



DEER JEEERWEY DON'T LEBE BEBE IN DE BIG DWARK 'OUSE."

A KNIGHT-ERRANT OF THE STREETS.

BY MRS. JAMES W. ROGERS.

Unheralded, and afoot he entered the lists. Armored *cap-a-pie* in rags, he named the broad thoroughfares of that great southern sea-port, wielding a "lance" which only burnished—never tarnished the thing that it touched.

"Squintin' Jerry," the boot-black, was all the title he claimed, if he ever claimed anything; which he never did.

Legend made him "a-cast-up-by-the-sea," and people called him "Jerry"; nothing more, as far back as he could remember; until a facetious member of the "shining" fraternity, to which he belonged, bestowed the euphonious prefix in compliment! to a slight defect in one eye. And Jerry had accepted the *sobriquet* with a true gamin's characteristic indifference to mere externals.

No lines of beauty are traceable in the healthful, beaming face, yet from out the grimed and smutch-marked features, overshadowed by a shock of tawny sun-burnt hair, gleam a pair of fearless gray eyes, challenging life in such merry gaudy nature that one is drawn instinctively to be friends with them. For all his *debonnaire* ways, Jerry had in the depths of his nature a perpetual crave, and unceasing longing to go back to that legendary mother—the sea.

To this end he fairly haunted the quay, dogging the footsteps of all seafaring men, learning all he could of nautical things. Once an old skipper had half jestingly said he would "take him out some day," and on that slender basis, Jerry built up many an airy structure of life on the sea. In the meantime he plied his trade and lived alone with the rats in the gable-roof of an old tumble down tenement house in the parlous of the poor.

Alone with the rats, until, scolding homeward one dark winter's night, he discovered a shivering, half-starved mongrel dog cowering at his heels.

He took the miserable "stray" creature in, and fed and sheltered it from that time on. "Curly-Wig," as Jerry dubbed him on the spot, because of the great mass of fluffy dirty-white hair that covered his small body from head to tail, attached himself to his new master with proverbial canine fidelity. They became inseparable comrades.

While Jerry merrily "shined the swell's butes," on uptown corners, Curly-Wig, watching the operation with inspector-like gravity, was always found seated on the nearest curb-stone. But Jerry's exploits never stopped at the rescue of a stray dog from death by starvation.

Street-gamin though he was,—getting

his living as he could,—yet he had the tenacity to adopt a child. A soulless actress, lodging in the same house, deserted her lovely infant one day, to join a passing theatrical troupe. No other of the women lodgers showing compassion on the deserted baby, Jerry indignantly picked up the little "waif" and bore it away to share the garret-home with himself and Curly-Wig the "stray."

Prodigal-handed summer was making life an easy problem when Bebe, as the lisping tongue named itself, came to lighten the gloomy old attic with his engaging infantine wiles.

Daily bread for three came almost without thought or care.

Joyous, free-hearted summer made glad also these children of her train. When niggardly winter came to usurp her golden throne, would Jerry have cause to regret his gigantic venture? However that might be, the long sunny days of "now," were full of pure enjoyment. From day-dawn till dark, all three were on the streets, Jerry purposely occupying corners of the many pleasant squares, that Bebe and Curly-Wig might gambol the happy hours away beneath their leafy shade.

When the rounded baby limbs grew tired of frolicking over the smooth, trim walks, Jerry would lead his little "adopted" way to one or another of his many friends among the Creole fruit vendors and deliver him over to their motherly care.

Mere Rose, a celebrity in her way,—for keeping the most tempting of stalls, in the coolest of sheltered nooks,—had ever the kindest of welcomes in her little French heart for "*L'ange pauvre joli*," as she always termed the lovely child in her liquid Southern patois. There, enthroned on an inverted basket, surrounded by luscious fruits from tropical climes, with purple grapes wreathed above his golden-ringed head, Bebe looked out with gleeful blue eyes on the pageant street, like a veritable young Bacchant keeping his own *fete*.

When sleep overcame the white, long-fringed lids, the bright golden head would drop down among the fragrant heaps, and Bebe would be in happy dream-land for hours. But such halcyon days could not last forever. The short Southern winter came after a while; and, to many a one's dismay, came with unprecedented severity beside. Jerry's little home-roof suffered in consequence, like all others of its kind. In the struggle for daily food, the brave-hearted bread-winner did not falter or lose courage, but the warfare was telling surely on his robust frame. A look of anxious care became habitual to the once smiling, *insouciant* face. Yet the fact that bread was harder to obtain and coarser than its

went, was not the chief cause for that look of care. Jerry was troubled far more by a sad necessity the inclement weather laid on him.

When the streets ran rivers of furious rain, and icy-breathed winds swept through the whole town, Bebe could not go out. Every one else in the rickety old house did go out; compelled, like Jerry, to seek their bread. Thus there was no one with whom to leave the tender child, and Jerry was forced to lock him up in the great empty house from day-light till dark, with only Curly-Wig for a companion and protector. Bebe's small intelligence could not grasp the full meaning of his cruel imprisonment, and the passionate grief he exhibited on each morning of its occurrence nearly broke his reluctant gaoler's heart. All the weary day, through his sad memory would ring the childish pleading—"Deer Jeerwey, don't lebe Bebe in de big dwark 'ouse—Maman Woze teep good Bebe." No wonder his swarthy cheek paled and grew haggard under the strain.

