VOL. XIX.

JESSIE'S CHOICE.

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

CHAPTER 1

The high road that lay between Puole Valley and its post town, had been thronged all day by travelling companies of equestrian ancrobatic performers, who followed the train of heavily laden wagons, moving on to slow procession towards the town.

The wagons were loaded with goods for the fair. The night had set in, and the panting gone for the priest. travellers hurried forward. Late as it was, the men had many hours' work before them, for each waggon had to be carefully unloaded, the goods unpacked and arranged on stalls by day break.

Hungry and footsore, the children clung to their parents, and eagerly inquired at every milestone if that were the last.

At midnight the town was reached, the wagons emptied, and children laid safely to rest within them. A few hours' sleep and then a more toilthe gaudy bats must be lined with coppers before the fair is silenced for the night.

Far behind the cest, and laboring on that toilsome road, is a solitary van. The borse is led ! by a young man, whose left hand carries a lantern, and whose naked feet carefully push aside any obstacle lying on the ground before it encounters the slowly revolving wheel. His tears animal by agonized entreaties. On, Bessie, on; he'll die on the road! Three miles, Bessie, and you'll see the town yet afore morning. Oh,

For the love of God, either stop that mare or make her go gently, cried a woman, thrusting her head through the window of the ran .-'You're joling out of him the little life that's so the place was held reserved, and considered no fairs ?' again inquired the man. left. Hear that now,' she cried, as a choking select for lady and gentleman visitors. The cough from the softerer within made her jurried stage without furnished plenty of amesement cle Sam has a grinder, and mends kettles and ly close the window. The nouth stopped the gratis, and it was beseiged all day by those who borse, and flung himself on the dann earth.

father die-he never meant to go like this, with with wondering spectators. The galaxy of hu- Townfolks call us gipsies; but we never tells never a prayer or a blessed word said over him. man eyes glistened and moistened with admira- fortunes and gamble-never. Dun't take him from us on the road. Spare miration as they watched the graceful movements 'Who taught you to dance the rope? a little longer. Spare him till we get to

'Sam,' cried the same woman, opening the door of the van, 'just step inside, your father wants you.

the horse's neck, said, 'Only a minute, Bessie don't you move for the life of you.'

Lying on a kind of ship's berth, at one end of the van, was a man about sixty years of age .--His head rested on the shoulder of a young woman, and his hair of shining blackness mingled with the long fair curls that fell in disorder from looking highwayman. the drooping head of his nurse. His eves black his rarched l ps labored to articulate words of a you.' prayer which she was prompting.

Beneath the berth an orphan child was sleeping; one hand was hid in a ragged pillow and kissing her tenderly on the cheek. 'The masclasped something attached to a string round her

'Sam, come nearer,' said the fair girl, ' father

can't see you there.' The young man stood by his wife's side, and

took his father's hand. 'Sam,' gasped the sufferer, 'I havn't long to stay with you; we've led a wandering life. my -listen to me. I've been a man of no religion -I never knew what religion was before you looking liquid in a can-

married Mary, here Sam, you've been a good and loving son to me, but I charge you afore the living God, to be the best of husbands to poor Mary, wou't you, Sam, won't you?'

'He is a good husband,' said his wile ; ' a betfer never trod the ground.?

'Yes. But you fretted because Sam hates religion, and broke your rosary.' The broken rosary was mended, and on the neck of the sick

'Father,' cried the young man, 'on my bendthis time forward. I promise faithfully to en courage Mary to go to her chapel, and I will blessed bim.

"Sam, if I could only bear the heavy road," get a friend to help me to die as I ought.

'Try again, Sam,' whispered Mary, 'be's miring audience. beifer now; make Bessie go gently. Here, give her this,' she added, putting her untasted supper into her husband's hand, 'and coax her to

'Mother, will you try to sleep till we get to night.' town? The aged woman so addressed glanced! Tears filled the child's eyes, and she watched

prared from the caravan.

the sick man felt no motion. He stared with us. solation in a cup of tea; Sam was out-he had from the hands of her little friend.

