

but she could not keep him; she was glad to let me have him."

"She trusted you with him, and you let him be out on a night like this, to sell flowers," I exclaimed, furiously. "I shall take him away at once."

"What will Miss Gwynneth say?" asked the woman, sullenly. "She may come back for him any day."

"Where is she? Come, you had better speak," I said. "I will give you five pounds to make up for the loss of this child's earnings, and twenty more, if you find his mother for me."

I took out my purse. Her eyes gleamed, and she stretched her hands towards it; then suddenly she sank down on the narrow, wretched bed, trembling so violently that I saw it was no time to press her for information. I gave her half-a-crown. "Get food with that," I said, "and I will wait till you can tell me."

She walked unsteadily to the door, and called to a neighbor. After the exchange of a few words she came back.

I had tried, meanwhile, to talk to Dicky, but he regarded me distrustfully.

"You ain't agoing to take me away," he said, with calm determination in his voice. "I'm going to stay along with her." "Do you like to stay with her, Dicky?" I said, studying eagerly the lines of the delicate features, and wasted limbs. "Is she kind to you?" Dicky nodded.

"She never hits me," he replied, briefly: and then the woman returned. In a few minutes a girl entered with some coals in a bag, a small bundle of wood, a loaf of bread, and some tea and sugar, in a basket. I was anxious to get away, and to have Dicky to myself; so I built up a fire in the rusty grate, in a very brief space of time. I was glad to find that she wanted tea and not gin. When she had taken some food, Dicky, to my astonishment, came with no small appetite to this second banquet. I drew from her her story. Briefly, it ran thus:—

She had once been Gwynneth's nurse, in Wales. Her marriage with a dissipated scoundrel left her a widow, at about the same time that Gwynneth's ill-starred union ended in her desertion by the roué for whom she had jilted me. They met, by one of those strange chances, which daily prove the truth of the old adage about truth and fiction, and for a time lived together, till both sank into poverty. Then, when Dicky was about four, and this partnership had existed for a little more than two years, Gwynneth had left him in Mrs. May's charge, while she went into the country to ask aid of a distant cousin. Her quondam nurse averred that she had never returned from this pilgrimage. My own opinion, however, which subsequent events proved to be correct, was that Mrs. May had left their lodgings during Gwynneth's absence, and taken good care to leave behind her no clue, which should guide the unhappy mother to her whereabouts. She loved the child, and wished to keep him. But, falling in the social scale from the rank of seamstress to that of charwoman, she had, during the last few months, grown too weak to work at all. Hence, Dicky's career as a flower merchant.

When I was convinced that she had told me all she could, I gave her ten pounds, and the name of a charitable institution in London. Then I addressed myself to the difficult task of overcoming Dicky's reluctance to leave her. He parted from her with tears furrowing little channels down his begrimed cheeks—but he left her—and in a few minutes we had found another cab.

I am more fortunate in my domestic arrangements than many bachelors. My housekeeper is a woman who has the rare good sense to understand that I pay her for services, and not for advice. She put Dicky, at my request, into a hot bath (I heard him objecting furiously to the process), and then brought him to my room, where her