

WILL SHAKESPEARE'S
LITTLE LAD.
BY IMOGEN CLARK.
CHAPTER IX.

O, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come!
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known.
Julius Caesar.
A noble nature.
May catch a trench.
Timon of Athens.

Hammet lay face downward in the lush grass, his head resting on his arms, his slender legs, in their blue, homespun hose, idly kicking the air. Silver was crouched at one side, but well removed from those heeled russet shoes, which described such remarkable revolutions, having been forced, by a wisdom learned from experience, to place a considerable distance between him and them.

There was an open book in front of the lad, propped up against a stone; but he was not reading, nor had not been for a long while past. From all around came the sweet stir and scent of the Healey Street garden, the little hum of the busy insects, the booming of some bee-lovers hovering around the flowers, and the gentle rustle of the baby breeze as it lapped its half-forgotten message to the leaves of the elder bush near at hand.

Hammet followed some gaudy-winged butterfly with speculative eyes, as they darted across the green, sunlit spaces; then his glance fell upon the open page before him, and rested there for a brief time. How dull it was! After all, the true place to study lessons was within doors, away from the temptations of earth and sky—some place so tightly sealed that not one of the thousand, happy summer sounds could penetrate its way to its interior—and especially not those shrill whoops that came ever and anon from the meadows, where some boys were playing at prisoners' base. It was impossible to nail long Latin sentences into one's memory when there was so much else of real note to engross the attention, and when underneath all—like the undercurrent in the river—there pulsed the thought that fate was coming home. Study? The thing was unheard of. The boy tossed the book, with ruthless hands, high in the air, and laughed to see it fall ignominiously into the heart of the elder bush, startling some young birds from their nest. They whirled off to a safe distance, and upraised the disturber of their peace with feeble, remonstrant voices.

"I! faith, the Latin is no more to their taste than 'tis to mine own this day," he cried, with a hearty laugh. "I'll have none of it—it is not I. Come, Silver, we'll away."

He rolled over on his side, and made as if to fondle the dog's ears with his upstretched hands; but Silver was burrowing in the bush after a new species of game. He turned, with the book in his mouth, and shook it again and again, worrying it as if it were some rat, until a shower of leaves lay on the grass about him, like the petals of a monstrous flower.

"Out upon thee for a pestilential, destructive rogue!" a voice cried sharply from the other side of the bush. "I'll teach thee, thou fat good-for-naught, what all the books contain! I'll learn thee—I'll thresh thee so thou'lt not soon forget this day's schooling."

Hammet sprang to his feet, his face—had taken on a look of mingled dismay and fun at the mischief Silver had wrought—working with anger. At any other time he would have called out a laughing explanation; but something in the unseen speaker's tones awakened all the unreasoning furies in his breast. It was like the gunner's match to the trail of powder.

"Thou'lt not lay a finger on my dog, Ned Shakespeare," he called, defiantly. "Thou'lt reckon wi' me first."

"Ay, that I will, or first or last, it matters not," the voice replied, with an ironical laugh; "but I'll not stand by and see property destroyed so wantonly like by that pampered beast, young Master Cockerel, were he thy dog or the Queen's."

The speaker came around the bush and faced the raging lad. He was a tall, fresh-colored youth, with something of arrogance in his bearing at that moment. Silver moved hastily out of reach of the strong, lithe arms.

"Thou'lt not touch my dog," the boy repeated; "an thou dost, thou'lt rue it to the longest day of thy life. Besides, he deserves no punishment; 'twas I that threw the book, and so set him on."

"Marry, I'll learn him, then, not to follow thy boasts," Edmund said, with flashing eyes, angered beyond control by his nephew's tones. He made a lunge forward, as he spoke, and cuffed Silver smartly on the ear.

"An thou knowest not the worth o' books, it shall be brought home to thee," he muttered.

"Thou'lt not but a sorry hand to do that," Hammet sneered, white with rage; "tis not overmuch thou canst tell us about the worth o' a book, especially an it be the inside."

"How!" cried Edmund, hotly. "Art ready wi' thy jibes? Dost dare outface me, thou little bragart? An thou wert near my size, I'd pound thee into mince-meat."

