

now, this minute, as if he was only sleepin'."

"Where is he?" asked Abbott.

"On the mattress where he always used to sleep," she answered; "and I could almost fancy he was alive, and it 'ud be all right if I went home again and called him. But he's dead; died in his sleep, and me never hearin' a cry or a groan. Oh! what shall I do?"

"Old Don's fast asleep," said little Dot. "I called him, and he never spoke. I couldn't make him open his eyes. Poor old Don!"

"Mrs. Clack," said Abbott, "I must fetch Hagar down, and let her have her child again. She never knew Don, and you must bear with her a little if she thinks of nothing, just at present, except Dot. You know as well as I do how she's pining after her, and how she's almost given up all hope. I'll go and bring her here."

He found Hagar standing at the open door, waiting for him, as he had asked her, and wondering what made him late this Sunday morning. He led her down-stairs, to the door of the kitchen where Mrs. Clack and Dot were, scarcely knowing what to say to her.

"Hagar," he said, in a hurried yet hesitating manner; "Mrs. Clack is here; she has brought something for you."

"Brought something for me?" repeated Hagar.

"Yes, a thing you have longed for; and despaired of, and given up all hopes of," he answered. "Something that you cannot be happy without. Cannot you guess, Hagar?"

She stood motionless, with her hand upon the fastening of the door. All the color faded away from her face, though an eager and almost wild light shone in her eyes. It seems to her barely possible to utter a word, and yet her lips faltered out:

"Not my little Dot?"

"Yes," he said.

It was not her hand but his that opened the door, for all the strength had forsaken her. But when her eyes fell upon little Dot, her little girl, so long ago forsaken, so lost, and so sorrowfully sought after, she cried with a very sharp and piercing cry, and sank down on her knees before her, scarcely able to clasp her in her trembling arms.

"Oh! my darling! my little child, my own little Dot! Now I know," she sobbed, "at last God has forgiven me."

"Go away!" said Dot, pushing her back, and struggling to free herself from her clasp; "go away. I want old Don. I want to go and wake up old Don."

It was a sudden and a wholesome check upon the excess of Hagar's gladness. Her child had forgotten her, the child she had deserted. Dot looked on her merely as a stranger, and cried to go back to the boy who was known only by name to Hagar. She rose up from the ground

where she had knelt and sank down on a chair, gazing wistfully at Dot. There was a great silence in the place; no one spoke to her, and when she looked up astonished, she saw that Mrs. Clack was weeping bitterly, and Abbott's face was sad.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in a tumult of great joy, and sorrow, and dread.

"It's only me and Don," answered Mrs. Clack; "I felt as he'd be almost like a son to me when he came back. It's him as has taken care of Dot, and he brought her home again last night in the dusk. I was sittin' by the fire, thinkin' of him, when I heard his knock; ay, I was sure it was his knock, at the door, and I went down to let him in and give him a welcome. But it looked like a ghost at the door, tall and thin, and a white face, and great, starin' eyes as bright as stars—I could scarcely believe it was Don. And when he climbed the stairs, and could speak a little, he told me Cripple Jack had made him believe I was dead and buried, and Dot was goin' to be sent to the workhouse. So to save her he stole her away, and they've been livin' anyhow they could at the East End, nights and nights never in a bed, and days and days with scarcely a morsel to eat; only he went short himself that Dot might have enough. And he never forsook her. And he overworked himself, and starved himself," she sobbed, her voice breaking down as she uttered the word "starved."

"I'll take care of him," cried Hagar; "I'll be good to him as long as he lives. Oh! if I'd only been true like him."

"He's dead," said Mrs. Clack, after a short silence. "I've known other folks die in that way. They drop off unawares to themselves. It's hard to bear hunger at first, but they get used to it after a while, and they never think it's killing them. I'm sure Don didn't think he was near dyin', though he said folks told him he wasn't long for this world. He bid me good night quite joyful, and I waited and listened till he'd put his candle out, and him and Dot were quite quiet. If he'd only stirred or groaned in the night I couldn't help hearin' him. But he went away in his sleep, and now surely he is where the Lord Jesus is, though he knew so little about Him. He was longin' to learn more about Him, and now he sees His face, maybe."

