

How to Keep a Secret.

"'Tis violet,' my mamma says,
A secret should be kept;
I heard her say to papa
Last night before I slept.
I heard her talking in my room
With papa, soft and low,
'Secrets are kept in violet,'
And I'm so glad I know;
For I've the loveliest secret
I want to talk about,
Of course I can't tell any one,
Lest it should be let out.
But I can tell the violets,"—
She darted down the walk,
'You see they're just the very ones,
For the violets don't talk."

The violets heard a whisper,
A murmur soft and low,
Then warningly she ended with,
'You mustn't tell, you know."

I knew her small first finger-tip
Was seared with needle pricks,
And that something was often brought
For dear mamma to fix.
And on my birthday by my plate
A handkerchief I found,
All snowy white and neatly hemmed
With tiny stitches round.
''Tis yours," she cried, "I was so 'fraid
I could not get it done.
See all the stitches round the edge;
I hemmed them every one.
It was a secret. Did you guess?
I kept it; no one knew,
'Cept mamma and the violets
'Twas being done for you."
''Tis beautiful," I said, and kissed
Her shining curls of gold;
And it was kept inviolate,
For not a violet told.

—Harper's Young People.

A BOY'S FRIENDSHIP.

A Story of Boy Life in England.

CHAPTER IV.

A GOOD CHARACTER ALWAYS TELLS.



UNDER his rough exterior, David Grimston had a kind and honest heart, and very sincere was his grief to find this lamentable evidence of Frank's complicity in the fish-poaching at Church Meadows. Of course he knew him, and, like all the people in the village, had unbounded respect for and confidence in the boy; it seemed quite impossible that Frank could have engaged in such an expedition. But there was the rod, with his name on it! And yet the good name, which was, in the Psalmist's opinion, far better than riches, seemed better evidence to the mind of honest David that Frank was not guilty. How often he had heard him talk to those worthless fellows in the cottages down the lane, urging them to give up their bad habits; and especially to remember that God had said, "Thou shalt not steal," and he would punish them, whether they escaped the constable or not! Such a kind-hearted, straightforward little fellow was Frank, nobody had a word to say against him.

But there was the rod, with the name on it. David lost several hours' sleep that night, turning over in his mind the mystery of the rod, and was

glad when morning came, and he could put on his hat and sally forth to make inquiry. Fearing to cause trouble by going direct to the cottage, David made straight for the blacksmith's forge. The worthy man—if anything a bit grimmer than usual, but with the same bright eye gleaming through the coal-dust—bade him welcome.

"Well, David, and how's it with ye this morning, my lad?"

"Bad, Ben—bad!"

"Eh! What's matter? Why, ye look as fretted as a horse with a stone in its foot. Hast fell out wi' th' Captain?"

"No, Ben; I'm all right in that quarter, as I suppose you would say, 'Thank God, for it.'"

"Yes, that I should, David. And why not? Isn't God good, then? And can any of us say, looking at what he has done for us these many years, my 'own right hand hath gotten me the victory?'"

"I daresay you're right enough, Ben. God is very good; though I didn't think that when my poor little lass died in my arms a year ago come Michaelmas."

"Ay, I remember the dear little heart; but the Saviour has just done what we read he did in the Gospels—taken her in his arms and blessed her, and will never let her hurt her gentle feet in life's rough road agen."

This reference to little Polly had touched the old gamekeeper to the quick. He stooped down, as if very much interested in some old horse-shoes in a corner, and on the rusty surface of one of them fell two or three big tears. The loud clanging of old Ben's hammer on the fiery iron he held between his tongs, at this moment prevented him from hearing the deep sigh which was heard from under David's velvet waistcoat, and the choking words which struggled to his lips: "The purty darling; my heart's a'most broke over it."

In a few moments more he had regained his composure; and, taking his seat just where Frank had always sat, he asked Ben a question.

"I say, Ben, do you really think God always keeps from harm those that trust in him?"

"Well, let's go to the Word and the testimony, David: 'The Lord preserveth all them that love him;' then, again, 'The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed; trusting in the Lord, his heart is established, he shall not be afraid.' These, and many others, David, are the words of your namesake, in his Psalms."

"Ay, that seems very true, Ben; and yet we do hear, now and agen, of good folks getting into all sorts of trouble, and sometimes disgraces, which they don't deserve."