"Size or no size," Hammet flung back, "I'll fight thee. I'm not afraid of thy bravery fist, Ned Shakespeare. An thou'lt lift it against a poor, innocent beast, thou'rt no better than a swasher, anyway. Thou'rt not wot for one o' thy inches to fight thee—'tis but an excuse."

"Nay, then, I'll take no eggs for money," Edmund answered, with a darkening brow. "An thou outmatchest me with thy learning, Sir Knowall, and thy quick tongue, my hands shall still do me some service."

He advanced threateningly upon the boy, but Silver, with a low growl like distant thunder, rushed between the unequal combatants. The hair on his glistening back stood stiffly erect, his tail was straight from his body, and his eyes were like lightning in their vivid gleam.

"Down, sir, down!" Hammet cried. "Tis not thy quarrel, then are my very own, and I'll pay back with interest the blow thou hast received—trust

me for that. Thou wouldst not turn on thy foe when he did strike thee, for that he beareth a name we both do love, though he is all unworthy o' it; but thou'lt not see me hurt, brave heart, brave Silver. Be off, sirrah!"

Ned's face flushed. "Nay, keep thy safeguard, little one," he answered, bitterly. "Thou dost valiantly to taunt a man when he's by. I'll fight thee not. I'd fight thee not at any time; thou'rt too low for fighting, wi' thy taunts. Thou'rt safe; but 'tis not for thy sake, thou little, puny, woman-decked thing, but for thy father, who is dear to me."

"Bring not my father's name into this quarrel," Hammet cried, beside himself with anger; "and get thee hence, Silver—begone, begone!"

He stamped his foot furiously until his champion, with his tail hanging dejectedly between his legs, had retreated to the house; then he turned again on his adversary.

"So now I have no protector save only these," he said, with a long-drawn breath as he looked down at his clinched fists; "but thou shalt feel them, I trow."

He made a rush forward as he spoke to deliver the blow, but Ned caught the small bare arm in its flowing white sleeve just above the wrist and held it between his iron-like fingers as in a vice. After a moment, he let it drop with a short laugh. The boy fell back only to gather fresh strength before he came whirling on again. Ned stood unmoved by the renewed attack, like some great rock against which the little waves beat in vain. He caught his assailant about the middle and held him at arm's length away from the ground.

"I'll not fight wi' thee, little lad," he said, contemptuously; "there's a shaking, sirrah, for thy saucy tongue, and here's another to mend thy manners withal—that's the treatment thou meritest. I am no scholar, I faith, but I yet know what's meet for such as thee. And so good-day, my young bull calf." He relinquished his hold, and the boy, dizzy from the rough handling he had received, reeled a few steps and caught at a tree to keep from falling, while Ned, as though he were not concerned in the matter, turned on his heel and strode away whistling. "Green Sleeves" merrily, his handsome, careless face carried a degree higher than was his custom.

Hammet looked after him impotently, clenching and unclenching those useless fists of him. Everything was in a whirl about him. He took a step forward. His ears were full of that gay, rippling music that grew fainter with every passing moment. It was like a goad to his soul.

"Nay, then, I hate thee, Ned Shakespeare," he cried, in a fury—"hate thee, hate thee, and I'll be even wi' thee for this some day, if I needs must wait till the end o' time or go to Terra Florida to find thee."

He flung his defiance out mightily, and for answer there came back to him the sweet lilt of the tune from the ever-growing distance—a mere thread of a sound, like the ghost of an echo—and, near at hand, the glad song of a bird overhead in the boughs of the apple tree and the murmur of the bees about the hollyhocks as now by the garden wall.

He remained motionless for some minutes, his quivering face turned in the direction whence that gay music had come, deaf to the other sounds about him, and blind, too, to the fairness of his surroundings, which never before had appealed in vain to his loving eyes. The whole world seemed dark to him. At last, with his chest still heaving with passion, he threw himself upon the ground near the mutilated Cat, which had been the cause of the outbreak—though only the slightest of causes, as he knew full well. Ned's wrath at the sight of the torn book might have been easily diverted. One little word of explanation uttered in the right tone and the youth, who had no love for musty Latin, would have been the last to censure Silver for his misdemeanor, but to defy, to threaten, when the right was so manifestly on the elder's side, made the explanation, when it did come, of slight moment, and the later taunt nailed the injury fast.

