

knowledgments: 'You need not think so much about it,' he said; 'if I valued it very much, perhaps I should not part with it.'

'Had you never any affection for my mother?' I exclaimed, somewhat indignant at the apparent contempt he cast upon her memory.

I suppose not,' said he, coolly, 'that is, not what you would call affection; but we have said enough about this. Some day,' he added, after some moment's silence, 'when I am safely off, and have nothing better to do, I will send you a sketch of some parts of my life; and then, perhaps, you will understand me better than you can do now.'

I thanked him; and once more I entreated him to forget for a moment what his past life had been, or rather, to let the remembrance of it drive him, not to dogged sullen hardness and impenitence, but to the outstretched arms of His mercy who is 'able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'

I might, to all outward appearance, have spoken to a rock as effectively as I spoke to that insensible man; and I groaned in spirit at the fruitlessness of my efforts to touch his heart.

And thus two, three, perhaps, four hours passed away. Presently my landlady retired to her chamber; and then I got food and placed it before my father. He ate, for he had long fasted. I offered him money; but he would receive none from me. He was not so destitute as I might suppose, he said; and had he not told me his passage money was paid? No, he would not take money from me; hawks did not prey on their own brood; and he would not rob his son.

And thus we parted. In the dead of night, my poor father, his disguise resumed, stole from my lodgings; and I passed the remainder of the night, till dawn of day, in an agony of shame and grief.

For many days and weeks afterwards, I nervously and tremblingly examined the police reports of every paper I could lay my hands on, to ascertain whether, at the last moment, the unhappy criminal's plans of escape had been thwarted. But no intelligence reached me from that source; and after a time, except that the name of my father was more fervently and perpetually mingled with my secret prayers, the remembrance of that night seemed to me like the unreal phantasy of a dream, rather than the memory of an event which had actually occurred in my experience.

#### CHAPTER XLVII.

I AM IN LONDON AGAIN; AND, IN SEARCH OF

PEGGY MAGRATH, ONCE MORE FIND MY WAY TO WHISKERS' RENTS.

Another year has passed away, and I was once more treading the pavements of London; not as a City Arab, ragged, fiendless, and despised, but in good broadcloth, 'close buttoned to the chin,' and with many to shake hands with me now, who, a few years before, would probably have shrunk from my touch. 'Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself,' said the psalmist, with a keen insight into human nature; and I had, at least, some signs of well-doing about me; for I had taken another step or two in advance, and was the accredited and confidential agent of my employer, the Yorkshire manufacturer.

No fear, now, of being driven away from church doors by suspicious and officious bea- dles, as a 'wagabond;' no danger of being sent to prison for having had more money in my possession than my looks would warrant; no occasion to appeal—if appeal had been necessary—to Ben the hostler for a character. All this was changed; but how?

I asked myself this question when, one day, I found myself in Smithfield, and looked round on the crowds there. There they were—drovers, salesmen, jockeys, buyers, sellers, as I had known them only a few years before; there were the same pens, where, shivering with cold I had tended sheep; there was the place—I well remembered it—on which my father stood when he first recognized me; and here the spot where I was thrown from the horse, and taken up insensible. Around me, too, were ragged urchins, striving to pick up pence, honestly if they could, and some of them I fear, dishonestly, if the chance were thrown in their way; and no one seemed to care for them, as no one, in former times, had seemed to care for me. But I had been cared for, nevertheless; and did not God care for them also? Another day will declare it.

But how had the change in myself been brought about? And when I asked myself this question, I thought of my old friend in Covent Garden market, and his emphatic declaration that 'industry, honesty, and God's blessing' were the elements of success in life; and I blessed the day when that first lesson of honesty was practically and painfully impressed on my mind by poor Peggy Magrath; more fervently still, and with deeper gratitude, I remembered the day when in my prison cell light broke into my soul, and those first imperfect petitions of mine reached the ear of Eternal Mercy;

that day on which I had looked up to the great God as my father, and asked him to be the guide of my youth.

My business engagements were sufficiently important, but they did not so entirely engross my whole time that I could not spare an hour for my own private affairs; and one day I bent my steps to Whiskers' Rents. For, in all this time, my unsatisfied craving desire to find the poor lost protectress of my childhood had become stronger than ever; and I had even inserted advertisements in several London papers, offering a reward for any intelligence that could be given respecting "an elderly Irishwoman, named Peggy Magrath, who, in such a year, had lodgings at Whiskers' Rents," etc. But no response to that offer ever reached me. Not entirely disheartened by this failure, however, I determined again to explore our old quarters.

There was no change for the better. The houses, indeed, looked more ruinous; and the heaps of festering corruption which encumbered the roadway, and spread their filthy effluvia around, seemed larger and more offensive than ever. There was the old gin-shop at the corner, and the same receptacle for marine stores; the same little shop for cheap chandlery, and the same lodging-houses for tramps and beggars and London disrespectability; the only change appeared to be in the inhabitants, very few of whom I was able to recognise, though it swarmed with life like a human hive yet not like a hive of industry. There were there now, as there had been since Whiskers' Rents was Whiskers' Rents, more drones than workers.

The fever which had, a few years before, more than decimated its inhabitants, and scattered the population in terror, had run its course, and then—its strength for the time exhausted—had appeared to die away; and the place of the dead and the fugitive had been speedily filled up by the living, who, in their turn, like their predecessors, took to nursing the lurking pestilence as though it had been some pet monster. For it was not gone; it lay hidden in neglected sewers of stagnant filth, in heaps of garbage, in rotten floors, and damp, musty, fusty cellars, in rags and poverty, and in intemperance and every other vice; it lay in the muddy streets amidst the animal and vegetable putridity, corruption, and decay, to be trodden underfoot, patiently biding its time to spring up again in terrible vengeance; it floated unseen and unfelt in the thick murky atmosphere, and its invisible atoms took shelter in

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