"So it be, David, for 'in the world we shall have tribulation;' but Christ will give his faithful ones the victory in the end, make no mistake."

"Well, Ben, that's very much in my mind just now."

"What is it, lad? I fancied when you came in there was a bit of bother in your face."

"Then the old gamekeeper told Ben all his experiences of the last evening, and finally how Frank's rod was found, and how he could hardly believe his own eyes. He also explained that he could not find it in his heart to go to the cottage with such sad tidings, so he came straight there to the forge for Ben's advice on the subject.

The blacksmith looked grave, and folded his two arms, in deep thought. "I'll never believe it of the young master; there's some bad business at the bottom of this, I'll be bound, David."

"But there was the rod, Ben—his own rod—with his name on it."

"Well, my advice, David Grimston, is, go and see Frank on the quiet, without giving his poor mother any trouble about it, and see what he says."

"That's a good thought, Ben; and, please God, he may give a good account of himself, so that it may be explained—leastways enough to clear him."

Leaving the forge behind him, old Grimston strode through the village in the direction of the place where Frank lived, anxiously looking forward, in the hope of seeing him in the road. But in this he was disappointed. Not to be turned off his quest, however, so ardently did he wish to see the matter righted, David knocked at the door, which was opened by Frank himself.

Such a fair, open countenance the boy had, that the gamekeeper felt in his heart ashamed of his business, and half inclined to say nothing about it after all.

So he chatted about many things; and thus talking, they passed into the garden at the back of the house. Then David Grimston got very absent-minded, returning foolish and evasive answers to Frank's simple inquiries, for his mind reverted to the scene of the previous night, and what kind of explanation he would be able to give Captain Starkie on the morrow; so, mustering up all his resolution, he looked Frank in the face, and said abruptly:—

"Master Frank, did you go out last night?"

"Yes, Grimston."

"I wish you had said 'No,' my boy—it would have made me happy."

"Why?"

"Because—well—there's something wrong; and I thought—no—I didn't really think—but, perhaps, you might know something about it."

"What is it? I will do my best."

"Where is your rod, Master Frank?"

The boy got up from the tree-stump where he had been sitting, and walked to the little shed. Opening the door, he looked in vain for the rod, and

turned upon the gamekeeper a face full of dismay.

"Grimston, it's not here! Where can it be?"

"I can tell you, Master Frank. It is safely lodged in my kitchen cupboard."

"You got it! Why, however did it come into your hands? Have you been having a joke with me, Grimston?"

"No, my boy; far from that. I only wish, in my heart of hearts, it was a joke."

"What do you mean? Is anything wrong? Pray tell me, please!"

"Yes, my dear boy, I will; and I hope you will not take offence, for I feel as sure as I stand here that you are not to blame."

"Go on, Grimston, please."

"Well, your rod was picked up in Church Meadows last night, and I've got one young fellow, who was poaching for fish there, and he said he had a companion who owned the rod, and that rod was yours, with the name cut on the thickest part. I'm sure there's no mistake about it being yours."

"But, Grimston, I was not there. On my word of honour believe me; and I know nothing of it, except that Squire Christie's son asked me to go with him some days ago."

"Oh, did he? Well, I'm glad to know that, for it was that young rascal who tried to lay the blame on you."

"On me? Why should he do that? I am innocent; indeed I am, Grimston."

"I thoroughly believe you, dear boy; so don't distress yourself like that. But what bothers me is, that Captain Starkie will want to know all about it to-morrow, and will ask to see the rod. And what am I to say to him?"

"Tell him I am innocent; or, if you like, I will come and say it myself."

"So I will; but then there's the rod."

Frank thought a minute, and in that quiet interval lifted up his heart to his heavenly Guide to lead him aright in his trial.

"The best thing, Grimston, will be for me to go with you to the Captain's house, and we will see George together, and he will clear me of this before you."

The plan was soon accepted by Grimston, who was only too glad to get a chance of putting the matter straight, and getting Frank from under this cloud of suspicion.

They had more than a mile to walk, crossing the fields by the stile at the end of the lane.

Little was said on either side for several minutes. Frank, with his sensitive nature, was feeling deeply the wrong which had been done him, and hoping and praying in his heart that a way might be opened for his escape. He looked up at the blue sky, with its light fleecy clouds sailing overhead, and listened to the birds singing cheerily in the trees. And