

## RAG AND TAG.

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## CHAPTER VII.

"Wife," said John Burton, as he came in late one evening from the warehouse after tea, "I want to consult you about something, but not at present—I'm too hungry."

"Nothing wrong, John?" asked Mrs. Burton with her usual anxiety.

"No, indeed, quite the other way; it's only something about Rag and Tag."

As soon as tea was over, Mrs. Burton drew a chair close to her husband's, and with her knitting in her hand quietly waited until it should please him to tell her what he was thinking about.

After a few moment's silence, John turned round, and laying his hand on his wife's, said—

"I think it's high time we dropped the 'Rag and Tag' names, and christened our children properly; and I've been thinking we could not choose a nicer day than Christmas Day for this, nor nicer names than yours and mine. I thought I would speak to Mr. Hannington this very night when I go to bring back the children."

And so John did; and it was settled that on the afternoon of Christmas Day Rag and Tag should be received into the outward and visible Church of God, whilst John and his wife stood as sponsors, and be known after that by the names of Rachel and John. The children themselves were much pleased when they knew this. They were beginning to wish for names not so intimately connected with the sad old times down in the cellar with the "dreadfuls" and Mrs. Burton was delighted, for she said "it would make them entirely their children, instead of only make believe ones." So all was satisfactory, and all were happy.

The day passed on, and Christmas Eve arrived. The snow was falling fast, and it was bitterly cold. Henry Hambleton had with much difficulty got some holly to brighten up the room where the night school was held; also the two wards; and he had asked Rag and Tag to come and help in making all tidy, and arranging for the Christmas dinner which was to be given on Saturday. Full of hope and joy, the brother and sister were wending their way to the night school house, in their light heartedness laughing at the soft flakes of snow as they came down so noiselessly upon them—now in their eyes, almost blinding them for the moment, now in their mouths, as they opened them to speak—and making them both look like a pretty Christmas card, as they half walked, half ran along. Just as they were crossing the street leading to their destination, Tag in front, and Rag following behind,

there suddenly came upon them unheard and unseen a cab, driven at a great pace; in another instant the horse would have knocked down Tag, and he would have been run over, when, quick as thought, from the other side there darted a girl with something her arms, who, pushing Tag as she ran, sent him flying out of danger, whilst the horse catching her instead, down she fell on her face, and the wheels passed over her body. It was all the work of an instant; but a crowd was soon assembled, and when two policemen raised her gently up Tag saw it was "Long Nose" who had saved his life.

With a cry of pain Rag flew to her side.

"Oh Lizzie, Lizzie, are you killed? You have saved Tag's life. Open your eyes and tell me you won't die."

Tag was sobbing so loud he could not speak.

Poor Lizzie's large eyes opened, and a smile came round her white lips for a moment, as she looked at the children.

"Pick up the holly," she whispered, faintly. "I've been a long way to get it and I've brought it a purpose for His birthday!"

Rag looked round, and there at a little distance lay, with its green leaves and scarlet berries, on the freshly-fallen snow, a large bundle of beautiful holly.

They were close to Mr. Hambleton's "Home," and he was too well known for the policeman to hesitate a moment about taking the poor girl there.

In a very short time she was placed in a bed quickly made up for her in a long room upstairs, into which Rag and Tag had been taken some weeks before. The doctor came, and all that could be was done for poor Lizzie. But it was a hopeless case; the spine was injured; she might linger on, or die soon.

As the clergyman and Henry Hambleton bent over her, she suddenly asked for Rag and Tag, who immediately came.

"Tell him," she said slowly, looking at Mr. Hannington, "what I got the holly for."

But the children could not speak—they were crying too much.

"What did you get it for, my poor girl?" asked Henry Hambleton. "Is there anything you wish us to do with it?"

"I got it," she said, slowly and painfully, "'cos I did so want Him to see I knew of His birthday, and 'cos I love Him for loving me. You will put it up, won't you?" she added, pleadingly. "I've walked a weary long way for it—but He did more for me."

"What did He do for you?" asked Mr. Hannington, gently.

"He died for me," she answered, gravely; "I know it all now, but I only knew it for certain last Mon-

day night. 'Twas my last chance—you was right, Tag, after all."

"Lizzie, Lizzie," sobbed the boy, as he looked at her colourless face and closed eyes: "don't die, don't die. You have killed yourself for me, and I've never been kind to you—only laughed at you and called you 'Long Nose.'"