CHAPTER II.

mised no unfriendly shower to damp the spirits ing room. The thin min strode forward, and and persons of the expectant sight-seekers.

variety of eatables, wearables, trinkets, and toys, After a careful scruting he expressed his satisfacwere arranged in unbroken rows through the tion by ringing a small hand bell, which was length of the public streets.

slows, with gaudy nanners floating from their patient shouts until the performance commenced. some day, for the little bleeding feet must dance canvas roofs, and wonderful paintings, advertisfor hours to the discord of fife and drum, and ing wonderful sights within, 'at the low charge scene then acting. She had seated herself in the pandy hats must be lined with conners before of one penny.'

glittering with spangles, parading with pompous air which the canvas walls were unable to shut stride the outside stage, while groups of gaping out.

boys and girls stare upwards at them. As the day wore on, the noise and lumult grew dealening, and the crowd moved in one compact mass, until its further progress was arfall fast and heavily, and he urges on the jaded rested by a wide spreading circus. The canvas walls swelled out as if the multitude confined within were struggling for a larger supply of air and space. This was the centre of attraction; gently, Bessie, not so fast as that, cried the poor for unrivalled feats of horsemanship were there youth, putting his arm over the neck of the ani- achieved, and an infant acrobat, eight years old performed such wonders on the tight-rope, that | Jessie. it was expected she would have the honor of a 'Arst appearance' before her Majesty in a few days. The price of admission was six pence; were unable to pay the admission fee. Within, always too bad to do anything; so he used to Father in Heaven!' he cried, ' don't let my the circular tiers over tiers of seats were filled mind the horse and van, and cook the dinner .of a young child, whose feet seemed scarcely to touch the sandy floor of the arena, as she moved I was only five years old when they left me. them to a lively air, played by a young man who was concealed from the audience. A thunder of applause greeted her when, completing her swered, half indignantly. Sam was on his feet in an instant; and natting task, she gracefully curtised to her admirers. A man who acted the part of clawn entered, and devil's trade, and she hates the sight of shows commenced arranging the tight rope, seasoning and fairs and such like." his business with sallies of wit, that drew peals ped behind a curtain concealing the actors, and | guess she aint over fond of you. hurriedly whispered into the ear of a ferocious-

'Uncle Sam, you play quicker than poor and glistening, were upturned to her face, and grandfather; it makes me so hot to keep up with Presently he returned, and placing himself in the

'I'll play slower this time, Jessie,' said the man, removing the false beard he wore, and you had her? ter's been talking to me about you; he says he'd pay us double what we bargained for before the fair is over.

' Has Aunt Mary come ?' inquired the child whose countenance betrayed no sign of pleasure at her uncle's words.

' Not yet, Jessie,' answered the highwarman: she said she couldn't leave father till your boy, but I'm moving on for good at last. Sam granny went home. Here, take a drink afore can have her p-pe, and take a few things out of you go back; and be offered her some dark- pawo that she put in when times was bad; and

> she bounded off, the audience greeting her reappearance with vociferous cheers.

The invisible highwayman watched her movements through a reat in the curtain, while the the rope? clown tenderly assisted her to reach the rope stretched high and tight above the ground .-The violin, after a few preparatory scrapes, commenced a Scottish air, and the child bounded life; and she says, though she loves me with forward to the centre of the rope. All eyes all her heart, she would rather I dropped down were riveted upon her, and the enjoyment of the dead than live and grow up a stage dancer .ed knees I promise to be a better fellow, from audience grew with her performance, until it And Aunt Mary is right, she added; I know she is right. ripened into enthusiasm.

A tall thin man, wearing a dark moustache buy her another rosary to-morrow.' Mary put and a profusion of curly black hair, peered forth her hand on her hu-band's head and silently from behind the curtain; his deep-set eyes were voice, and her face glowing with animationfixed upon the fairy-like child with intense interest. When she finished ber task he withdrew the world. My Ant Mary never did a bad sighed the man, 'and get to town, Mary would his head and a grim smile played on his features thing in all her life. She's religious, my Aunt as he listened to the shouts and claps of the ad- | Mary is.

