

appeased, all doubt was at an end forever in my mind. In spite of dirt, in spite of rags, in spite of the language and manners of the London street-Arab—this boy was Gwynneth's child.

The primrose merchant had arranged his flowers upon the table. "There are seven bunches," he remarked, "but you have treated me—and you can have the lot for sixpence." I was not base enough to profit by this handsome offer.

"No, I will pay the sevenpence," I replied, handing him that sum from the change the waiter brought me. "I am going to walk home with you," I said, rising, and taking his hand. The contrast between the cheery warmth of the shop and the bitter cold of the March night was very great. My little companion shivered. It was too late to buy him an overcoat, but I hailed a cab.

"Now, where do you live?" I asked, as I wrapped my overcoat round him. He named a street unknown to me; the cabman, however, proved to be my superior in the matter of topographical knowledge, and we drove away.

In a few minutes I was on comparatively intimate terms with my guest.

"What is your name?" was my first enquiry.

"Dick," he responded. "What's yours?"

"Mark Ford," I answered, almost involuntarily.

"Mark—that's easy," said Dick, musingly.

"Who takes care of you?" was the next step in my catechising. Dick looked puzzled. "Nobody," he said.

"Well, who lives with you? You don't live alone," I persisted.

"Oh, mother and I live alone—in that house," replied Dick. "Tell him to tell his horse to stop."

I obeyed, and followed Dick up the stairs of a London lodging-house of the very poorest kind. At last we reached the topmost landing. My guide turned to me and said, gravely

but politely, "You can go home now."

"But I want to see your mother, Dick," I remonstrated. I could not let this child go—and, if, indeed, my haughty Gwynneth had sunk to this, I must see her before I slept. Could it be that I was to meet her here,—in this sordid, poverty-stricken place?—Gwynneth, whose bright beauty I had last seen set off by rustling silks and glittering jewels. I waited with a beating heart while Dick went in.

"Mother, a man wants to see you—his name is Mark—he gave me some coffee and a bun—he's bought my flowers—he says you've got to go out and see him." (I had said nothing of the sort.) I heard some words in a low tone. Then Dick reappeared.

"You come in," he said, with careless authority. "She ain't coming out." I walked in. I saw a woman past the prime of life—haggard and wasted, but not—not Gwynneth. I do not know whether I felt relieved or disappointed. I was conscious of one definite purpose—to take my flower vendor back with me.

"Thank you kindly, sir, for buying Dick's flowers, and bringing him home." She held the seven-pence in her hand, and looked towards the door. "I want to ask you a few questions about him," I said, decidedly. "He is not your child; whose is he? and how did you come by him?"

She turned fiercely upon me, and began a string of asseverations, which I soon checked. A barrister hears too many lies not to recognize them.

"That will do," I said sternly. "I knew his mother. Tell me truly how you came to have him, and I will make it worth your while. Don't waste my time with lies." She was silent for a few moments. The subject of our conversation lifted his small, surprised face to mine, and said re-assuringly:

"She ain't telling no lies; she's my mother."

"I knew your mother, Dick," I said, and then the woman spoke.

"Yes, he's Miss Gwynneth's child,