



"Not long, sir." The brave voice broke, —the clear eyes were wet.

"And there is no one to take care of you?"

"No, sir."

"How old are you?"

"Ten, last June, sir."

The man thought of his own little boy at home, just ten last June, and a shiver of pain crept through his heart.

"What are you going to do?" he asked, wishing to learn more of what was in the child's thoughts.

"Take care of myself, sir. I've got to do it now." And Jimmy drew himself up, and put on a brave look, which touched the man's heart as much as the weakness that showed itself in wet eyes.

"Was it in the city that your mother died?" inquired the man.

"Yes, sir."

"How long ago?"

"It's only three weeks, sir." The brave look went out of his eyes.

"Where did she die?"

"Down in Water street. We lived in a garret. She was sick a good while, sir, and couldn't work. Father died last winter. But he didn't do anything for us." A shadow of pain was in the child's face, and the man saw him shudder.

Ah! he understood too well the sad story that little boy could tell,—the story of a drunken father, and a sick, heart-broken mother dying in want and neglect.

"Your mother was good, and you loved her?" said the man.

Instantly the large, soft eyes gushed over with tears.

"What did she tell you before she died?" asked the man, in a low, tender voice.

"She said," answered the boy, sorrowfully, yet with something brave and manly in his voice,—"'Never steal, never tell a lie, never swear, Jimmy, and God will be your friend;' and I've never done any of 'em, sir, and never will."

"Your mother taught you to pray?"

"Yes, sir; and I say my prayers every night. Sometimes bad boys make fun of me; but I don't mind it. I just think it's God I'm saying 'em to, and then I feel all right."

The man felt a choking in his throat, he was so moved by this, and could not trust himself to speak for some moments.

"God is your best friend, Jimmy," he said after a little while, "and no one trusts Him in vain. He has taken care of you since your mother died, and, if you will be a good boy, will always take care of you. Do you know that it was God who led me

to the apple-woman's stand just in time to see your brave and honest act?"

The boy opened his large eyes, wonderingly. "But you didn't see Him! God doesn't walk about the streets as we do," he said.

"We cannot see God, but God can see us; and what is more, can look into our hearts, and knows all we think or feel," replied the man.

"Oh, yes, sir. My mother told me that But I don't know how He led you."

"He leads us by ways that we know not, my child," said the man, in a serious voice. Then he added, "I think I can make you understand. God sees and knows everything. He knew that you would see the wicked boy try to steal apples, and that you would do all you could to stop him. Then He put it into my thought to go and see a man whose store I could not reach unless I went by the apple-stand, and this brought me to the spot just at the right moment. I call that God leading me. Now do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I see it just as clear as day," answered Jimmy, a new light breaking over his face.

"And God, who loves you and wants you to be good and happy, knew that if I saw how honest and brave you were, I would be your friend."

"Oh, sir! will you?" cried out little Jimmy, trembling all over, while his face lighted up suddenly with hope and joy.

"Yes, my poor boy," answered the man, whose heart was feeling very tender toward the child. "I will be your friend always, if you will be honest, truthful, and obedient."

"I'll try to be as good as I can, sir," sobbed out Jimmy, losing all command of his feelings.

Then the man went with him to a store where they sold boys' clothing, and selected everything he needed to wear. But before he let him dress up in his new garments, he took him to a bath-house that he might wash himself clean all over, and comb the tangles out of his curly hair.

No one would have dreamed that the handsome, well-dressed boy who, a little while afterward, walked beside his new friend, holding his hand so tightly, was the same whose voice not an hour before had been heard crying in the street,—*"Shine your boots, sir!"* It was never heard there again. God had sent the brave child, who tried to be good, a friend in need; and he is now in the house of that friend, a happy boy, loving and obeying him as though he were his father.—*Children's Hour.*