PHIL'S HERO

C. E. BARON

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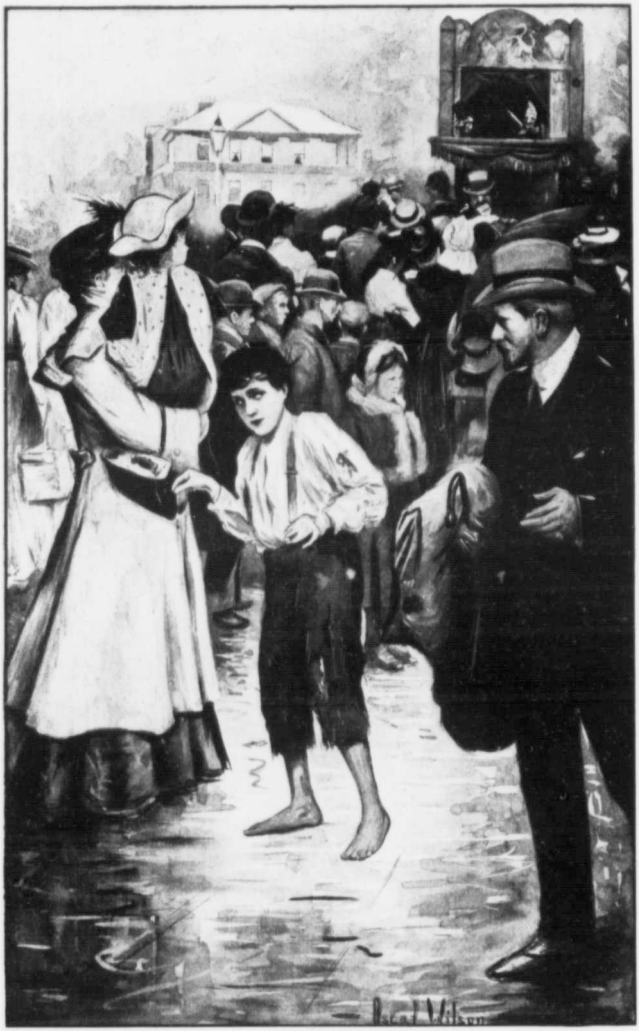

'PHIL!' THE BOY STARTED AND LOOKED ROUND.

[*See p.* 35.

Phil's Hero

OR A STREET ARAB'S RESOLVE

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH BARON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY OSCAR WILSON

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

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PHIL'S HERO

CHAPTER I

Moke's Story

'I SAY, Moke, wake up, will yer? What's the good of a pal as is allus asleep? Wake up, or I'll pitch this clay at yer.'

The boy addressed as 'Moke' opened his eyes lazily, and looked across to the spot from which the shrill treble voice came. What he saw was a little thin, ragged figure, minus boots, socks, cap and jacket, standing in a threatening attitude, with a wet clod of earth, almost as big as himself, raised aloft in both hands, in readiness to be flung at his companion.

'Now then, set up and listen, will yer? I've got somethink to tell yer.'

The elder boy, obediently raising himself, came over to the side of the younger, and both sat down at the edge of a slimy, evil-looking pool in the brickfields, letting their feet dangle into the dirty water.

It was a Sunday morning in winter: one of those occasional warm, bright mornings with no wind and no fog, which give promise of spring. The brickfields, where the two boys had come to spend their time, were on high ground, and below them they could hear the ceaseless hum of the great city from whose noise they could never quite escape.

'What 'ave yer got to tell me? Summut nice?' the still sleepy lad inquired.

'Do yer know what I'm thinkin' o' doin'?' the small boy asked. 'I'm thinkin' o' givin' up nabbin' an' takin' to papers an' matches.'

'Not goin' to nab no more, Phil?' the elder lad asked, now thoroughly roused, and in a tone of much dismay. 'What's that fer?'

'Teacher don't like it; prap's 'e wouldn't 'ave us in school if 'e knowed as we did nothink else, an' I'm fond o' teacher, arn't you?'

'Well yes, in course I am, but however 'ull we git along?'

'Papers an' matches, I tell yer, stoopid! Oh! I say, Moke, wouldn't it be fine if we got a barrer—a red 'errin' an' wegetable barrer? D'yer mind Bandy and Mick as got in that line? They soon got sech a trade that they shifted into th' surburbs! Wouldn't it be fine ef you an' me could do that?'

'I believe yer! But where'll we git the barrer an' the things to stock it?'

'Oh, we must begin with papers an' matches fust, an' you go on carryin' bags and doin' jobs fer Smilin' Sam, like yer do now, while I gits customers. I believe I'll do splendid.'

'But, Phil, where'll get the bob fer yer evenin' papers?'

'Dunno yit. 'Spect as how I'll 'ave to nab it, an' after that, I arn't going to nab no more, 'cept I'm 'ard up.'

'What 'ull Big Joe an' Smilin' Sam say 'bout yer new dodge, Phil?'

'Shan't tell 'em. Sam don't often make me stump up, so long as we pays Mother Brown fer our cupboard; an' ef we can save anythink fer the barrer, we might put it in a little hole I've found in the side of our place, an' shove some straw in after it, an' they mightn't never find it.'

''Fraid they would; they seems to smell a copper (same as a dog 'ud smell a rat) if we comes in with one under our jackets. Look 'ere, Phil, why shouldn't we move orf an' find a lodgin' somewheres t'other side o' the city—Manchester's a big place—an' keep oursels?'

'That 'ud be grand! Fancy th' old Moke a-thinkin' o' sech a big thing as that now!'

Phil sprang to his feet and slapped his comrade on the back most vigorously, while the other boy reddened with pleasure. It was very rare for him to originate an idea, and Phil's warm approval seemed to make him keen about producing something further in the same line. He began to inquire about things which he had always taken for granted before.

'Is Smilin' Sam your guv'nor, Phil? 'E seems to watch yer a bit, an' 'e won't catch on to this new idea, I'm afraid.'

'No, 'e ain't my guv'nor. I'll tell yer all as I knows 'bout Sam. 'E come to a place where I were with a lot o' kids, an' 'e axes me, afore the other folks there, to say as I were 'is lad. 'E called 'isself my guv'nor, an' yet 'e didn't know as my name were Phil! 'E called me summut else. I can't mind what. Then 'im an' me we went in the train a long way. I thought as we was never goin' to stop, an' all the way 'e kep' on tellin' me 'ow grateful an' obliged I'd ought ter be to 'im fer takin' me out o' the workhus. But on'y last week I 'ears him a-arguin' with Mother Brown 'bout our lodgin' an' keep, an' says 'e, "Phil ain't my lad; I know'd his guv'nor, but I ain't goin' ter keep 'im, 'e's sharp enough ter keep 'isself. I ain't got nothink ter do with 'im"!'

'Well, 'e keeps a pretty sharp eye on yer, ef 'e

ain't got nothink ter do with yer! Ef 'e meets me anywheres doin' jobs, 'e's allus axin', "Where's Phil?" an' a night or two as I got in afore yer, 'e come ter me an' kicked me when I'd gone to sleep, an', ses 'e, "Get up an' go an' look fer that young wagabone Phil, an' doncher lose sight on 'im when yer finds 'im. Ef yer ever comes in an' tells me as 'e 'as run orf, yer may look out, fer I'll flay yer, I will!" What's the meaning on it all?'

'Dunno,' Phil answered meditatively; ''e's allus orderin' me an' takin' tin orf me, ef 'e fancies I've got extra, same as ef 'e were a master or guv'nor or somethink. Seems queer, don't it? Seems as 'ow 'e's wantin' me fer something when I gets bigger, an's 'fraid I'll run orf afore then; an' so I will. When we gets the barrer, we'll quit, cut 'an run, an' never wisit 'im no more, an' take to one uv th' surburbs furest away. My! won't it be grand!'

'Are yer goin' ter set up papers right orf, Phil?'

'Ay, termorror, ef I can get the bawb in time.'

The boys sat silent for a while after this talk, and amused themselves by throwing dry mud into the pool. After a time, Moke produced their dinner from the recesses of a very large pocket inside his very large jacket. It was an understood thing that he should be the bearer of the provisions

on any joint expedition, because he could carry a good deal without appearing to be carrying anything. He now produced two thick slices of bread and a very small portion of coarse-looking brawn, of which the boys partook eagerly.

During their meal some black clouds had been gathering, which told of coming rain, and before long the first drops fell so heavily that they ran for shelter to the angle of a high wall at the back of the nearest houses, where they crouched down close together in the one dry corner to be found there. Moke took off his large jacket and spread it over both, giving Phil the driest spot underneath it; and as it was evident that they could not go further towards the 'real country,' as they had meant to do when they left the city early that morning, they made up their minds to waiting where they were until the rain should cease, or until the going round of the milk-carts should warn them that it was time to retrace their steps for the evening Ragged School.

Had they been boys more happily circumstanced they would probably have vented their disappointment in bad temper and loud complaints, but their lives of daily hardship had taught them to make little of small vexations, and they whistled and talked as cheerily as if they had been able to continue their expedition.

'Tell us somethink, can't yer?' Phil demanded after a time. 'You've got somethink 'bout a bobby as you've promised to tell me sometime — out with it.'

A dark cloud came over the elder boy's face at this request, and a look of anger and revenge stole into his usually dull and heavy eyes. He seemed to be calling back memories of a painful kind, and Phil twisted round and looked up into his face, wondering at his silence and at the scowl which he had never seen there before.

'What's up, Moke?' he asked, as his companion did not speak; ''ave yer been took bad?'

'No, Phil; no!'

The words came out slowly and sadly, and after another pause he suddenly broke out angrily into strong and abusive language about a certain policeman, whom he blamed for spoiling his life and making him a thief.

'Come, lets 'ave it from the start,' said Phil. 'It 'appened when you was livin' in the country, didn't it? Tell us all about it, do, Moke! there ain't nobody to listen out 'ere; fire away!'

'Yes, I'll tell yer; but it do make me feel bad when I thinks of it. Yer knows, Phil, as I was brought up by me aunt as 'ad a little shop in a village a long way from 'ere. I was same as you, not 'avin no guv'nor nor nobody; only jest me aunt. I'd used

ter go ter school, an' they said I was that slow I couldn't learn, an' th' old lady said it were wastin' me time, an' she sent me ter work. I'd a very good place, plenty o' wittles an' a nice little place ter sleep in, top of th' stable. There was th' pony ter see to an' th' little trap ter clean, an' a lot of diggin' ter do. She 'ad lots of apples an' pears, an' it were along o' them as I got run in!'

'Did yer nab 'em, Moke?' Phil here interrupted. 'They never run yer in for takin' apples!'

'Wall, yer see, some o' them apples was werry good uns, an' th' old lady she wes wantin' ter send a lot away at Christmas to 'er sons an' daughters as lived in Lunnon, an' she'd say ter me, "See as yer keeps them brown eatin' uns by theirsels inth' dryest part o' th' loft, an mind as nobody touches 'em." Sometimes she'd climb th' ladder an' 'ave a look into th' loft 'erself. Well, one day I saw as they'd been moved an' some took, an' I told 'er, an' she come up ter see an' said she'd tell th' bobby ter look after it. Well, 'e come an' 'ad a long talk with 'er, an' the werry next day a lot more apples wes gone. 'E come again, an' they fetches me hin an' jaws me about stealin' th' apples. It warn't no use me tellin' 'em I 'adn't took none. *She* would 'ave b'lieved me, but this young bobby as 'ad only lately come ter th' place, 'e swore as it were me. After that I thought as I'd watch an'

try ter catch th' thief meself. Fer two nights I slep' among the straw in th' apple loft, an' on th' second night as I were just droppin' asleep, I 'ears a noise an' sees a light. I keeps quiet till I 'ears the bumpin' of apples in a sack, an' then I lifts up me 'ead out of th' straw an' sees that willanous bobby fillin' a big sack with th' very best apples! I lifts me 'ead too much, an' 'e sees me, an' grabs me tight an' drags me down an' calls up th' old lady, an' tells 'er as 'e'd found me stealin' th' apples, an' shows 'er th' sack arf full. In course I told 'er it wes 'im an' not me as done it, but they both says as that were a werry fine way of gettin' out of it. She gives that bobby a 'arf sovereign! I seed 'er; an' he runs me in an' gets me a month!'

Here the big lad paused and wiped his eyes with his ragged shirt sleeve, while Phil broke in eagerly—

'Didn't yer trip 'im up, nor nab 'is things nor nothing when yer come out, Moke?'

'No, I didn't. Me haunt shut th' door agen me, an' nobody wouldn't give me a bit, an' I starts an' tramps it ter Manchester. I'm glad as I fell in with you, Phil, but it's that bobby as made me start in this line, an' I 'ates the 'ole crew of 'em, I does, like pizen!'

'Never yer mind 'em, Moke,' Phil said cheerily.

'We'll be even with 'em some day. Yer know that trick as Sam teached me? Ter shoot 'tween a bobby's legs an' upset 'im. I've not tried it on a real bobby yet, but yer knows as I can lay *you* flat with it, don't yer, Moke? Well, I'll just try it on th' first real tall un I sees, ter pay 'im orf fer all that other chap did ter you!'

Moke's story had certainly helped to pass the time, and it did not seem long before the milk-carts began to be heard rattling up the streets, and the boys got up and shook themselves, stamping on the wet ground to restore feeling to their cramped limbs. Moke's face was unusually clouded, but Phil turned towards the city with eagerness, and appeared to forget the story he had just heard, in the anticipation of evening school.

'What are you going to say about Jackears?' he inquired of his companion as they started on their walk.

'Jackears; who's 'e?' the elder boy asked.

''Im as teacher told us ter tell 'im 'bout ter-night. You've never forgot Jackears what climbed the tree ter see teacher goin' by?'

'I b'lieve I'd fergot 'bout 'im, but I mind it now.'

'What are yer goin' ter say, Moke?' the little questioner repeated.

'Don't quite know. Seems ter me 'e were a flat. Who'd be poor ef they could be rich, I wonders? Ef I'd got a lot uv money like 'im, yer wouldn't catch me a-givin of it away like 'e did! What are yer goin' ter say yerself, Phil?'

'Seems as ef teacher were pleased with 'im some'ow! I'd do a lot ter please teacher!'

'I wonder 'ow 'e got such a rum name?'

'I s'pose 'e were one uv those Hinjun fellers as teacher seed when 'e were in Hinjia! D'ye mind as 'e told us 'bout some elephants 'e saw there, an' 'ow the men-folk wears white cloes?'

'But, Phil, it weren't *teacher* as saw Jackears in the tree, were it? Warn't 'e tellin' us it out of th' Bible?'

'In course not, silly. Didn't 'e say that "'E came along ter Jericho?" That's in Hinjia, ain't it?'

'I never thought o' that. I wonder what Jackears did when 'e'd give away all 'is tin?'

'We'll ask teacher,' Phil said brightly. 'It beats me why 'e wanted ter pay back four bawb fer ev'ry one 'e'd took!'

The pair had now reached the neighbourhood familiar to them, and loitered about till the welcome dusk told them that six o'clock was near, when they turned eagerly towards the large, gloomy-looking buildings known as St. A——

Schools. All the narrow streets approaching the schools were swarming with boys, girls, and very young children, jostling, shouting, fighting, struggling, few having any trace of hat or cap, and at least one half of them being barefoot.

Nearly a thousand children were wont to gather every winter Sunday evening in the Ragged Schools held under the shadow of the old church which stood a few streets off. The congregation who worshipped there (most of them families in comfortable circumstances) supplied the teachers for this rescue work among the slum children.

The vicar, whose force of character gathered about him so large a band of capable workers, felt the greatest responsibility for that part of his parish from which many of these lads and girls came, including, as it did, some of the worst of the crowded courts and alleys which were to be found in Old Deansgate, as it was thirty years ago; nor was there any body of his workers in whom he reposed greater confidence than the superintendents and teachers of his Sunday evening Ragged Schools.

As the workers in each department passed through the crowds waiting for admission on this wet Sunday evening, there was a quiet earnestness and solemnity on most of their faces, even while they greeted the children with kindly looks and

words, for they never knew what difficulties might be before them.

The short, brisk, alert superintendent of the boys' school, whose bright, piercing eye was such a power among the lads, was, as usual, accompanied by his senior teacher, whose strong face broke into a quiet smile as he was enthusiastically hailed by Moke and Phil as "Teacher."

A few minutes after the teachers' arrival the doors were opened, and with whoops and yells the ragged crew charged the stone stairs, as if they had been storming a battery. The younger children swept down into the basement, and the girls disappeared within the doors of the lower rooms, a strange and sudden silence falling on the streets, which had been such a pandemonium for the last hour.

CHAPTER II

A Strange School

'GOOD gracious, Norman, you are surely not going out in such a deluge as this? From the long time you have been standing at that window you must be convinced that it is sheer madness to turn out to-night! Whatever ails the weather I don't know, but it is in the most deplorable state; indeed, it seems just trying to prove how disgusting and horrible weather can be! Even that precious Ragged School, I hope, is not going to weigh down the scale against possible pneumonia, congestion, bronchitis, inflammation, and all the other horrible things which Dr. Black rolls off his tongue so glibly to threaten *me* with when I happen to want to keep an engagement in damp weather! Of all the frantic ideas which ever came into anyone's head, this Ragged School is the worst! Here you are in a nice warm, comfortable room, with books and music and a nice young friend ready to sing and play to you, and yet I know that at this minute you are thinking of starting off for a two-mile walk, in spite of the

deluge outside, and of sitting down, wet through, on a hard chair in a dull, dark schoolroom, to teach—goodness knows what—to a set of vulgar, dirty, disgusting young scoundrels (thieves and pickpockets among them, very likely), and when you come in Miss Gray will be gone and I shall be too sleepy to benefit by your company! Do be sensible for once and leave the rags and tatters to take care of themselves on such a desperately hopeless night as this!'

The speaker was a fine, tall, good-looking and well-dressed woman. A good-tempered smile was on her face even while she poured out her favourite adjectives in condemnation of her stepson's intentions with regard to the Ragged School, and in spite of her words it was easy to see that she had not the faintest hope of changing his purpose.

By her side sat a fair, attractive girl, a near neighbour, who had just come quietly into the room to join the Sunday afternoon tea, having greeted her hostess in the hall.

'I'm sorry, Miss Gray,' the young man said, turning from the window and holding out his hand with a smile of welcome; 'I did not know that you were here. It is good of you to come and keep the mater company this evening, as she cannot go out.'