Deep in his heart Hammet was conscious that the real reason of the quarrel lay in his own bitter jealousy of Ned's good fortune, that and nothing else, and his face flamed scarlet as the remembrance of the jibe he had let fall flashed into his mind. He moved restlessly.

But surely what Ned had said was unpardonable—"too low for fighting," "little puny thing," and "woman-decked." He dragged at the embroidered collar of his shirt in sudden fury. Why need his every-day shirts be steeched with gay-colored threads? Not another boy in school wore such womanish gear. He hated, hated it! He wanted to be flouted for that and for all the foolish fondnesses those about him chose to bestow? He saw everything through his blind, unreasoning anger. And "little lad!" Of a truth, the taunting had not been all on one side. Little—little, forsooth? That was something he'd mend with the years—those slow, slow years.

He struggled into a sitting position and rolled up his shirt-sleeve, which was open to the elbow, with a swift motion; then he balled his fist quickly, bringing it up to his chest, and looked down with eager eyes at the slight swelling of the muscle under the sm-skin of his upper arm. He pulled down the sleeve hastily, with a gulping sound in his throat. His skin was as white as a girl's, only the forearm was respectable and brown like other boys'. Little—puny! Nay, Ned should eat those words some day. And what he had done to Silver was even more unpardonable.

Hammet felt on the moment something moist and soft against his cheek. It was like the gentle touch of a snowflake, though they come not in the summer-time. He threw out his arm, gladly and drew Silver close to his side.

"Now heaven be praised, dear heart, thou'rt come again," he murmured fondly, caressing the dog with tender hands while; "thou wouldst not see me hurt; and thou wouldst fight for me—I that am too puny, they say, and too low for fighting—I that cannot even serve thee with those poor fists o' mine."

An angry rush of tears blinded his eyes to the love in the dumb, uplifted gaze.

"In truth thou art my only friend," he went on, working himself up into the belief that all the world was set against him, and taking a mournful pleasure in the loneliness of the position which he thus conjured for himself—"my only friend; and thou wouldst serve me, too, so that Ned would fear no longer at me. But I'll none o' thine aid; I'll fight him yet till that he bites the dust."

A trifle mollified by these threats, Hammet came back gradually to a realization of his surroundings. The world was still a dreary place to him, though little by little a hint of its real fairness was creeping over him and stilling those thoughts of revenge in his breast.

He had ever been above petty meanness, and though his fists were ready at any time to serve a friend or one who was weak, he quarrelled but seldom on his own account. For all that he was a true boy, as full of mischief as an egg is of meat—one who was willing to play truant when the fish leaped in the stream, or there were fruits or nuts to gather; quick, too, at sport of any kind, and ever foremost in the pranks at the school-master's expense. But he had no love for underhand dealings; what was fair and open to the day appealed most to his taste; and yet the only way he might reach Edmund was by those very means. His face darkened. Well, why not? he argued to himself; they were surely fair if one were the smaller. A throng of suggestions surged into his mind. He had only a few days in which to compass his vengeance. But at that thought some other, springing up in its train, made the boy suddenly lower his head. Only a few days! He kicked at a toadstool impatiently, and his foot came in contact with one of the scattered pages; the rustle was like a little sigh. He sat up then and began to whistle, while Silver with a joyful bark, sprang to his feet; he had hardly recognized his master in the sullen, brooding lad.

"Thou art a very mad-cap," the boy cried, "and this is all thy work. Nay, I'll chide thee not," he went on, as he crawled on his knees over to the fallen book and began to pick up its torn leaves, at which Silver, undismayed by any serious reflection, frisked about in unrighteous delight at the memory of his deed.

"Marry, 'tis a small jest, to my way o' thinkin'," Hammet remonstrated, though the light was coming back to his eyes. "A sorry jest. But there! mine is the blame, and a stitch or two will put all right again. And as for the back—why, 'twas broke long since, as mine will be in the morrow, I trow."