It seemed to bring the other world very near to them, as, with a strange sense of awe and sorrow, they thought of Don standing in the presence of the Saviour, whose footsteps he had followed so faithfully, though he had not known it. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." And Don had possessed and manifested this love. Why should

they wish him back again to the troubles and sorrows of this sinful world? He had fought his fight, and finished his course; he had kept what he knew of the faith. They could not have spoken a word to call him back again into the thick of the battle.

They set out for the low, dark coach-house, where his body lay. The nearest way was through Kensington Gardens, and every step brought back to Hagar the sick despair that had conquered her, when she had abandoned her father and little Dot. She had cast away her burden and Don had taken it up. But she knew more now of the loving kindness of God, which never fails, even if it leads His children homeward along a path as full of gloom and grief as that which Don had trodden.

"But he can't undo the wicked things we've done," she said, half aloud; "it will never be the same as if I hadn't forsook them. If I'd kept true, Don would be alive now. It seems as if little Dot belonged more to him by rights than to me."

There was but a dim light in the coach-house, though it was full noon-day when they entered it, but it was light enough to see Don's calm, pale face, and the peaceful smile lingering upon it. He had passed away in a tranquil sleep, and his weary body was lying for ever at rest. There was no more labor for the hands to do, no rough road for the feet to tread. There would never more be hunger and thirst for him, no houselessness nor friendlessness. He was gone home to his Father.

"He'll never grow up to be a man now," whispered Mrs. Clack, mournfully; "but I know he'd have made a good man, and he'd have been like a son to me."

CHAP. XIX.—A SHAMEFUL VERDICT.

It was necessary to have an inquest held on the death of the homeless and nameless boy; and the usual verdict of death through starvation was returned. This verdict is growing common enough to lose its power of giving a shock to the hundreds of thousands of hearths where comfort and ease abound. But Mrs. Clack had some few visitors who came, with aching hearts, to learn all the particulars of Don's early death, and to see if anything could be done to prevent such deaths in the future. To perish of hunger in the midst of plenty such as the world never knew before! To die of famine and the want of all things, whilst our river is thronged with heavily-laden ships coming in day after day, bringing stores of corn and food from the furthest ends of the earth! To be stinted in the absolute necessities of life, whilst luxury and waste run riot on every hand; whilst hundreds of tons of food are thrown away lest

prices should become too low! That was terrible.

Christ had come amongst us, in the form of one of the least of his brethren; he had been hungry, and we had not fed him; naked, and we clothed him not; a stranger and we took him not in.

They buried him in the grave which Mr. Abbott had bought for his mother, and where Hagar's baby was lying; for they could not bear the thought of laying him in a common grave, where every trace of his last resting-place would presently be lost. He had no name that they could put upon the headstone; but they added a new inscription to that already upon it, one which would remind them of him whenever they came to the spot: "He shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; and God shall wipe away all tears from his eyes."

After Hagar and Abbott had been married a few months, they persuaded Mrs. Clack to give up her old home in the mews and her toilsome business, and to come and live in the pleasant attic which had been Hagar's place of refuge. They had not forgotten that Don would have been like a son to her; and they felt as if they were in duty bound to make up to her, as far as possible, what she had lost in him. She had made some provision for her old age; and they could look after her comfort and welfare if she was under the same roof, they said.

As time passed on Hagar grew happier; for though she could never forget the past, her thoughts no longer brooded over it. She had learned to know God better; and to trust in Him; and even if He had required her to pass again through the sharp trial she had failed in before, she would have been willing to meet it.

Little Dot was never weary of listening to the story of Don's great love for her; and Mrs. Clack was fond of telling it. Hagar herself would sometimes lay aside her work, and draw near to hear it, in spite of the pain it stirred in her heart.

"Don loved you and lost his life for you," Hagar would say to her child, with a sad smile upon her face. "But oh, if it had not been all a mistake! If he'd only come back a day later, when Mrs. Clack had got home. Or if he hadn't believed Cripple Jack, Don might have been alive now!"

"Ay," said Abbott, one day when she said this in his hearing, "and yet it brought Don nearer to being like our Lord Jesus Christ than if he'd lived to be a man. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend." Hagar, he continued, "it was through no mistake, and no lie, but knowing there was no other way to bring us back to God, that Jesus Christ came and laid down His life for us."

THE END.