

usual, for he knew she loved to sit in the twilight; but there was a white blind across the window; and there was a strange stillness, and a sense of emptiness about the closed house, which struck him forcibly. He tried the latch, but that was fast, and though he knocked a third time, no notice was taken of him.

Don sat down on the low door-sill, somewhat dulled and sad at heart, as one whose first gladness had received a chill. He could hear voices and see lights in other houses, whilst this one was so dark and still. Mrs. Clack had always warned him to keep himself to himself in the mews, amongst her neighbors; and he obeyed her now as he had always done before. He did not go to enquire after her, but waited patiently at her door till something should happen.

At length he heard the crutches of Cripple Jack coming limpingly along the court. Jack caught sight of him in the dusk, and stopped, leaning against the wall, as if ready to hold conversation with Don.

"She's gone," he said, nodding toward the empty house.

"Dead!" cried Don, in a tone of profound terror. It struck Jack's mind that it would be worth while to see how far Don could be made a gull of, and he answered, without a moment's hesitation.

"Ay, dead!" he repeated, and buried a week last Tuesday. She were raving and wandering just like the old man was before her. You could hear her across the mews, and she were calling for you over and over again, like this, "Don! Don!" and Jack imitated Mrs. Clack, as if she had been in the habit of shouting in a very loud voice.

"Dead!" uttered Don, thunder-struck with grief and dread.

"And buried the very next morning," continued Jack, "the fever was so very strong on her, and the doctors had all the stores burned up, and the house locked, and the keys kept by the parish, so as nobody is to go into it for nobody knows how long. Some folks say the fever's got into the walls, and it's to be pulled down to the ground, but I don't know as that's true."

"And where's little Dot?" asked Don, rousing himself from his stupor a little.

"She's stopping a bit with the Watsons," he answered; "but you should only see Peggy thrashing her! It's only for a while though, for she's to be sent to the workhouse. I'm sorry for that, Don, I'm really sorry. She's a nice little thing, and very good; scarcely ever whimpers so you can hear her, no! not when Peggy whacks the hardest, and, my! she can whack."

"She shan't ever go to the workhouse," said Don, in a low voice of resolution.

"Oh, I remember," went on Jack, chuckling to himself over Don's credulity, "the officer is coming to take her to-morrow at nine o'clock. There was nothing left from Mrs. Clack, after her funeral was paid for, and all the stores burnt up. So that made an end of everything, except Dot. Is there nothing more you'd like to ask me?"

"Nothing," answered Don, in the sickness of despair, "I wish you'd go away and leave me."

"Oh! I'll go," said Jack; it's none so pleasant standing here, when you may catch the fever from the walls. So good-bye to you."

Don could not speak. The sudden calamity that had befallen him was too dreadful for words or tears. He had lost everything at one blow; and he felt bewildered and amazed at the sudden ruin of all his plans; his home was gone, and his only friend. It did not occur to him to move away from the door-sill his feet had crossed so often, because it was infected and under a ban. Where was he to go to? Where else could his weary limbs and heavy heart find a resting-place? He heard Jack's crutches clicking over the pavement, and then he was alone. Now Mrs. Clack was dead, he was utterly alone in the world.

By-and-by his ear caught the sound of a child crying in the dark, somewhere near at hand—of little Dot crying, for no other child in the mews cried softly and quietly like she did. He lifted himself up, and shook off the bewilderment of his sorrow; a new plan was already coming into shape in the lad's active brain. They should never carry off Dot to the dreadful workhouse, to be brought up with workhouse children. He thought of Peggy thrashing her, and his blood boiled. But he must keep himself quite still, and on the alert, unseen by anybody, if he was to carry out his scheme. He crouched down again in the darkness, and waited to find out where Dot was. Before long he discovered that she must be sitting at the foot of the narrow staircase leading up to the Watson's rooms, and he crept silently that way, and as silently unlatched the door.

"Dot!" he breathed, in a very quiet tone; "hush, here's old Don."

"Don!" whispered the little creature, half afraid of him in the darkness.

"Ay! come along with old Don," he said, "and buy some sweeties. I've money in my pocket."