'I suppose that means that you *are* going out, then? I expect you would go if a volcano were pouring liquid fire down the streets, or if the snow were six feet deep!'

'Come now, mater, you know that I am always glad to go out or stay in with you when I can, but Sunday evening is my regular "night out," and I can no more give it up, than cook can give up hers! Do you remember when you asked the Blakes to dine with us on a Tuesday, how cook protested because it was her "night out"? You would have been amused at the scene,' he said, turning to the girl, while his mouth twitched at the recollection—'there stood cook (who has been with us for a dozen years or so), twisting her apron into a sort of rope, her face getting redder and redder, while she stammered—"Which bein' my night out I can't cook for no visitors of a Toosday—which is gravy soup and beefsteak pie night—'cos Mary she can't spoil 'em when cooked in the mornin' ready for 'er to 'eat hup!" You had to give in, had you not, mater? You wrote and explained matters, and pressed the Blakes to come some evening when it was not cook's "night out!" You are not going to treat me worse than cook, are you, and try to interfere with my "night out?"'

'You ridiculous boy!' the elder lady responded

merrily. 'Of course you must please yourself, only that wretched Ragged School—— However, here comes tea, and I suppose you will not be going out for another hour, shall you?'

As the trio gathered round the dainty tea-table the girl said in a low, tremulous voice, 'Will you tell us something about the school, Mr. Miller? I often think that there are more fascinating stories in the lives of the poor in this city than any which one finds in fiction. I do want to know something more about them!'

'Yes,' broke in the hostess; 'I believe you are just the sort of girl to want to go to these terrible places yourself. I believe that the prospect of going out to the Cannibal Islands would just suit you—now would it not?—or to some of those fever and ague places where missionaries die by scores? I think you had better not tell her anything, Norman, or you will make her as bad as yourself.'

'Now, mater, that is too cruel! You know that you often like to hear about the Ragged School yourself. We are likely to have rather a lively time of it to-night,' he added, turning his steady eyes towards the girl, who was eagerly listening. 'The superintendent has resolved to break the cane before the school and give up its use, and it is not easy to foretell what sort of an effect this piece of news will have on the lads. I am not one who

sees a lion in every path, but I must say that I should not have had courage for such a step. Our superintendent is about four feet eight, and numbers of the lads are head and shoulders taller than he is; still, he has a wonderful eye, which makes most wrongdoers quail, and he does not know what fear is!'

'But, surely, you do not *cane* boys at the Sunday-school,' broke in Mrs. Miller. 'Not but what they are sure to richly deserve it, the young imps! But it is not usual, is it?'

'Certainly not, nor desirable in the ordinary Sunday-school, and we only resort to it under special circumstances at the Ragged School. Our boys' department consists of upwards of three hundred lads of all ages above about eight, so far as we can judge. Some of them come from the lowest dens in the city. The younger ones are veritable street arabs; a few sell papers or matches in the streets, and a very limited number have any certain dwelling-place. They pay for a night's lodging when they can, and at other times sleep under archways and in dark corners wherever they can hide. Not a few come from a spot known as "The Thieves' Quarters," in Deansgate, and of the elder lads a fair number have already seen the inside of a jail. Of course, there are some who are only struggling with poverty, and who are not

quite homeless; little lads with sad, pinched faces who are trying to be honest and to earn for themselves, and perhaps for a sick or drunken father or mother as well. They are too ragged for the Sunday-school, and they creep in and get round the warm stove as soon as the school door is open, and leave the building most reluctantly when closing time comes.'

'Poor little chaps!' Miss Gray exclaimed sympathetically.

'The first lesson we try to teach the lads,' he continued, 'is that we are their friends, and are not wanting to spy on their outside lives or to give them up to the police. Once convince them of these facts and we have a great moral hold on them, and if we always had the same boys every Sunday night, we should get on famously. The pity of it is that we do not, for on wet, cold nights a fresh lot will come streaming in, lads of the worst type, who are just driven in when the weather is too bad for them to prowl about the streets. A dozen or so of this kind scattered about the school have a very bad effect. They don't want to be taught, and they try to upset all steadiness. They will whistle, interrupt, pick quarrels, raise street cries to excite the rest, and even get up free fights, unless the teacher is particularly watchful. It is this type of lad for whom

we resort to the cane. When the teacher can do nothing with him, he hauls him into the class-room and locks him in. There are sometimes three or four lads in at once, and after the school is dismissed the superintendent hears the case from the teacher, and canes each lad before he is let out. I think the separation of the culprit from his companions, and the solitary confinement, do him more real good than the caning, although the superintendent does not play at caning when he has to do it. It is a sight to see the little man with the eagle eye standing up to a great tall fellow of sixteen or seventeen ; but they all know that he is just, and they seldom or never try to take revenge, as they might easily do, on his way home. I generally walk with him through the worst of the streets near the school, but it seems hardly necessary. His kindly " Good-night, lads," as he passes along, is usually responded to most heartily even by the black sheep. In their inmost hearts they all know that we are their true friends and want to help them. But I am sure I am tiring you with all this talk about my hobby; I never know when to stop.'

The deep interest in the girl's face, however, denied all thought of weariness, even before she exclaimed eagerly: 'Oh no; it is so good of you to talk to me about them; do, please, tell me some

more! I want to know how you set about teaching them, and how they listen?'

'Well, I must say I think that a little gift in the story-telling line is almost a necessity for a Ragged School teacher. The lads are sharp as needles, and full of mischief, and unless you get their attention and interest right from the beginning, your evening's teaching is no good, and you spend your time in vainly trying to keep order; but if you can once interest them deeply, an absorbed look comes into their eyes, they slip down from off the forms and squat on the floor, looking up into your face and listening with all their might; they seem to become deaf and blind to the noises and scrimmages which may be going on in the very next class. Those are moments when a teacher feels that he is dealing with the Divine Image which is hidden away in each of these outcasts, and when he feels that the whole future life of some of these lads may depend on the way in which he uses his opportunity.'

The speaker's voice trembled a little as he broke off, and the silence of his hearers testified to their deep interest and sympathy. The girl's eyes were full of tears, and she almost whispered the words: 'Will you tell us what you are going to talk to them about to-night?'

'I am a little afraid that we may have an

exciting time to-night, and that much teaching may be out of the question. Still I hope not, for I expect a particularly interesting evening. Last Sunday I told them the story of Zacchæus the publican, who climbed the sycamore tree to see the great Jewish Teacher as He passed through Jericho. I do not believe that a single lad in the class (and there are some of fifteen or sixteen, as well as younger ones) had ever heard the story. The few remarks which they interspersed, about the tree climbing, were rather distracting to the story-teller! "Same as we'd swarm up a lamp-post to see a percession!" "But, teacher, 'e were a toff, wouldn't the kids 'ave a jolly lark shiein' sods an' mud at 'im!" "'E'd think as th' cops 'ad got 'im, sure enough, when the percession stopped under the tree, wouldn't 'e?" and so on. But it was what passed in Zacchæus' house that puzzled them the most. I told them how the Great Teacher chose this man's house to rest and take food in, after His long journey to reach Jericho, and how angry the crowd were because He had chosen the house of the one whom they thought the biggest sinner in the town. I pictured to them as well as I could the bowl of water brought by a servant and poured over the Traveller's hot hands and tired, dusty feet, the sweet-scented oil brought to anoint His head, and the

low sofa or divan on which He was asked to recline while food was served in the dwelling of this rich man. Then I tried to picture to them the dramatic scene which followed, when the little man rose up from his own divan and, standing there in the midst of the tokens of his ill-gotten wealth, not only confessed his sin, but made the most splendid restitution. As we should put it, by one stroke of the pen he cancelled and signed away the whole of his possessions, promising to give half of his goods to feed the poor, and to use the other half in paying back to each person from whom he had extorted money unjustly, four times as much as he had taken from him. At this point in the story we broke off, and I promised to tell the rest to-night, and asked them to think about it during the week, and to be ready to tell me to-night their thoughts about *Zacchæus*. I strongly suspect that they will all agree with one big lad, who had been listening intently, and who at the close of the story, said (half under his breath): "What a softy 'e were!" '

'Good gracious, Norman! Is that the way you let them talk about Scripture? How improper and irreverent!'

'But, you see, mater, they do not know what reverence or its opposite means! When the new lads come in, the only thing they appear to know

about the Bible is, that it is the book the witnesses in court have to kiss when they give evidence to get men and boys put in prison!'

'How deeply interesting it all is,' said the girl at this point of the talk, 'and how I should love to visit those schools! Is there a girls' department as well?'

'Oh yes; quite as large and quite as rough in its own way as the boys', and there is a very large infant school besides. There is one of my lads who from his size really ought to have been put there. I fancy that he is nearly ten years old, although a casual observer would be sure to pronounce him to be about seven. He has no idea whatever of his own age, nor of his own name, except that he is always called Phil. I think that he interests me as much as any boy in the class. He came in a few weeks ago with a tall strong lad who looks as if he ought to be following the plough, and is quite unlike the sharp street arab. Phil appeared to bring the other in, and they are seldom seen apart. Phil is small and thin and wiry, and wears about as few garments as it is possible for a boy to appear in. He might have been trained for an acrobat, judging from his quick, springy movements. He reminds me of an indiarubber ball. I believe that if his face were clean enough for one to see his features properly,

he would be found to be a striking-looking child. He has hair such as we see in pictures of the Fiji Islanders, standing up in a sort of furze bush round his head and showing to the best advantage his wonderfully intelligent eyes. He grasps every idea very quickly, often explaining things to suit the duller intellect of his chum. They are quite an unusual couple. Phil seems to be very much devoted to me, although I have taken no special notice of him, beyond the fact that I find myself continually looking into his absorbed eyes as he squats on the floor at my feet during the telling of a story. A listener of that sort is a great help to a teacher.'

'Could you not bring that child up to see us some day, Norman?' asked Mrs. Miller, as, after a glance at the clock, he rose to leave them. 'He could have a good meal in the kitchen, and perhaps we could manage a bath and some clothes for him.'

'Not unless you are willing to risk your silver spoons or other useful articles being missing after the visit,' was the laughing reply. Then, seeing the horror on his step-mother's face, he added gravely: 'I believe that the strange pair I have told you of come from the Thieves' Quarter in the worst part of Old Deansgate, and no lad but one being trained to steal would be living just

there. I fear you are shocked, but mind, I trust there are better things in store for that fine little chap. He is young enough to make me hopeful of saving him, and I mean to try my best in his case.'

CHAPTER III

The Burglar's Pupil

'WHY, Norman, off already!' Mrs. Miller exclaimed, sailing into the breakfast-room as her step-son was just preparing to leave it. 'Surely you are very early or I am very late! I was looking forward to hearing an exciting account of your scrimmages at the Ragged School last night.'

'I'm afraid it must wait till evening,' the young man replied, 'for my time is up. By the way, mater,' he added, turning back from the hall door, 'you have not forgotten that Dorothy Whittaker comes to-day, have you?'

'Why, I declare I had! Dear me, I have promised to dine with the Harveys. I'm afraid you will have to entertain your *protégée* yourself, but I will give orders for her room to be got ready. I had no idea she was coming so soon.'

'You know, mater, that it is the ordinary breaking-up time for the boarding-schools. It is awfully good of you to have her, and I hope she

will be less trouble, as she is a year older than when she was with us before.'

'I hope so, I'm sure. She truly was *l'enfant terrible* then! But her mother's death has altered her, I think you said.'

'I believe so. I will meet her and bring her up, and will arrange to be at home this evening with her. Now I must run, or I shall be late.'

Dorothy Whittaker was the only daughter of a late tenant of the Millers in the Derbyshire village where most of their property lay. Her father had been a mill-owner, corn-dealer and fancy farmer combined; but his easy-going nature and lack of businesslike habits had prevented him from getting on in the world, and after his wife's death things became worse, and at length he had had to give up his pleasant house and business connection and to start again in such work as he could get to do in Birmingham. Their mother's own property being secured to his two children, they were kept at school, but had no home to go to in the holidays. It had been Mrs. Whittaker's last request that Mr. Norman Miller should act as guardian to her boy and girl, together with her old friend Miss Sturrock, to whose school Dorothy had been sent. The children's father most urgently seconded this request, knowing that the state of his affairs would prevent him taking

much oversight of them himself for many years to come. There had been very friendly intercourse with their wealthier neighbour in more prosperous days, and both Jack and Dorothy were glad to acknowledge their old friend as guardian, and to be guided by him, more especially as there was a certain uncle in London, a struggling barrister, greatly disliked by both of them, and under whose care they had much feared they might be placed.

The motherless boy and girl had spent their summer holiday at the Millers' house, in their old village home, but Mrs. Miller objected to Jack coming to Manchester this time, and other arrangements had been made for him.

As the afternoon train from Derbyshire steamed into the station, the girlish face which her guardian was looking for did not appear at any of the carriage windows, and when at last he found her waiting for him on the platform, there was a gloom and a silence about her which told him plainly that this visit was against her inclinations.

Dorothy was a very good-looking girl, with striking features and expressive dark eyes. She was tall for fourteen, and had a certain self-reliance about her which made her appear older than she really was.

'May we walk, please?' she asked, as her

companion moved towards the line of cabs. 'I'm so tired of being shut up in that train, and my box went yesterday; I have only this bag to carry.'

'I'm afraid we can't walk all the way, it would take too long, but we might walk across to the omnibus and go up in that if you liked. You will certainly see more of the city in that way.'

They had not gone far when they passed a crowd of people gathered in an open space greatly enjoying a Punch and Judy show. Glancing carelessly towards them, the gentleman stopped, looked more closely, and then said quietly, 'Will you wait here, Dorothy, I will only leave you a moment?' Hastily crossing over towards the group, he came up with a very small and very ragged boy, who was also creeping stealthily towards them, his eyes fixed, not on the show, but on an open satchel hanging on a woman's arm. She had stooped to lift up a child to see the show, and was evidently too much interested to notice that her purse was plainly to be seen in the open satchel, and that a little lad with tigerlike movements was close upon it.

'Phil!' The boy started and looked round. Seeing his teacher he turned from the woman and the tempting purse, and, with an appearance of innocence, said, 'Is it you, teacher? A good Punch that?'

'Come and carry this bag, Phil, the one the young lady has'; and Phil, furtively glancing at the policeman who was also crossing in his direction, quietly took the bag and said most innocently, 'Which way, teacher?'

Police constable XB had his own suspicions, but when he saw who it was whom the boy spoke to as 'teacher,' he saluted and passed on, for almost all the police force knew Mr. Miller by sight and by repute, since he had opened certain Sunday Evening Short Services for their members at the different centres of their beats.

'Climb up outside, Phil, and give me the bag,' said Mr. Miller, handing Dorothy into the Cheetham Hill omnibus.

Phil was in the seventh heaven! What mattered the biting north wind which was finding its way through his poor, thin garments? What mattered the numbness of his little blue legs and feet dangling halfway to the ground, nor yet the pitying looks of the people sitting beside him? Was he not having a real 'penny fare' out in the *surburbs* and probably going to see the place where 'Teacher' lived?

He glanced keenly at the names of streets and roads, and tried to remember them, in order to be able to find this part again, and, as they rolled on, he decided that this *surburb* would do very well

for the *wegetable barrer*, and the disappointment of not having yet secured that shilling which was to open the way to paper-selling and honesty passed for the time from his mind, and he only knew that he was enjoying himself hugely.

A short walk after leaving the omnibus brought the party to the house, which Phil observed was numbered on the large garden gate 27, although it was a detached house standing in its own grounds. He was taken round the house to the back kitchen door, where a call of, 'Cook, can you come here?' brought a stout, middle-aged person, with a kindly face, to the door.

'Why, Mr. Norman, whatever 'ave yer got there? Well, to be sure, 'e do look cold!'

'Will you put him in the *back* kitchen, cook. Mind what I say! I see you have a fire there. Let him sit by it till I come to him, and perhaps you can manage a bowl of soup or cup of tea while he is waiting for me.'

'Come in, boy, and set down there,' said cook, while her master hastily went off to take Dorothy in. 'Now don't you be meddlin' with nothun! I know your sort, and not a step nearer the kitchen do you come! I'll see what I can give you soon, but what with Mary 'avin' 'er day out and Sarah took bad and gone to bed, I'm in a pretty fluster to get tea in, and then dinner

cooked.' Bustling away into the other kitchen in the midst of her remarks, Phil could hear her addressing all the inanimate residents there, from the kettle down to the coal shovel, and inquiring of each whether she was not the most unfortunate of women to have such a set of ailing holiday-makers for kitchen companions!

'''Ow do yer do, miss?' as Dorothy came into the kitchen to speak to her. 'You must excuse me bein' a bit behind, but I'll soon have some tea ready for you. You have *growed*, miss, you have. I'll jest show you yer room, for Mrs. Miller's out and Sarah a bit out-of-sorts; which bed's the best place for sech.'

'No coal in, of course,' began the voice again, after returning to the kitchen; 'troubles never comes single, as sayin' is.'

Two bright eyes and a shock of curly black hair now appeared round the doorpost of the kitchen door, and Phil's voice was heard in a loud whisper: 'Please, missis, may I fetch yer some coals? Gimme th' shovel. I seed coal place as I come in.'

'You did, did yer! Then yer hadn't ought to! Here 'tis, bring 'em quick now. That will do, now go and sit down again where I put you,' cook commanded, as she took the coal from him at the kitchen door; 'no comin' in here.'

Phil returned to his chair, and the soliloquy in the kitchen continued—

'Dearie me, to think as I 'ave to take tea in, this special evenin', the only time as I can't get a clean cap an' apron! Whatever was Mary a-doin' to push that door handle inside. It ain't no sort of use tryin' to open it, for get in I can't.'

Here the bright eyes and mop of hair, as well as half Phil's little body, twisted themselves round the half open kitchen door.

'Missis, if yer'll show me yer winder, I'll get in an' open the door for yer. 'Ave yer got a meat 'ook anywheres an' a bit o' cloes line?'

'Well, I never, to think of a little chap like you tryin' ter do a job like that!'

'Gimme the 'ook, do, I'll show yer!'

Somehow the eager tone prevailed, and in a few moments cook had produced both hook and cord, and had pointed out to Phil the window immediately over the back kitchen, without at all realising what he meant to do.

