

## RAG AND TAG.

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Return from India," "Little Nellie," &c.)

## CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

All of a sudden—the children having been intently gazing at the east window, an old and very beautiful one, all filled in with dark blue and purple glass, its subject "Our Saviour blessing the little children"—the great organ in the gallery far behind them sent its first notes swelling and streaming through the church; and as the beautiful chords rose and fell, echoing and vibrating throughout the building, and away softly and slowly, the clergyman entered the reading-desk. Rag and Tag felt as if their hearts would never stop beating, and as if the sound they made must be heard by all the little boys and girls and people close by.

Of course they looked about a good deal during the service, it was all so strange to them; but on the whole they behaved very well, and John and his wife were quite satisfied. When it came to the sermon they listened very attentively, for Mr. and Mrs. Burton had promised them a penny apiece if they could find out the text in the large Bible when they got home. The verse the clergyman chose was, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" and as he spoke of the love of Jesus, so exceeding and so great, in dying not only for His friends,

but for those that hated Him, willing to suffer that cruel death that the smile of God might again rest on the work of His own hands, the beings he had made, who in their blindness and hardness of heart had wandered so far from him in the darkness and wickedness of sin that it was only His own strong arm that could bring salvation—and went on to say how the Lord Jesus rejoiced when a wanderer was brought home and a heart trusted in Him, and how the angels rejoiced when they saw the joy of their Lord over a repentant sinner—and spoke of the joys of heaven, of its pathways of gold, of its service of love, of its freedom from sin, of being for ever with the Lord—how none would be cast out who came to God through Jesus, and how all might come that very moment, even the youngest child

within the sound of his voice, and claiming God's promises become His own true servant living and dying for Him, Rag and Tag felt as if they must jump up and say they wanted to belong to Him. Love can break the stoniest heart, and this wonderful story—only quite lately heard and so little understood by these poor little waifs and strays, now told them so earnestly and powerfully in all its simplicity and beauty—was brought home to their empty, thirsting hearts, as God's Spirit alone can bring it; and although very dark and ignorant, their earnest longing was to know more about Jesus and His love, and to really and truly become a "gooder boy and gel."

By the time the sermon was over, large tears were rolling down Rag's still pale cheeks; whilst Tag kept brushing his away with two fingers, at the same time

pered gently; "don't talk now—just wait a moment. I want to speak to this little girl, Mrs. Burton," he added nodding in a friendly way to her and John; "and to the boy too. Just stand on one side for a minute; I have a word to say to you all. Will you wait till I am rid of my gown and have seen the clergyman in the vestry, and then I'll be with you? Or if you would rather go home I can follow—only it will take me a bit out of the way, and I must be home to my little sick girl."

"All right, Mr. Stubbins, sir," said John. "My missis and I and the young ones can wait."

By this time Rag had got hold of Tag's hand, and pulled him to a little distance from John and his wife.

"Tag, Tag, I know him now; it's the man as sent me for the orangers for his lill' sick gel, and he'll be down upon me for those

she at him in dismay—they could not make it out at all, when up came Mr. Stubbins to solve the difficulty.

"I tell you what, Mrs. Burton, I have sent word home to my little girl to get her supper to-night without me, for I am anxious to have a word or two with you, and it's cold standing here, and you will let me have my meal with you instead; it won't be the first time by a long way that I have supped with you."

"And I hope it may not be the last, I'm sure that I do," added hospitable Mrs. Burton.

Just as Mr. Stubbins and John were walking off together, leaving Mrs. Burton and the children to follow, Rag darted up to him, and putting a little piece of dirty paper in his hand, in which were wrapped the two pennies he had given her, exclaimed eagerly,

"There they are, sir. I've kept them iver since; an' Tag an' I did mean to try and get the orangers yet for your lill' gel, we did, indeed, but we've niver had the 'pertunity."

The verger turned round; then taking the pennies from the poor trembling little child, he smiled a kind, gentle smile upon her, and walked on.

"He's got his pence now—that's off our minds; ain't you glad just?" asked Rag, with a deep sigh of relief.

Tag nodded. "But how about 'the dreadfuls' money, and the old genelman's big shilling, and the shawl and the jacket we took?" he asked.

"Oh, well I wouldn't trouble our heads about the likes of 'the dreadfuls'!" and Rag gave her chin a little chuck upwards. "They niver belonged to them, that I'm sartain sure of."

"They niver belonged to us, that's sartain surer," answered Tag.

"Well"—and Rag glanced complacently down at her neat dress, and then at her brother's—"we'd be no ways pleased to wear such odd-fitting things any more. But for all that, after all our hard work and hard blows, an' scrimping an' scraping for them two horrible 'dreadfuls,' we've the most rights to them."

"I'm not so sure that Him as we have been hearing about to-day would say we're right," said Tag, slowly. "You see, Rag, there were many worse 'dread-

opening his eyes very widely to make believe he was not crying at all.

The verger in the black gown, who had repressed Rag's rising merriment so effectually at the beginning of the service, was standing at the doorway through which they must pass on leaving the church; and as Rag passed him, pushed gently along by Mrs. Burton, who herself was being rather pushed by those behind her, he, to the little girl's great surprise and some alarm, laid his hand upon her shoulder and drew her to his side.

"Please, please, sir," said poor Rag, in a loud whisper, almost ready to burst out crying, "I didn't laugh much, only a very, very little, an' I stopped d'rectly I see'd you looking so hard at me."

"Hush, child, hush," he whis-

pennies—but I've got them in my pocket; I've kept them there ever since. He won't tell them what bad uns we've been an' take us from them, will he, an' we have to go back to 'the dreadfuls'?—an' me just wantin' to be a betterer gel. O, Tag, I wishes now as we had niver com'd to church."

"My wee lass, why?"—and John, who had just overheard the last remark, took her little cold, trembling hand in his.

"It's just this, master," said Tag, trying to speak bravely, but with a very quavering sound in his voice. "That man knows somethin' about us which looks bad, but which ain't really bad, and Rag is so afraid of going back to those 'dreadfuls,' and—and so am I;" here the boy's voice failed him.

John looked at his wife and



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