

Dave, looking half blindly from the one to the other, wondering why Jarvis was not there to help him, yet with a sudden sickening revulsion of certainty that Jarvis had used him as a tool for the theft.

"Will you charge him, sir?" asked the constable.

"Certainly; it will be a warning to him," answered the gentleman; and after a moment's violent resistance on the part of Dave, the three proceeded together to the police-station, followed by a small crowd of juveniles.

The magistrate was sitting in court, and the evidence was laid before him, added to which Dave was charged with severely assaulting the policeman, whom, in trying to escape, he had kicked with his hobnailed boots.

Sentence was passed upon him for the theft and assault—three weeks in all; and the red head disappeared from the dock, and Dave was a prison-boy.

He went down to the gaol in the van, feeling as though he "didn't care now what became of him—not he;" and he came out three weeks later a desolate child, into the shrouding fog.

#### CHAPTER II. SUNNYSIDE.

Cold and hungry and friendless, Dave wandered on to a pretty village on the outskirts of Mereham; many an artist loved to linger at Bankside, on account of its beautiful river scenery, and others stayed there in fine weather for the sake of boating and fishing.

The fog was clearing now, and Dave could see the shining river spanned by an ornamental bridge, and the handsome villas with their spreading lawns and conservatories full of rare choice flowers.

"How fine it must be to be rich!" thought Dave, gazing at the gleam of the firelight upon crimson curtains and plate-glass windows; "there's food to be had in there—they don't know what it is to be all over cuts and chilblains, and not a bit of bread a-lying about anywhere to be picked up, that I can see."

Slowly and hesitatingly (for Dave was thoroughly frightened of all this grandeur) he entered the opened gate of one of the finest of the mansions, intending to make his way to the kitchen entrance, and beg for a little food. But the approach to "Sunnyside" was rather perplexing, and he found himself instead before the deep bay window of a large, comfortable room, into which he could look quite plainly from the gravel path outside.

Something like envy filled the heart of the little outcast as he gazed upon a boy, attired in warm black velvet, who lay upon a couch, comfortably wrapped in a handsome skin rug. This child

of luxury seemed about his own age, but oh! what a difference there was between them!

"He's had dinner, I reckon," thought Dave, miserably; "maybe plum duff, and gravy 'taters. There ain't no shivering for him, neither. Ain't he just snug, and ain't he a-laughing jolly like with them there kittens, and don't that 'ere lady seem fond of him just?"

A gentle-faced lady, who had been sitting in the arm-chair by the fire reading aloud to the little boy, here rose and settled his sofa pillows for him more comfortably.

"Guess it's good to have a mother," thought poor Dave, turning gloomily away; he did not know that in one respect he and Wilfrid Joyce were alike, for they were both motherless; but Dr. Joyce's sister in Wilfrid's case, tried hard to supply the place of a mother to her little nephew.

"Hallo, youngster! lost your way, eh? You mustn't come tramping about the front garden."

The speaker was a good-natured man in coachman's livery; in Dave's eyes he was very imposing, and the frightened boy faltered out, that he was very hungry.

"Well, you won't get food, starting at mistress and young Master Willie; come round here to the kitchen, and I'll warrant cook can find you some broth."

Dave opened eyes, ears, and mouth; it was good fortune enough to be addressed so kindly, but to be promised broth, and actually to detect a warm savory smell as he neared the cook's domains!

But, unfortunately, just at that moment a side gate opened, and in walked a gentleman, at sight of whom Dave would have taken to his heels and fled, but that fright seemed to chain him to the spot.

"How often shall I have to order tramps away from the stable-yard?" he asked sternly; and then, seeing Dave's face, he exclaimed, "Why, this is the young thief who stole my purse last month—the daring rascal to come prowling about my house! I'll take care you lay hands on nothing here, you good-for-nothing fellow! Be off, or I will send for a policeman."

"Please, sir," pleaded Griffiths, with the privilege of an old servant, "he's such a little chap, and mistress said as how the broth was to be given away at the door this bitter weather."

But Dave was already out of the front gate, and a long way down the road, and Dr. Joyce passed in to toast himself at the fire, and take an hour's rest before tea with his idolized child, Wilfrid.