The boy took the hook, attached it to the end of the cord, and flung it as far as the window sill. It fell down, but at the third attempt the cord in in his hand tightened and the hook had gripped the ledge. In a second he had tied the lower end to a heavy iron grating in the yard, and before the amazed woman could draw her breath he was

swarming up the cord, and having gained the window ledge, opened the window and disappeared inside.

'Well, I never!' cook gasped in astonishment; but even while she stood gazing after him he reappeared, swarmed down his rope, and said reassuringly: 'Th' door's open, Missis, an' I put a chair agen it ter keep it that way.'

The nimble fingers quickly untied the rope, twitched it skilfully to loosen the hooked end from the window sill, and handed both hook and rope to her, asking meekly if she would like him to do any other little job.

Amazement at the boy's feat seemed now to have deprived cook of her powers of speech, and it was only the striking of the clock which at last startled her out of her inaction, and made her hasten to secure the released cap and apron.

Hurrying down the stairs again she found the boy in the kitchen, carefully removing the lid of the spluttering kettle.

'Well, I never did!' said cook. 'If you aren't jest like Kiplin's story of the first cat as ever was. It wormed its way right into the middle of the cave and sat by the woman's fire, after 'er a declarin' solemn as she'd never, no never, let it inside!'

Phil stood solemnly by the large, bright kitchen

fire and looked round with admiration at the comforts the place contained, while she went in and out of the library with the tea. Then cook supplied him with a steaming basin of tea and a large slice of bread and ham, which he got down on the hearthrug to eat, while she sat and watched the ravenous way in which he took the food, breaking out now and then into her favourite exclamation—'Well, I'm sure!'

When, later on, she left the kitchen to fetch the tea things out, Phil, his hunger quite satisfied, stepped noiselessly across to the dresser to look at something there, when his eye caught the gleam of a silver sixpence lying on a ledge in front of the plates. The force of habit was strong, and in less than half a minute that sixpence was in the lining of Phil's ragged jacket in a safe corner reserved for such gains, and he was standing quietly warming his hands at the fire just as cook had left him.

A little later an urgent summons came for Mr. Miller from the Police Station, where one of the force had met with an accident. He went off hurriedly, forgetting that he had told Phil to wait and see him.

Dorothy meanwhile, left alone, unpacked her box, got ready for late dinner and came down to the empty library. Feeling lonely and sad, she turned into the kitchen to talk to cook, and to her

surprise saw, standing on the rug, in strange contrast to the comfort and plenty around him, the thin, ragged little fellow who had carried her bag.

'Oh, you are here yet,' she said carelessly. 'Did Mr. Miller tell you to wait?'

'Yes, Miss,' Phil answered, while his eyes opened wider and wider, gazing at the bright, dainty picture the girl made, in her simple white dress, which showed her dark eyes and hair and strikingly handsome features to such advantage.

'Are those the warmest clothes you have?' she asked, coming forward and standing at the other end of the hearth-rug.

'Yes, Miss.'

'What is your name, little boy?'

'Phil, please, Miss.'

'Well, haven't you a father or mother, Phil?'

'No, Miss.'

'Where do you live?'

'Spinning Field, Deansgate, Miss.'

'Does my guardian know you?'

'Who? 'Im as told me ter wait, d'yer mean, Miss?'

'Yes, Mr. Miller, who lives in this house.'

'I never knowed 'is name; Moke an' me an' all the lads calls 'im "Teacher."'

'What does 'e teach you?'

'Oh, a lot. 'E's teached us a lot lately about a feller called Jackears.'

'Who? I never heard of such a person. Was it out of the Bible?'

'Yes. The feller what climbed inter th' tree an' give away all 'is tin!'

'Whoever can he mean, cook?'

'Don't know, Miss; but it's sure to be some of them Bible stories, and the child's got hold of the name wrong way.'

'Can you read, Phil?' was the next question.

'Oh yes, Miss. I can read the bills what tells 'bout th' evenin' papers, but I'd like ter read the stories teacher tells.'

'Have you got any book at home?'

'Why no, Miss. Moke an' me 'aven't got no 'ome nor nothink.'

'Where do you sleep at night?'

'We sleeps in a cupboard place under th' stairs, but we keeps oursels. Moke can read a bit. I wishes I could do as well as 'im,' the child added wistfully.

'Suppose I give you a book to take home; would you learn out of it?'

'They'd take it off me.'

'Look here, Phil, suppose I teach you to read! Could you come here pretty often? I'm going to be five weeks here.'

At this point cook interposed. 'Wait a bit, Miss Dorothy. Mrs. Miller mightn't be willin'. He's so very ragged, you see, an' a young child like 'im can't be expected to keep 'isself clean.'

Phil looked wistfully at cook, and then at the girl, who seemed to him to be one of the angels of whom teacher had sometimes spoken.

'Suppose we have a lesson now, Phil!' cried the girl eagerly. 'Please, cook, do let him have a chair at the table, and I will see how much he knows.'

Cook looked at Phil doubtfully, seating him finally on a wooden chair at a bare wooden table, and when Dorothy came back with books, paper and pencils, she insisted on her sitting at the opposite side of the little table.

Dorothy was much perplexed at Phil's attainments in reading. Small words, used by beginners, he did not know, while quite long, difficult ones he pronounced at once in his own way. His early reading lessons had been forgotten, except in the case of words occurring constantly on the posters about the city, which had made a certain set of words familiar to him.

After a short trial, Dorothy gave a Bible into his hands and asked him what part he knew.

'Jackears an' th' tree,' he replied at once.

'But, Phil, I don't know what you mean.'

'Teacher goin' through Jericho, an' Jackears

payin' back four times as much as 'e'd took off th' folks.'

'Oh, I wonder whether you mean Zacchæus?'

'Yes, yes!' Phil cried delightedly.

The book was opened and the place found, Phil stumbling painfully through some verses and astonishing his hearer by his quickness in mastering others.

'Please, Miss, is this one what's called Jesus the same as th' teacher?'

'Yes, Phil.'

''As 'e got any other name, Miss?'

'Oh yes, several others.'

Phil's perplexed face settled into content again, and the girl never guessed that he was believing the story to be a record of the actions and words of her guardian.

Cook at length sent Phil away, telling him to come again. She gave him money to take the omnibus back into the city, and as she watched the little ragged and barefoot figure running away in the darkness, she said to herself: 'Clothes 'e shall 'ave, if I 'ave to buy them myself; poor little 'arfstarved mite!'

CHAPTER IV

Molly's Story

DOROTHY and her guardian had quite a lively meal. All her sadness had disappeared and she chatted to him about Phil the whole of dinner time.

'Please, sir, may I speak to you?' said cook as soon as the meal was over. 'I want to find that little lad some warm clothes, if you'll let me, sir. Not new clothes, becos' is folks would praps take 'em off 'im, but some of my sister's boy's things, warm but shabby, and a warm flannen shirt. If you an Mistress is willin' for him to come sometimes for Miss Dorothy to teach, I'll see as 'e 'as a good bath in the wash 'ouse an' fresh clothes to come in with!'

'Thank you, cook, the old clothes will be the very thing; I will speak to your mistress.'

'Did you 'ear, sir, about 'im gettin' up to my winder?' and here cook related the story of the hook and the cord.

Mr. Miller's face grew sad and stern as he listened, and he sat for some time lost in thought;

then, to her great disappointment, he withdrew his half consent for the reading lessons.

'Oh, Mr. Miller,' Dorothy exclaimed, 'surely you will not say that he must not come again, because he was so clever as to get cook's things.'

'Do you know, Dorothy, that his knowledge of that trick proves to me that he is being trained for a burglar? You may well look shocked at the wickedness of teaching a young child such evil ways. I suppose that his size and his light weight make him peculiarly suitable for such training. I will do my best to discover who is training him, but it will take time and great care, and I dare not have him in the house till we have got him away from the lot of thieves who seem to have got hold of him. Get him clothes if you like, cook; mind, the shabbier the better! I should advise you to make a hole or two in them if there are not any; but he must not come into the house again until I have done something for him.'

'Oh, how cruel of you!' Dorothy exclaimed as cook retired. 'I thought I might have done it; it's too bad! Everything I want to do that's some good I'm stopped in! I wish I had not come! I hated to leave Jack! I wish I had never come here!'

The child's eyes were flashing and her cheeks burning. These passionate outbursts were not

unusual, and having once lost control of herself, she poured out all her sorrow of heart, amidst heavy sobs which shook her and almost stopped her utterance.

'How can I be happy when Jack needs me? Why couldn't I go to Farmer Bridges as well as Jack? You will be angry, I expect; but oh, do send me back to Jack! Why should I always be dressed up and do nothing, and poor Jack have to rough it? Mother said I was to look after him, and you and Miss Sturrock won't let me. *I must* go to Jack. Why should he be alone and have no friends and I have everything?'

Throwing herself down on the sofa, the child buried her head in the cushion and sobbed passionately for a few minutes, until her companion's continued silence quieted her.

'Dorothy,' he said at length, 'I had hoped that you were going to be my little comforter when you came! I need one badly just now. Should you like to hear a little about my great trouble? It may help you to bear your own.'

The child was awed by the sad tone, and coming nearer, lifted her tear-stained face to his and listened in wonder.

'I once had a young sister, Dorothy; I think you are very like her. She and I were devoted to each other. I was five years older, but we had

always been comrades and close friends. Poor Molly! I can see her now, tall and dark and with a wonderful head of hair which was always getting loose and flowing about her shoulders. She sang like a lark, and had most wonderful spirits. We lost our mother (just as you did, Dorothy), and my father was a very grave, stern man, who had no sympathy with Molly's jokes and fun. I often stood between him and her, and dreaded leaving home at all, because of his harshness and her high spirits. When I got into the Indian Civil Service and had to leave home, Molly was in despair, and my father sent her away to a ladies' school in London. She was sixteen then. She stayed there three years, studying music almost entirely the last part of the time. She declared that she could not bear home without me, and therefore spent her holidays chiefly with friends or schoolfellows. I think you know that I married in India, and from that time I noticed that Molly's letters were fewer in number and not what they used to be. I wrote and begged her to come and live with us, and also wrote to my father asking him to send her. I never had any answer to those letters. Poor Molly had felt my marriage terribly, she and I having always been so much to each other. She got to know a brother of some school friend of hers, a very showy, clever man,

who turned out afterwards to be a great rogue. She had just written to ask my father's consent to marry him when my letters arrived, and I believe that she never received the one for her. My father was ill at the time, and wrote briefly to her, saying that he would not consent to her marriage to anyone till she was older, and ordering her to come home at once. Poor, hasty Molly! She would never wait for anything. She disappeared from school a week later, and sent home a paper announcing her marriage. When I heard the news, illness had come into our happy home, and I could not leave to come and look after Molly. I lost my wife and my little son, and then received news of my father's death which obliged me to give up my post and come home to see into his affairs and carry on his concerns here. I had heard some sad stories of Molly's husband, and my great hope was to find her and help her. I had a long search for her, and the first news I had was of her death. It was just at Christmas when I lost my wife and child, and the following Christmas I heard of Molly's death. I did hope that she had left a child. It would have been something in my loneliness to have someone call me "Uncle," but I cannot find any trace of one. I have looked forward to *your* coming, and am very sorry that you are unhappy. I would have

had Jack, too, but Mrs. Miller had some reason for thinking that she could not have both.'

'Oh, how selfish I have been!' the child exclaimed, as he ceased speaking. 'I am so, so sorry! Please may *I* call you uncle? I should love to, if I may! I will try and not be naughty. I do want to help someone!'

Dorothy's earnestness was genuine, and the troubles of both seemed now to draw their hearts together. She slipped down on to the hearth-rug and looked up into her guardian's face with sympathy and love. Since he had become her legal guardian she had been a little more afraid of him than in the old happy days, when she and Jack had gone with him on fishing excursions, and had spent much time in the grounds of the Miller's country house. This fear now passed away, and they opened their hearts to each other.

'Will you tell me, Dorothy,' he asked, after a short silence, during which both had been thinking over the sad story of Molly Miller, 'whether you have any special wish about the future? I do not think that you will want to lead an idle life, and as time goes on I should like to know whether there is anything in particular you would like to be trained for. I can't promise to grant all your wishes,' he added, with a smile, 'but I should like to grant any I can.'

'Oh, Mr.—I mean Uncle—Miller, may I tell you of Jack's and my lovely plan? Miss Sturrock calls it a "castle in the air," but I hope you won't. Jack wants to learn farming when he leaves school, and I do so much want to learn how to keep his house, and especially how to manage his money, because, you know, he is like father about money—I don't mean spending too much—but so easy, and he never puts things down. Mother taught me her ways, and she used to say that it might be my mission in life to help Jack to be careful and businesslike in money matters. She did really say that! She used to show me her own accounts, and was always telling me that the way to keep out of debt was to be very careful about accounts, and never to buy anything that I could not pay for at once. Mother tried to teach Jack, too, but it wasn't much use. You see he was so much about with father, and *he* was so different about those things, you know. Miss Sturrock wants me to stay at school for years, and then perhaps to teach, but I do hope you won't make me. Didn't mother ever tell you anything about it?'

'No; it is quite news to me that she wished anything of the kind; but then the suddenness of the seizure which ended so sadly for you both, probably prevented her talking these matters

over with me. All the talk I had with her was before your father's failure, and I never saw her afterwards.'

'Oh, I can tell you why it was so sudden,' the child began, and then she buried her face in her hands and tears stopped her words.

'I am very sorry, dear child, to bring back these sad memories, but it will help me to act both for you and Jack if I know more.'

Dorothy controlled herself with a great effort, and, in the hope of getting her guardian to grant her own desires, opened her heart and told him all about those last weeks of her mother's life.

'It was poor Mrs. Arthur's loss which really killed mother,' she said. 'Someone came in and told her that father had borrowed a lot of her money to put in his business only a little while before, and that Mrs. Arthur had only lent it to him because she was fond of mother. Mother had not known about it till then. When she heard it she seemed as if she could not speak at first. I was quite frightened, and then she asked me for paper, and tried to write. She wrote part of your name and then laid down the pen, and said something about "writing to-morrow." She was looking so ill then that I begged her to sit and rest, and after that she only talked a little, just a few words at once, and with difficulty, until

she became unconscious. I can't tell you how dreadful it was to see her get quieter and quieter and not be able to answer me, and no one there to help me!'

The child broke down again and quiet tears fell, and her listener asked her whether her mother had spoken about money matters in that last hour of consciousness, before her final and fatal seizure.

'Yes; she told me that her money was for me and Jack; but she said: "I mean to leave you less, and pay Mrs. Arthur back. She is getting older, she must not suffer." Then she seemed to wake up after I thought she was asleep in her chair, and said: "Dorothy, you and Jack must restore that money when you grow up—*four-fold*, Dorothy—to make up to my poor friend!" I said, "Yes, mother," for I thought she was really telling me a dream, but now we know that she meant it, and Jack and I mean to do it. Oh, do let me learn to keep house, and make cheese and butter and those things, so that Jack and I can give mother's money to pay that debt! You don't know what a *dear* Mrs. Arthur is; and, do you know, she has sent her maid Bessy away and was doing the work herself when we went to tea with her before going to school last term. Do—do pay some of mother's money to her, and we will work and get the rest!'

'Dorothy, child, I will do what I can; I knew nothing of this, and am glad that you have told me; but your own preparation for life and its work must come first, and Jack must be given a start. It is your *father's* duty to pay back that money. Your mother's is left to us for you and Jack, and it is scarcely enough for your needs and your education now.'

'But, you know, uncle, that *father won't* pay it back. Mother could never get him to pay back anything. I'm so dreadfully afraid of Jack beginning with careless ways about money, too. I shall never be happy till we have paid Mrs. Arthur *four-fold*, as mother said.'

'Poor child,' her guardian answered, in a tender, pitying voice, stroking her hair soothingly, 'your life has been too full of care for one so young. I believe, Dorothy, that your father is making great efforts now to get on his feet again, and I know that he has paid back something to one of the sufferers. I shall let him know what you have told me, and if he does not pay Mrs. Arthur (as I hope he will, at least in part), your mother's wish shall be respected; and you and Jack must work hard and look forward to the time when you have got a start in life to do what you wish. Do you know, Dorothy, I think it will be necessary for Jack to go abroad, unless your father can help to

support him. We cannot keep him any longer at school, and that is one reason why I have sent him now to stay with good, worthy Farmer Bridges. He will soon find out whether Jack is likely to make a farmer; and if so, perhaps he might consent to take him for a year, to learn a little of farming before he goes away.

'Oh, don't send him abroad till I am old enough to go too. Don't, please! Can't he stay a few years with Farmer Bridges till I am older?'

'Perhaps so, if your father can help with his expenses. Mr. Bridges would want some payment, and your mother's money only brings in enough for your needs, with a little in reserve for Jack's outfit, etc. We have given notice for him to leave school at Easter.'

The sound of carriage wheels and then the sudden and noisy opening of the library door put an end to their conversation at this point, and Mrs. Miller's portly figure sailed into the room, her loud, cheery voice exclaiming—

'Good gracious, Norman, you look as if you had been at a funeral, and Dorothy too! How are you, Dorothy? Dear me, what a deplorable couple you look! Been weeping, Dorothy? Oh, come, child, that won't do; I am going to take you to the pantomime to-morrow! Got frozen in

the train, I dare say. You want some sleep, I know. Get off to bed, and don't let me see any more of those miserable, woe-begone looks, or I will send you to spend the day with the large family of boys and girls at the Watsons'. They would shake you up and do you good, I know; but you are such a child for keeping to yourself. Very well, off to bed now!'

'What have you been saying to her, Norman?' the lady continued, after the door had closed behind Dorothy.

'Well, mater, I'm afraid we have both been opening old wounds; and I have also heard for the first time that Mrs. Whittaker got Dorothy to promise the repayment of moneys got from a friend of hers by her father, a little time before the crash came. It seems that her mother was going to write to me about this, when the torpor which was the beginning of the end came on; but Dorothy had promised her that Mrs. Arthur should be paid four-fold out of Mrs. Whittaker's own money (which now supports the two children) as soon as they were able to earn their own living. You know Mr. and Mrs. Arthur well.'

'Yes, a charming couple, and with only just enough to live on. What a shame, isn't it? but as to paying four times over, it's too absurd and quixotic for anything.'

'Not as much as you think, mater. They may have to endure years of privation before they get *any* of it; and will be having no interest all that time, and probably their lives shortened by it, as neither is young, and Mr. Arthur is far from well at any time. Such things can scarcely be paid for in money, but I shall do my best to help the children to do the right thing, and shall let their father know what were his wife's last conscious plans.'

