

## RAG AND TAG.

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## CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

"The clothes we had on when we first came to you were not ours—we took them out of 'the dreadful' bag; we were so cold an' starved, an' what we did have on when we settled to run away and leave them were so old they'd scarcely hold together. Weren't they, ma'am?" added Tag, earnestly, turning to Mrs. Burton; "you know best, for you saw us."

"They were indeed bad, my poor child—only fit for the rag-bag."

"There, do you hear that, Rag?" asked Tag, triumphantly; "then it was not so wicked of us after all; but for all that we don't want to meet the two 'dreadfuls' again, an' they live in your street, Mr. Stubbins."

"Ah, my poor boy, I understand, and I am not surprised at your fear of meeting them; but there is no chance of that—they have left the cellar, and no fear of their returning again in a hurry; the police found them out about ten or twelve days ago, and I don't suppose that that part of the world will be troubled with them much more."

"Hooray!" called out both the children together.

"Hooray indeed!" and John smiled; "but I say, wife, I am not altogether pleased at the notion of having stolen goods in our house. Where are those clothes which the poor things had on when they came to us? We might give them to some poor person, or get rid of them somehow."

"They will be clever people who get them now," answered Mrs. Burton, gleefully, "for I took them the very next day and threw them on a large fire in the back kitchen, and burnt them up stitch and thread, and pushed and turned them about in the fire until they were as fine as sand. How could I tell where they had come from, or what they might bring? and I thought the best thing was just to ask no questions, but put them out of the way at once."

"Right as usual, my wife, and I am quite sure Rag and Tag think so too."

Their approving look and smile of satisfaction told very plainly what they thought of the matter.

So it was agreed that, all being well, on Thursday afternoon in the next week Rag and Tag were to go and have tea with Mr. Stubbins and his little girl.

## CHAPTER V.

The next morning when Rag and Tag awoke, it was with a feeling that something very unusual was going to happen, and not only one thing, but two things—first, the

night-school that evening, and to have tea with Mr. Stubbins and his "lill' sick gel" the following Thursday. Would the day ever pass, and the time ever come! At last half-past seven did arrive, and both John and his wife were as pleased as the children when it did. I wish I could describe the feelings of Rag and Tag when, after about half an hour's walk from where they lived, John led them into a large, well-lighted, whitewashed room, filled almost up to the door with rows and rows of forms, and all these forms filled with children—boys and girls of all sizes and ages, the former on one side of the room, and the latter on the other. Although some looked very thin and poor, yet all were clean and decently clothed, and every face

by their neighbor, and hearing "Do as we does" whispered in their ear, they sat down again. After a short prayer, the hymn "Hold the Fort" was given out. Although Rag and Tag could not read, they caught the words every now and then, and when it came to the chorus—

"Hold the fort, for I am coming,  
Jesus whispers still:  
Wave the answer back to heaven,  
'By Thy grace we will,'"

the two children looked at each other, and evidently each knew exactly how the other felt, for almost at the same instant the books they were holding were thrown from them, their little white faces covered with their hands, and they were sobbing so violently that Mr. Hambleton, at a sign from the clergyman, went up to



View from Sunrise Mount

A.W. Moore

appeared bright and happy. Rag and Tag being rather late arrivals were seated almost close to the door, but apart from one another, by Mr. Hambleton, the visitor at John's house on Sunday afternoon. Exactly as the fingers of the clock pointed to half-past seven, in walked a clergyman, whom the children recognized as the same who had preached the sermon which had made them each want to be a "gooder boy and girl" the evening before. The clatter of feet as each child rose from their form to greet him was quite a little storm. Mechanically our children did as the others had done; but their eyes were fixed on the clergyman, whose quick, kind eyes had soon discovered them; and they remained standing, until, feeling themselves rather sharply pulled

them, and telling John he would bring them back presently, opened a side door and took them into a little snug parlor. For a time he said nothing; but at last he asked so gently what was the matter, and spoke so soothingly to them, that by degrees the sobs ceased, and two little tear-stained faces looked so pleadingly at him with their large brown eyes, that the good kind man although accustomed to really harrowing scenes, felt so moved that he bent down and kissing each thin forehead, urged the children to speak and say what it was had touched them so much, and why they were crying so sadly.

His very kindness made the tears come back again; but after a little rubbing at his eyes with the back of his hands, Tag spoke:

"'Twas them words as they sung did for us both."

"Why, did you not like them? They are beautiful words."

"Yes, indeed; it's just 'cos they are so beautiful that we cry," answered Rag. "But it's so funny to cry 'cos we like 'em. We allus used to laugh when we wor happy, and cry when we wor sorry. I dunno what's come over Tag and me: everythin' seems turned round since we com'd to our master an' missus, an' now we wants to be the good-est, when we used to like to be the baddest."

"Ah, my children, and things will turn round still more when you come to your Master in heaven."

Seeing they looked surprised, he added; "I mean things will seem so different to you when you know more about this Lord Jesus, which the hymn they have been singing to-night speaks of."

"Sir"—and Tag stood very erect, and looked very steadily into the kind eyes looking into his—"Rag an' I does want to gooder, an' to know more about our Lord Jesus. We've wanted it iver since we heard all that genelman in the large room said yesterday; but how can we, when we can see Him now heres, an' He'll niver care to come to the likes of us. Only," he added, with a brighter look, "we are out of the cellar now, and in a 'specable house—that may make a difference, mayn't it?"

"Not the least, my boy—not the very least," replied Mr. Hambleton, gravely.

The children's faces fell.

"Then I'll give it up," said Tag, impetuously; "it's so weary confusin'."

"And you?" said Mr. Hambleton, turning to Rag. "What will you do?"

"I'd like to find Him, an' I could," was the reply, in a low voice. "I would indeed," she continued earnestly; "an' I'll go on huntin' and huntin' until I do, and Tag 'ill stick to me, an' we'll find Him together—won't we, Taggie?"

Tag nodded. His mouth was quivering, and he could not speak.

"Dear children"—and Mr. Hambleton drew them towards him—"you need not go hunting and hunting; our dear Lord is close beside you at this very moment." The children looked round, but said nothing. "He has watched over you all the time you were in the cellar, and He loved you ever since you were born. He led you from that wretched place where you were somiserable, and brought you to your present happy home. He put the words into the clergyman's mouth to speak to you yesterday. He put it into my heart to ask John Burton to bring you both here to-night; and oh! Rag and Tag, it is He who has put it into your hearts to wish to know, love, and serve Him, and the work He