He stopped in the midst of the sentence to laugh heartily.

"Nay, I could not get my lesson memorized—'twas too much to ask. On a half-holiday, too! An I had not tried, this never would have happened. I should have been off wi' Tom and Frank, an I'd been wise."

He got up a little soberly and walked slowly to the house, with Silver bringing up the rear, tail and ears hanging dejectedly again—their owner quite unequal to the task of comprehending his master's varying moods.

Meanwhile the boy was hoping that he would find his grandmother within; the book must be mended before the morrow, and hers were the safest hands to have the charge of it. He knew how his mother would cry, at first sight of the wreck, that Silver was an arrant villain, and even when he told her that he—Hammet—was alone to blame, she would still chide and chide again, and frown at Silver, though in the end she would sew the grand old book together. But his grandmother would be different. First she would hear what he had to say from beginning to end without a word on her part, working all the time at her task with such brave stitches; then, when he had ceased speaking, she would say something—oh! just something short, and always with a little smile. He did not think she'd be overbearing, and there would be no sharp word for Silver—that he knew quite well; he could even imagine her laughing, though gravenly too, for she loved not to see books mis-handled.

But if he told her one portion of the story, how could he keep back the rest? Those keen eyes of hers had such a way of seeing the very heart of things. Nay, then, he hoped she would not be there; he was not minded to tell aught of the quarrel; that was between him and Ned, and women would not understand. There was no fear that Ned would say a word concerning it—and, like as not he'd clean forgot it by this time. He'd such a sunny heart he seldom kept an affair long. Even in his anger against his uncle, Hammet was generous enough to admit that much, though he felt a bitter twinge of resentment at the idea that his wrath should seem of such slight moment to the youth.

The house-door, leading into the garden, was set wide, but there was no one in the little sully at one side of the small entry, nor in the large living-room. Hammet peered in cautiously before he entered with noiseless steps. Everything was very quiet, save for the bird in the willow cage, which chirped blithely as it turned its little sharp eyes upon the newcomers.

On the settle was Susanna's work-basket with a bit of white cambric, in which her needle was quitted, lying across the top. One of the cushions had fallen upon the floor, thus disclosing a book, as if Mistress Sue had been reading between her stitches. Hammet knew the cover at a glance; 'twas the 'Book of Merry Riddles,' and no doubt Susanna was getting some off by heart against their father's coming. Push! as if their father had forgot the Book of Riddles.

Not far from the settle Mistress Anne Shakespeare's lute lay across a chair, and a little stool in front of it told the boy more plainly than any words could have done that Judith had been picking out the music of different songs. Her work lay in a careless heap on the ground, where she had dropped it when she had been summoned away. He picked it up half-curiously. If the needle was a big one he saw not why it should not serve him. Sewing, marry, looked easy enough; 'twas just to put

in and draw out again, and he would trouble no one to help him, since they all kept aloof from him that day. The needle, however, was not to be found, and what thread there was in a sad snarl. Judith had been setting a little vine-like trimming about the handkercher, for such it was. It was a goodly sized napkin, too, such as a man might carry. Hammet laid it down with a sigh. 'Twad his first grown-up work. But there! 'twas not for him; his handkerchers were smaller; like as not 'twas for father, or for—pshaw! what had put Ned in his thoughts?

He went over to Susanna's work and made as if to take out the needle, then he half drew back his hand in the fear that he might pull the thread and so mar all. What beautiful stitches Sue took! He did not know the name of a quarter of them, but these were fair enough to have been made with the finest point of a painter's brush. And blue, too—he liked blue best. 'Twad a brave, brave collar, and Sue was a sweet wench to make it for him. He paused with it in his grasp; then, casting a wary glance around, he drew it about his throat. 'Twad world's too wide! He pulled it off quickly, and the needle pricked his finger, causing a tiny drop of blood to stain the spotless fabric. He inspected it ruefully for a moment. A brave collar surely, and not for him, and too gay for grand-father. 'Twould look passing well on father—or—Ned. Hammet dropped the work in a fury; he had Ned on the brain that day.

