

sick friend. It was dark, the moon having sunk below the high city houses. It was ten o'clock, and everything was still in the quiet street. Lights had disappeared from most of the windows and the little circle of light under the gas in the street was all that relieved the darkness.

I saw, as I approached the house, under the gas jet at my gate, two small figures huddled together, and intent upon something they held in their hands. They were so engrossed that they did not discover me as I approached; their heads were very close together, and they were discussing something with great warmth. The larger boy of the two held in his hand an old, soiled, worn Testament. They were deciphering in a slow, stammering way the verse, "Blessed are the meek." One said: "I don't know just what *meek* means, but I guess it means *wicked*." The younger replied: "No, I don't believe it means *wicked*; I think it means *not proud*." The discussion waxed warm, one of the boys insisting upon his interpretation, and the other equally sure that he was right, and that *meek* could only mean *not proud*.

I, hitherto unnoticed, now stepped up to the boys, expressed interest in the discussion, and said: "You don't seem to agree about that verse in the Testament. Would you like to know what I think about it?" I explained, adapting my language as well as I could to the understanding of the poor little waifs, and then questioned them as delicately as I knew how about their lives. They replied to my questions in a frank and boyish manner—said they had no home; that their parents died when they were babies, and they had been shuffled about from one place to another and had earned their scanty living, sometimes as errand boys, sometimes as clog dancers at the Museum—though they informed me it was awful hard work to be a clog-dancer. The older boy had wandered into a mission Sunday-school, and had been, as he said, converted. They were, on this evening, going from a "mission meetin'" to their poor quarters in a miserable boarding-house. They said they spent

most of their evenings in missions and meetings, and the older boy said, pointing to his companion, "He ain't a Christian, he ain't, and I'se tryin' to make him one." The younger boy, with a bright, intelligent face, looked up at me and said: "No, I ain't a Christian, but I am trying to be one, and it's awful hard work."

When they came the next evening, at my solicitation, to visit me and to get some books I had promised them, they sat down, those homeless, friendless boys, in my library, and turned the leaves of a little hymn book I gave them and said: "There is hymn number so and so—'I love to hear that sweet story of old'; I like that hymn ever so much." "And there is such a number—'We shall meet by the river'—don't you like that hymn?" "I sing um when I think there don't nobody hear me."

Some time was spent in looking over the hymn-book, and in remarking upon the hymns they loved best, and they became quite confidential with me. I in my turn felt that I had made two friends with whom I would not willingly part.

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