CHAPTER V

The Mysterious Sixpence

PHIL'S paper-selling was prospering. Each evening he increased his stock, and seldom had any papers over.

In the dark, wet, foggy afternoons he would dash about like a black elf, disappearing up an entry or into an omnibus, and reappearing in quite another quarter, with his shrill cry of 'Paper, sir—evenin' papers!'

One evening he accosted a gentleman just turning into an office.

'Paper, sir?'

'Is that you, Phil?' Mr. Miller exclaimed, turning at the sound of his voice.

'I didn't see as it was you, teacher! Will yer 'ave a paper?'

'Bring one into my office, Phil; this is mine—and now run up those stairs to the office above. I think the gentleman there will take one, too.'

''E took one, teacher!' said the cheery little voice, as Phil's small face and shock of curly black hair appeared again at the open door.

'Come in, Phil, I want to speak to you. What have you been doing to get that bruise on your face?'

'Doin' *exercises*, teacher—fer Sam.'

'When do you do them?'

'Oh, whenever 'e's in—and awake—evenin's most general.'

'And you got a fall, I suppose?'

'Yes, teacher, but it wern't bad.'

'Who is Sam, Phil?'

'Don't know, teacher; 'e's sharp on me an' Moke, but we means to quit some day.'

'Do you think that he would let you go into a home and learn a trade?'

'No, teacher, I'm sure 'e wouldn't. 'E seems afraid I'll go away; leastways, 'e's allers axin' fer me if I don't turn up when 'e's in.'

'Have you any idea what he wants you for, Phil? You need not be afraid of telling me; you know that I am your friend, my lad, and would not betray you.'

Phil's little face became quite beautiful (dirty as it was) as he heard those words, and all his little hero-worshipping soul looked out of his large black eyes as he gazed up at his beloved teacher and answered unhesitatingly—

'I b'lieve Sam wants ter take me out o' nights to *practices*, same as 'e does two other lads as

exercises with me. 'E do say as I'll soon be ready, and I'll '*ave ter go*, teacher, when 'e takes me.'

'I see, Phil; I suppose *practices* mean what we call burglary, that is, entering houses for the purpose of stealing? Don't be troubled, Phil; you see I know a good deal and need not ask you much, and I shall not betray you. Now tell me one thing more. What do you think about that sort of life? Do you want to make that your life work?'

'Oh no, teacher. I'd like ter be what yer tells us at school. I've took ter papers now, instead of—of—other things as Sam teached me; an' Moke an' me we're savin' fer a wegitable barrer. We are to work it t'other side o' city.'

'Have you heard of one for sale?'

'Not yet, teacher. Moke goes around Shude 'Ill Market most mornin's ter see fer one an' ter find out 'ow ter buy, 'cos they might cheat 'im an' me if we knowed nothink about it.'

'I see you are businesslike; but now tell me, Phil, what were you going to do when I saw you the other day, and got you to carry the bag?'

Phil looked on the ground and shuffled his feet uneasily.

'Shall I tell you? You were going to take a purse out of a woman's bag. Have you often done that, Phil?'

'Smilin' Sam 'e teached me, teacher! An' I wanted to set up honest, an' 'adn't no tin ter start with.' Phil was crying now and rubbing the tears away with his poor ragged sleeve.

'Poor lad, poor lad!' his friend said, greatly moved. 'Look here, Phil, I want to help you to be honest. You come to me and to the office above every day, and when you hear of a barrow for sale come to me, and I will help you to buy it.'

'Oh, thank you, teacher! I'll make that there old Moke stir and git one quick. Thank you, teacher!'

He ran off joyfully, and hunted up his comrade the moment the papers were sold, to tell him the good news.

After this talk with teacher, the remembrance of the sixpence taken from cook lay very heavily on Phil's mind. It was not so much what had been *said*, as the effect of the personal friendly contact with a straightforward honest man (whom Phil loved with all his heart), which was quickening his conscience and clearing up his ideas of right and wrong. He felt now as if he could not look his friend in the face again until that wrong had been put right. How to return the money without betraying himself was the chief difficulty. Business had prospered sufficiently for him to spare the sixpence without encroaching on his

little capital required for the morrow's papers, nor yet to fail in putting away in the hole under their straw bed the few pence which it was now their great delight to save each day towards the coveted barrow.

As the boy lay awake that night in the midst of squalor and dirt and vice, while Moke snored at his side, a plan for the return of the money was concocted in his busy brain. The appointed time for carrying it out was the following morning, which proved bright and clear, and the boys started early on their long walk. Phil's plan of finding the way was to follow the course of the omnibuses on one of which he had ridden before, and this plan guided them safely to the neighbourhood they wanted.

About twelve o'clock a tall, forlorn-looking lad rang the front-door bell of Mrs. Miller's house. The housemaid who answered the bell was asked whether Mrs. Miller lived there, and if so, could he see the cook.

'Can't you tell me what you want, my boy?' said Mary; 'cook is busy just now.'

'No, Miss,' said Moke. 'I must see the cook, please.'

'Well, you should go round to the back door. Why do you come here?'

'Please, Miss, I couldn't find it, and I must see

Mrs. Cook, please,' replied Moke, having learned his lesson well.

Mary was a town-bred girl, who knew better than to go away and leave a ragged boy at the door. She looked round for help, the boy's pleading voice following her: 'Do let me see Mrs. Cook, please, Miss.'

She opened the dining-room door, where Sarah was cleaning windows, and asked her to go and fetch cook, as there was a person at the door who would not go away without seeing her. When cook appeared, very hot and much surprised, Sarah came back behind her to her own work, curious to see who cook's visitor was.

'Please, Missis,' said Moke, 'could yer give a pore starvin' lad a bit o' wood choppin' ter do? It's hard times an' a long tramp I've 'ad ter find work, an' in this 'ere big place I'm sure as you uses a lot of firewood. I'll do it cheap if yer'll give me a job!'

'Well, I'm sure,' cook exclaimed indignantly, 'of all the himperent young scoundrels as I hever met, you're the worst! Fancy fetchin' me away from my cookin', and all my pastry gettin' spoiled, to talk about wood choppin'! Shut the door, Sarah. You'd ought to have more sense than to fetch me on such a fool's errand!'

She bustled back to the kitchen, and Moke

retired to an appointed street corner, where Phil presently joined him, chuckling at the success of his plan.

'You did real well, Moke,' he exclaimed, careering round his comrade and administering sundry slaps to his person, as a method of expressing his approval.

'I were watchin' the kitching winder, an' as soon as I seed Mrs. Cook orf ter speak ter yer, I slips in through th' back kitching, and puts it right on the werry spot as I tooked th' other from, an' I didn't see nobody.'

'Mary, what's all these wet marks on the floor?' cook exclaimed, when she crossed the kitchen a short time afterwards.

Mary looked puzzled. 'It seems as if some dog had been in here,' she said, after tracing the muddy marks to the back kitchen door.

'Too big for a dog's,' cook pronounced.

When Mary was taking down the plates for dinner that same evening, she knocked something off the shelf, which rolled on to the floor.

'Here's a sixpence here, cook,' she said; 'is it yours?'

'Well, I'm sure; how strange, now! Where was it, Mary? I lost a sixpence off that shelf the night you was out, and I moved all those plates and dusted the shelf down to find it, and I'm

positive certain it wasn't there; and now you finds it in the very same spot where I put it; and every day you've dusted down that shelf and couldn't a helped seein' it!'

'Oh, I'm quite sure there was no sixpence there yesterday when I put the plates up. You must have forgotten, cook.'

'No, I didn't forget; seems as if fairies is about, what with footmarks, and sixpences speerited away and appearing again theirselves. I 'opes this 'ouse isn't goin' to turn out to be one of them 'aunted places as one 'ears of!'

Meanwhile the two conspirators were trudging back to the city, their talk being chiefly about that 'barrer,' which was such a vision of joy to them both.

'I wish as you'd 'urry up, Moke, an' find one. I thinks as somewheres 'bout Angel Meaders 'ud be a good place ter start, unless we can get a barrer with a "connection"!'

'Angel Meaders is too near Deansgate, Phil. I'm awful afraid of Smilin' Sam findin' us.'

'Oh, we'll give 'im the slip when we gets it, no fear.'

'Look 'ere, Phil; what are yer goin' ter do 'bout payin' Mrs. Cook? Are yer goin' hin for that there four times as much? 'Cos if yer is, there's eighteen pennies more ter pay.'

Phil looked grave over this remark, and made no answer, and he was soon busy plying his trade in the streets and squares, while Moke tried his best to earn something also.

Phil thought it wise to postpone his visit to Mrs. Cook to get the promised warm clothes, and perhaps the reading lesson, until she had forgotten the incident of the sixpence; but his rags were harder to keep together than ever, and at length he boldly presented himself at the back kitchen door in the twilight of just such a cold day as that of his first visit.

He waited about till cook passed near the door, and then said in a loud whisper—

'Mrs. Cook, 'ows the young lady? Do yer think as she'll give me a readin' lesson agen?'

Cook looked pityingly at the little shivering figure, and found it hard to dash his hopes to the ground; but her master's orders must be obeyed, so she said—

'I'm afraid you can't see Miss Dorothy to-day, Phil; but I've got something for yer!'

The little shabby suit of cloth clothes and the new warm flannel shirt were indeed a sight for Phil; and then and there the kind-hearted woman poured hot water into a big tub, and made the child take off his rags and get in, she promptly carrying away the old clothes with the tongs, and

burning them. Phil scarcely knew whether to be pleased or frightened, until he felt the unusual comfort of the clean warm garments, and looked himself up and down in some perplexity.

'Won't they ax me where they come from?' he said.

'If they do, tell them that a cook begged them for yer off her sister. They're shabby enough, but warm!'

With the comforting sensation produced by a bowl of steaming soup, and clothed in his warm, dry garments, the boy scarcely knew himself, but felt a little nervous about the questions likely to be asked in his own small world.

Moke was delighted at his appearance, and whispered, as he crept into bed, 'You'll sell a lot more in them togs from the barrer, I knows.'

CHAPTER VI

The Broken Cane

EVER since the confidential talk which Dorothy had had with her guardian, she had seemed a different child. Her confidence in his goodness and power was unbounded, and in telling him all her hopes and desires her burdens seemed to have rolled away, and she was once more gay and happy. She did not again beg to be allowed to teach Phil, but at every mention of the Ragged School her eyes looked beseechingly at him, and he saw what was in her mind.

They were sitting round the fire one evening when he said, quietly—

'Mater, I should like Dorothy to see the infants at the Ragged School having their Christmas treat. It is fixed for the day after to-morrow. Will you come, too, or shall I take Dorothy only?'

'Take Dorothy to the Ragged School! Are you mad, Norman? Well, I suppose you must please yourself, I'm not her guardian; but of all the frantic ideas I ever heard! There, it's no use

saying anything, I know! Go with you? No, thank you; I don't want to come home and give everybody measles and whooping-cough, or scarlet fever and diphtheria! If she catches anything, mind you send her off to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Norman! I can't do with anything of that sort here!'

'Oh, all right, mater. I think she will be pretty safe among the infants. Of course, the boys would have been too rough and noisy for her.'

Dorothy danced up to him, and, seizing his hand, kissed it in the excess of her joy.

At this moment Miss Gray was announced, and, when she heard what plan was under discussion, she begged earnestly to be taken to the treat as well as Dorothy.

'Poor mater,' her son said, with a mischievous smile, 'you will have to lay in a large stock of disinfectants, and banish your friend here for at least a week after this tea, shan't you?'

'Oh, it's all very well for you to laugh, Norman! I call it a most deplorable place to take a child to, and I shall ask Mary to stitch camphor into different parts of her dress before she goes, and to give her a good overhauling when she comes back, before I see her. How troublesome you are, Norman, to be sure! but never mind,' she added hastily, 'I won't say any more.'

Her eyes had caught the grey look which sometimes came over his face, and told plainly how the recollections of this season tried him, and her kind heart reproached her for opposing anything which was a pleasure to him.

'Mr. Miller,' said Miss Gray, after a moment's pause in the talk, 'you have never had an opportunity of telling us what happened about the cane; won't you tell us now? I'm sure Dorothy would like to hear it.'

'Well, I have never heard the end of that story either,' exclaimed Mrs. Miller, 'and I am quite longing to know how those young rascals behaved over it.'

'All right, I will do my best to make you see it all.

'You know, Dorothy,' he continued, addressing himself chiefly to her, 'our superintendent of the boys' department is a very little man, with a strong personality. He has a brisk, emphatic utterance, and a voice which penetrates to every part of the large building. His dress is always particularly fresh and dainty, contrasting strongly with the rags and unkempt locks and begrimed faces of the lads. If once he decides that a thing is right and wise, no difficulties and no obstacles are enough to stop him carrying it through.

'It had long been the practice in the boys'

school to use the cane for incorrigible lads, who were bent on hindering the others and making a disturbance. These canings upset him more than anything, and after much thought he decided to give up the use of the cane. I remonstrated with him for beginning the new system on a pouring wet evening, and suggested waiting for a week, but he answered me with kindling eye that his mind was made up.

'I am afraid to say how many lads were packed into that large upper floor on that special Sunday evening, but at any rate it was several hundreds. As soon as all the boys were in their classes and the crowd of strange ones judiciously disposed of, one here and one there, the superintendent mounted the platform, from which point he could run his eye over the whole mass of heads, and ringing his bell, called for attention.

'"Lads," he said in a strong, clear voice, "I want to say something before teaching begins. You know that if any of you come here and behave badly and upset the school, we cane you. Now I don't like it, and I don't think we ought to have to do it! We are your true friends, and we come long distances in the wet and the cold to spend this hour and a half with you; we give you a warm fire and kind words, and we help you all we can. It is a *shame* that you force us to cane you!

It must not be, lads! That sort of thing is going to stop. I believe you will see how unfair it is. I am not going to use the cane any more!"

'There was silence which could be felt while he spoke these short sentences, and a sort of magnetic power kept the boys' eyes fixed on him. Stepping back to the table he took up a large cane, held it up for all to see, broke it across his knee, and flung it away. Then quietly taking up his hymn-book he gave out the opening hymn. Before, however, the organist could begin to play, and while the mass of boys seemed hardly to have taken in his words, a big lad of sixteen or seventeen stepped out of his class into the centre of the room, and lifting his head defiantly, shouted out the words, "I'll mek yer get another!"

'The superintendent did not reply, but fixed his keen gaze on the offender who had thus thrown down the gauntlet. Every eye followed his, and the boys in the distant parts of the room began to get up on the forms to see what would happen.

'I wish I could make you see that lad! He was of a kind you have most likely never met with. He was about my height, perhaps a little taller. One scarcely needed to notice his closely-cropped hair to tell he had been in prison a great deal. His whole face was that of a typical jail-bird. His feet and ankles were bare, and the trousers,

reaching just below his knees, hung about him in a sort of ragged fringe. His short jacket was full of holes, each elbow protruding, and the poor pretence of a shirt under it was simply a few strips held together somehow, while a bit of short rope held the trousers in their place. After shouting out his challenge, he turned round to see what he could do to fulfil his threat, and his eye fell on a large bucket of very dirty water, which the school-cleaner had evidently forgotten to take away.

'In a second he had sprung across to where it stood by the classroom door, dragged it nearer to the forms and upset it where all the dirty water would go swishing across the floor among the classes. Like an inky river it invaded class after class, causing the boys to jump aside to avoid it.

'Instantly the first ripples of fun and applause began to be heard, and in about half a minute the school would have been in an uproar, had not our superintendent been equal to the occasion.

'Lifting his hand and his voice to attract all eyes to himself, he repressed the intended cheer by a stern, "No, lads, no!"

'Curiosity as to what he would do or say next held their attention for an instant, when his voice, full of determination, but also full of emotion, rang out again.

'"Lads," he exclaimed, "*it's too bad! it's too bad!*" and without another word he instantly started the hymn.

'It was a long hymn, and one the boys knew well. After the first verse or two they responded to the stimulating leadership, and sang with all their hearts, appearing to forget all about the big lad who stood defiantly in the open space near by. He began to look first uncomfortable, then unhappy, and then frightened. The moral support and the applause which he had expected to receive from his comrades were absent, and he shuffled his feet and dropped his eyes under the piercing gaze of the superintendent, which continued fixed upon him.

'My own class was close to the spot where he had overturned the water, and I knew how much depended on the way in which his daring act was received by my boys, they being the nearest to him. It took me all my time to keep my eye on the twenty I had round me, and to let them feel how wholly my sympathy was with the superintendent and not with the offender.

'Phil took a long, steady look at me, and then, reading my thoughts, started a sort of jeer well known in the streets, a mixture of a groan and a hiss, which I believe is specially disliked among the street arabs; but I managed to check him

before the noise had been noticed outside the class. Poor little chap! He seemed disappointed; he thought he was doing what I wanted.

'As soon as the singing ceased I glanced round to see whether the lad had moved his position. He had disappeared, but excited whispers of "Look, teacher!" and many fingers pointing in a certain direction guided me, and there I saw him on his hands and knees on the floor. He had taken off his ragged jacket, and holding it in one hand was using it to try and mop up the dirty water!

'When he got up and slunk back into his seat, there were two watercourses on his cheeks where tears had been trickling down, and his whole form seemed to shrink and cower into half its size. We heard no more of him, but the victory we had gained bore fruit in the increased order and quietness of the school during the rest of the evening.

'We had our second talk about Zacchæus that day——'

'Oh, I know, I know,' Dorothy interrupted, almost screaming in her eagerness; 'Phil told me about it the day I came to Manchester, when he had carried my bag! Do you know what he calls Zacchæus? It was ever so long before I at all understood what he meant.'

'Well, what was it? Something extraordinary, I'm sure,' said Mrs. Miller.

'Jackears! Just fancy how puzzled I was! I could not understand who he meant, until he talked of him as "*the chap wot give away all 'is tin*"!'

Dorothy shook with laughter as she gave them a vivid description of Phil as she had seen him that day.

'Really, Norman, I must see this extraordinary imp of yours,' said Mrs. Miller; 'he must come some day when I am at home, for your account and Dorothy's, and cook's incoherent rambling talk about him, have made me quite curious to see him myself. Do go on with your story now, and tell us what they said.'

