

"we cannot start to find her, because she has refused you, and the shadow of our lives has fallen on her—of course that woman has told her everything and she has felt that her young life is better away from us, but I am grievously disappointed that this should have happened! Poor Bertie, this is very hard for you!" His mother's kind tones made the young fellow pause in his strides up and down the room: and putting his arm round her, and kissing her cheek, he answered: "Never mind, mother, dear, we still have each other," and we must save her name from general gossip." So it was allowed to transpire that Gracie Somerset had gone on a visit to some of her father's friends in London.

#### CHAPTER III.

More than a year has passed since Gracie had become a nurse by profession. There had been much that had been disagreeable in the life she had chosen, but she could not honestly say she was unhappy in it. After leaving the Towers, she had gone to one of the principal hospitals, wisely taking the letter she had received from Park House, not as a reference exactly, but as a sort of voucher for her respectability. The sisterhood was in need of volunteers, so Gracie had not met with much opposition to her becoming a member, and after a short time, she evinced an aptitude for nursing, combined with a quiet control of her patient, that was of great value in the sick room. On the day in question she was returning to the hospital after a short absence of a few days; her patient had recovered and her duties were therefore at an end. Rain, rain, incessant rain, had been falling all day, and the invariable gloom that seems inevitably to fall on a city under such circumstances. May have extended its influence on the passers by. The subdued rumble of the rubber-bound wheels of modern invention gave a sort of resentful protest against the universal slipperiness of the roads. Among the many foot passengers might

be seen the figures of two children, whose clothing and speech stamped them as belonging to the poorer class of London's thousands. The elder, a boy, about seven or eight, was holding the hand of a little girl, his junior by a couple of years, evincing an almost parental care of her. They were chatting away, evidently quite at home, and at ease with their surroundings, the boy every now and then breaking into what from his air must have appeared a manly whistle, to him but the result might have been described as a well pronounced whisper. How it exactly happened no one could exactly say, but a warning shout from the driver of a cab was too late to prevent or avert the accident. The horses were well fed and fresh, and the recklessness that is born and bred in children who know only of streets always crowded by human beings and a motley crew of horses and vehicles, united with dire mishap to the poor children. For one moment of horror, horses feet and children seem mixed in a tangled mass, and when ready hands extracted them, pitying eyes turned away from the sickening spectacle. The boy was unconscious, but his poor little sister had been cruelly treaded by the horses iron shod feet. Gracie's grey dress of the nursing sisters procured her orders immediate attention and it was her hands that raised the bleeding little form in her arms while willing assistance placed the boy on the most easy seat of the cab which bore them to the hospital to which Gracie belonged and to whose care they were charged. Before the dawn of another day, the youngest of the two little sufferers had partially returned to sensibility only to murmur incoherently "Mammy!" "Mammy!" and to clasp her nurse's hand with one of her own that had escaped injury. "Cannot live"—had been the verdict arrived at before medical testimony had confirmed the fiat, and the opiates administered in mercy, apparently numbed all intense pain. Carefully