

The Boy Who Helps His Mother.

As I went down the street to-day,
I saw a little lad
Whose face was just the kind of face
To make a person glad
It was so plump and rosy-cheeked,
So cheerful and so bright,
It made me think of apple time,
And filled me with delight.

I saw him busily at work,
While, blithe as blackbird's song,
His merry, mellow whistle rang
The pleasant street along.
"Oh that's the kind of lad I like!"
I thought, as I passed by.
"These busy, cheery, whistling boys
Make grand men by and by."

Just then a playmate came along,
And leaned across the gate,
A plan that promised lots of fun
And frolic to relate.
"The boys are waiting for us now,
So hurry up!" he cried.
My little whistler shook his head,
And "Can't come," he replied.

"Can't come? Why not, I'd like to know?
What hinders?" asked the other.
"Why, don't you see?" came the reply,
"I'm busy helping mother.
She's lots to do, and so I like
To help her all I can;
So I've no time for fun just now,"
Said this dear little man.

"I like to hear you talk like that,"
I told the little lad;
"Help mother all you can and make
Her kind heart light and glad."
It does me good to think of him,
And know that there are others
Who, like this manly little boy,
Take hold and help their mothers.

SUSIE REDMAYNE:

OR,

A Story of the Seamy Side of Child-life.

BY

CHRISTABEL.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLACK RIVER.

THE children left the house sobbing wildly and passionately.

The night was cold and dark and wet. The rain was washing the snow from the black icy streets,—very icy they were to the two pairs of little naked feet.

They fled on swiftly through the cold falling rain,—through the dingy rays of light that streamed from the little shops.

They did not know where they were going. They seemed to be impelled onward by the violence that had struck them and wounded them, and turned them bruised to the door.

They were too heart-sick to make any plan.

They might have appealed for shelter to this neighbour or to that; but they had gone far beyond their own neighbourhood in the first blinding moments of their grief.

Presently they found themselves in a wide dark street that was now almost deserted.

A cab dashed by full of gaily-dressed people who had been to the theatre, and were going to their luxurious homes. In the distance there was a solitary policeman. In front of them yawned a wide black arch, blacker than the night and more full of terror.

All the world seemed full of terror at that moment. There was no light in it, no love, no help.

Ralph knew all about the arch. He had been through it by daylight many a time, and had explored some of its most mysterious recesses.

There was a railway, or rather two or three railways, overhead; and the arches below led into one another or crossed one another in a most bewildering manner.

It was in a bewildering manner, too, that a black, shallow, sluggish river ran in and out among the piers that supported the archways.

It was a place to strike horror to the heart of a man if he were not accustomed to it; but many of the people of that part of the town were accustomed to it very well.

Walking in and out among the dark

arches there was a slender wooden platform that served as a bridge over the dark chasm below.

It was quite narrow, only wide enough for one person to walk across it at a time; and it was raised only a few feet above the sluggish current below.

Terrible as the place was, it occurred to Ralph that they might find shelter there from the wild rain and the piercing wind.

So cold the children were, so wretched, that once for a moment the boy had wished that the warm earth would open under their feet and shelter them forever.

Susie shrank in terror when she saw that Ralph was leading her under the dark arch. Her quick ear caught the dull splash of the dark water, and unknown horrors presented themselves to her childish imagination.

"Where are you taking me, Ralphy?" she asked in a beseeching tone. "Not there, oh, not there!"

The boy was as wretched as the little one herself was. Perhaps more wretched, since he knew more of the wicked world; but he saw that all depended on himself, humanly speaking.

"Susie, listen to me," he said in his firmest voice. "Have I ever been unkind to you?"

"No, Ralphy, never!"

"Have I ever asked you to do anything that was not good?"

"No, Ralph."

"Then trust me now, little woman."

"But tell me what you are going to do, Ralphy,—tell me where we are going?"

"We are going under this arch if you are not a little goose. I have been through it dozens of times. There are a lot of arches, and I know them all. I know one corner that will be ever such a jolly place to sleep in. It is like a little wooden gallery, and it won't rain, and the wind can't get there, and we shall be as safe as safe, if you'll only come along."