Mrs. Joyce had died when her little boy was born; she was a sweet Christian woman, and though she could scarcely get sufficient breath to speak, yet when they laid her little one beside her, she touched the tiny

babe, saying faintly, "Thine own, dear Lord."

Her last words were thus a prayer that her little Wilfrid might belong to God; as yet it seemed as though her dying prayer had been unheard, for though little Will heard plenty of fairy-tales, and wonderful adventures of heroes real and unreal, no one had ever told him the sweetest story of all—how Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And yet he was nine years old, and could read quite well.

You will wonder still more when I tell you that it was by his father's orders that the subject of religion was kept as an avoided one in Wilfrid's presence; Dr. Joyce said that he himself did not believe in God, and he would not have a lot of nonsense put into the boy's head.

Miss Joyce, a kind, gentle lady, who prayed in secret that the Lord would move her brother's heart to let her teach little Will of the Saviour, took good care of the child, who was by nature sweet-tempered and obedient; but often and often when the poor little fellow was in pain with the croup and asthma that so sadly afflicted him, she longed to hear his little voice falter a prayer to the loving heart of Him who pities His little ones in their pain and trouble.

But her brother, to all save Wilfrid, was a hard stern man, and Miss Joyce was frightened that if she disobeyed him, he would remove her from the care of her dearly-beloved nephew. How often she thought of the times when the doctor and his sweet wife went to the house of God together, and when morn'ing and evening the doctor used to open the Bible, and read aloud from it, and then offer prayer to God.

But since his wife's death he had seemed completely changed. He had loved her passionately, and none but himself and the Lord knew how hard he had prayed that her life might be spared. But God, in His wisdom and mercy, saw it fit to call her to himself, and from that time the doctor seemed utterly turned against religion.

I wonder what you would think of a child who turned against his mother, and would have nothing to do with her, because she had denied him something he was determined to have? You would call such a child foolish and wicked; could he not trust his mother's love to choose and decide for him?

But Dr. Joyce was acting just in this way; first of all he said, "God is cruel," and then, like the fool mentioned in the Bible, "There is no God," and then, as if to revenge himself against the Lord of Hosts, he decided to turn religion out of his house entirely.

But the dear mother's prayer had gone up to heaven with her

dying breath, and the Lord in whom she trusted had not forgotten little Will.

In envying the young master of those pretty white kittens, Dave had only judged from appearances; he did not hear the hacking cough, he did not know how many months little Will had lain upon that couch day by day, and how hard the father strove to persuade himself and others that the child was not growing weaker, and wearing away before their eyes.

He looked up gladly as his father came in, with the loving smile and dark blue eyes of his lost mother.

"Papa! we've got snow-cake for tea, and we had chicken for dinner, only I couldn't eat much because auntie gave me such a big cup of beef-tea at lunch."

Did some thought of the hungry face of the little tramp cross the doctor's mind? If it did he dismissed it with the remembrance of Dave's guilt as a thief.

"And have you been busy, papa dear? Have you been to any little boys who cough as bad as me?"

"Oh, what grammar!" cried his aunt, playfully; then she added, "But you have not coughed quite so much to-day, darling."

"Of course not," said Dr. Joyce, drawing the little golden head tenderly to his shoulder. "I believe that medicine will fatten him up out of all knowledge. This dull weather is against the strongest constitution; when the roses come you'll be quite well, my boy."

"But I have never been quite well, you know, papa; somehow I never seem to have played about like other boys."

"Oh, your chest has been a little weak," said the doctor, hastily, "but you will grow out of it; it is nothing at all. You've got that wool next to the skin?"

"Oh yes, papa; auntie takes care of that; but, papa dear, I've been thinking—suppose I don't get better, papa. Cook had a little nephew who had the croup, and he died."

"Cook is a gossiping idiot," said the doctor angrily; then he added, touching the little frail hand to his lips, "There's no fear for you, my boy; cook's nephew very likely had neither doctor nor nursing. I think we are able to insure your life for a good many years to come."

"Oh, I do hope so, papa; I don't want to die. Fancy going away from you and auntie, and everything nice and being put in the cold, dark ground."

"The flowers don't mind the cold dark ground," said his aunt, in a trembling voice.

"No, auntie; but they come up out of it, and look beautiful; I shall have to lie there for ever and ever and ever—shan't I papa? Oh, it does frighten me so."

(To be continued.)