

Keep Nothing from Mother.

They sat at the spinning together,
And they spun the fine white thread,
One face was old and the other young
A gold and silver head

At times the young voice broke in song
That was wonderfully sweet;
And the mother's heart beat deep and calm;
For her joy was most complete.

There was many a holy lesson,
Interwoven with silent prayer,
Taught to her gentle, listening child,
As the two sat spinning there.

"And of all that I speak, my darling,
From my older head and heart,
God giveth to me one last thing to say,
And with it thou shalt not part.

"Thou wilt listen to many voices,
And, ah! that this must be!
The voice of praise and the voice of love
And the voice of flattery.

"But listen to me, my little one,
There's one thing that thou shalt fear—
Let never a word to my love be said
Which her mother may not hear.

"No matter how true, my darling one,
The words may seem to thee,
They are not fit for my child to hear
If they cannot be told to me.

"If thou'lt ever keep thy young heart pure,
And thy mother's heart from fear,
Bring all that is said to thee by day
At night to thy mother's ear."

A BOY'S FRIENDSHIP.

A Story of Boy Life in England.

CHAPTER III.

AN EXCITING SCENE IN CHURCH
MEADOWS.

IN speaking of the stream which ran through the Church Meadows, George Christie had not over-estimated its attractions from a fishing point of view. Kept strictly private, only occasionally in the season did the float bob up and down at the nibble of the roach; or the fly, with its hidden hook, sail along the ripples to tempt the trout rising to its evening meal. At these special times, the fishing-rods were held only by the friends of Captain Starkie who happened to be staying at the hall. The place was jealously guarded and watched, for Captain Starkie took a special pride in the value of this water. Frank knew the place well, but never for a moment had he felt the desire to trespass without permission, for his mother had always warned him against giving way to temptation, reminding him that "the path of duty is the path of safety."

A day or two had passed, and young Christie was sauntering through the spinney, when he met a rough-looking, ill-conditioned country lad, who touched the rim of his ragged cap with a grin of recognition.

The truth was, that this boy, Bill, had in times past been only too ready to do any odd jobs, some not very creditable, for the Squire's son.

"I wishes yer good morning, Master George."

"Well, it isn't a good morning, and I'm out of sorts, so let's have no more of your smirking, d'ye hear?"

"All right, Master George. No offence, surely."

"I say, Bill, you know Frank Darrell?"

"Rather; wot of him? Want anythin' doing?"

"Oh, not much. He's got a decent fishing-rod, and I quite forgot to ask him to lend it me for a bit of sport I'm going to have to-morrow evening."

"I'll run and ask him for 't, in a jiffy."

"No you won't. Now look here, Bill; can I trust you to do a bit of business for me?"

"Well, Master George, yer know we've had dealings together, and I've allers kep' it dark, and done what's wanted."

"Now listen to me. I want you to go on the quiet to that shed in the garden where Frank keeps his rod, and bring it to me."

"It's a ticklish thing, Master George, to do, yer know."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, if I was nabbed while getting it, yer know, it might go hard with me, like when I got them chickens at Farmer Bassett's."

"And it served you right, you young thief. But I'll take care of you this time; and, when it's done, here's a bright shilling for you."

The small, black eyes of Bill brightened at the sight of the silver, and he faithfully promised that night to get the rod, and that Frank should be none the wiser.

Now, it so happened, that as Bill was going back across the fields, Frank met him so suddenly that he turned crimson with the thought of the evil design he had in his mind, and he hardly cared to look into the face of Frank, lest in his very eyes he should read his secret guilt.

"Why, Bill, is that you? It seems a long time since I saw you about here."

The boy muttered something about having a job at the hall garden.

"I'm glad to hear it. Try your best, Bill; and, above all, ask God to help you to do what is right."

"I ain't religious."

"That's a pity, Bill. I think if you knew how much God loves you, and is willing to help you, your face would look a bit brighter than it does."

"Well, Master Frank, you wouldn't look so if you had'n't had nothin' to eat for four or five hours, like me."

"How's that, Bill?"

"Oh, it's nothin' particular; only mother ain't got nothin' in the cupboard, and I've no money in my pocket—not a blessed ha'penny—so that's it, you see."

"Bill, are you really in want of something to eat?"

"Oh, never mind; if you thinks I'm taking you in, I don't want to beg."