Ralph himself thought that all this must sound very tempting, but the little girl shivered sadly with fear as she followed her brother down the descent that led from the side of the street.

The boy led her very carefully, holding her hand in his, and going a little before.

They came quickly to the beginning of the little wooden bridge, the boy holding by the handrail, and telling Susie to mind when they came to a stone or a splintered piece of plank.

The child was half dead with terror, but not the less was she brave and strong; braver and stronger for the very effort it cost her. She could hear the sickening flow of the water close beneath her feet. There seemed a silence about the very sound it made, as if it whispered hoarsely lest it should betray dark deeds.

At last they reached the little wooden gallery that Ralph had spoken of; it sloped a little toward the water. There was the cold stone arch on one side and the light handrail on the other. There was nothing to make the black darkness visible; and the only sound was the sound of the turbid river dropping with that slow oozy sound that was so much more repulsive than the rush of clear water would have been.

Cold and strange as the place was, the children fell asleep quickly, locked in each other's arms. Ralph was the last to fall asleep, and even in his sleep he seemed to hear Susie's sobs and her pathetic murmurs of terror. But there was no need for her terror, nor for the boy's inevitable fear. A divine and loving Father watched over them as protectingly as if they had slept on beds of down, enwrapped by silken coverlets.

All night they lay there, and nothing disturbed them; and Ralph's first thought on waking was the thought of a text that he had learned when he attended the Sabbath-school: "I laid me down and slept and rose up again, for the Lord sustained me."

The children said their usual prayers before emerging from the arches of the river. The dawn light was now struggling through the sun atmosphere of Yarnborough. The carts were driving in. The silence was broken by street cries. The shops were being slowly opened and the coffee-stalls at the corners of the streets were thronged with customers. These little ones were hungry and they were penniless, but they were not despairing, as a grown-up person would have been.

Their strongest dread was the dread that their father might find them.

The children went on wandering hand in hand. At last they came to a street that was as strange to them as if it had been a street in some other town. The neighbourhood was respectable compared with the one they had left. There were tiny gardens in front of the houses, or rather little damp plots that were meant for gardens. The houses stood in regular rows, as modern houses do stand. They looked bare, even mean, but there were no signs of squalor outside.

Our two little wanderers went up and down one of these rows—Nelson Row it was called. Most of the houses were inhabited by working-men, and some of the windows betrayed signs of that desire for respectability which is so strong a characteristic of England's best working-men and working-women.

The door of one of these neater-looking houses stood open, and a comely woman was trying to clean away the blackened ice from the door-steps.

She looked up at the children as they passed, and her eyes met the heavy, sorrowful blue eyes of Susie.

"Eh, bairn," she said, "but I doubt you're sickly. Why has your mother let you come out such a morning as this?"

Little Susie only looked silently into the woman's face—silently and pathetically.

It was Ralph who replied:

"We haven't got a mother;" and his eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

"You've got a father?" said the woman, inquiringly.

"Yes," replied Ralph, brushing the tears away.

"And what's he doing?" asked the woman.

"I don't know what he'll be doing to-day," was the reply, cautiously given, Ralph had learned to dread this species of catechism from strangers.

"What does he do on other days?" asked the woman.

"He paints heraldry," said Ralph.

"Paints what?" said the woman.

"Well, coats of arms, and things on carriage doors."

"You mean them lions, standing on their hind legs, and bears climbing up poles, and vultures w' two heads?"

"Yes," said Ralph, "things of that kind."

"And does he make a living by it?"

"He can make a living, and a very good living."

"Only he don't?" said the woman, interrogatively.

Ralph kept silence. It was often difficult for him to keep God's commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;" but he tried to keep it as a rule.

It was only when worn down by suffering that he permitted a word against his father to escape him.

The woman had been watching the children narrowly, taking note of their worn-out look, their thin clothes, and their bad shoes. She was a person who had had a history of her own.

"And where hav' ye slep' all night?" she asked of the children.

"Under the river arch," said Ralph, boldly and bravely.