'At first they all seemed to think that Zacchæus was a lunatic, or at any rate one who had got a "tile loose" or "'adn't all 'is buttons on," as they expressed it! I therefore turned to the other side of the story, and tried to describe some of the *gains* of Zacchæus. I told them that in giving up his wealth he gained the friendship of the warmest and most loving heart that ever beat in a human being. He also gained (what was a great deal to a Jew) the respect and fellowship of his own brethren, who always shunned and despised the hated publicans. You will remember that the

Master Himself seems to mark this, when He says that Zacchæus is now a son of Abraham. Then he gained a quiet conscience or happiness within ; and above all he laid up for himself treasure in Heaven, so that when he had to die he would be *going to* his real treasure, and not leaving it behind. The lads got so far as to see that he was not so mad after all, but they could not understand why he gave back four times as much as he had taken! They thought that he ought to have had an understanding with the Great Teacher as to how much it was necessary to give back in order to secure the advantages I had been mentioning.'

'Well, did you satisfy them ?'

'I'm not sure that I did get them to see it from my point of view ; although there was *one* who did.'

'That was Phil, wasn't it, Uncle Miller? I believe you could make him think anything you liked !'

'Yes, it was Phil'—the speaker's voice grew lower, and into his eyes there came a depth and an earnestness which made the group round the fire listen more attentively as he went on—'I tried to describe to them the person and the character of the Saviour of the World, as He sat in the house of the rich publican. I tried to tell them of His wonderful heart of sympathy and love ; of the matchless grace, tact and sweetness which

attracted men to Him; of His readiness to respond to every call for help, and of the pity and pardon for the past which He was prepared to offer to all who sought it. I told them that if they could only have been there they would have been so carried captive by His personality; that they would have cast their last farthing at His feet, if by such restitution they could have earned His smile of approval.

'When the bell rang for teaching to cease, I found Phil down on the floor at my feet with his two little hands clasped round my ankle. His face was a picture of adoring love, and there could be no doubt what course *he* would have chosen had he been in the place of Zacchæus.'

After a moment's silence Miss Gray asked softly whether Mr. Miller could not think of any way of taking Phil from his evil surroundings and getting him to school.

'I am carefully making inquiries,' he answered, 'but there seems to be sufficient mystery about him to make me feel that I must be cautious, lest we lose him altogether.'

'What mystery, Norman? Come, that sounds interesting! A mystery about a little waif like that should make a good story!'

'I only wish I *could* give you his history! Phil brings a paper to my office daily, and I have once

or twice noticed him darting into the entry, as if pursued by somebody; he has stayed hiding in a dark corner there for some minutes before knocking at my office door. He looked distressed when I questioned him about this, and could not explain it, until he at length admitted that "Sam" had once caught him coming out of my office after leaving the paper, and having looked at the name on the wall had beaten him, and charged him never to go near that office again. I gathered from Phil's reserve in one part of the story, that a very bad character and some very bad intentions had been attributed to me by this said "Sam," and I told Phil that I would go and see him, and tell him that he had made a mistake about me; but the boy burst into tears and implored me not to enter Spinningfield, as "Sam" had assured him that I should never go out alive if I ventured into their court. The boys know that Mr. Naylor and I go down a neighbouring street, which I think could scarcely be beaten for squalor and vice in all Deansgate, and Phil seemed very fearful of my paying a visit to him, and so incurring "Sam's" wrath. Don't look so frightened, mater! I am not going there to get Phil another beating, you may be sure. I have promised him that I will not attempt it at present.

'It seems that this "Sam" does not know that

the Mr. Miller who has an office in St. A—— Square is Phil's teacher at the evening school. I am glad of that bit of ignorance. I have been making careful inquiries through the police as to who and what "Sam" is.

'Phil has sometimes spoken of him as "Smilin' Sam"! When I mentioned that, they knew at once who I meant. They tell me that he is believed to be a clever and successful burglar, but that so far the police have failed in getting evidence enough to convict him. They say that he came here from Birmingham some years ago, and that he brought a young child with him. I should imagine that this would be Phil, although he declares that Sam is not his father; still, he has evidently some great hold on the boy. He comes every day with my paper, and if I missed him once, I should take immediate steps to find out where he was.'

When the talk was over and Miss Gray and Dorothy had left them, Mrs. Miller questioned her step-son more closely about what Phil had said. She did not like to think that they had a secret enemy, and wondered whether what the child had said was true. Finding that there was no doubt about this in his mind, she exhorted him to be careful about going into the dens of infamy which Old Deansgate then contained, and

retired to her own room for the night, feeling much mystified about the whole story.

Sitting down in an easy chair before her bedroom fire she tried to recall the past, and to remember whether she had ever heard of an enemy that the family had.

At length a sudden light dawned on her, and she exclaimed aloud—

'To be sure! Who but that unfortunate Molly's husband could have a grudge against Norman? I remember now reading something about "undying enmity" in those letters which passed at the time of Molly's death, but I can't for the life of me recollect what it was all about! Let me think now; could this horrible man whom Norman calls "Sam" have anything to do with Molly's husband? *He* was a clever swindler, and this one is a mere low burglar! Still, who knows whether there may not be some understanding between them? At least they might have had something in common before that wretched man was sentenced to penal servitude.'

CHAPTER VII

A Little Sinner

On the morning of the day of the Infant School Christmas Teaparty (to which Dorothy had been looking forward so much) cook came into her room and awoke her before the usual time.

'What is it, cook?' the child asked sleepily, 'and why are *you* calling me instead of Mary?'

'Well, Miss,' cook said, 'it's just this: Phil's here, Miss, and you told me never to let him go without tellin' you, if he come again.'

'Phil! At this time, cook? How strange! You'll give him some breakfast, won't you? I shall hurry down to see him.'

Cook had brought Phil into the kitchen before calling Dorothy, and he stood warming his little blue fingers and toes at the large, glowing fire, while Sarah went to and fro attending to her work.

Phil's pinched face was full of excitement this morning, but he refused to say what had brought him so early, except that he wanted to see 'teacher.'

When cook put a steaming bowl of bread and milk into his eager hands, he said in a whisper (looking round to see that the two younger maids were not near enough to hear)—

'I s'pose yer ain't got no boots as yer kids 'as done with, Missis?'

'Bless the child! I 'aven't got no children. Them things were from me sister's boys.'

'I'd like some boots, Missis, ef yer could spare 'em, becos I'm agoin' inter the wegetable bizzness, I am! An' Moke 'e says as 'ow folks won't buy nothin' off us ef I goes to th' doors barefoot.'

'Who's Moke, I wonder! Well, whoever 'e is, 'es quite right there, and I'm glad as you're prospering, Phil. I'll get yer some boots, never fear, when I 'as my day hout, which is next Toosday. You come on Wensday, an' I'll try to have some for yer.'

'Let's see,' she added, thinking aloud; 'it's Wensday to-day, so you'll have to wait a whole week; but I can't help it, child. We 'ave a big party on to-morrer, and it will keep me very busy, or I might 'ave an extry evenin' to go to me sister's; but I tell yer what, you may come round on Saturday, an' I'll give you some of the good things as will be left over—mince pies an' nice things as you don't never taste. Now you eat that good warm breakfast, an' get some roses

into yer cheeks before Miss Dorothy comes down ter see you. I think you might go out to the tap in the yard, Phil, an' give yer face and 'ands a good wash afore you sees 'er. I'll give yer a bit of soap an' a towel.'

'All right, Missis Cook,' the little fellow said, with the air of one who was conforming to some quite unmeaning and unnecessary usage of polite society.

He now gave himself up to the enjoyment of his unusual breakfast, while cook bustled about preparing the family meal.

'Here, Sarah,' she called, 'do come an' dust these plates.'

As Sarah took the plates off the shelves, something fell and rolled across the floor.

'What's that? I didn't put nothing there!'

'Well, cook, you must have done. See, it's a sixpence,' said Sarah, picking it up from the floor; 'and I do declare if there isn't another left on the shelf! You forgot you'd put them there, I expect, or perhaps it's some change you've to give to mistress.'

'But I tell yer I didn't put no money there!'

'It couldn't have walked there, you know! If you don't want the sixpences you can give them to me,' Sarah added, as she went away laughing.

'It was the very same, a fortnight ago,' Mary said, when she was told of the strange occurrence. 'Cook declared that she had not put a sixpence on the shelf, and yet I found one there. I expect she is getting old, and her memory is not so good as it was.'

Phil, meanwhile, had finished his breakfast, had his wash, and begged the bit of soap that was left, to do himself up for the 'wegetable sellin',' and was standing on the kitchen rug when Dorothy came down.

'Oh, Phil,' she exclaimed, 'I'm so glad to see you! Are you going to the Ragged School tea to-night? I hope you are; perhaps you have come for a ticket. I am going, and I should like to see you there.'

'Please, Miss, it's the hinfant tea ter-night; I ain't a hinfant!'

'Well, I don't think you look very big. Shan't you get a "tea," then?'

'The boys 'as 'ad theirs, Miss. Stunnin' it wer', too! A big lump o' cake as lasted Moke an' me two or three days; an' a magic lantern. I'd like ter see yer goin' in, Miss. You'll see Moke an' me somewheres about them streets by th' schools.'

'Do you want to see Mr. Miller, Phil?'

'Yes, Miss, *werry pertickler*. Will yer tell 'im,

Miss, as it's about a barrer—'e'll know what I means!'

This was said in such a mysterious and confidential way as almost to upset Dorothy's gravity. She beat a hasty retreat, and found cook standing in the passage, looking greatly troubled.

'What's the matter, cook?' the child asked brightly.

'Well, Miss, I must say as I'm troubled. A fortnight ago a strange sixpence was found on the kitchen shelf, an' this mornin' two more is a layin' there, what no mortal 'ands 'as put there, unless it were you or the mistress, which isn't likely. I'd like to know what it's a sign of? It can't be a weddin', fer that's a stumblin' in goin' upstairs; an' it can't be a funeral, fer that's pictures a-fallin' off the walls; an' what it means beats me!'

'Oh, don't trouble about it, cook,' said the child, laughing merrily. 'If you are afraid of bad luck with keeping those sixpences, give them to Phil; he won't be frightened of them, and they would get him a good dinner or two, I daresay!'

'Oh, Miss,' said cook, greatly impressed, 'do you think as it could 'ave been the angels as put them sixpences there, ready for me to 'and on to that child when he come so unexpected this mornin'? There's sayin's in the Bible about angels takin' care of little children. Surely if

any child needs an angel it's jest such a poor desolate mite as that, what's got to earn his own livin' when he had ought to be nursed on a good mother's knee! I'll give them sixpences to 'im, no fear, and it may save me bad luck!'

During breakfast Dorothy told the story of the magic sixpences with much mirth, and Mrs. Miller exclaimed—

'You see, Norman, you were wrong about that boy being likely to take things. From what Dorothy says he must have been alone in the kitchen for some minutes with that money lying there, and he might easily have taken it, if he had wanted to steal.'

'I am more thankful than I can tell you, mater, that he did not, and also that he has come about the barrow. That is likely to be the first way of escape from the den of thieves into whose hands he has somehow fallen.'

When his beloved teacher opened the kitchen door, Phil's face glowed with delight, and as Dorothy noticed his large eyes raised with something of worship, as well as ardent love, to her guardian's face, she did not wonder at the tenderness and pity which shone in his own.

'Well, Phil,' he said, cheerily, 'so you have heard of a barrow, have you?'

'Yes, teacher! Moke went to Shude Hill this

mornin', an' there was a chap there sayin' as 'e wanted ter sell 'is barrer in a 'urry, through 'im a-goin' off ter some friends as 'ave got him work in Stockport. Moke says as it's a strong 'un, but not werry new, an' there's scales an' weights, teacher, an' some old baskets fer the wegetables, an' th' rent o' th' shed as 'e keeps it in, paid fer three weeks!'

'That sounds very good. What does he want for it, Phil?'

'Please teacher, 'e wants sixteen shillin's; it wer' more, but 'e ses 'e'll take that, if he gets the tin to-morrer or next day. 'E'd used ter sleep in the shed, an' 'e ses it 'ull do fine fer Moke an' me ter begin with. Please, teacher, me an' Moke 'as saved six shillin's'—here Phil lowered his voice and involuntarily looked round, to see that he was not likely to be overheard—'We've got it in a hole in our cupboard place as we sleeps in! If you'd let us 'ave the rest o' th' sixteen bawb, teacher, we'd pay yer back honest. 'E'll sell it to some other lads if we don't pay 'im to-morrer or next day, cos 'e's goin' away.'

'I see. Now tell me where this shed is, and where you think of trading? I mean in what part of the city?'

'It's out at Openshaw, teacher; a real long way from Deansgate; Sam won't never find us there.'

'Very well, Phil; when are you to see the boy?'

'Moke's gone now, teacher, to 'ave a look at the shed, an' we're to take the sixteen shillin's early to-morrer mornin' or th' next mornin'. 'E won't wait no longer.'

'Very well; you come to my office this evening, a little earlier than usual, before I go out to the schools, and you shall have the ten shillings, and I will write out a paper for the owner of the barrow to sign. Then let me know which day you are going to get away from Deansgate, and when you have really left there I will let you have money to stock the barrow.'

'Thank you, teacher!' Phil's face showed intense delight, and his teacher warned him to be very careful not to let anyone know about it.

He started off at once when the business was settled, and had to be recalled to get the penny to pay his fare to town. As he darted through the back kitchen on his way out the second time cook stopped him and put two sixpences into his hand, saying—

'Them's to get you some good, warm dinners, an' mind you come for the boots, child.'

To her surprise he looked at the sixpences somewhat doubtfully, then lifted a flushed face to hers with an inquiring look.

'It's all right, child; take them,' she repeated, and Phil slowly left the house, not resuming his headlong pace until he reached the street, where he executed such a long series of 'cart-wheels' as to threaten the safety of the people who were hurrying along to business. He finally took his seat proudly on the omnibus, and tried to keep himself from shouting for joy. Before long he reached the city, and went off to the quiet street where he had arranged to meet Moke.

As soon as his comrade came in sight, he was treated to such congratulatory slaps, and such buttings of Phil's head between his legs, as no one but Phil could have executed; and having thus let off the exuberance of his joy, he related to his comrade all his successes, and their teacher's promise of the ten shillings to purchase, and after that the necessary money to *stock*, the barrow.

'What about the shillin', Phil?' he asked presently; 'did yer pay that there "fourfold" as yer were so set on?'

'Didn't I! Some'ow I couldn't ax teacher to 'elp us till I'd give that back; an' yer sees as we're no worse off for it! 'E didn't make no more bones 'bout the ten shillin's than if it 'ad been nine, an' I pops them two tanners on th' shelf while everybody wes out o' th' kitchen.

What d'ye think, Moke! Ef Mrs. Cook didn't go an' give me them two back again, fer to get some 'ot dinners, she ses! What d'yer think o' that now?'

'Well, I'm blest!' was Moke's exclamation, as soon as astonishment would let him speak.

'Yer may well say that, an' 'ere they be, the werry same two as I took 'er, I'm sure! Tell yer what, Moke, when we gets well off, I'm goin' to pay back fourfold for everythink as I've nabbed—there!'

'But, Phil, 'owever will yer find the folks as yer took it off?'

'I knows one or two, sech as Jones's Stores an' blind 'Arry and Mrs. Curtis, an' I'll 'ave to give some to some lads as is poorer than us, like Jack-ears did. Teacher 'll tell me 'ow to manage it, fer we'll be toffs then, you an' me, Moke, an' 'ave good cloes an' p'raps a proper shop to sell the wegetables in!'

'Oh, I say, Phil, draw it mild now! I tells yer ef yer gits talkin' an' lookin' as yer doin' now, when we goes in ter-night, Sam 'ull be guessin' somethin', an' then where'll we be!'

The two boys then went about their daily business, Phil with a light heart, but Moke with very mixed feelings, as he thought of Sam's threats if ever Phil disappeared.

When Phil got his papers he made straight for

St. A—— Square, disregarding all other possible customers, and, taking a rapid glance up and down the pavement, he darted into the entrance and knocked at Mr. Miller's office door.

He was admitted immediately by the clerk and taken through the office into the private room beyond, where four half-crowns wrapped in paper were given to him.

'When are you leaving Deansgate, Phil?' his friend asked.

'To-morrer, teacher, or next day.'

'Of course you won't come here with papers again, after you have left Deansgate?'

'No, teacher; Sam 'ud maybe look for us 'ere.'

'Now, Phil, give this paper to Moke, and let him get it signed before giving up the money. I think that he should not pay until one or both of you can go and take possession of the barrow. Leave him there to look after it, and you come up to my house, and I will let you have money to stock it.

'Now, Phil, remember, if you are in any difficulty, or if you believe that Sam is likely to hear where you are, come straight to me. If you think that Sam is following you, come away at once; leave the barrow and come to my house, and I will advise and help you. Do you understand?'

'Yes, teacher, thank yer, teacher, I'll come.'

The boy ran off with a light heart, and his shrill cry of 'Papers, evenin' papers,' was soon echoing through the square and surrounding streets, to such good purpose that his sales were completed, and he was playing leap-frog with Moke and some other boys when Dorothy, with her guardian and Miss Gray, passed through the narrow streets which led to the schools.

'I say, Phil, show us yer young lady as yer talks so much on,' Moke had remarked when he heard of the party who were likely to be at the schools that evening.

Accordingly Phil dragged him across the street immediately in front of them when they appeared, and introduced him after his own fashion, in spite of Moke's bashful looks and his efforts to free himself from his little captor's hands and to escape.

'Oh, this is Moke, is it?' Dorothy said, holding out her hand, which, however, Moke would not take, after a glance at his own grimy one. 'I have heard a great deal about you, Moke, and I am glad you are such a good friend to Phil; it is nice for him to have such a big, strong friend as you are.'

At these kind words, the first which had ever been spoken to him by any woman, much less by any such dainty little lady as Dorothy, the boy

ventured to lift his eyes from the pavement and to take a good look at the speaker. He could not find a word to say in reply, and in another moment the three had continued their way, and he and Phil were gazing after them; but from henceforth Dorothy's face was photographed on the boy's mind, and into his heart there came a great longing to be able to serve this beautiful young creature, who seemed to him to be a being more than human.

While Phil was chattering away after his usual fashion, the elder boy's mind was going on a quest of its own, and a dim purpose was dawning in his slow brain to somehow make himself worthy to serve her in some way, even if only in the far future.