He puthis arm gently round her, and she let him lift her up; and carry her away without a sound. Dot was accustomed to quiet movements and low voices, for blind grandfather could not patiently endure any noise that could be spared him. And Don's

manner toward her was very tender; he kissed the soft cheek next to him again and again, and he clasped her fondly in his arms. His heart sank as he passed Mrs. Clack's closed door, but he knew he had no time to linger. Cautiously he crept along the darkest side of the mews, where no lamp had been lit because of the broken glass; and he kept as much as possible in the dark along the streets, until he reached a distant place, where he could look at Dot in safety.

He sat down on the curbstone in front of a brilliantly illuminated spirit-vault where the glare of light fell full upon Dot's pretty face. It was dirty and unwashed, and her curly hair was in knots and tangles, through which he could scarcely pass his fingers. The tears had made little channels down her cheeks; and the red cloak she had been so proud of, was bespattered with mud. But she was laughing merrily now, as she looked into his sorrowful face; and her little arms fastened round his neck again.

"Old Don!" she said, "old Don!"

"Ay! it's Don, little Dot," he answered, "and you belong to all me now. I'll take care of you, never fear. They say Jesus Christ is fond of little children, and He'd never like them to be beaten, or sent to the workhouse, I'm sure. You shan't go, though Mrs. Clack is dead."

His voice faltered as he uttered these last words, and the tears glistened in his eyes as Dot patted his cheek with her small hand.

"She's tomin' back aden," lisped Dot.

"No, never!" cried Don, breaking down into a passion of weeping, and hiding his face on Dot's curly head, "nobody ever comes back from where she's gone to," he sobbed. "But oh! she knew about God and Jesus Christ, and she wouldn't be so frightened to go, Dot. When I know all about God, I'll teach you and everybody else, so as nobody 'ul be afeared to die."

"She's tomin' back aden to-morrow," persisted Dot "She kissed me, and said good-by, and went away, a long, long way off, where dere's flowers, and everything; but she said she'd come back aden and take me some day. It's a bootiful place, old Don, and folks is kind to her dere. You shall come too, old Don."

"Ay, ay! we'll go, he said, with a heavy sigh; "but oh! it may be a long while first, and I've lots to learn before I'm fit to go to such a beautiful place. I know scarcely nothing yet, and I must set about learning all I can, though Mrs. Clack is dead."

It was time to seek a refuge for the night, but there was no difficulty about that, as Don had half a crown in his pocket, which had been given to him by some of his short-lived acquaintances at

the seaside. Don was only one among many who spent a few days at the Home, and then were lost again in the great multitudes that thronged London streets. With this half-crown, prudently laid out, he could provide food and lodging for himself and Dot, at least for the next two days and nights; and on Monday morning he must set to work somewhere, at something. He bought some little pies for their supper; and in the quietest corner of a crowded lodging-house, he fell fast asleep, worn out with grief and fatigue, and with little Dot safely protected by his arm.

#### CHAP. XII.—COMING HOME.

When Mrs. Clack and Abbott, standing under Mrs. Watson's window, heard Peggy say that little Dot was lost, they felt the shock and chill of disappointment more for Hagar than themselves. Abbott did not know the child at all; and Mrs. Clack's mind was full of the poor mother's broken-heartedness, described to her by him. They asked Peggy again and again when and how the child came to be lost, till the girl grew quite angry with their questioning.

"I'm sure I was as kind as kind could be," she said. "I was always giving her taffy and peppermint, and it was too bad for her to stray away, and get herself lost. But there! you know as much as I know, and I can't tell you no more. Father flogged me last night, and he says he'll flog me every night of my life till she's found. And she didn't belong to nobody that they should make such a fuss."

Peggy slammed the window down in her anger, and then opened it, and flung out Mrs. Clack's key without uttering a word. Abbott caught it in time to save Mrs. Clack's head; but her hand shook so much she could not fit it into the lock.

"Let me do it for you," he said, putting her on one side.

It was a very miserable coming home after the week's pleasure in the country. When the gas was lighted they could see how thickly the dust had settled upon everything, so that she was compelled to wipe a chair before she could ask Abbott to sit down. She had stowed away most of the drapery which usually hung about the room, before she left home, and the bare walls and bed-posts looked comfortless and strange to her. Besides, the bad news about Dot, and the stormy interview with Peggy, had quite upset her, coming after the tranquillity and peace of her holiday. She sank down on one of the dusty chairs in a fit of great trembling.

"I did hope as God would have taken care of Dot for me" she faltered. It seemed very hard.

(To be continued.)