How the "shut-ins" passed their time Jerry could only conjecture. As it was always dusk when he returned, he invariably found Bebe asleep on their wretched pallet-bed, while Curly-Wig would dash forward to welcome him, evidently roused from his own napping, beside the unconscious child, by his master's familiar step. Despite of all, Jerry's generous nature had never yet known any regret.

Southern winters wear frequent smiles; and on those genial days Bebe returned to the streets. At each fresh reappearance "Maman Woze" makes a little festival in honor of the "liberation" of "*L'ange pauvre joli*," nor is faithful Curly-Wig forgotten. Many hunger-appeasing slices of fine white bread intended for him, find their way inside the small basket of dainty cakes and sugared bonbons that is always in waiting for the delighted child.

The winter was drawing to a close when a fateful day arrived to them.

Jerry had been alone on the streets again, for the weather, though not cold, was exceedingly stormy.

Hurrying along in the dusk of the evening, he suddenly came face to face with Captain Clack, the very skipper who had half way promised to give him "a taste of salt water life" some day.

"Well met, my hearty!" cried the jovial old tar, giving Jerry's ragged shoulder a friendly clap. "I was even now on the lookout for ye, lad. Shall we cruise together at sunrise to-morrow?"

Where was the doubt of it? Not in Jerry's proudly beating heart. Two minutes later he had parted from the skipper, and went on his way in a delirium of joy. Passers-by glanced curiously at the in-

congruously ragged, forlorn figure, and ecstatic looking face.

Unconscious of their gaze, Jerry reached the old house, climbs the broken stairs, and pushes open his own rickety door, before the shock of Curly-Wig's welcoming bark restores his wandering senses. Recoiling, as if from a sharp blow, he cries aloud, "Wot's cum to me now—I nuvver onct thort uv ther chile." Then began a conflict which ended only with the dawn.

With the look of a hunted animal on his suddenly aged face, Jerry raced about the great, bare garret, as if he would fain escape from the torturing thoughts that hounded him on. Hours passed by. The unconscious child slept on. The repulsed dog crept back to his post beside the sleeping child. Only the echo of hurried irregular steps filled the air. At last regret had touched him.

Cold, and hunger, and toil; he had endured all three for the sake of the child.

But this—the cherished dream of his poor vagrant life—could he renounce that, too, for the sake of another?

Toward day-dawn he sinks to the ground in sheer exhaustion, but no sleep relieved the tortured mind. As the glimmering light of day peeps through the one small window, the recumbent figure struggles wearily once more to his feet. It steals softly towards the door. Noiselessly though it moves, the faithful dog is instantly by its side. Then Jerry stoops to pat the matted head and whispers in the attentive ear:

"No, Curly can't go—he must stay here and watch Bebe."

The obedient little creature goes immediately back to his charge, and Jerry glides swiftly through the door.

The street gained, which way will he go? Is it himself, he is fleeing from, or the child? His face, wan and haggard in the fast flushing day, is resolutely turned toward the sea. Alas! then, it is the child.

He sets out on his race with the sun, and as his fleet footsteps echo on the cobblestones of the quay, its first golden shaft dips in the sea. A ship's gig is in the act of putting off from shore and Skipper Clack is seated astern in it. At the sight Jerry breathes hard, and redoubles his exertions to reach the shore.

"Aha! my lad," cries the roaring voice of the skipper in welcoming tone.

With white, set face, the ragged figure stumbles forward, then falls to its knees on the wet stones beside the ship's boat. Between hurried gasps for breath the half-choked voice exclaims:—

"O! sur, I 'opes yule furgive me. Taint thet I doant warnt ter go, but Ikant dessurt ther chile." The ship anchored in the offing, is ready to sail, but kindly-natured old Skipper Clack will not go until he has drawn the whole pathetic story from the quivering lips of the boy.

A tale, told by its hero, in simple unconsciousness of his own heroic part therein. Deeply touched, the good captain winks the sympathetic moisture from his own keen gray eyes, and motions his men to "give way"; then leaning over the side grasps the grimy hands of the little gamin boot-black in friendly parting, and cries cheerily, "Shiver my topsails, lad, but old Captain Clack will keep his word, and make a sailor of ye yet." Then more lowly and gravely added, "the great captain of us all will never desert the man that stands by his guns: remember that." Later, a goodly ship sails proudly out to sea and a solitary figure stands motionless on the lonely shore.

But a light, that comes not from sea or land, gleams on his pallid brow like to that of those "shining ones permitted to draw near the Holy Mount."

AN OLD SUPERSTITION.

Lord Wolseley remarks emphatically in his "Soldier's Pocket Book"—"The old superstition that grog is a good thing for men before, during, or after a march, has been proved by the scientific men of all nations to be a fallacy, and is only still maintained by men who mistake the craving arising solely from habit for the promptings of nature."

LIFE'S STORY.

Our actions are the pens which dip themselves in our heart's blood to write Life's story out, And then the finished tale lies on time's shelves, For the old world to read and talk about. —Selected.