Well done, Jessie,' said the highwayman as | gion does she follow? she left the arena, and again removing the forest of hair to embrace her. Well done, Jessie. that is me. and Uncle Sam, and granny, and Poor father, I wish he could have seen you to-

Nay, mother, latter is really hetter, seid Sam. his part of the performance. A black horse are something a man might make his fortune of if into her uncle's hand. There was no time for Do try to sleep a few minutes;' and he disap- was brought forward and Jessie ran to hold the he had the gumption to take pains with the train bridle.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 1869.

'I am inded better,' said the sufferer, 'both 'Bessie,' said the highwayman, addressing the in body and mind.' Mary put the rosary and animal as if it were himan, - Bessie do your ero this to his lips, and he kissed them. The part to night as well as Jessie did hers, and I van moved on, but angels guided the wheels, and warrant the master won't be sorry he hired

surprise when, an hour later, he awoke upon a Bessie expressed her comprehension of these clean hed, in a decent lodging-house. Mary words by rubbing her head against Jessi-'s was still by his side; his wife was seeking con- shoulder, and she received an affectionate cares-

> 'The audience is impatient,' exclaimed the thin man; 'bow much longer are they to wait?'

'Coming, master,' answered several voices The morning broke bright and clear, and pro from the further end of what served as a dress inspected a group of characters about to perform Stalls of every size, and furnished with every the play of 'Dick Turpm, the Highwayman.' heard by the audience, and answered with im

Jessie appeared to have no curiosity about the Dincers in every imaginable costume, and finery, and protecting her from the cold night

She started with surprise, not unmixed with fear, when, looking up, she encountered the piercing gaze of the tall thin man.

What are you crying for ?' asked the man. Because my poor grandfather is dying, and I

want to go to him, answered Jessie Where does your grandfather live?

'He lodges at No. 9, Queen's Court. 'If he dies, who will take care of you?

' Uncle Sam and Aunt Mary,' sobbed poor

' In Dick Turpin your Uncle Sam ?' 'Yes, sir'

What do you do for a living when there are

We go about in a van and sell mats Unsaucepans and such like. Poor grandfather was

' My poor mother and father, afore they died.

Does your Aunt Mary ever dance ? The child opened her eyes very wide, and an-

"I should think she don't. She says it's the

'O,, does she ?' sneered the thin man. 'This of laughter from the audience. The child slip- is a wonderful creature, this aunt of yours. I

> A deafening shout of applause prevented Jessie's reply being heard, and the thin man left her to peep through the hole in the curtain,same position before her, said,

A fine animal that of yours. How long have

· Uncle Sam hought her three years ago .-Grandfather says she is as good as a Christian.

'Do you like dancing the rope? 'I do, and I don't,' was Jessie's answer.

The man asker an explanation, and she coninued in her artless fashiou: 'I do like to dance the rope when it brings grandfather lots of money, because that pleases hun, and he don't get sick for want of good victuals, and granur Bessie gets hay and beans, and such like, what 'No thank you, uncle; I haven't time;' and she don't get when I a am't a dancing.' ' And what do you get?

'Oh, I get lote of grandfather's kisses, and Uncle Sam buys me a new frock sometimes. Well, go on. Why don't you like to dance

Jessie's countenance fell as she answered .-Because Aunt Mary says it's a bad, wicked

· How do you know she is right? Because,' answered the child, lowering her because my Aunt Mary is the best woman in

'Oh, is she?' speered the man. 'What reli-

' My Augt Mary is a Catholic. We ain'tgrandfather - we're nothing.

A deep sigh followed the last words.

ing of you.