Lizzie opened her eyes. "I would take your hand, Tag, an' press it, an' Rag's too, but I can't move nor feel anythin'; but I do love you both, an' it wor all through you I iver learnt anythin' or how 'Jesus loves me;' for I follered yer both, the night you went past the cellar with the man, an' it wor you got me to come here, an' got me to be made happy. So don't go for to cry, an' make yerselves unhappy. I'm glad to die—besides, if this 'adn' a-come to kill me, my cough would a-done it—I knows that; so don't yer fret, dears."

She closed her eyes again. Mr. Hambleton held a cup to her lips, but she could not swallow. They all knelt by her bedside, but she did not seem to see or heed them. Presently a sweet sunny smile flitted over her poor pinched wan face, and she tried to raise herself in the bed. "I'm coming, Lord Jesus," she murmured; "I'm thank you for loving me. My first happy Christmas." These were the last words she uttered.

"Oh, think of the home over there,  
By the side of the river of light,  
Where the saints all immortal and fair  
Are robed in their garments of white.

"Oh, think of the friends over there,  
Who before us the journey have trod;  
Of the songs that they breathe on the air,  
In their home in the palace of God.

"My Saviour is now over there—  
There my kindred and friends are at rest;  
Then away from my sorrow and care—  
Let me fly to the land of the blest.

"I'll soon be at home over there,  
For the end of my journey I see;  
Many dear to my heart over there  
Are watching and waiting for me."

## CHAPTER VIII.

"And so these two children you baptized this afternoon were the little Rag and Tag you had been telling me about; and the poor friendless girl you had buried to-day, lost her life in saving the boy's—poor brave young thing. But oh, Herbert, what a wonderful Christmas Day this will be to her! Just fancy, after all her privations and sorrows and trials, and no one to love her down here, to find herself up there looking on the face of Jesus, and amongst the blessed ones in heaven. It makes one hold one's breath—one cannot imagine what it must be. Happy Lizzie! I envy her."

"Don't say that, Amy," replied her brother, quickly; "your turn will come in God's good time, and until it does you have plenty of work to do for Him. I am sure I hope it may be ages before you are taken from me. Why, my little darling golden-haired sunny Amy, what should I do without you? Life would indeed be a blank to

me without my sister—my only relation in this wide, heartless world;" and Mr. Hannington stooped down and kissed his sister's forehead.

"I did not mean it, Herbert dear; I spoke thoughtlessly and wrongly. Of course in one way I do envy that happy Lizzie; but it would indeed be sorrow to leave you. And then I should like before I go to feel I had done some little work for Him who has done all for me; and I should be sorry to leave all my girls, and my little Servants' school, where they are getting on so nicely. Only think! I have sent three girls out to good situations within the last month, and three more will soon be ready to go; and oh, Herbert, I wonder if I had had Lizzie whether she might have not been alive, now, and strong and happy; I might have hunted her up if I had tried hard. Might I not, Herbert?"

Mr. Hannington said nothing, but he smiled as he looked at the sad downcast face—a moment ago so full of brightness and gladness.

"Why, Herbert"—for on receiving no answer she had raised her eyes to look at him—"you are smiling! How unkind of you, when I am feeling so sad and miserable. What can you find to smile at in what I have just said?"

"Let me ask you one question instead of answering yours."

"As many as you like; only I am sure you cannot ask me anything which will make me smile."

"Let me try. Which do you think is the most to be envied—poor, friendless, starving Lizzie, a neat little servant learning her duties very tolerably well in Miss Amy Hannington's school, down in this changing restless world; or the same Lizzie taken away from all her temptations and miseries, and placed by her loving Lord in the midst of joy, rest, and peace forever, 'where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.'"

"Oh, Herbert"—and his sister got up and put her hand lovingly in his—"how foolish of me to speak as I did when a moment ago I was envying her! I spoke without thinking. What a thing it is to have a clergyman brother to help and teach you;" and bright, good little Amy was leaving the room to see why tea was so long in coming for this same brother, when he caught her by the hand, and gently forcing her into a large arm-chair close to the fire, said:

"One little sermon, Amy, and then you may go. I believe what God wishes us to do is to seek out carefully, in a prayerful, humble spirit, His will in all things, and then looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, but with our faces set Zionwards, endeavour, by His grace helping us, not only to know but to do it; and I can-