

families or relations on either side, so that it had been quite easy to leave him under his mistake but it made Gertie very uneasy; and, if the truth must be told, she had had several bitter weepings on the subject after going to bed at night when nobody could see her or wonder what was the matter. She could not bear the idea of deceiving Walter. She felt sure he must find her out some time or other, and yet to risk losing his affection or making him think less of her was more than she could endure. It made her feel quite hard and bitter towards the Home, although her conscience told her how ungrateful this was, and when Mrs. Morgan suggested that she should write to the ladies at Peterborough and tell them of her engagement, she made an excuse for not doing it at present. Up to this time Gertie had always regarded Dr. Barnardo and the Home with much loyalty and affection, as, indeed, she had every reason to.

Her father had been a warehouseman in London, and a very sober, respectable man. Gertie had passed her infancy and early childhood in a very happy, well-ordered little home in the suburbs of London, but sickness had come in, and her father, after a long, painful illness that swallowed up what little money he had saved, died, leaving the mother, a sickly, delicate woman, to struggle as best she could with the two children—Gertie, aged four, and her small brother, aged two. Gertie had a very distinct recollection of the sufferings and hardships of those early days, of the wretched room in the East end of London to which the poor mother was forced to move, and where she struggled bravely by work with her needle to keep a home together for herself and her children. Gertie could well recall the severe Winter when, for weeks, they were without fire in their room, and often without food, when almost the last of the scanty belongings had gone to the pawnbroker's,

and her mother, emaciated, starved, sick and dying, struggled on to keep together even the wretched semblance of a home that was left to herself and her children. She could remember when her mother had become too weak to go to and fro with the shirts that she was making, and she used herself, with much difficulty and labour, to hug the parcel in her little arms and, with the piercing wind searching through her thread-bare garments, make her way through the streets to the big warehouse where the gentleman of dark complexion with the large nose and the very big rings on his fingers used to open the parcel and severely examine each garment before handing out the ninepence that represented, oh, so many hours of her poor mother's painful stitching. Gertie could never forget one terrible afternoon when her mother's cough had been worse than ever; when they had had nothing to eat since the day before, and she and her little brother were huddled together on the poor bundle of rags in the corner of the room that they called bed, her mother had suddenly dropped her sewing and came over and sank down beside them; and how they couldn't wake her, and they were so frightened that she ran down stairs to tell the woman who let the rooms; and how there happened to be a big, good-natured man, who turned out afterwards to be one of Dr. Barnardo's beadles, talking to the woman; and he had come upstairs with her and spoke so kindly to herself and her little brother. And then she could recall how that night they were all moved away and she and her brother taken to a house with a big lamp that had something on it about "No destitute child ever refused admission," and inside there was some lovely hot cocoa, and lots of good bread and butter, and a warm, cosy bed. Gertie could never recall quite so clearly what happened immediately after, but she remembered being told that her mother was dead, and going with