As soon as their friends had disappeared inside the school, Phil pulled his companion along towards their night quarters, and took advantage of a quiet spot on the way there to tell him about the money which was then safely hidden in the lining of his jacket.

'D'ye know what I'm goin' ter do, Moke?' he said, 'I'm goin' ter creep in an' see if anybody's near our bed, an' if not, I'm a-goin' ter put it with th' other tin as we've got. Ef Sam was to mek me *exercise*, he'd see the lump in me jacket, sure enough. It'll be safer in our hole.'

Accordingly the little fellow came creeping noiselessly through the well-known entry, took a rapid glance into the darkness inside, and then dived into a hole under the stairs in the little kitchen of the house where he and Moke were accustomed to sleep.

There was no need of any light. He knew just where to find their small hole, and he carefully deposited his little packet of money in it, on the top of sundry dirty bits of newspaper containing odd coppers and sixpences, which the boys had been saving up for some time. Having hidden his new treasure, he carefully covered up the spot with the straw as before.

Creeping out again, he cautiously left the house, and was making for the entry at a head-long pace when he ran right up against the dreaded Sam, who was turning the corner at that moment.

That worthy, flashing on him a shaded lantern which he carried, noticed at once the boy's unusually flushed face, and also his scared look when he recognised him.

'What are yer' doin' here, boy?' he asked sternly. ''Tain't bedtime yet. What little game 'ave yer got on 'and now?'

The frightened child murmured some incoherent words and escaped into the open street, never once

slackening his speed until he was some distance from his enemy.

'I say, Moke, let's go off somewheres, where Sam 'ull not be about!' said Phil, after giving his friend an account of his narrow escape. 'Sam looked queer, 'e did, an' we'd best keep away till 'e's gone out ter-night.'

'S'pose we goes to th' school an' watches the young 'uns comin' out, Phil? We won't be there for a werry long time after we gets our barrer, shall we? We'd oughter go an' see it agen, surely.'

'To be sure, let's go; but yer know we'll be seein' teacher, even if we daren't go to school. He telled me to go ter 27 an' see 'im when we was ready for the wegetables.'

'I some'ow feels a bit afeared of goin' off, Phil. Sam 'ull look fer us, an' ef 'e found us, 'e'd kill us, 'e would, soon as look at us! S'pose, Phil,' here Moke lowered his voice to a whisper, 's'pose 'e found th' tin, we couldn't never go then!'

'I tell yer, Moke, as I'm a-goin'! *Tin or no tin*, I aren't goin' ter stop no longer; teacher wants us ter go, 'e'll stand by us, 'e will! If Sam takes me out ter practices, I'll be a proper thief, an' teacher wouldn't look at me no more. We'll have ter go in ter-night to get th' tin, an' ter-morrer we clears out!'

Moke's words of remonstrance were checked by the opening of the school door and the sound of many shrill voices, as the infants poured out in a living stream, all hugging the large pieces of cake left over from the square blocks which had been weighed out to each child. In the darkness and noise the boys only caught sight of their friends for one moment as they stepped into the cab which was waiting for Miss Gray and Dorothy near the school, and the latter was scarcely conscious of a little barefooted figure pattering along beside it, until Phil's shrill "Good-night, Miss," at last made her spring to the window and return the greeting, when, quite satisfied, he turned back to join his shyer comrade.

'Well, Dorothy, and how have you enjoyed your evening among the rags and tatters?' Mrs. Miller inquired on their return.

'I am afraid I did not enjoy it much.'

'I am not a bit surprised; but come and tell me all about it. Why, child, how upset you look!'

'Poor Dorothy had an unpleasant time with a tiny child there,' Miss Gray replied, in answer to an appealing look from Dorothy. 'Poor little mite, she had been taught to lie and steal, and declared over and over again that she had had *no cake*, although we were *quite* sure that we had handed a large block to each child in that row.

In spite of tears and protestations, the superintendent did not believe her, and searched all round her for the cake. He at last found it. Where do you think, Mrs. Miller? Do you know that tiny mite had laid it carefully on the gallery where the children were closely packed, and was *sitting on it*, with her little ragged skirt concealing it. It was only when she was lifted off her seat that it was found.'

'Little wretch! And she had been crying over the loss of it, you say. I hope you gave her a good whipping!'

'That's just where the sadness of it comes in! How can one correct a poor, miserable, starving mite like that, clothed in little more than her thin, ragged, cotton frock, and looking forward to hunger again to-morrow as a certain fact.'

'Oh dear, oh dear, how terrible it all is!'

'Yes, I don't wonder it upset Dorothy; but, Mrs. Miller, I am going to try and help there. I have quite made up my mind to that. I believe I could do something for the children, and might possibly in time get some of them into Training Homes, as you know my father has some influence in that way.'

'I am very glad to hear that!' said a voice behind them, and looking round they saw that Norman Miller had come in unnoticed.

'I feared,' he continued, 'that that little sinner had spoiled the evening for both of you.'

'So she did in a sense: but surely enjoyment is not everything. Do you know, Mr. Miller, as I looked at those cold, hungry, untaught little ones, I seemed to see myself giving an account of my life to the Great Judge of all, and the only things I had to tell of, which took all my time and filled up my life, were little home duties, calls, visits, "At Homes," etc., and it all seemed so poor and empty. Why have I never thought of these things before?'

'Because you are beginning to understand our Master's mind, and to enter into His thoughts about the world He came to save,' was the quiet answer.

'I rejoice at your wish; only remember that you will soon feel the difference this work makes as regards your friends! Many of them will first laugh at you, then sneer, and possibly drop you altogether.'

'But suppose that should happen to me. It need not make my life unhappy. I am sure it does not make yours; and do you think it ought to count against making the greatest possible use of one's life? How thankful I should be if I could really rescue even one of those little creatures, as you are saving Phil from a life of sin.'

'I only trust we may really succeed with him, but I confess to having some fears. One does not need to think about *reward* for faithful service! It brings its own reward, but I am sure you will remember those words of our Divine Master about any who make sacrifices for His sake: They shall receive, not *fourfold*, but *manifold* more in this present life, besides the promise for the future.'

CHAPTER VIII

The Burglary

WHILE this talk was going on about Phil, he was taking shelter in the deep doorway of an old empty house in an alley off Wood Street, where he had more than once remained in hiding, to wait for Sam's departure on his nightly business. Moke was with him, and they were anxiously waiting for the time when they could safely creep into their nightly shelter.

'I'm awful sleepy, Moke,' poor little Phil exclaimed, as a church clock struck ten and chimed the half-hour.

'Well, you'll 'ave ter wait a bit longer. 'E don't often go out afore eleven. 'Ow cold yer are, Phil! Let's put my jacket over us, an' you'll be warmer.'

The big lad looked anxiously at his little companion, and then a bright thought struck him.

'I say, Phil,' he said, 'tell us what yer got this mornin', up at 27, yer knows. You 'aven't told me nothink.'

The boys had agreed that it was safer not to

mention Mr. Miller's name after the day when Sam had so cruelly beaten Phil, so that they agreed to speak of it always as '27.'

'Oh, 27 was jest prime this mornin', Phil replied, giving a little chuckle of joy at the recollection, in spite of his weariness. 'I got a great big dish of bread an' milk, and it *wer*' good. Oh, and Moke, what d'yer think? She told me to come o' Saturday an' get some mince pies an' things as she'll 'ave left from a big party as they're 'avin' to-morrer! Won't it be prime, Moke? I expect we'll get a good blow out. I'll tell 'er as I've got a pal, and git something extra.'

'Ay, it 'ull be a sort of 'ousewarmin', won't it, fer our shed? Shall I come with yer to 27 o' Saturday, Phil?'

'No, you'd best not. She saw yer at th' door when you went afore, and might know yer agen; besides that she'll be awful busy after the party. She said so, and if she got waxy with two comin' we might git nothink.'

The boys had been too much interested in the talk to notice a stealthy step approaching, and they were utterly taken by surprise when Sam's hated voice now bade them come out and get off to bed.

'Where's this fine party as you're going to get the leavings of?' he said savagely. 'Did I hear

yer say 27, Kersal Grove? Now, no lying, or I'll ——'

'Yes, yes, 27,' Phil cried in terror, and leaping aside from Sam's uplifted hand, he bolted up the entry. Moke followed, after watching Sam disappear down Wood Street.

They then crept tremblingly into their poor shelter, determined that it should be their last night there. Early in the morning Phil put his hand to the hole where the money was hidden. He felt, and felt again, but no little packet was there. He got up and searched for it on hands and knees, his face growing whiter and whiter each moment. He then roused Moke, who shared in the search, and cautiously striking a match, they both noticed that the pile of straw had been disturbed, and was heaped at one end. As no one was in the little kitchen, and all was quiet in the house, they crept out of their cupboard and dragged out every bit of the straw.

It was all in vain; there was no trace either of the money or of the papers in which it had been wrapped.

'It's Sam!' Phil whispered. ''E's took it! 'E must 'ave got ter know about the barrer! We'll 'ave to cut an' run without it!'

'Isn't there nothink of 'is we could take ter pay 'im out?' Moke replied, also in a whisper.

Sam occupied comfortable rooms upstairs, where he was accustomed to entertain his friends after any successful burglary, but the boys dared not venture up there, not knowing who might be in.

They looked round the wretched little place, but the only thing they saw which it was possible to carry away, was a set of hooks and cords used for the exercises. These were kept on a nail inside their cupboard.

Phil snatched them up, although he hardly knew why he did so, except to vent his anger and disappointment on Sam *somehow*, and they stole out without waking anyone.

They again made for the deep doorway, to decide what to do next, and here Phil flung himself down and sobbed as if his heart would break.

Moke tried his best to comfort him.

'Never mind, Phil, don't take on,' he said, rubbing his sleeve across his own eyes at the same time.

'Don't, Phil,' he repeated; 'wouldn't teacher 'elp us now?'

At the mention of 'teacher,' Phil's sobs became more violent, and his companion learned what was the chief cause of his distress.

'Teacher 'ull think as I've took 'im in, 'e will! 'E'll think as we 'adn't got the six bawb, an' as we've been makin' it all up!'

It was long before he could listen to Moke's attempts at comfort, and when he ceased sobbing there stole into his face a look so unlike him, a look of such anger and revenge, that even Moke was startled at the change in him.

'Come on, Moke,' Phil said at length, 'let's clear out and never come 'ere no more. It won't do to stop 'ere, where he found us afore!'

A long, miserable day followed. The boys had no heart to take up their daily work, and for once Phil's usually fertile brain produced no plan or suggestion of any kind. As night came on, a driving rain set in, which forced them to look out for some shelter, and Phil suddenly remembered that some excavations were being made in a certain street in Salford, where an old man, who had often been kind to him, was the night watcher.

'I believe Old Wiggles 'ud let us in 'is 'ut, Moke! I'd often used to sleep there afore you an' me took to lodgin' together. Let's try; it's real warm there in front of 'is big fire.'

'You go there, Phil; I'm too big, 'e wouldn't 'ave me. I knows a shed where a pony used to be, as is gone now. It's a goodish bit away, but I can get in there. Where will we meet in the mornin'?'

'Oh, Shude Hill market 'll do, there's shelter there jest by the big clock.'

The boys parted, Moke disappearing at the top of a long street, while Phil crept up to a hut which stood in front of a watchman's fire, where the barricades had been put up, and the street traffic had been stopped.

Old Wiggles (as Phil styled him) was not unwilling to let the boy curl himself up on an old coat on the floor of his hut, for he knew and liked the little lad, and also felt sure of his willingness to fetch him hot coffee in the early morning from the barrow where it was sold to workmen in a neighbouring street.

The tired child was conscious now and then of the old man pushing past him to attend to his fires, but only half awoke and dropped asleep again at once. Some continuous sound roused him at last. Men's voices were heard in subdued tones outside the thin partition. Showers of hail and sleet were driving against one side of the hut, and two men were sheltering from it by leaning against the other side. They were talking earnestly as they smoked. There was something about the voices which roused Phil until he was wide awake, and as he listened he felt sure that one of the speakers was Sam. His heart almost stood still, as he became convinced that it was indeed Sam.

'It should be a good haul,' he was saying.

'They tell me that they've a very good lot of silver.'

'How did yer hear as they were havin' this party to-night?'

Sam's harsh laugh here broke in.

'Oh, I heard that young scamp Phil talkin' about a party at 27, and I soon found out it was the same place.'

'Shall we take him? he'd know the house, p'r'aps?'

'Are yer mad, Joe?' the other said angrily; 'we daren't trust him to make a beginnin' *there!* His nerve might fail him, and then he'd fall into the hands of the folks I'm most anxious to keep him from. Fancy, the wicked young dog goin' up there to beg or something! I'm sure he's been, from what he said.'

'I don't see what yer mean.'

'Why, look 'ere, Joe.' Sam lowered his voice and looked round for the old man, but seeing him tending his fire at the other end of the barricade, besides knowing him to be almost stone deaf, he continued—

'Isn't someone comin' out, p'r'aps next month, what's promised me a partnership if I'll have the kid trained and ready for him to take in hand when he gets here? Seein' as his last haul was a thousand or so from the jewel robbery, it's

worth bein' a sleepin' partner with him, isn't it now ? '

'Did yer say next month ? '

'Well, it may be, if he's got a ticket for good conduct, yer know. If not, it will be six months later. At any rate we'd best watch that kid a bit jest now. We'll start takin' him out next time after this, an' if he plays any tricks I'll take him to Birmingham and get him kept close there, ready for when I want to produce him. I believe the two of 'em had somethin' on hand yesterday. Things was suspicious, but I spoilt their little game, whatever it was. I found sixteen bawb in their cupboard. In course, I didn't leave it there ! '

There was a smothered laugh, and Joe inquired how soon Sam was starting for 27.

'Three o'clock's quite soon enough for us to be on the ground. Our watcher will go at two. It depends how late they keep it up. I hear that their party a month ago was over at one, and all the silver was left in the dinin'-room to be put away in the mornin'. I'm expectin' it will be so again ! '

The men now moved off, leaving Phil in a state of terror from which it took him some time to recover. As minutes passed on, however, and they did not return, he began to hope that they had finally gone away.

Two things stood out unmistakably before Phil as he recalled the words he had heard. First, that Sam and Joe and their band meant to rob the house of his beloved teacher that night, and second, that he had led them to do it by telling of the party at 27, when surprised by Sam.

The misery produced by this last thought was so great that he started up and cried aloud to Moke to help him, forgetting that Moke was far away from him that night.

He got on his feet when he realised that he was alone, and looked out of the hut. The storm had passed off and the street lamps shone on the wet pavement. The old man was in the other hut. Phil felt miserably lonely. There was no one to help him, and whatever was done must be done by himself alone. Dare he go through the night and find his way to 27 and warn them of the intended burglary? He shivered and trembled as he thought of the long, dreary journey, along the now quiet streets, and almost gave it up. Then there flashed into his mind those terrible threats of Sam about what he would do to Mr. Miller if he ever came prying into their quarters. Was Sam going to that house to harm Phil's one friend, as well as to rob him? This thought gave the brave little fellow fresh courage, and without stopping to consider longer, he stepped out of his

warm shelter and started off at a quick run in the direction which would lead him towards the Millers' house.

It was a long and terrible journey to Phil. Although he was accustomed to being alone in the streets amidst crowds, yet he felt the silence and desertion of them now try his courage sorely, besides which he had to keep a constant look out for policemen and dart into side streets while they passed by, fearing they might stop him.

As he went on and on, a great fear seized him lest he should be too late, and he tried to run faster, although his legs were aching and he was feeling a strange weariness and numbness. He had no idea of the time until he heard a church clock strike one, as he was getting near to the neighbourhood in which No. 27 stood.

What had Sam said about one o'clock? Was that the time he had named? Phil's mind was confused and his head was aching now as well as his legs, but he bravely struggled on, and at length crept inside the entrance gate of No. 27.

Once in the garden he stole round to the side of the house which was nearest to the kitchen door. What was to be done now? There was no light anywhere. How was he going to wake them and tell them of their danger? Suddenly he recollected the hook and cord inside his jacket,

and groping carefully along towards the familiar kitchen door he tried to remember which window it was that he had opened for cook. The kitchen wing was lower than the front part of the house, and there were several windows in a row over the kitchens. There seemed to be a glimmer of light in one of these, and the boy summoned his remaining strength and tried to throw his hook on to that window sill.

After a few failures, his well-practised trick succeeded, and in half a minute he was on the ledge trying to open the window. To his great joy it opened easily, having been left unfastened, and he dropped inside, finding himself in a bath-room. A small bead of gas, which had been left burning, showed him the open door and a passage beyond.

As he passed into the long, dark corridor he shook and trembled with fear, and in another moment he would have been seized with panic and have turned back and made his escape, when his eye caught sight of a bright light under the door of a room on his left, and he heard a well-known step crossing the floor.

In one instant Phil had fled across to that door, opened it without knocking and darted in, his eyes almost starting out of his head, and his cheeks crimson with excitement and fear.

'Teacher!' he exclaimed, sobbing convulsively with terror, and sinking on to the floor at his feet, —— 'They're — comin' — to rob yer — It's Sam, an' 'e 'ates yer, teacher! Oh, I'm glad as I got 'ere afore them!'

Mr. Miller's amazement at the sudden appearance of the boy and at his words, completely paralysed him for the moment, and he looked down anxiously at the flushed face of his little scholar, and wondered whether he was not dreaming. Phil had sunk down on the hearthrug, his breath coming in sobbing gasps, and his little body shaking and trembling.

'I am afraid you are ill, Phil,' his teacher said kindly, stepping across to a small gas stove and putting some milk into a pan to heat for him, before questioning him further.

'But aren't yer going ter do somethink, teacher? Never mind me, I've run from Salford, and it were a long way.'

Mr. Miller, who was now firmly convinced that Phil was delirious, gave him no answer, but spread a rug in his own easy chair and made the boy comfortable; waiting until he had swallowed the hot milk to ask him how he got into the house.

'Thank yer, teacher,' the little fellow said gratefully — 'that done me good — will I run an' get the pleece for yer?'

'How did you get in, Phil?'

'With me 'ook an' cord. Oh, teacher, they're comin' at three! Couldn't yer get the silver fetched away an' 'id?'

The mention of the silver made Mr. Miller start, and a few rapid questions at length convinced him that Phil was not rambling, and that he must take immediate action.

