



"Ted started forward, putting up his hand to claim the nurse's attention."

### "FER JIM."

BY JULIANA CONOVER.

Mr. Farnum frowned as he stepped out of his carriage in front of a well-known up-town restaurant, for he caught sight of a small ragged boy balancing on one bare foot, his face close to the heavy plate glass window. "Can't they even keep this place free from beggars?" he muttered, irritably.

"What are you doing, boy? You mustn't hang about here."

"Please, sir," answered the little fellow, raising a freckled face to his, "please, sir, I was just smellin' a bit fer Jim."

Mr. Farnum started, but before he could reply the boy was off.

"A singular coincidence," he said to himself, "it must be the same little ragamuffin, only when he ran into me in the Metropolitan Museum, he was, seein' fer Jim."

A week later he stood in the crowded aisle of a large church waiting to be shown a seat.

The clear, sweet notes of the boys as they sang the opening chorus of a great oratorio, rang out above the buzz of voices round the door.

"This way, sir," whispered the sexton, touching his arm. "I think I can find a place for you."

As they walked over to the side aisle the sexton's sharp eyes spied a small figure crouched by the door, half hidden in the folds of the curtain.

He sprang forward: "Didn't I tell you you couldn't come in, you dirty little beggar?" he cried, seizing the boy and pushing him towards the door.

"Stop a moment," said Mr. Farnum. "He hasn't any card," answered the sexton, "and it's the second time I've had to turn him out."

"It's a church," said the boy, wriggling away from the hand on his collar. "And oh!" looking wistfully up at Mr. Farnum, "I do want to hear it fer Jim, awful."

Yes, his eyes had not deceived him, it

was his disreputable friend of the museum and the restaurant.

"Let him stay," he said, turning to the impatient sexton, "he will do no harm, and I want to see him after the thing is over."

"I suppose if you say so it's all right," replied the sexton, gruffly, "but he's got to sit quiet and not get in anybody's way."

Mr. Farnum looked at Ted, who shuffled somewhat uneasily under his gaze. "Wait for me here by this door after the people have gone," he said, "I want to speak to you."

Many times the sweet solo died away, and the chorus swelled into a triumphant burst, before the oratorio, so beautifully rendered, was finished; and Mr. Farnum was afraid that his small friend would have gone home for very weariness. But he found him still standing in the corner, with dilated eyes and flushed cheeks.

"Did you like it?" he asked, smiling.

"My! wasn't it splendid!" ejaculated Ted. "Didn't the little kids sing good? I told Jim I'd better sneak in a church where the swells go."

"Who is Jim?" asked Mr. Farnum.

"He's my brother, his back's broke," simply, "he has to lie still all day and it kinder cheers him ef I hev somethin' to tell him when I come home, so whenever I git a good chance I pop in somewheres. I'm doin' the city reguler, a new street 'most every week; I'm up-town now, doin' the fashionables; but shucks! there ain't half as much to see as there was in the 'Bowery.'"

"What does your mother and father do?" asked Mr. Farnum.

"Ain't got any. Pop was killed by some bricks fallin' on him, and mom died last year. She told me to take care of Jim best I could, cause there wouldn't be nobody else to. I run errands for Mr. Cobb, he's awful good to me, sends Jim sausages and newspapers and lets me off every Saturday afternoon."

"Who stays with Jim while you're away?"

"Nobody, he's used ter bein' alone." Mr. Farnum took out his pocket-book and put a bill into the boy's hand.

"Get something nice for Jim with this," he said, and before the astonished boy could stammer out his thanks, he was gone.

What a grand time they had in the small back room on the top floor of the tenement house, when Ted came home, his arms full of queer-shaped bundles.

He had grown impatient as the evening wore on and Ted did not come back. The pain had been very bad all day, but he forgot it all when Ted told of his wonderful experiences, how he had heard "little kids" sing like angels, and a "swell had guv," him a "fiver," four dollars of which he had brought safely back.

The next morning Ted went to his work with a light heart, and Jim spent a happy day, feeling under his hard pillow every few minutes for the precious hoard that was slowly accumulating for a rolling chair—like the one Mrs. Grubbins, the lady on the next floor, had told him about.

Nine o'clock struck, and soon he heard the well-known step on the stairs. His eyes brightened as the door opened, but grew puzzled and wistful when Ted came slowly in and walked to the other end of the room without even speaking. Jim clutched the old coverlid tightly with his nervous fingers. He knew that something must have gone very wrong; only once before had Ted come home in that way,—the day after his mother's funeral, when the landlord had threatened to turn them out.

"What's up, Teddy?" he asked, in a husky voice, and the forlorn figure in the corner burst out, passionately.

"I didn't do it, you know I wouldn't do it, Jim, don't you? I ain't never done it since I was a kid and hooked an orange fer you when yer back got broke. You believe me, don't you, Jim?"

Soon the whole story was told in broken words. Ted had gone up-town on an errand, and met Mr. Farnum coming out of his club, who had stopped and accused the boy of stealing a ten-dollar bill, which he had missed on returning home from the church. In vain Ted had asserted his innocence. Mr. Farnum, thoroughly angry, called him a good-for-nothing beggar, with the old story of a bogus sick brother, and said that he had a great mind to have him arrested for a liar and a thief.