"Eh, mercy on us!" said the woman. "Ye slep' under the arch w' the rats running about ye."

Little Susie shivered, and the woman thought she was shivering with cold.

"Come away to the fire and get warmed," said the good-hearted woman. "My man's gone to work, and I've neither chick nor child o' my own."

There was a blazing fire in the kitchen and a tidy hearth. Ralph could remember the time when his father's home had looked just as warm and comfortable as this. Little Susie smiled when the woman told her to put her feet on the fender.

"Will you tell me what your name is?" the little thing asked, blushing as she spoke and looking prettier than ever.

The woman laid a maternal hand upon the little golden head.

"They call me Jane Sorrell, honey. And now tell me what do they call thee?"

"Susie Redmayne," said the small creature; "and Ralphy is Ralph Redmayne."

While Mrs. Sorrell had been talking, she had also been preparing breakfast. A jug of steaming coffee was on the table, some

beautiful home-made bread with nice sweet butter and a pot of real jam, such as Ralph knew only by memory. Mrs. Sorrell was both proud and glad to see how much the children enjoyed their breakfast.

"And now tell me what ye're going to do to-day?" she asked when the children's appetites were about satisfied. "I don't want to ask no questions, not none as I shouldn't ask," she added, with a touch of respect that included both herself and her guests. "But it isn't unbecom'g on me to ask what ye're going to do to-day."

The question saddened Ralph in spite of the woman's kindness. What were they going to do? He tried to think for a moment what they were likely to do, then he gave it up.

"I don't know what we shall do," he said, "nor where we shall go."

"You ain't thinking o' going home again?" asked Mrs. Sorrell.

And little Susie cried out with a touch of terror in her tone: "No, please don't take me home; I'll sleep every night down beside the water rather than go home any more."

"I'd a' asked you to stay here a bit longer, but my master isn't like me. He isn't fond o' childer, and he's allus sayin' that he's glad we haven't none of our own. So I can't ask ye to stay, ye see, that is no longer than dinner time, but ye can sit a bit yet. He doesn't come home to his dinner till twelve."

While the children were sitting by Mrs. Sorrell's cosy fire, wishing that twelve o'clock might never come, or that John Sorrell would send word that he was not coming to his dinner that day, Richard Redmayne was walking in bitter moodiness up and down his wretched room.

Had anyone told him a week ago that he cared so much for his children he would have smiled and said to himself how little the speaker knew him. Things were bad with him, they had been bad a long time, and he could not have believed that the absence of the girl and boy could make matters much worse.

But the sudden discovery of their escape had filled him with a strange deep feeling to which he could give no name. He was remorseful, he had much to make him so, but when he had blamed himself to the uttermost there was more behind.

There was in the man a hungry yearning for the children's presence, a feeling that was to him as if he knew that they were dead, and that he might all the rest of his life only long passionately to speak one word that they could hear.

If he could only have them back for a moment, so that he might tell them of his bitter repentance, so that he might promise them that he would never be unkind or cruel any more, then he would be satisfied; so he said to himself.

He had scolded them, he had starved them, and he had struck them; but it seemed as if another man had done it, for he had loved them all the while.

Whilst Richard Redmayne was taking himself to task for all his past conduct, his neighbours in Piper's Court were talking about him.

"Ay," said a fat virago, "he's been out pretending to seek 'em this morning, and he'll be going out pretending to seek 'em again."

"Mebbe he will," said Bessie Brown; "but the worst wish I wish them is, that somebody kinder than their father may find them and give them shelter. but they're in God's hands, and they are safe there, whether they be found any more in this world or not!"

(To be continued.)

KEEP A CLEAN MOUTH, BOYS.

A distinguished author says: "I resolved when I was a child never to use a word which I could not pronounce before my mother." He kept his resolution, and became a pure-minded, noble, and honoured gentleman. His rule and example are worthy of imitation.

Boys readily learn a class of low, vulgar expressions, which are never heard in respectable circles. The utmost care of parents will scarcely prevent it. Of course, no one thinks of girls being so exposed to this peril. We cannot imagine a decent girl using words she would not utter before her father or mother.