers of the Lamb,
And round thy cross we gather,
Battling for thy precious name.
Help us, Father, Saviour, Jesus,
Fight our sins and weakness down,
Till the love of Christ release us
From earth's cross to heaven's crown."

So as the shades of night come creeping,
And as darker grows the day,
While they kneel before their sleeping,
Feeble words in faith to say,
All thy little children keeping,
Jesus hear them when they pray!

PILGRIM STREET.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER II.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

MR. HOPE ascended the steps of the Assize Courts, closely followed by Phil, who shrank with dread from the severe eye of the first policeman whom they met. He was a tall, strong man, stiff and straight as an arrow, with a rigid face that could not readily be moved either to a smile or a frown. He was about to lay his hand upon little Phil, as he ventured to enter the grand hall under the protection of his new friend, when he was arrested by Mr. Hope speaking to him.

"Banner," he said, "can you tell me anything of the case of Handforth and others on the charge of housebreaking?"

"To be sure I can," answered Banner; "the house is in my beat, sir, but I was off duty at the time. Two men and a boy engaged in it; the men were taken in the house, but the boy escaped. They're up now, sir, before Mr. Justice Roberts."

"This little fellow says his brother was at home all night with him," said Mr. Hope. "Is not the boy's name Tom Haslam?"

"Ay, sir, Tom Haslam," replied Banner, "that's the lad's name. But it's no use hearkening to these young ones—it's only encouraging them in their lies. They are born and bred liars and thieves, sir.

The gentleman sighed, and looked down upon Phil with such an expression of pity and tenderness, that the child was emboldened to speak, even in the presence of the policeman.

"It isn't a lie," he said, thrusting his little hand into Mr. Hope's, and looking up with new-born confidence. "There's Nat Pendlebury and Alice could tell, if somebody 'ud only ask them. They know that Tom was with me. Oh! whatever can I do, if Tom is taken to jail again?"

"Banner, I will inquire into this," said Mr. Hope. "Do you say the prisoners are before Mr. Justice Roberts?"

"Ay, sir; this way, if you please," answered Banner, striding away toward a corridor leading to the interior of the building. But Mr. Hope bade him and Phil wait for a few minutes, which the child did in fear and trembling, without so much as moving one of his restless little feet under the stern gaze of Banner. Before long he heard the voice of his friend again, but he could scarcely believe it was the same, as he appeared in a black robe, and with a gray wig above his dark hair. Mr. Hope smiled, and again bade him follow in his steps, and, conducted by Banner, they went a few paces down the arched corridor, and turned into a room filled with people.

It was not the great Criminal Court, as large as many a church and chapel, with galleries in it for the accommodation of those persons who wished to be present at the trials; the number of prisoners was large, and this was an additional court, held in a smaller room, in order that the business of the assizes might be more quickly despatched. But to Phil the place seemed large, and crowded with strange faces, until Mr. Hope told Banner to lift him on to a bench, and bade him look round if he could see Tom. It was a minute or two before he looked in the right direction; but at length he saw a clear spot near the middle of the room, railed round, and separated from the rest, where stood Handforth and another man, and beyond them Tom, with his black hair and eyes, and his familiar face, only more dogged and downcast than Phil had ever seen it before. Somebody was just crying out, in a loud voice, "Thomas Haslam!" and Tom looked up for a moment, and moved his lips, but Phil could not hear any sound come from them. Other words were said, which Phil could not understand, and Handforth and the other man answered "Guilty," in a loud, bold voice; and then Tom uttered something, and Banner laid his hand heavily on Phil's shoulder.

"Eh!" he said, "he pleads guilty. He says he did it, and he'll be sent to jail for it, and serve him right, the young rascal!"

For a moment Phil could not understand it; but as soon as he thought of Tom going away from him into jail broke upon his mind, a childish cry rang through the quiet court, and the judge looked round, and a hard voice called "Silence! silence!" But Phil heard and saw nothing but Tom and the judge.