His first care was for Phil's safety. He knew that the hook and cord would be easily recognised by the gang, who would take summary vengeance on Phil, if they knew that he had betrayed their plans. He therefore went quickly downstairs, opened the kitchen door as quietly as possible, and loosed the cord, drawing it inside from the upper window. Another moment and he had quietly opened the door of cook's bedroom, and was trying to awake her.

It was some time before he could made her understand the danger they were in, and as he was explaining it the clocks struck two, and then chimed one quarter past.

'I must go and take some steps for our protection,' he said rather sharply; 'if you can't understand and help me, I had better go and call Mrs. Miller.'

The unusual tones had more effect on cook's bewildered brain than any amount of explanation,

and she appeared almost immediately at the door of Mr. Miller's room, where he left her in charge of Phil.

'Keep the curtains closed across the window, cook,' he said, 'and don't allow any light to be seen outside. Whatever sounds you hear, do not open the door; keep it locked and bolted. Whatever happens, the boy must not fall into their hands.'

'Oh, how exhausted he seems!' she exclaimed, bending over Phil.

'Yes, I fear he is; do your best for him, and mind what I say.'

What was to be done next? How could he attract the attention of the police? He stood for a moment considering. If he had rightly understood Phil's story, some of the burglars might even now be waiting about the grounds, and it would not be safe for him to leave the house and go for help.

A sudden inspiration seized him, and unlocking the dining-room door, he sprang on to a chair, struck a match and lighted the chandelier.

The dining-room looked on to the road, and although the shutters were closed, the bright light could be clearly seen through the coloured glass of the fixed lights above them.

One glance round the room showed that the

silver *was* lying there, as Phil had seemed to expect. There was no time to spend in wonderment as to how he knew so much. It was the work of a moment to seize and carry away a portion of it into a small cloak cupboard, and as he returned for more he heard the welcome sound of a policeman's whistle quite close to the house. Hurrying upstairs he opened the drawing-room window, and could just discern a bull's-eye lantern outside the front gate. A low whistle brought the officer into the garden.

'Is that you, sir? Is anything wrong? I saw the light as I was passing, and whistled Thompson; he has just crossed me on his inward beat.'

'Come closer under the window, Smith, and close your lamp. I believe a gang of burglars to be close upon us. I have had warning. You and Thompson come quietly round to the kitchen entrance. I will be there to admit you. Search well with your lights about the out-houses by the kitchen entrance. If you can't get Thompson, come alone; there is not a moment to lose.'

'All right, sir,' came the whispered reply; 'put out those lights at once, sir.'

The household slept on while these arrangements were made, and soon the house was again in darkness, while Mr. Miller, arming himself with a stout

stick, stepped out noiselessly among the kitchens and pantries, to detect the first sound of any attempt to force an entrance. The glimmer of the bull's-eye lantern through the kitchen window was a welcome sight, and the police officer to whom he had spoken slipped into the kitchen quietly, securing the door.

'We've caught one, sir,' he said, in an eager undertone, covering his lantern and stepping noiselessly into a passage out of sight of the window.

'Where—how—Smith?'

'I believe, sir, as we're on the track of the worst gang in the city. This fellow was hiding behind the wash-house door. Thompson has him safe. He'll be the "watcher" they generally send out to give the alarm, if he sees a light or fancies all is not safe. If he had seen that light that brought me across the road, we should have lost the lot of them, but he couldn't see it from where he was, and you put it out too soon for him to get round. However did you get warning, sir?'

'Never mind now, Smith. Where do you think they will try to enter? The windows over the kitchen are an easy place. Suppose I go there, and you watch near the dining-room door?'

'No, sir. Thompson can watch those windows from where he stands; he's got the fellow locked

up with a handkerchief over his mouth, and he'll watch that side. Is there anywhere we can hide in the hall?'

'Yes, behind the curtain covering the study door.'

Scarcely had they hidden themselves there, when a sharp crack was heard, as of a glazier's cutter, and then the sound of the forcing of the door which led from a conservatory at the side of the house into a passage close to the hall.

Almost before the watchers thought it possible, they heard muffled sounds of a saw, and then the withdrawing of the bolts of the second door, opening into the hall, and the figure of a youth carrying a shaded light passed noiselessly into the dining-room.

The officer pressed his companion's hand to indicate 'wait.'

The dark figure again noiselessly crossed the hall and disappeared.

'Gone to tell them the silver's there,' whispered the excited Smith.

In a few moments the youth appeared again, as guide, followed by two men wearing masks and carrying sacks.

As soon as the three were in the dining-room, the two watchers followed. The bull's-eye lantern flashed, and Smith struggled desperately with the

taller of the last comers, while Mr. Miller made for the other. The trapped men fought hard for their liberty, and only one was secured, although Smith gave chase to the second, and struck him a heavy blow with his truncheon, which made the man's right arm fall limp and helpless to his side.

After their prisoners had been secured, police whistles and alarms broke the silence of the night. A gentleman driving home from a late entertainment volunteered help, and carried the news of the attempted burglary to the police station. A number of police officers came at once and took charge of the prisoners.

Mrs. Miller and all the household were now awake, and were in a state of great terror, although assured that all was well.

Amidst all the noise and confusion, the door of Mr. Miller's room remained locked, and none of them knew that Phil was there, being carefully nursed by cook, whose motherly instincts had prevailed over her desire to scream and rush out of the room when she heard the echoes of the disturbance below.

When at last her master came to her he found Phil sleeping quietly.

'I've done as you told me, sir,' she said, with tears running down her cheeks; 'but it's been 'ard

work to stop 'ere by myself with all them whistles and noises a-goin', and Mary a-screamin', and me not knowin' whether you was all bein' murdered!'

'I knew I could depend on you, cook; you have been very brave, and I don't know what I should have done without you,' her master said, approvingly.

Then he told her all that had happened, only omitting Phil's part of the story, and asked her to keep Phil's presence in the house a secret.

'You see, cook,' he urged, 'the police might think that Phil belonged to those burglars, if they knew of him being here on the same night; and there is no knowing what difficulty and sorrow that might mean for him.'

'To be sure, sir. What shall you do with the child, sir?'

'I hardly know yet—I must think about it. You need not stay with him any longer, I think. He will no doubt sleep on after his exertions last night, and I am sure you will want some breakfast after your long watch up here.'

They had, however, scarcely left the room when Phil opened his eyes and gazed with surprise at his unusual surroundings. At first he thought he was dreaming, but gradually the events of the previous night came back to his mind, and with

them a thought of his own danger, as the betrayer of the burglars' plans.

In the excitement of last night, the knowledge of his dear teacher's danger, and also a certain pleasure he had felt in disappointing the schemes of Sam, had upheld him; but now all the horrible stories with which he was familiar, of boys done to death in most terrible ways for betraying intended burglaries, stood out clearly in his memory, and he shivered with the fear of being caught and punished.

He sprang up and crept to the window. It was still quite dark, although various sounds outside told him that daylight must be very near. How had he got into this house, and where were the hook and cord? If they had been found by the burglars, there was no hope for him. He stole out of the room and found his way to the bath-room through which he had entered. Tremblingly he passed his hand along the window ledge. The hook and cord were gone! What was to be done now that his worst fears were realised?

'I must get away afore it gets light,' the little fellow whispered. 'They'll watch for me comin' out, now they've found the cord!'

One wild longing for his teacher's help seized him, and a thought of throwing himself at his feet and begging him to believe the story of the lost

money came to him as he hesitated; but supposing his teacher did not believe him?

At this moment the recollection of Moke's danger, as well as his own, crossed his mind. Moke would go to Shude Hill, and, if Phil failed to come to him, would saunter round their old haunts to seek him. He would be easily found and caught, as he knew nothing about the necessity for hiding. Phil's hesitation was over now. He went back into the room where he had passed the night, put on his jacket, and feeling very hungry, finished the milk and biscuits which cook had been giving him when he fell asleep. Then, stealing down the staircase with noiseless, bare feet, he darted into a passage to escape the notice of the police officer who was keeping guard in the hall, opened the pantry window, and shot away through the back premises.

CHAPTER IX

'Telegrams'

THE day following the burglary was an exciting one in several parts of the city. Early in the morning a body of police paid a surprise visit to Spinning Field and other suspected parts of Deansgate, hoping to find traces of the ringleader of the band of burglars who had attacked Mr. Miller's house. They suspected him to be none other than the rogue known as 'Smiling Sam.'

Police Constable Smith was convinced that he could be identified by a disabled arm, and was hopeful of his arrest. No trace of him, however, could be found. Sam was much too clever to be caught in his lair with a broken arm, to connect him with the last night's doings, and they had to be content for the present with the two prisoners already secured, who declared that they came from the Staffordshire potteries, and had no confederates in the city.

This statement, however, was soon proved to be false, as the man overpowered in the dining-room exactly answered to the description of 'Big

Joe,' and when Mr. Miller went into the local police station to report on the night's events he found Police Constable Smith quite jubilant over the success they had had, and especially his own share of it.

'It will mean promotion for me, sir,' he said, as he left the station with Mr. Miller. 'I'm sure that we'll be able to prove that that big fellow belongs to the Deansgate gang. May I ask you one question, sir?' he added, confidentially. 'I noticed that you only spoke of your suspicions being aroused, in your evidence. I suppose I'm to consider what you told me of having had *warning* to be a private matter?'

'Yes, Smith, you are right. You know my close connection with the Ragged School in the neighbourhood of Deansgate, and I am sure you know the fearful risk any lad would run who was suspected of warning me.'

'I see, sir, and it is no part of my duty to inquire about that; but I would like to ask you what made you think of putting on them lights just when you did? It was a wonderful clever idea of yours, for if you had been a minute or two later Thompson and me would have been out of sight for an hour, and who knows what would have happened to you, sir, with them desperate characters in the house! They'd evidently waited

till they thought we'd crossed and gone out of sight, as we do at 2.30. I expect they knew there was only one man in the house, and, as I say, there's no saying what mightn't have happened if they'd found you about alone.'

'Do you remember our subject last Sunday evening at the Branch No. 5 Mission Meeting, Smith? I think you were there?'

'To be sure I do, sir, and a splendid lesson you gave us, as I was saying to the men only yesterday. We was all struck with what you said about the telegrams to Heaven when sudden need and danger and such like comes to us, and the quick answer that comes back, same as if it was flashed along the wires. Ah, I see, sir! You sent up one of them, and a wonderful answer you got, if it was that as put it into your mind to light up when you did, in the very nick of time, as I said.'

'Yes, Smith, you have the clue to our preservation. I felt it to be a critical moment. I did not know what time you or Thompson would pass. I had no idea of that, and as I stood alone in the dark considering, I sent off my "telegram," and it brought a quick answer. The thought at once flashed through my mind, "Light up, and if any of your police friends are near they will be keen enough for your safety to stop and inquire if

anything is wrong," for you all know we keep early hours.'

'Well, sir, I must say as what you tell me is a lesson as I shan't soon forget. It reminds me of a verse that my good mother used to make me repeat very often, till I got it so pat I can never forget it: "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers." Then, sir, there's something else I'd like to tell you, and I must say I feel ashamed of having done so little praying when I see how wonderfully all these small things was arranged, to make the Almighty's words come true. I was just passing your gate when the carriages came (about 12.30 it was), and one cabby called out to another to ask whether he thought they was going to be kept waiting long. "No, not at this house," says cabby; "the folks here is a good sort, and doesn't keep us waiting in the cold half the night. The master is a good Christian; he don't preach so much to us about the drink, but sends big jugs of hot coffee out to us to stop us wanting it." You see, sir, cabby's words made me notice most perticler what time the last carriage drove away, as I mightn't have done otherwise. Having noticed the house all dark and quiet soon after one o'clock, I was surprised at a bright light showing downstairs at 2.30.'

'Now, Smith, I am going to take you into my confidence, in a private matter which, as you say, is no part of your duty, but in which you can help me very much. Come into the house, where we shall not be overheard. A little lad out of the Ragged School came up here last night. Cook has been kind to him, and, seeing how ill he looked, I made her keep him for the night. He was asleep the whole time of the burglary, and at six o'clock this morning she left him for half an hour still asleep. On returning she found the room empty. His sudden disappearance disturbs me very much, and I want you to try and find him by making quiet inquiries through the members of the force about the city. I was just setting the boy up in business and getting him away from bad men. He was going to begin business at Openshaw this week. Possibly he is gone there; if so, don't disturb him, but let me know. There are circumstances connected with him which make me very anxious to find him. His slipping away before daylight perplexes me, too. You know the boy, his name is Phil; he has been up here several times.'

'Yes, I know him well enough, sir, and if he's in this city he shall be found. I'll go across myself to Openshaw to-night, and I shall say nothing of all you have told me, sir, for I can see from

what you say that he's in danger, and I gather that he is innocent of any share in last night's work.'

Norman Miller stood long at the window after Smith had left him, turning over in his mind the possible causes for Phil's hasty flight. He had not left the boy for more than half an hour, and yet had found the room empty. He felt very much troubled about the child. Had he understood the danger he was in from betraying the secrets of the gang who professed to own him, and gone away before daylight, so that he would not be seen leaving the house? Or had he merely slipped off to meet Moke about the purchase of the barrow, intending to return?

His disappearance added very much to the special anxieties of the day.

Mrs. Miller, too, was in a state of nervous agitation quite unusual to her.

'Really, Norman,' she said, as soon as she saw him, 'you must not go to the city to-day. I would not for any money be left in this house after dark, and nothing would induce me to enter that dining-room, with all those bolts and locks broken. Dorothy and the servants are all just as bad. I really think we had better go down to Derbyshire for a while, and send the silver and valuables to the bank.'

'Just as you like, mater; you may find it a little cold, but Mrs. Evans will soon get the house aired and prepared for you.'

'I really think I shall go, Norman; you will have to stay here, I suppose, and cook can stay; but I had better take Dorothy, and Sarah and Mary. Could you not get some of your policemen to sleep here for a time?'

'Oh, that will be all right, mater. I will get the silver away, and will come down when I can, although I fear it will not be very often. We will have watchmen in to-night, and you can leave to-morrow.'

'Look here, Norman,' Mrs. Miller exclaimed, handing him the daily paper the following morning, 'it seems that this city harbours the most desperate characters! Just read that; I hope it was not any of your precious *lambs* at the Ragged School that did that. I don't know what we are coming to, I'm sure, when mere children can plan and carry through a daring robbery such as this!' Taking the paper from her, he read as follows:—

A Daring Robbery.*

Yesterday afternoon, as the manager of the —— Co.'s shops in the new district to the left of Cheetham Hill Road, was going his rounds to

* An actual newspaper cutting.

collect the cash, he sent the man in charge of No. 2 branch out for a few minutes, and in his absence himself served a small street arab with a penny cake, which he kindly helped him to secrete in the back of his jacket, on the boy telling him that there was a big lad outside who would take it from him if he saw it. During this operation the small boy abstracted the manager's gold watch and chain, without his being aware of its loss. Immediately he had left the shop a tall, ragged lad ran in and told him of the theft; the little thief had only just gone out, and the manager immediately gave chase, leaving the bigger boy standing there. When the shopman returned from his few minutes' errand he found the till empty, both boys having managed to elude the police. The manager who has been robbed is from the country, and is evidently no match for the city arab. He has only held his present post for a fortnight.

'Well, what do you think of that?' Mrs. Miller exclaimed, as the paper was laid down. 'Wicked little imps! If boys are as clever as that, life won't be worth living with the gangs of burglars there will be in a few years.'

'You are right, mater. But what skilful and capable men they may turn out, if all this cleverness is guided in the right way!'

The paragraph had, however, disturbed Mr. Miller more than he cared to show. Was it possible that Moke and Phil were the big and little lads mentioned in it? He turned from the thought as unlikely; but then there was the mystery of their disappearance to be cleared up somehow! No tidings of any kind about either of them had come to hand, although he had employed all the skilled help which the city afforded to try and discover whether Phil had got into Sam's hands or had been seen in Spinning Field. He felt in a measure responsible for the safety of the little lad who had risked so much for him, and was relieved at the Derbyshire plan, as it would give him more time personally to follow up the search.

The long train steamed out of the station, bearing the party from No. 27, and all the nervousness and sadness passed from Dorothy's face as they rushed through the rugged scenery of the Peak, in its winter dress of frost and snow, on which the sun shone brightly, making every tree a sparkling picture, and adding grandeur to the rocks and dark clumps of fir trees among which they passed.

The sight of Jack waiting at the railway station at B——, with the pony phaeton and pair of fat, shaggy ponies, sent her into raptures, and her

gushing caresses made Jack blush furiously, and look round, hoping that no one was watching their meeting. Real pleasure and satisfaction were on his face (although he was somewhat in awe of Mrs. Miller) as he prepared to drive them home.

'Why, Jack, can you manage the ponies?' Mrs. Miller asked, a little nervously. 'Where is Isaac?'

'He said I could bring them in, Mrs. Miller; Mr. Bridges says I am safe with them.'

'Well, do take care. If we get broken bones to add to thieves and robbers, whatever will become of us!'

Jack laughed, and the ponies trotted away to Mr. Miller's house at Hazelgrove.

Bright fires were sending a warm, glowing light through the windows of the picturesque, old-fashioned house, and the evening meal looked tempting to the cold travellers, the crisp, frosty air having sharpened their appetites. It was quite a merry one, too. Mrs. Miller could be very amusing, and they spent a happy evening, with games and music, and stories of Mrs. Miller's younger days.

No fear of burglars in this village, where they knew everyone, and where silver and valuables, with their accompaniment of care and responsibility, were not kept.

Even the maids rejoiced in the feeling of freedom which belongs to the country, and told wonderful things about the burglary to the old couple who lived there as caretakers of house and garden, whether the family were at home or away.

The fortnight which Dorothy and Jack spent together was a time of perfect delight to both.

Mrs. Miller invited Jack to spend as much time as he could with Dorothy, and the pair enjoyed to the full the many special pleasures of bright, sunny, frosty, winter weather.

They were daily to be found roaming about Farmer Bridges' model farm buildings, climbing into haylofts, visiting the calves, and hunting for eggs.

Dorothy showed such a desire to know how to churn and to make bread, that kind Mrs. Bridges was only too proud to teach and help her.

There was skating, too, and there were many friends to see, so that the days were too short for all they wanted to do.

After one of these days of healthy enjoyment, they came in rather noisily, and found Mrs. Miller sitting alone waiting for them.

'Oh, Mrs. Miller, do forgive us for being late,' Dorothy exclaimed, 'we have such a lovely story to tell you!'