It was very still all about him, but from the floor above there came the occasional sounds of footsteps, and someone was singing faint snatches of song. Hammet walked over to the narrow flight of stairs and went up a few steps, pausing then to listen. It was Judith's voice half-chanting a verse of "Constant Susanna":

"There dwelt a man in Babylon,
Of reputation great by fame,
He took to wife a fair woman,
Susanna she was called by name."

The girl broke off suddenly and was silent for a few moments, then she resumed the song as if there had been no interruption:

"A woman fair and virtuous,
Laid—laid—
Why should we not of her learn thus
To live godly?"

"Jude," Hammet called, as she finished with a laugh—"Jude, what dost thou?"

"I be up to my eyes in work, sweet ape."

"I prithee come hither, I've summat to ask o' thee."

There was a rush of flying steps, and the next instant Judith's rosy, laughing face appeared at the top of the stairs. "I may not go to Shipton," she cried, breathlessly, "I may not out o' doors, I may not e'en budge from here. Sue and me are unpickin' o' Ned's murrey colored doublet to have it ready against his going. Go away. Buz!"

Hammet's face clouded, but he stood his ground.

"Where's my mother?" he demanded. "She hath gone to Mistress Sadler's for the rest o' the day, and she hath taken her stichery wi' her. My godmother will show me a new stitch for Ned's shirt. Verily, my grandam saith we'll make him as fine as any sir in London town; they shall not think to dunt a Stratford lad for country fashions."

"Nay, Judith, come back to thy work," Susanna cried, impatiently; "'tis little enow thou hast done, what wi' thy hoppings about and thy songs. Leave Hammet be, unless he's minded to help us unpick this; he must not bring us out."

Minded to unpick Ned's doublet! Hammet put up his hand to his throat as if he were choking. What! make a girl of him at once and be done with it. The whole house seemed to go up and down before his eyes. Ned's doublet—Ned's shirt—that collar and handkercher in the other room were Ned's too—and what else?

"Where's gran?" he called, in a voice shaking with rage.

"In the buttery, methinks," Susanna replied, calmly; "she be not somey gone to Aunt Joan's. She'd some ruffs o' Ned's to set and color wi' starch before she went. Seek her there. But what hath come to thee, sweet boy? Thy voice soundeth as if thou hadst a quack, or else thy mouth were full o' summat. Hast been in the store-room, sirrah?"

Hammet did not wait to answer, but rushed headlong from the house, through the quiet garden, sleeping in the afternoon sunlight, out to the tenley street and away—he cared not whither. Nor did he notice that his trusty Silver looped as usual at his side. There seemed to be a thousand demons within him, lashing him with unseen whips on and on, their voices rising in a whirl of discord—a deafening tumult that filled his ears until they were on the verge of bursting. And "Ned—Ned—Ned—" they cried. Turn where he would there was aught to be heard but that hateful sound.

CHAPTER X.

The time of life is short!
To spend that sorrow-busy were too long.
If life did ride upon a day's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour.
Henry IV. (Part 1)

But O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!
As You Like It.

Hammet sped along the Warwick road, soul sick and tempest-tossed, a prey to his evil passions. He had been governed by no particular desire in making his selection—one road was as good as any other to his thinking that day. He had but stumbled into this by the merest accident, though it was ever a favorite with him. He kept on doggedly with downcast eyes until, tired and panting, he halted at last for breath, and, like a person waking from a heavy slumber, glanced wonderingly around.

He was about a mile from the town, and there on his left were the Welcombe Woods. Just beyond them the Dingles—a belt of straggling ash and hawthorn, which went winding irregularly through briery hollows and depths of vivid green where, earlier in the year, the blue-bells swung their tiny chimes—climbed from the footway below to the summit above, while immediately around rose the Welcombe Hills, from whose heights his father loved to look down upon the peaceful valley. The thought was like

a cool hand laid on the boy's fevered brow, and for the moment those hideous voices were quiet in his breast. He pushed on over the familiar ground, thinking of the last time he had travelled it in his father's company, and recalling every detail with such loving exactitude that when he reached the crest of the hill it almost seemed as if that beloved presence were by his side in very truth.

