

## For the Young

### "LITTLE MAGGIE'S DREAM"

#### CHAPTER I.

It was a cold windy night in November, the rain was descending in torrents, making the people hurry to their different homes as fast as they could. But everybody in London has not a home to go to; and there are many little children left to wander about the streets with no one to take care of them.

One of these poor little wanderers was this night walking leisurely along the dripping streets; the few old rags that hung about her fluttering in the night wind, and her little bare feet splashing in the puddles, and dragging behind her the stump of an old birch broom.

It had been raining all day, and Maggie had found it next to impossible to keep a crossing swept, and the few passengers that had crossed the road near the corner had been in too much haste to get out of the wet to notice the poor little ragged, half-starved girl, so that Maggie knew, as she had got no money, she must not go home, for her mother would beat her if she did. It would be useless, she knew, to say no one had given her anything; for her mother had told her a great many times she did not believe her, and had been so angry, that now Maggie preferred looking for some empty shutter-box or doorway where she might roll herself up for the night, and sleep in her wet rags, to going home, where she knew hard words and harder blows awaited her for her unsuccessful day's work.

She walked on for some distance, keeping close to the houses for shelter, and casting sidelong glances at the policemen as they passed her. She regarded them as her natural enemies, because she knew if they saw her creep into some corner, they would be sure to turn her out immediately. But for some time she could see no place likely to shelter her from the keen cutting wind and driving rain; and at length, tired out with her walk and exhausted from want of food, she lay down in one of the darkest doorways she could find, and in spite of the cold and wet, and her shivering, aching limbs, she fell asleep, and before long was dreaming.

She dreamt she was out in some beautiful green fields. Near the fields was a very lovely garden. She went as close to it as she could, and there saw a number of children, about her own age, playing among the flowers, and looking so happy, that she was just rushing up to the fence to clamber over, when a kind, gentle-looking lady turned towards her and said, "Wait a little while and you shall come in too, Maggie, but you're not fit for this place yet." She did not say any more, and Maggie stood and watched the beautiful children at their play. She now saw for the first time that the "all wore white dresses, that shone like silver as the sun's rays fell upon them; for the sun was shining very brightly in the garden, much more brightly than in the field, although there it was very pleasant and warm; and she was just resolving never to leave this pleasant meadow, when a rough voice, telling her to get up and move on, awoke her from this beautiful dream; and she opened her eyes, scarcely knowing where she was, until the

sight of the policeman, stooping to turn her out of her corner, recalled her scattered senses, and made her pick up her old stump of a broom and hurry away as fast as she could.

Poor child! As she walked on and thought of her dream, she could not help crying and wondering whether there was such a place; and if so, where it was to be found. She knew there were many gardens not far from London, for she had seen several when she went with her mother hop-picking the previous summer; but the garden of her dream was different from any of these.

Thinking of these things she did not look where she was going, and presently struck her head against a projecting window. The blow made her scream for a minute, and this attracted the attention of a young man who was passing, and he stopped and asked if she was much hurt.

"No, not much," said Maggie, putting her hand to her head.

"You've cut your forehead, I think," said the young man. "Come with me, and I will get some one to tie it up for you." Maggie looked up in the stranger's face with a look of wonder, as if her ears had deceived her. What she saw there evidently satisfied her, for without asking any questions as to where he was going to take her, she picked up her broom and followed him. They walked on together for some little distance, the stranger meanwhile asking her many questions about her home and parents, and where she lived, so that by the time they reached the ragged school, where he was going, he was pretty well acquainted with her wretched history.

The bright warm schoolroom presented a striking contrast to the cold wet streets, and Maggie's dream recurred to her mind as she stood by the fire drying her rags, after her forehead had been strapped up. But the sudden warmth after her long exposure, added to her almost starving condition, brought a strange feeling of weakness, and she was obliged to hold the iron guard that surrounded the fire to keep her from falling. One of the teachers noticed her turning pale, and stepped forward just in time to save her; poor Maggie had fainted.

When she got better, some warm soup and bread was given to her, which she devoured ravenously, and after that appeared recovered.

"Now, Maggie, will you come again to-morrow evening and learn to read and write?" said the one who had brought her, when her supper was finished. Maggie looked in wonder. To sit in that light warm room was in itself a luxury to her, and she readily promised to come again.

"And now run home as fast as you can," said the teacher, "or your mother will wonder where you have got to."

"No, she won't," answered Maggie. "I often stays out o' nights when I don't get no money."

"But where do you sleep?" asked the teacher, in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, anywhere I can. Sometimes under a cart, or in a—"

"But you should not do that," interrupted the teacher. "You will be ill if you do; you have a bad cough now." But then he recollected what she had told him about her mother beating her if she did not take home some money, and he thought it would be better to provide the poor little creature with

a shelter than tell her to go home, where she would probably be beaten and sent out again. Moreover, the child was evidently ill, the deep hectic flush on her cheek, and the short laboured breathing, with the frequent cough, told plainly enough that Disease had claimed its victim, which made the teacher more than ever anxious to befriend her.

"Do you think you would mind sleeping in this room if we made you up a bed on some forms?" he said, addressing Maggie, after a whispered consultation with one of the other teachers.

"I should like it if I might stop," said Maggie, eagerly; "it's so nice and warm here."

"Very well, then, you can stay, and some one will bring you some breakfast in the morning, and then you can go to your crossing, and come back in the evening." The schoolroom adjoined the house of the person who had charge of the premises, and she promised to look after the little girl.

Poor Maggie lay down upon the bed that had been made up for her; and again her dream was thought of. It must be true, for this room felt warm and comfortable, just as that pleasant field had done in her dream; and she looked towards the opposite wall, where a single jet of gas had been left burning, almost expecting to see the garden. That was not there; but there was a picture of Jesus blessing the children, and the look of benevolent kindness depicted in His countenance reminded her of the lady in the garden who told her to wait a while, she was not fit to come in yet; and she determined to ask some one the meaning of this picture, that was so strongly like, and yet unlike her dream. There were the children, just as she had seen them in the garden, only these wore dresses of different colours, while those of her dream were all dressed in white.

#### CHAPTER II.

The next morning when the woman woke her up to have her breakfast, her first thought was about the picture again; but she did not like to ask her, but resolved to wait until the evening, and then ask her friend who had brought her.

That day, the roads being muddy, but no rain falling, a good many half-pence were given by the passengers who crossed the road, so that she had no fear of going home; but she resolved to go to the school first.

She was there long before the time of opening, and sat down on the steps patiently awaiting the arrival of her kind friend. She saw him before he reached the school, and ran to meet him with the question—

"What is that picture about where the children are pushing up to a kind man?"

It was asked with an eagerness that touched the teacher's heart, and as they walked along he commenced the story of the Saviour's love to little children. Then she wanted to know who Jesus was, for she had never heard His name before. And she listened with almost breathless attention while he told the story of His life and death to her and those who were gathered round in the class; for school had commenced, although the ordinary routine was abandoned in this class, owing to Maggie's eagerness to hear more of this wonderful story. She sat, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, drinking in with an avidity that was perfectly