"Oh, Judge!" he cried, "Tom didn't do it. He was at home with me all night, and Nat Pendlebury and Alice knew he was."

It was a clear, shrill little voice, and not a word was lost in the silence. Tom started, and looked round eagerly, and the dogged expression passed away from his face as he caught sight of Phil standing on the bench, with his thin, small arms, so plainly seen through his ragged jacket, stretched out toward him. Mr. Hope was speaking in a low tone to the judge; and the judge fastened his eyes keenly and penetratingly upon Tom.

"Thomas Haslam," he said, "Mr. Hope undertakes your cause. I will try another case before this. Let the prisoners at the bar be removed."

In a few minutes more, Phil found himself in a small, detached room, with Banner and Mr. Hope and Tom. Tom's hand was firmly clasped between both his own, and they were standing together before Mr. Hope, with Banner behind them, ready to seize Tom, and carry him back to jail if he were proved guilty. Tom's black eyes were searching Mr. Hope's face with a keen and cautious scrutiny; but after the search was ended, and he had looked fully into Mr. Hope's own kindly eyes, the lines of

his face grew less hard, and there was something like a smile playing round his hungry mouth.

"My boy," said Mr. Hope, "are you or Phil telling the truth?"

"Phil," answered Tom, pressing the child's hand fondly.

"What were you going to plead guilty for?" asked Mr. Hope.

"It were no good to say I were 'Not guilty,'" said Tom, a surly look returning to his face. "The police swore I were guilty, and the others were going to say they were guilty; and they said the judge would be ten times harder on me if I said I were not guilty; so that was how I came to say I were guilty. The judge knows nought about poor folks like me."

"You do not care much about telling the truth always," said Mr. Hope.

"No," answered Tom, not boldly but frankly; "it doesn't pay for a poor boy like me to tell the truth every time he speaks."

"But now, Tom," said Mr. Hope, "I intend to be your friend, on condition that you tell me the whole truth, and the simple truth. If you have really not been helping in this robbery, I can save you from going to jail. Tell me all you know about it; what you have had to do with Handforth, and what you were doing that night."

Once more Tom's keen eyes scanned the face of his new friend; and then he drew himself up, and raised his head with an air of resolution, and began to speak quietly and deliberately.

"We lodge with Handforths, Phil and me," he said; "they live in a cellar, and we have the place under the steps to sleep in. The night they say I was helping in the robbery, Phil and me were up at Longsight, selling chips, and we didn't get home till after nine o'clock, and Phil went straight off to bed, because he was cold and hungry; and I didn't do anything but just run to Pilgrim Street, to Nat Pendlebury's, with a penn'orth of chips, for Alice. It was striking ten by the old church clock as I came back, and Nat knows it. But before it was light in the morning, the police came and took me up, and said I'd had a hand in breaking into a house the night before."

"Do you know anything about it, Banner?" asked Mr. Hope.

"If what Thomas Haslam says is true," answered Banner, "he can have nought to do with the housebreaking. It was done somewhere between nine and ten of the night, being a house locked up and left, while the owners were out for the evening. The policeman on duty detected a light in the windows, and knowing the owners were out, he got help and secured the two men, but the lad escaped them by jumping through a back window. He carried off some silver spoons, and and of them was found amongst the straw where Thomas Haslam was sleeping."

"The lad would hardly have carried his stolen booty to his own bed," said Mr. Hope, thoughtfully. "Tom, why did you not speak of Nat Pendlebury and Alice at once, when you were taken up?"

"It were of no good," said Tom, rather sadly; "the police said I'd done it, and the magistrate said I'd done it, and nobody 'ud hearken to me. But if you'd send for Nat Pendlebury, he'll tell you I say true. He lives in Pilgrim Street, and Phil'll run and fetch him."

"Banner shall go," said Mr. Hope; "and Phil can show him the way."

In a few minutes Phil was pattering through the mud at the side of the tall policeman, to whose strides he had to take two or three of his own short steps. Something of the sternness had vanished from the cold eyes of Banner, and he looked a little