He paused and looked back at the tranquil scene, at the orange and gold of the maturing fields, and the rich deep greens of the bosky acres with their broom groves and hazel copses. Before him, right in the track of the homing sun, Stratford lay among her orchards and gardens, the thatched roofs of her habitations of the less conservative owners. Above them all the square tower of the Guild chapel stood sturdily aloft, and farther along the wooden spire of Trinity perched the cloudless sky with its slender point. And that thread of molten light quivering now in this spot, now in that, was the Avon bearing its waters to the sea. Beyond the sweeping curves of the river lay the undulating valley of the Red Horse, shut in by the misty Cotswold Hills.

The little lad drew in a deep breath of satisfaction at sight of so much loveliness, and some of the peace and quietness about him crept into his troubled breast. After a few minutes he threw himself down upon the ground, and Silver, who all this while had kept discreetly in the background, came wriggling forward. Hammet opened his arms wide, and the dog, with a joyful bark, crept close, nestling his head against the breast of his master's sleeveless jerkin.

"How fair it is," the boy whispered dreamily into the attentive ears, forgetful at that moment of what had driven him hither. "My father doth well to love this place. He saith there is no fairer in all the world to him."

He broke off with a sound in his throat that was half way between a sigh and a sob, and the old, bitter feelings surged afresh through his soul, sweeping away all the beauty of the summer land, as a current, breaking its bounds, submerges everything in its headlong course.

No fairer in the world? Why, London was that, for any spot would be fairer if father were only by. The boy's heart was full of contradictory emotions. One moment he longed with all the ardor of his nature for his father's homecoming, the next, with a singular inconsistency, he wished as strenuously that that coming should be deferred. What did it mean? What did those three days hold that he was willing to let them go? The happiness of seeing his father again, of hearing the deep, gentle voice, of meeting the smile in the tender eyes, of being with him constantly—was he content to relinquish all that wealth of joy because of the parting on the dark morning of the fourth day? What did that fourth day mean, that he could let the pain of it rob him of the delight of the other days? Was it only the dread of farewell that made him shiver, or was it that picture—the hateful picture—of Ned's happy face turned Londonward that blackened everything?

"'Twas too much to bear! The humiliation of being young, of being little, while his heart was as big as any man's with longing, hurt the child like the sting of a lash. And Ned—Ned only five years his senior, riding off into that enchanted land by father's side. He grieved his teeth together and clinched his small fists at the mere thought. How could he stand by the road and wave good-bye to that dear figure turning ever and anon in his saddle for a last look, while Ned turned, too, with glad shouts?

What pleasures that journey held! He had travelled it in his fancy times beyond numbering. It almost seemed as if he knew every inch of the way and just how the land looked on either hand, for nothing had ever been too small for the father to note or to tell again and again to the attentive ears of the child. Now they had left Shipton behind and had crossed the Combe, where Long Compton straggled on both sides, and they had had a goodly glimpse of The Whispering Knights, clustered in a circle about their king, standing in stony silence under the spell of an enchantment centuries old. After which loitering, forward to Chipping Norton!—there to halt for the night. Off the next day, riding through Eustone, Over Kidlington, and Ditchley, past the walls of Woodstock Park through Woodstock itself, and so by Bigbrooke and Wolvercot into Oxford, to The Crown, in the Cornmarket, where they would lie the night."

Away again in the early dawn, just as Charles's wain was fading from the sky on the third day's journey, travelling long miles over bad roads—through Whatton, Thetford, Stockingchurch, to East Wycombe, where they would halt again for a night's refreshment. A start betimes the next morning would bring them to Uxbridge in the forenoon, and then there was a longish ride to London, which they would reach in the soft evening glow of the fourth day, travelling through the fields to the water-side, where, having left their horses at some inn, they could take boat for South wark."

The color deepened in the boy's cheeks, and he forgot that he was there on Welcombe Hill, with Stratford lying before him, so real did the imaginary journey seem. And in a little while now 'twould be Ned's dole to see all those wondrous sights, hear all those wondrous sounds.

