

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the evening, after school was over, and I'd helped Transome to get up and come downstairs, and had settled him quite comfortably in his own chair out of all draughts, I told him about my new scholar.

"Why, my lass!" he cried, "aw do believe as it's ou'd measter's own nephew! He'd a gradely fine lass for's sister, and hoo wedded beneath her, like thee, Ally. Captain John Champion was na' captain o' one o' the bettermost sort o' ships; and ou'd measter swore 'at he'd never forgi'e her."

I coaxed Transome to tell me all he knew about it, though his words were as scarce as silver. He had seen the little lad's mother scores of times before she was married, when she was living with her brother, our landlord. But when she had died, or how her poor child came to be living in our town, he could not tell.

"Transome," I said, as I poured out his tea, "if God had asked me what I wished for as He asked Solomon, I'd have chosen to write a book."

"Eh! but aw niver did see such a wonian for a book!" he said again, looking across the table at me with such a pleasant look that I could not keep myself from going round to kiss him. He was sore changed since we came home together along the canal, and picked flowers from morning till night; but I loved him as much, ay, ten times more now than then!

"If I could write a book," I went on, as I sat down again in my chair, "I would write one that would prick our old master's heart to the quick."

"Eh, lass! it 'ud take a pen very long and very sharp to prick his heart," he answered.

"Yet," I said half to myself, "he's a church member, and takes the sacrament; and he's often chairman at the meetings. If that boy belonged to me, and me rolling in riches like him, I'd give him the best schooling in all England. I suppose he's too proud to forgive his poor dead sister for marrying below her."

"He's a gradely rich man," said Transome, shaking his head gravely, "and aw reckon he can afford to have his likes and dislikes."

"No," I answered, "the Lord hasn't made any one rich enough for that."

"Aw were wrung," he said; "rich and poor are all alike to Him; but that's hard to mind, Ally."

Well, to go on with my story. Pippin came to school for nigh upon twelve months, never missing morning or evening. I got so used to his being close beside me in the chimney-nook that I should not have been myself if he was away. Never, no, never had I such a scholar as him! He learned as if he was hungry and thirsty for learning, and could