CHRONICLE

Jessie was getting restless, for the man's grim smile and inaudible collugary terrified her more 'sence long and tedious hours. than his sarcasm and unfeeling words.

look at him through the peep hole. Please, sir, up with pillows, his wife supporting his head on will you let me pass?

ber foot on the bench before him, and thus preventing the child's escape, 'I know a gentleman who wants a little girl like you to play with his You said you would only wait for Jessie. Sure. children. You're not more than seven, are you? · I shall be eight next birth day.

Well, that means seven. You see, the gentleman's little girls are about nine or ten. What a nice little pet you would be among them. You know the youngest is always spoilt, don't you?

Jessie glanced uneasily at the curtain, but made no answer to the thin man. · Well, you see, continued the creature, smil-

ing so horridly that Jessie turned pale with saw Jessie Jance so well. fright, 'the gentleman would be kinder to you | than he is to his other little girls, and would buy my peace with my good God to-day, and I have you a splendid frock to dance in, all covered over with silver and gold and precious stones.

But I wou'du't have to dance for gentleman's children,' interrupted Jessie, whose keen intelligence suspected some trickery.

'Look here, the gentleman's children loves dancing more than sugar plums, and this gentleman spends all his money to buy them pretty dresses and flowers and fancy slippers, till they get so happy they don't know what to do with themselves;' and the thin man drew himself up, and smiled his peculiar smile down upon his trembling auditor.

'I am afraid you want me to be a balletdancer,' sighed Jessie.

Well, my dear, have you any objections? can assure you these forty children are the nicest, prettiest, happiest, rosy-cheekiest little girls you never did see. Wouldn't you like to live along with them, my dear, eh?"

'No, no, no. no,' cried poor Jessie, struggling in his grasp; 'I'll never leave Aunt Mary. I will never be a ballet dancer; I'll die first .-Loose me, sir, locse me!"

'Holloa, halloa!' shouted Uncle Sam, flinging himself from the back of Black Bess and seizing Jessie with a violence that made her stagger; 'what's to do, master? Speak, Jes

'He want's me to go along with him and be a ballet-dancer; and I said 'No,' and he said you are.' Yes;' and he looked so fierce, and held me so tight, it made me cry out. On, don't you burt Shame on you, Sain. him, Unele Sam. Ob, stop! she shrieked;

Uncle Sain, stop !' But it was too late; Sam's passion had blinded him, and he struck without seeing the object he aimed at.

' Aunt Mary! Aunt Mary!' cried the child, throwing herself by the side of the prostrate form of Sam's wife, who had just entered and rushed forward to arrest the arm of her husband. The thin man, trying to escape the blow, had thrown her down; the act was unintentional, but he thought it better to retreat, and was hiding somewhere near.

Sam, livid as a corpse, raised his wife in his arms, while the group of actors dispersed to seek tor restoratives for the injured woman. Jessie was speechless with horror and grief, and sat at her aunt's feet, watching the pale face pillowed so tenderly on Sam's shoulder. Jesse saw the got her, and we could never have her more. thin man reappear with a tumbler of hot negus in his hand. She saw him beckon to her after be had made a sign with his finger that what he held was for her aunt; so she obeyed the sign, and wept to meet him.

. Hold out your left hand first,' said the thin

Jessie complied, and five sovereigns were placed on her palm.

'Now the right-there, don't spill it,-and, look here, tell your uncle I want both your services to morrow night. There is a cab outside when you want to go. She's not burt; she's only frightened, that all. Tell your uncle the blow fell on me; he never touched her. Tell him I'll send the mare after him-he can go with you in the cab. Mind you come to morrow

night. Stop, what's your name!' "Jessie Brink."

' And theirs.'

' Sam and Mary Brink.'

'All right,' sail the thin man; and he went into the arena to sing the sentimental song which was to complete the evening's entertainment.

CHAPTER III.

Sam tenderly embraced his wife when he beard from her own lips that the blow had not fallen on her, and he shed tears of thankfulness dinner, only the pudding. that he was spared even the involuntary commission of such an act.