At Southwark with father! Going with him, mayhap, at an early day to the old church whose walls were washed by the running river, and where, in ancient times, the fisherman's daughter used to row the folk over the ferry. 'Twould be like father to take Ned there and show him old Gower's monument, with the marvellous colored figure lying on the tomb, and they would read the inscription together: "Pour ta pitie Jesu regarde." Nay, then, he could not remember the rest of it, but that much was right he knew. And Ned would go to 'The Bear Garden' to see the sport there, and to 'The Curtain,' and better still, to 'Blackfriars,' and he would sup at 'Tabard,' or the Falcon, or some other

ordinary. Marry, 'twould take more fingers than he had a hundred times over to count all those wonderful places that would be calling to the country youth: "Come, see me! come, see me!" whenever he took his walks abroad.

Hammet groaned aloud. Nay, he cared not so much that Ned should see those things, and that was true, I faith. Ned was welcome to them; he was welcome to all the sights in Christendom. What hurt the loving, jealous heart was that Ned should be admitted into a companionship from which he was debarred. The promise the little lad had made to young Mistress Rogers was forgotten, swept from his mind as completely as the December winds clear the boughs of any clinging leaves. Not one word of his father's poetry, which he was to use as a charm to expel his bitter, grudging thoughts, came to him now. He rolled over and hid his face on Silver's firm side, and then, because he was only a little fellow after all, he gave vent to his feelings in a torrent of deep, tearing sobs.

Silver tried in vain to touch with his tongue the bit of cheek left exposed, but no loving demonstration of sympathy that day would have penetrated through those evil passions that were piling themselves up into a mighty wall in the small heart. Jealousy, hatred, revenge—how fast they were building, until it almost seemed as if all that had made his world so fair would be lost sight of forever! Only one thought in the midst of that enveloping darkness was clear to the lad's mind—the way to make Ned suffer!

He'd listen to no plea for forgiveness. What! should he be outdone by a dog? Silver, who had wearily suffered punishment for his own fault, had shown his teeth and had been ready in defence when his master was threatened. Should the master do less? He was not fighting for his own injuries now, but for his friend's sake. Only—only—wicked and savage as the small heart was, the truth would out in that taking up the dog's cause he was secretly gratifying the grudge which had ever been as a thorn in his side. The idea of revenge was as sweet to his mind as the taste of any cakes to his palate.

After a little the whirlwind of passion subsided somewhat, the tears which had made his cheeks burn with the sense of his utter childishness vanished, and he lay quite still looking up at the segment of sky which was revealed through the leafy branches overhead, a multitude of plans crowding in upon him. At last, utterly wearied and sore dismayed by his thick-coming fancies, he nestled closer against Silver and fell asleep.

But even in his slumbers he found no relief from his evil thoughts, I the idea of punishing Ned pursued him incessantly. It hung itself again and again, like some curious halliway. Now, with a burst of wild music like the clash of arms, he found himself on a vast heath accounted in Sir Guy's famous armor, and up and down he strode calling upon his enemy to meet him in single combat. And suddenly Ned, in his simple country dress, with no mightier weapons than his fists, faced him dauntlessly. And there was no fear in his eyes, but just a soft glance that made them like a certain pair of eyes the boy knew and loved best in all the world, and the great sword trembled in the upraised hand and turned to a wisp of straw—powerless, powerless.

The lullaby went on. There was the faint swish-swish of the river amongst the grasses, and he was flying by in a boat which had wings and skimmed along the water like some great bird, so that it needed not his guidance. He sat idly in the stern and watched the familiar banks now closing toward each other as if to whisper some secret, now retreating and leaving a wide space between, like friends estranged. Here the water danced and sparkled in the sunlight, there it lay unruddled in the shade of the willows that bent low above its glassy surface to catch a peep at their hoar leaves. Then out he passed into the wide reaches again, with only sky above and something dark on the wind-rippled waves—Ned, in mid-stream, clinging with desperate hands to a plank to keep from sin'ing. On and on the boat flew, and now Ned had caught at its side, and his face was aglow with the hope of deliverance



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