Bill got out these words with difficulty, for what little conscience he had smote him when he remembered how all round the village he was known as living, not by his hands, but by his glib tongue—begging everywhere. But Frank put aside the misgiving he felt for the moment, and believed the tale, putting sixpence in Bill's hand, and passed on his way.

A grin of satisfaction came over the lad's face, and he chuckled at the thought of what he was going to do in taking the special treasure of the unsuspecting Frank.

Captain Starkie was not a hard man, and, as a magistrate, no one in the neighbourhood could say that he was unkindly severe in his treatment of the culprits who, from time to time, came before him. His park was not an extensive one, but was thickly wooded on that side which lay nearest to the old church.

David Grimston, the gamekeeper, was walking across the meadows, in company with his master, next day.

"The water at the foot of the trees yonder looks well, Grimston."

"Yes, sir, full of fish, I should say; and when the gentlemen come down to-morrow, they'll catch well, I'll be bound, sir."

"I hope so. Keep an eye on the place, Grimston, and don't let any of those rascally boys of the village poach in the stream."

"Oh, no, sir. I'll have them, you may safely reckon, in a jiffy, if they come prowling about here."

"That night, when the sun had set, and it was just dark enough to hide the flowers in the grass, Grimston took up his short whip, and thought he would take a turr round the meadows. Sweep—the black retriever—jumped up, and followed close at his master's heels.

They walked on through the grass wet with dew, and across the quiet fields, over which a grey mist was beginning to gather, like a thin mantle of smoke."

Grimston was smoking his pipe, and his thoughts were far away, at a town some miles off, where, in a few days, he was to attend a sale of horses on his master's behalf.

"I rayther fancy," he murmured to himself, "I rayther fancy the roan mare will be the one—she was a regular fine un, in my opinion."

Sweep had stopped short, and his master almost fell over him.

"What is it, lad?" whispered Grimston.

The dog gave a low, muffled bark, and slowly made his way along the path to the trees of Church Meadows.

"That's odd," meditated his master. I shouldn't wonder if he isn't after something. At any rate I'll go with him."

All at once there was a rush and scramble in the thick brushwood on the other side of the deep stream. Sweep barked loudly, and tore his way to the water.

"Fetch him, lad! Go on, Sweep!"

The dog had taken the water, and was sending ripples and eddies to the bank, making the water lilies and forget-me-nots dance in their sleep.

Grimston's quick eye caught a figure trying to escape in the shadows, throwing everything away in its terror.

"Stop, you young vagabond, or I'll horsewhip you when I catch you."

"And Grimston, remembering the Captain's words, looked as though he meant it.

But there was no voice, and the figure—that of a boy—had got fairly into the field, and was running at top speed. Grimston knew every inch of the ground, and ran quickly towards the old footbridge to cut off the boy's retreat.

A few minutes more, and Sweep had the trespasser by the leg—his master being just in time to call off the dog before much harm was done. But he was not to get off scot-free.

"I told you what I'd give you, and you shall have it."

In vain the lad expostulated, and tried to explain who he was. Grimston's temper was fairly up, and lash after lash of the whip crossed the back of young Christie, for it was he.

Then, taking him by the collar, the gamekeeper dragged the boy back to the bushes, and made him collect his scattered things.

"Was anybody else here?"

The lad was silent for a moment, and then he saw in his craven mind a chance.

"Well, here's a rod—it isn't mine—so you may guess, if you like, who's been here besides."

Grimston took it in his hand, but the light was too far spent for him to discern any special mark on it, so, taking possession of it, with other matters, including the cap of his prisoner, marked clearly inside with his name, he let the boy go.

"But look here, young Christie, if it had been one of those rough lads of the village there would have been some excuse, but you ought to be ashamed of yourself for doing such a thing. However, you've got a bit of punishment, and I'll see what the Captain has to say to it to-morrow."

That night Grimston told his wife all about the adventure, and dwelt specially on the fact that there was an accomplice, who had left his rod, and might prove the bigger rogue."

"Let me look at it, Davie."

It was brought forth, and there, under the light of the candle, could be read the words, neatly carved, "Frank Darrell, his rod, 1869."

The worthy couple stared, speechless, at each other in astonishment and dismay.

(To be continued.)

CHARITY is never lost. It may meet with ingratitude, or be of no service to those on whom it was bestowed; yet it ever does a work of beauty and grace upon the heart of the giver.