'Yes, you are something,' muttered the man, cab stopped before the house where her sick

uneasily at the sufferer, and shook her head .- with abstracted air her urcle's preparation for fixing his keen eyes on her averted face. 'You grandfather lay, she slipped the chinking coin explanation; the man was in a hurry for his fare, and Mary was full of anxiety for the poor sufferer, who had thought the minutes of her ab-

No. 44.

They entered their humble home, and stood 'I wish uncle would come. I should like to by the old man's death-bed. He was propped her arm. A bright smile crossed his face as 'I say little girl,' said her tormentor, placing they entered; but his voice, as he gave them welcome, was faint and weak.

'Mary, what kept you so long, my dear ? ly the child has not been on the rope all these

'Let me tell father,' said Sam to his wite; and taking a chair, he sat by the bed.

Mary commenced to cook the much needed supper, and Jessie insisted that she was not too tired to help her.

'Father,' began Sam, 'I never in all my lite

'Hush!' said the sick man. 'I have made made a true and faithful promise to Him to do my best to save that child from such a life as at opening afore her.'

Jessie clung to her aunt, her face beaming with joyful surprise.

' Sam, as sure as I'm a dying man, the stage will ruin that child, soul and hody,'

'She ain't a common child,' said Sam; 'just look at what she earnt to-night,-the master paid her that much;' and Sam laid the gold on the bed.

Take it away, Sain; it won't buy my consent to let the child go once into any kind of play-house. I have had good advice, Sam. The blessed priest of God showed me my duty as clear as the light of day, and thousands of that yellow coin wouldn't make me yield an inch. Sam, your dying father's words to you this night is, to keep that child from plays, theatres, and dancing-houses, and every mortal thing that could harm her immortal sout?

" Uncle," said Jessie, as she placed his supperplate before him, 'grandlather knows what's best; and have you forgotten what happened tonight? You wouldn't let me go a-nigh that

man again? "He paid you well, Jessie," said Sam ; 'and after all, be meant no harm; it was for your own good, - he wanted to raise you higher than

What!' exclaimed Mary, 'do you call a ballet-dancer a thing raised above our Jessie.

"The curse of an unhappy and a dying father

light on you, Sam, the hour you-

Oh, stop, father,' cried Mary and Sam in a breath. 'Father,' said the humbled youth, don't curse me; I will do as you bid me, and Jessie shall go no more to these places. But what we are to do with her when you are gone, I dont know. I've had an offer to-night from the master of the Circus that almost turned my head. He said, if we would 'prentice Jessie to him, he would pay us ten pound a year as long as he had her. I don't want to take his offer; but I know, if the man don't get her by fair means, he'll try what he can do by foul. Jessie won't be safe with us when you are gone. I was a'most mad to-night when I saw her a-crying, and the master a holding her as if he'd fairly

'Listen to me,' said the dying man; 'the good priest, who has been with me nearly all the day, is very sad about our Jessie. I told him all about her; and shook his head, and said we was a-ruining her for life. He said we must strive our best to spare the child, and let her go to school. I begged and prayed of him to put her in an orphanage, where she would learn her aunt's and my religion, and be brought up as a respectable servant. And the good priest said there was such a place not two miles from here, and he would go and see what could be done there for Jessie.

' What do you say to that, Jessie?' said Sam, drawing her towards him.

'I don't know what to say, it makes me feel so happy.'

The old man stretched out his wrinkled in nd. Jessie fell on her knees by his side, and sobbed out her thanks for all his love and care for her.

'I think,' said Mary, 'poor father ought to bave some rest; don't let him talk any more now, but go and have your suppers quietly at the table. I'll have mine by-and by.

Sim and Jessie obeyed, and left the sick bed.

to take their places at the supper table. 'It is Friday, Jessie,' whispered Mary.

'I know, aunt; and I had none of macle's 'Then here's a nice piece of cheese, and a rosy apple; but say your grace first. When

Jessie held the five bright guineas, and as the you've done supper, go to bed very quietly.' ab stopped before the house where her sick 'Aunt, is it true!—I can't eat till you tell