

"Sweet, isn't it?" as his eye caught Jasper Schumann's.

"We've no time to hear you now; out of the way!" cried the waiter; and the little voice was hushed.

"But I want to hear him," said John Hunter; "let him come in here."

"It's against the rule, sir."

"Very well, send him to the reading-room;" and the two gentlemen followed a small, slight figure in patched coat and little top hat.

The room was quiet. John Hunter walked to the opposite side and motioned the little boy to his side.

Timidly the child looked up; his cheek was brown, but a flush rested there, and out of the thinnest face, under the arch of a massive forehead, deepened by masses of soft brown hair, looked two eyes, whose softness and tenderness would have touched a heart harder than was John Hunter's.

"What do you sing, my boy?"

"I sing German or English," was sweetly answered.

"Why child, what makes you tremble so? Are you sick?"

As if unheeding the question, the child began to sing. His voice was wonderful and simple and common, as were both air and words, the power and purity of the tones drew many of the gentlemen from their tables. The little song commenced thus:—

I'm but a stranger here,

Heaven is my home;

Earth is a desert drear,

Heaven is my home.

Dangers and sorrows stand

Round me on every hand;

Heaven is my Father's land,

Heaven is my home.

The tears were in John Hunter's eyes, and his voice was tremulous.

"Look here, child, where did you learn that song?"

"My mother learnt it to me."

"And do you suppose there is such a place?"

"I know there is. I'm going to sing there."

"Going to sing there?"

"Yes, sir; we shall all sing in heaven; father and mother both said so."

"Where does your father live, child?"

"In heaven."

"Your mother?"

"She went too, last spring," while the tears dropped over the thin cheek.

John Hunter was silent; his eyes were brimming over.

"Who do you live with?"

"I live with granma now, but it won't be for long."

"Why so? What makes you talk so?"

"I have just such a cough as mother had. When she went she said it would not be long. There won't be any pain up there, sir."

"How do you know?"

"The Bible tells us so."

John Hunter had a praying mother; his heart travelled backward; once more he knelt at her knee, a simple hearted child. Where was that mother now? Years ago she had gone to her rest, her last breath fluttering out in a prayer for her only son.

The little boy turned to go.

"Child, have you been to supper?"

"Grandma will be waiting for me."

"Have you no overcoat?"

"These are all the clothes I have, sir."

"His father was an organist," said Jasper Schumann. "The mother was also a musician, but they were both in consumption when they landed. They were not here long."

Along the snowy streets, down in the dark alleys, walked John Hunter, a little trembling child's hand in his.

At an old, dingy tenement they stopped. Up broken, creaking stairs they climbed.

"Here we are, and here is grandma," said the boy as the door jarred on its hinges; and an old woman tottered across the room.

"O, Harman, has anything happened to you?"

"Only this kind gentleman came home with me," and again the slight body was racked with that terrible cough.

"Poor child! poor child!" and the grandmother held out her arms to the little sufferer.

John Hunter had taken it all in, the want and cure that had driven the parents to their graves. It was no place for him. "I'll see you again soon," and he groped his way down stairs.

He did not forget his promise. All that money could do was done; but it was too late. Harman was dying of disease; the grandmother, of want and misery.

The winter had not gone when we found John Hunter and Jasper Schumann again walking the streets together. No longer in a fashionable square, but through lanes and alleys, till they came to the gloomy building where lived Harman Stein. They had not seen his face at the window, and it looked gloomier than ever as they mounted the stairs.

A slight rap at the door did not arouse any one. The room was not empty as they at first thought. Harman lay on his bed, the cold, clammy sweat standing on his forehead, while his cheeks were crimson.

"I was in hopes to find you better, child."

"O, no, sir; I did not expect to get well. Mother said we should all meet up there."

The eyes of the two gentlemen met, and it would be difficult to say which felt the most deeply.

"You have been so kind, I should like to sing for you; but I can't sing any more, it hurts me; it won't be so there."

"Is there any one you expect to meet there?" asked John Hunter's friend.