

he and his granddaughter set to work at that, but before they could make themselves clearly understood, they had become sacred persons in those parts, in consequence of their discriminating charity. We have nothing more to say about that just now. We proceed with our story.

A sailor had been away for over two years, leaving his wife and little boy behind him; when he came back he found that his house was shut up, his wife in prison, and his boy on the streets. He had been a good husband, had remitted money regularly, and had always believed his wife to be a model of respectability. Soon after his departure, she had started a lodging house, which, whether through her ignorance, her folly, or her culpability, was turned into a receptacle for stolen goods to a very large amount. When the police broke up the establishment, her previous good character was of less than no use to her; she was looked on as a very artful and dangerous person, and sentenced to a very long term, and her boy was left to take care of himself.

How half of these children live without crime is a wonder; this boy ostensibly lived by sweeping a crossing. When his father came home and realised the disaster which had befallen him, he found the boy at this employment. He was too young to take to sea just then, so he clothed him and took him to Gravesend, to the house of a married sister. She and her husband took the money for the boy's keep, but they hated the task and were cruel to him. No sooner was his father safe at sea, when the boy ran away and came back to his old haunts, free at all events.

M. Escriot had now been a year in his new home; among all the thousands of faces which he saw every day, one of all others began to attract his attention; it was the face of our boy. He got into conversation with him, and helped him. At last he took him home one night, set him before the fire, and made him tell his story.

The boy's story was straightforward, and most absolutely true. He had seldom seen his father, he was always at sea, but his father was a very good man. His mother was a very good woman, no better woman in the world, but she had been imprisoned on false evidence; it was very much as we have previously told. M. Es-

criot asked him his name, the boy refused to tell it; he was no credit, he said, either to his father or his mother, and was not in any way likely to be, and so he would keep his name to himself; he said that M. Escriot might give him a new one if he liked, and M. Escriot said:

"Poor little piece of sea-foam, shall I call you Ros Marinum—Rosemary?"

"No, that is a girl's name," said the boy.

"Then we will put it in Lorraine-German for you; shall Ninnette and I call you Meerschaum?"

That took the boy's fancy more readily, and he assumed the name. The neighbors who had known him had forgotten his real one, so M. Escriot never knew it, and never really cared to inquire about it.

The boy came to him at intervals, sometimes of days, sometimes of weeks; he was always kindly received by them, and if he wanted it, fed. M. Escriot was treating many boys so, but this one seemed to him far above the common herd; and as he seemed deteriorating, the old gentleman and his granddaughter were determined to rescue him somehow, and were discussing the best means, when the boy came to them one winter afternoon to say good-bye.

Where was he going? That he could not tell, but he had met a boy, who had met a "bloke," who had told him of a place where you could get taught a trade, and he was going there. Then he lifted up his voice and wept, not alone, for one of them at least had got to love him very dearly, and then he was gone.

M. Escriot was sorely exercised in his mind, immediately after his departure. Where could the boy have gone to? what trade was he to learn? Perhaps he was taken by some thief to a den to learn some infamous traffic. The old man was very anxious, but without reason; the boy, as we have seen, had only been seduced as far as Field Lane.

He had, however, completely disappeared; nothing could be heard of him; he was absorbed into the State, but for good or for evil? As time went on, it seemed as likely to M. Escriot that he should recognise a brown leaf upon a swollen autumn torrent, as that he should see and know again the poor waif whom he had known as Meerschaum.

In the sea of misery which surrounded