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The Little Outcast.



MA'AM? I stay, ma'am? I'll do anything you give me; cut wood, go for water, and do all your errands.

The troubled eyes of the speaker were filled with tears. It was a lad that stood at the outer door, pleading with a kindly-looking woman, who still seemed to doubt the reality of his good intentions.

The cottage stood by itself on a bleak moor, or what in Scotland would have been called such. The time was near the latter end of September, and a fierce wind rattled the boughs of the only two naked trees near the house, and fled with a shivering sound into the narrow doorway, as if seeking for warmth at the blazing fire within.

Now and then a snow-flake touched with its soft chill the cheek of the listener or whitened with the angry redness of the poor boy's benumbed hands.

The woman was evidently loth

to grant the boy's request; and the peculiar look stamped upon his features would have suggested to any mind an idea of depravity far beyond his years.

But her woman's heart could not resist the sorrow in those large, but by no means handsome, grey eyes.

"Come in, at any rate, till the good man comes home. There, sit down by the fire: you look perishing with cold;" and she drew a rude chair up to the warmest corner; then, suspiciously glancing at the child from the corners of her eyes, she continued setting the table for supper.

Presently came the tramp of heavy shoes, the door was swung open with a quick jerk, and the "good man" presented himself, wearied with labor.

A look of intelligence between his wife and himself: he, too scanned the boy's face with an expression not evincing satisfaction; but nevertheless made him come to the table and then enjoyed the zest with which he despatched his supper.

Day after day passed and yet the boy begged to be kept "only till to-morrow:" so the good couple, after due consideration, concluded