

CHAPTER X.

ROGER BREAKS DOWN.



MISS FIELDEN had no occasion to summon Dick. The boy was watching, and the moment he saw Roger supported by the young lady, he ran forward in a state of terror to see what was amiss. No one else was under the shelter at the moment, for the young lady was well known thereabouts, and if she was seen talking to any one, others would take care not to listen or intrude.

A park-keeper was in sight, and by Miss Fielden's wish Dick ran to call him. By their united efforts Roger was at length restored to partial consciousness. A shade of colour came back to his face; he opened his eyes and spoke; but he knew no one—not even Dick.

The boy bent over him, saying, "Don't you know me, Granddad? I'm Dick. You cannot forget Dick."

He held Roger's hand in his and repeated his question and his name, but all in vain. The old man might hear the sound of words, but he did not grasp the sense of them. He only looked vacantly round, then closed his eyes, as though even that effort had been too much.

"Better take him to the hospital, Miss," said the park-keeper. "He'll be well attended to there. Very decent old man. I used to see him about the markets when I was on duty there. I was on the police for some years."

"No, no," cried Dick. "Grandad must come home. You must not take him away. I'll wait on him. He will be miserable when he comes round if he doesn't see me."

The park-keeper had a heart, but he had seen many such cases, and he was a practical man who ignored sentiment if it interfered with the common-sense side of things.

"It's all very well to say that, my boy. You'd do your best, but maybe that wouldn't be quite enough to meet the case. This old gentleman will want a doctor, and medicine, and good nourishing things to set him on his legs again. By the look of his clothes, I should say he hasn't got a heavy purse in any of the pockets. If there's no money to pay for the things I mentioned just now, and nursing into the bargain, you'd better let him go to a place where they're all to be had free gratis, for nothing. That is, if you want your Grandad to get well again."

Want him to get well! The look of agony on Dick's face at the bare possibility of anything else was pitiful to see.

The lad would bear or do all for Grandad's sake. To be without him seemed too hard. He wanted just the one comfort of his presence, the knowledge that he was ministering to Grandad's wants. The prospect of being unable to supply them was too appalling. He must be parted from him, and then—

"You see, Miss," whispered the park-keeper, "we've no call to ask this youngster's leave. We've got to do what is best for the old party here"—indicating Roger. "We've an Ambulance just by—"

Miss Fielden's heart was, however, softer than that of the ex-policeman, kindly though he was. She could not withstand Dick's mute appeal. "I will