"Do you think he'll do it?" whispered Ted.

"You can't never tell," answered Jim, "he might as like as not."

Hour after hour the boys discussed the problem in frightened whispers, starting at each sound from below, expecting to hear any moment the heavy tread of the "cop" upon the stairs.

Then the greasy old pocket-book was pulled out from under Jim's head and the precious contents counted and recounted. Jim looked a little paler and the black rings under his eyes were deeper when they put it back, and Ted crept to bed and lay shaking by his side far into the night.

Mr. Farnum was ill with a bad attack of gout, and the great house was silent as the grave.

All the morning a little figure had dodged about the front door. It was very cold, and the wind whistled through his torn shirt.

Five times he had rung the bell and begged piteously to see someone "belongin' to the family," and each time he had been sent harshly away.

Still he persevered; clasping a little package closely in his half-frozen hand. Finally the coachman, who had driven up, heard his story, and offered good-naturedly to help him.

"I guess Thomas thought you'd come to beg," he said. "And he knows the master's death on beggars. I'll get in the house and open the door for you and then you cut in and wait in the passage till the nurse comes, she'll tell the old gent about it."

The scheme worked well, and Ted drew a long breath of wonder to find himself in such a grand place.

The nurse passed through the hall as he stood, overawed and hesitating.

Ted started forward, putting up his hand to claim her attention.

"I've brought the five dollars back," he cried, "me and Jim won't take it."

"Why?" she asked stopping.

"'Cause he called me a thief," indignantly.

"Ah, yes, wait here a moment." And she went quickly up-stairs with the tray of dainty food.

It was some time before the nurse returned. "Mr. Farnum wants to see you," she said, smiling.

Mr. Farnum was sitting before the fire in a big arm-chair. He looked old and sick and miserable.

"I must beg your pardon," he commenced, as Ted stood awkwardly before him "for my harsh words the other day. The sexton found the bill that I had lost in the church just afterwards. I am truly sorry for what I said. Did you mind it very much?" looking at him, curiously.

Ted met the glance boldly.

"I knowed I hadn't done it," he answered, "but I minded fer Jim."

The slow moisture gathered in Mr. Farnum's eyes.

"My boy," he said, "you have opened my eyes upon a new world—one in which the laws of God are practised, not sneered at, and in which unselfishness, strange to say, is really the rule of life—do you understand me?"

"No, sir," said Ted, slowly, "I—I—don't know much about God, 'ceptin' He's good, and lives in heaven, an' don't like lyin' and cheatin' and cussin'. I ain't never been taught."

"We will teach each other," said Mr. Farnum. "For I must learn all over again—if I'm not too old"—he added, sadly.

"I'm ten, an' Jim's twelve," replied Ted.

"Jim kin read splendid, there aint' nothin' he don't git outer papers, about murders and sich. Guy! it's fine!"

Mr. Farnum smiled.

"Do you ever go to church?" he asked.

"Christmas times I does, and when there's flowers an' grand singin'. Jim likes that kind too."

"Ah, that reminds me," said Mr. Farnum, "I have an errand for you to do, after you have washed your face and changed your clothes"—looking at the holes through which the wind had played at hide and seek, the grimy face and shock of light hair that seemed to have grown right out of the crown of his hat.

"Why, it ain't Sunday!" exclaimed Ted, in surprise.

"No, but I do not like dirt on week days, either; besides, it's part of a secret which I will tell you when you come back. I hope you will like it—" his voice trembling a little—"I am a lonely old man with no one to care for, or who cares for me. I need a 'Jim', too, to work and plan for—but go, now, Mrs. Black is waiting."

It was a long time before Ted came back, he had had so far to go. He was tired and hungry, and thought in dismay of the long walk home from Fiftieth street. He wondered if the secret was worth it. The butler grinned as he opened the door. "Walk in, youngster, won't drive yer off this time. Here he is, Mrs. Black."

"Come right up, Ted," she called from the stairs, and then she led him up another flight, into a large, airy room. Ted jumped. There was something in the bed, he saw it move—what was it? Then he heard a smothered laugh, and a small familiar face peeped out from under the covers.

"It ain't Jim!" he screamed, in round-eyed astonishment.

"I come in a kerridge," cried Jim, "an' two horses prancin'. I've eat grapes an' an orange—I saved some for you, Ted. We're goin' ter live here. The doctor an' that lady's goin' ter look arter my back—an' you're goin' ter take care of the horses just like you allus wanted to."

Ted looked at the nurse in utter bewilderment.

"It ain't true?" he said. "I guess I'm dreamin'."

"Yes, it is," she answered. "It was the secret Mr. Farnum had to tell you; do you think it is a nice one?"

"Won't it be splendid fer Jim!" was the fervent answer, and a light broke over the boy's face at the sudden realization of what it meant.

"But will you like it?" she persisted.

"Oh, my eyes, won't I!" throwing up his cap, with a shout of joy. "Hosses! an' things to eat! Why, I'll—I'll wash my face every day in cold water twice fer Mister Farnum, ef he wants me to!"—

Churchman.