

# Northern Messenger

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## Jacob's Unexpected Guest.

The rain was pouring in torrents as Jacob Sudge, the old pawnbroker, turned to his boy Joe and suggested that he might as well put up the shutters. But before Joe could comply he was 'knocked of a heap,' as he expressed it, by the sight of a little girl who walked timidly into the shop. 'Look, master,' he cried.

Jacob turned and hurried to the farther side of the counter. 'Mattie Dunstan!' he exclaimed. 'What are you doing away from home without a hat on a night like this? You are soaking wet, child.'

Mattie raised a pair of tear-filled eyes. 'I have no home,' she said. 'Aunt Maria's turned me out, and I'm not to go back.'

It was only too true. The child's mother, Grace Dormer, had displeased her father and brother by marrying Harry Dunstan, a man who had proved unfortunate in business. She had sought in vain to become reconciled to her relatives, but her brother Ralph, greedy of the whole of his father's wealth, did his utmost to harden the father's heart against her.

In a few years she sank under the sorrows of her lot, sending, however, in her dying moments a letter to old Giles Dormer, commending her daughter Mattie to his care. No notice was taken of this letter, which Ralph caused to be destroyed, and when Harry Dunstan followed his wife to the grave, he left the child in the charge of his sister Maria, who gave her by no means a warm welcome.

During the miserable time Mattie spent under her aunt's roof her only friend was old Jacob Sudge, who knew her story, and who had written at her mother's request the letter asking Giles Dormer to befriend the orphan child. So when a course of harsh treatment ended in Mattie being turned out of doors in a soaking rain to shift for herself, she knew of no one besides old Jacob to whom she could apply for shelter.

Great was the old man's indignation when he understood the facts of the case, and he vowed that if her own kin cast her off, she should find a home with him. So a new and happier life began for the little maid. By her sweet face and ways she twined herself round old Jacob's heart so that he could not bear to think that she would ever leave him, and as for Joe, he almost worshipped her.

Meanwhile the firm of Giles Dormer and Son went on prosperously. The old man left most of the business to his energetic son and partner, and, no longer being thus occupied, fell to brooding over the past. He had had only two children, Ralph and Grace, and thoughts of his daughter, driven away from him by his own harshness, filled his mind. From time to time he could not help reproaching himself openly for his harshness, and Ralph's attempts to re-ignite his bitter feelings against her failed. Giles Dormer begged his son to try every means of tracing Mattie's whereabouts, but Ralph secretly resolved that the latter should have no communication with her grandfather if he could possibly prevent it.

Five years passed away, and Mattie grew up into a beautiful girl, the delight of old Jacob's eyes. But the latter felt that he was not growing younger, and that it was his duty to make at least one more effort to induce



'YOU ARE SOAKING WET, CHILD!'

Giles Dormer to receive his grandchild. He therefore called with Mattie at the house, but instead of Giles, whom he had hoped to see, they were received by Ralph, who froze them by his icy coldness, and assured them that their desire for a reconciliation was by no means shared by himself or his father.

'Never mind, dearie,' said Jacob, on their return home, 'we will have one more try to see your grandfather. I hear he has had a serious illness lately, and that must have softened him a little, I think.'

So another call was made, and this time, in answer to the note which Jacob sent in, a message came that Mr. Dormer would see them.

There was a yearning look in the old man's eyes as he pushed back Mattie's bright curls and gazed into her face. 'Grace! Grace!' he muttered, brokenly; 'have you come back to me in your child?'

'Ah!' exclaimed Jacob, as Ralph, with an angry look on his face, appeared at the door, 'I see now who it was that prevented this breach being healed long ago!'

'And so, father, my orders have not been sufficient to prevent your being troubled with impostors!'

'Silence, Ralph!' said Giles Dormer, sternly; 'how dare you apply such a name to a relative of mine!'

'If you are anxious about money,' said Jacob, 'let me tell you, Ralph Dormer, that you can make your mind easy. I have been putting by for a good many years, and Mattie will be well provided for.'

And so to Giles Dormer came the opportunity for which he had longed, of making up in some measure to his daughter's child for the sorrow he had caused her mother. His own yearning over his lost daughter gave him, too, some glimpse of the love of God for his straying children, and aroused in him a desire to respond to it. So even his own wrong-doing was over-ruled by God to his own spiritual good, for in the short span of life left to him Giles Dormer did his best to live as an obedient and loving child of his Father in heaven.—'Friendly Greetings.'