'I'm glad you have had a nice day,' she answered kindly; 'mine has been a rather tedious one.'

'Did not Isaac drive you to Bridgehill?' Jack asked quickly. 'Oh, I am so sorry! If I had known that this morning, I should have been glad to drive you.'

'Thank you, Jack, I know you would. Isaac is laid up with asthma; but now tell me what has been amusing you so much, for you both look very bright.'

'Let me tell, Jack!'

'All right, go ahead.'

'You know you asked us to call on our way home to inquire after Mr. Stokes,' Dorothy began eagerly, 'and we found he had been dreadfully ill, but is better to-day. His housekeeper says that his quinsy has been *charmed* away!'

'What nonsense, Dorothy! You won't make me believe that a steady-going, middle-aged clergyman like Mr. Stokes believes such a thing!'

'Oh no, *he* does not believe it, but his housekeeper does. Let me tell you from the beginning. There is an old woman living high up on the Chevin side in a very lonely little house there. She keeps a cow and makes a living out of its milk. Some time ago this cow fell ill, and Betty

came down to the curate's house, time after time, to beg him to go and see it. She said that she was sure someone had cast an evil eye on it, and nobody but a parson could do it any good. At first Mr. Stokes refused to go, but she kept on coming continually and begging him to go with her and "*charm*" the disease away.

'Poor Mr. Stokes told her that he did not believe in charms, and could not do the cow any good; but she persisted, and came so often that at last he went with her.

'It was a very stormy night when he went, and Sally (his housekeeper) says that was when he got the bad cold which has hung about him ever since. What do you think he did when he got there?'

Dorothy went off into peals of laughter.

'Well, what was it, child? You have made me quite curious. You don't mean to tell me that Mr. Stokes *did charm* the cow?'

'Yes, he did, he actually did; and——it got well!'

'Absurd! Who has been taking you in with such silly tales?'

'But really, Mrs. Miller, it is quite true,' said Jack, continuing the narrative, as Dorothy seemed unable to go on for mirth.

'I suppose the poor man saw that old Betty

was a bit weak in the upper regions, and that there was no way of satisfying her without saying something she might take for a *charm*. At any rate, he consented to go into the little cowshed and look at the cow. Then he asked for a gridiron.'

'A what?'

'Oh, do let me tell the rest, Jack. A gridiron, Mrs. Miller! Every one of the cottagers here has one. I don't quite know why. Well, he asked for one, and when Betty brought it he held it over the cow, and then twirled it rapidly, saying as he did so, "If yer live yer live, and if yer dee yer dee. If yer live yer live, and if yer dee yer dee," about five times, as fast as he could speak! Fancy grave Mr. Stokes doing that!'

'But that's not all the story,' Jack interposed. 'This happened in December, and the cow got well. I assure you it did! When Betty came to tell Mr. Stokes how his "*charm*" had worked, she found him very ill, and Sally gave her a bit of her mind about bringing the parson out for a four-mile walk on a stormy night, on what she called "a fool's errand," and giving him his death of cold.

'Old Betty was a good deal troubled about it, and kept coming to inquire after the parson and begging to be allowed to see him! Yesterday she

came again, and asked if she might just stand inside the door and look at him.

'Sally thought she would satisfy her, and as Mr. Stokes was asleep, she let the old woman go a step or two into the room.'

'Guess what she did, Mrs. Miller—guess what she did!' Dorothy interrupted.

'I really cannot guess, child.'

'Well, she snatched the gridiron from under her apron—the one he had used to charm the cow, you know—and pushing her way to the bed, she twirled it round and round over him, saying, as fast as she could speak, the same words he had used for the cow, "*If yer live yer live, and if yer dee yer dee!*" I don't know if she said it the right number of times, for Sally got hold of her skirts and dragged her out of the room, to try and prevent her waking Mr. Stokes. But he did wake up, and heard her saying the words, and saw her twirling the gridiron, and he burst out laughing; and Sally says that the sudden laughing broke the lump in his throat, and that the doctor says he is ever so much better to-day, and will soon be well!'

'That's the best story I have heard for some time,' said Mrs. Miller, leaning back in her chair and laughing heartily.

'I can tell you another,' said Jack; 'it happened just before you and Dorothy came, Mrs. Miller,

while I was with Farmer Bridges. Mrs. Bridges had gone to market, and the woman who works there had gone home ill, when a gentleman and a lady drove up to the farm. He was an agent for some agricultural implements worked by steam, and wanted Farmer Bridges to do business with him. He had just come from the South, and was spending his honeymoon in Derbyshire, and doing a little business at the same time. They were asked into Mrs. Bridges' nice, pleasant sitting-room, and the farmer wanted to give them some tea, thinking that the right thing to do for a bride. He and I foraged about, and found tea and sugar and cream, but when it came to cutting bread-and-butter, we were both stuck! At last he pounced on a small tin of fancy biscuits, turned them on to a plate, and triumphantly carried in the tray. Unfortunately, the small plate of biscuits was placed near to the bridegroom, and while talking business he absent-mindedly helped himself continuously to the biscuits, until only two or three were left. Farmer Bridges had been watching him with some anxiety, and just as he was stretching out his hand again, he called out in his broad dialect, "Thar (thou) grett greedy-gut! leave some for t' missis!" The bride-groom tried to pass it off as a good joke, but Farmer Bridges meant it in earnest.'

This proved to be the last of the happy days the brother and sister spent together, for the next morning's post brought letters for Mrs. Miller and Jack which cast a gloom over the entire household.

Mrs. Miller's was as follows:—

'My Dear Mater,

'I have news which will surprise you. This morning I had a letter from Mr. Charles Whittaker (Dorothy's uncle in London), asking me to go and see his brother (Dorothy's father), who is in Manchester very seriously ill. He had been written to by the landlady where his brother was staying, but thought I might go instead, being on the spot. I went at once, and found the poor fellow unconscious. He had had an apoplectic seizure, caused no doubt by distress of mind at his dismissal from the management of some flour and bakery business which he had just entered on in Manchester, having been transferred here from Birmingham for a short time. It was *he* who was the victim of the robbery of both watch and till, which you showed me the account of in the paper! I fear that this event was the cause of his dismissal. It made the company think him an unfit man to deal with city work. I can quite understand that he did not care to let us

know of his being in Manchester, until he had fought his way up again to something like the position he used to hold.

'The doctor thinks that he will not recover, and believes that he may not regain consciousness.

'Let Jack be ready to start for Manchester if I send a wire. I have only told him of his father's illness, and not of any of its causes, and I think it will be best for his children to know no more at present.

'Your affectionate son,

'NORMAN MILLER.'

The letters were scarcely read when the tidings of their father's death were received by wire, and the following day Jack went to Manchester to his father's funeral.

Dorothy was glad that she was not summoned, too. After the first shock she was horrified to find how little difference her father's death would make to her, and that her first thoughts had to do with Jack's prospects.

Her guardian had told her that Jack would have to go away to farming at once, unless her father could help, and now that he was gone she feared their separation would have to come.

The days passed slowly until the one fixed for Jack's return, and when Dorothy went to the

station to meet him, her surprise was great to see both her Uncle Charles and her guardian get out of the train by which he came. On the way home she inquired about Phil, and was told that he and Moke had quite disappeared.

'Oh, how dreadful!' said Dorothy; 'cannot your police officers find him?'

'They are all doing their utmost, but we cannot get the slightest clue. I am very unhappy about Phil, and must go back to Manchester as soon as ever the business is settled here, to try and assist in the search.'

That evening a family council was held as to the young people's future.

'I am afraid, my boy, that your father's death means your not returning to school but going out to Canada to learn farming this spring,' his guardian said, turning to Jack. 'Many boys younger than you have done well there, and I believe you will. What do you say to it?'

'I am quite ready to go any time,' the boy answered, in a manly way that charmed his hearers; 'and I hope you will use all mother's money for Dorothy. Please, may she be taught how to keep house, and do things wanted in Canada, and come out to me when you think she is ready? I will do my best to be able to support her by then.'

Their lawyer uncle broke into a loud laugh at Jack's words.

'Oh, you young people,' he said; 'how little you know of life! Dorothy be turned into a little Canadian farmer! Ha, ha, a good joke! I wish Dorothy to come and live with me when her education is finished. I shall be glad to give her a home, and her father's bachelor brother is the fittest person for her to live with—being lonely enough now.'

Dorothy's cheeks crimsoned and her eyes flashed as her uncle said this, in his most cynical and (to her mind) offensive tone, and she now burst out with an angry refusal—

'I will never live with you, uncle—no, never! I shall go to Jack. Oh, do let me do as Jack says!' looking appealingly at her guardian. 'Besides, there is Mrs. Arthur to pay; Jack and I must give all mother's money to her, when I can go and help him in Canada!'

'Dorothy,' her guardian said, 'I think it would be better if you left us to talk this matter over together;' and although he spoke quietly, Dorothy knew that it was her passionate words which made him send her away.

She sobbed herself to sleep, and the next morning went to him in a very penitent frame of mind, to ask what had been settled.

'Before anything else is talked of, my child,' he said, 'I want you to remedy a wrong you are doing to your dead father. I want you to know that the debt to Mrs. Arthur, your mother's kind friend—the debt which lies so heavily on your mind—was *not* his doing. Your father was in difficulties, and allowed your uncle to act for him, but he would never have let him borrow from anyone, when he knew that he was likely to be made bankrupt, especially from an old friend. Your uncle did it in his name and without consulting him, because he feared loss to himself; and while I condemn him for it, I cannot bear you to blame your dead father unjustly. Has it ever occurred to you, my child, that there are wrong and injustice to others in thought, which we should be as keen to restore fourfold as you are to restore this money?'

'Do you mean my blaming father for taking it? I am very sorry, but how can I undo that?'

'You can repay him by a little attention to his brother, your uncle, who is naturally hurt at what you said. Repair the wrong in that way. Four little acts of consideration for every unjust thought of your father's actions. A walk taken with him, a letter written to him; other ways will suggest themselves to you. As to your future, I have promised that you and Jack shall not be

separated longer than necessary, and that you shall be put in the way of useful knowledge, which will help you when you go out to him. Be content, Dorothy, and don't think it necessary to get into a rage every time anyone suggests other plans to me.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you!' the child said gratefully; 'how good you are! I am so sorry I thought *that* about father. I *will* try to do what you say, although I know it will be hard.'

She kept her promise, and before half an hour was over had chosen a walk with her uncle in preference to one with her guardian, and on several occasions she showed that she was persevering in her determination to pay back to her uncle some of the attention and consideration which she now wished she had tried to give to her father. Her guardian rejoiced to see these efforts, and encouraged her in them. He also told her a little more of the circumstances of Phil's disappearance. The possible fate of his little scholar lay heavy on his heart. Dorothy now shared his fears, and Phil's disappearance was the one subject uppermost in their minds, and was the chief thing spoken of, when Dorothy had her last talk with him before going back to school.

Mrs. Miller had soon tired of the country, and decided to return to Manchester when Dorothy

and Jack left her. They were both invited there for the last fortnight before Jack sailed for Canada, and although sad at the prospect of separation, they were full of hope for the new life which lay before them in the future, when Jack should have got a nice little Canadian farm, and Dorothy could go out and help him to manage it. Phil's disappearance broke down a certain castle in the air which Dorothy had been building. In this Phil had figured as a useful house-boy to the young couple in their new home, and Dorothy bewailed his loss doubly on this account, as it would have been a great pleasure to her to have had him.

CHAPTER X

Escape

WHILE Phil's friends were going through so much anxiety about him, he was almost breaking his heart about losing *them*, and was shedding bitter tears in loneliness and pain.

How little he knew as he lay in a small bed in the D—— Infirmary that the two who had so filled and brightened his life were only some eight miles away from him, and were at that moment grieving as much for him as he was for them! His right arm was in splints and a bandage was round his temples.

'Oh, if Moke 'ud only come and see me!' the poor little patient sobbed, when the nurse tried to soothe him and to check his tears.

'A boy did come,' she said, 'but the doctor had given orders that no one was to see you, as you were so feverish. If you keep quiet now and don't excite yourself, he will find you better to-morrow, and then I'll ask him to let your friend see you.'

Thus exhorted Phil made a great effort to stop

crying; but, although he succeeded in subduing all outward signs of trouble, his brain was busily going over the exciting incidents of the last fortnight, which had made such a change in his life.

Up to the day of his accident he had had no time to dwell on the events which had led to his leaving Manchester, and had ended in his being carried, when quite unconscious, into the Infirmary at D——. They came back to him now, one by one, with great vividness.

When he had left No. 27 in the early morning of the day after the burglary, he had made his way to where he had arranged to meet Moke, and had told him all about his night journey, his betrayal of Sam's plans, and his fear of the vengeance of the gang. Moke's usually colourless face grew quite livid with dismay when he heard Phil's story. Never very courageous, he now shook and trembled and exhorted his little comrade to escape with him from the city at once. He fully believed all that Sam and Joe had taken pains to impress on him, as to the dire vengeance which would certainly overtake any boy who betrayed their plans, and as he and Phil were such faithful comrades he was sure that they would not believe in his innocence of the last night's work, especially as he and Phil had left Spinning Field together.

'Let's start and tramp it to Liverpool,' he said,

as the difficulties of their position came more clearly to his mind; 'we might get took on some vessel goin' ter sea, an' then Sam couldn't find us.'

'Oh, I say, Moke, could we get to Canada, d'ye think? A lot of lads like us goes there. We'd soon earn money, an' be able ter live honest.'

'Would teacher 'elp us, d'ye think, Phil? I'm sure as 'e wouldn't want us ter be shut up in a cellar an' starved ter death or be taken to the canal an' pushed in,' said Moke, repeating some of the ways in which boys were supposed to be got rid of who gave information.

'We dursn't go near No. 27 now, Moke. They'll be watchin' about there constant, an' about teacher's office, too. I wish I'd told teacher now, but I were so scared about you, Moke, thinkin' as you'd get took afore I could warn yer, that I run right orf without seein' 'im.'

'Phil, I b'lieve we'll 'ave ter nab somethink ter get us away! Yer see we *must* get away, an' Sam's took every copper we 'ad. We can't get ter Liverpool without somethink, can we now?'

'No, I aren't goin' ter nab no more,' Phil answered resolutely; but scarcely had the words passed his lips when he was hailed by a boy from Spinning Field, who recognised the pair in the now increasing daylight.

'I say,' he exclaimed, 'I'll get the shillin' as Sam promised ter any of us lads as could bring 'im word where you was! 'E was in a *orful* way last night when 'e couldn't find you an' Moke, an' afore daylight Mother Brown was axin' for yer all round, an' she telled us about the shillin'. She said as Sam 'ad ter go out o' town sudden, an' 'e'd left some on 'em ter bring 'im word who'd found yer. I'll get th' shillin', no fear, but I wouldn't advise yer to come back jest now, fer Sam '—here he lowered his voice and glanced round, to be sure that no one was within earshot—' 'e'd 'ad bad luck last night, they say; 'e'd got 'urted a bit, in 'is arm, I b'lieve, an' they do say as Joe an' another got *tooked*. Mother Brown said as 'e were gone out o' town, but I don't b'lieve it, or she wouldn't 'ave been so particular for none on us ter go near 'im. In course, after all that bad luck, 'e'd be jest like a ragin' lion. Ef I was you I'd run, I would.'

The lad darted off, and so did Phil and Moke in the opposite direction, never stopping till they reached the lonely brickfields, the scene of their Sunday morning's excursion so many weeks ago. Here they stayed all day, not daring to return to the streets, and here Moke used all his powers of persuasion to get Phil to think of some plan for getting away from the city.

At length, as the afternoon came on and the pangs of hunger were added to their other troubles, Phil admitted that he had had a fine plan some time ago, before teacher had spoken to them about stealing, but since then he had never intended to try it.

'But, Phil,' Moke said, as he still hesitated to unfold it, 'yer knows as Sam 'ud soon make yer go out with 'im regler if we went back, an' do a whole lot o' nabbin'! Ef we notices pertickler who it is as we gets the money off, we can pay 'im back again when we earns all we will do in Canada!'

Poor little Phil! what wonder that his new principles gave way before the pressure of hunger, the entreaties of his companion, and the great danger in which they both stood!

He slowly made his way to the nearest houses, and going from door to door had soon begged the penny which was to be the foundation-stone of their future wealth.

The couple then started off into a new neighbourhood where a number of streets had lately sprung up, while one or two of the shops were already occupied. At some distance from one of these they halted, and Phil carefully explained his plan, the boldness of which quite took away his companion's breath.

Phil had been in this neighbourhood before, when trying to get a district for selling papers which was unknown to the other paper-sellers, and he had observed a certain bread shop, which was one of several, all bearing the same sign. This one was a lock-up shop, and he had never seen anyone but a single man in it until towards dusk, when a well-dressed man, who looked like a manager, was accustomed to come round to take the cash. On one or two occasions, while delivering his papers, Phil had noticed this manager send away the man to some of the other shops which were short of bread, himself remaining in charge until his return. It was during this short interval that Phil hoped to be able to carry out his scheme, if Moke proved himself equal to his share of the work.

At another time Moke would have been utterly useless in such a very bold undertaking, but now he was desperate, his fear of being caught by Sam growing greater as every additional hour passed by.

The boys next explored the network of streets round the spot, and decided on the course each should take to reach a certain distant shop, to which they had been sent before now by Sam to dispose of goods; a place where a fair price would be given and no questions would be asked. It was also close to one of the railway stations, to which

Moke assured Phil he had once carried a gentleman's bag who said he was in a hurry to catch the Liverpool train. They therefore planned to get away from the city by this station that same evening with the proceeds of their theft.

'Please, Mester, will yer give me a penny cake?' said a plaintive little voice, as soon as the man had been seen going away to one of the branch shops that evening with a basket of bread.

The manager turned and saw a very small, white, miserable-looking boy, who advanced to the counter and laid a penny down.

He at once stepped across to the window to reach the cake, and as he did so the pitiful voice was again heard—

'Please, Mester, will yer give me as big a one as yer can; it don't matter bein' a stale 'un—I 'aven't 'ad nothink to eat to-day, an' I'm dreadful 'ungry?'

'There, my boy, there's a twopenny one for you,' the manager replied, handing him the cake and taking the penny.

'Thank yer, Mester,' and the boy turned towards the door.

As soon, however, as he reached it, he came back and stood in the middle of the shop, wiping his eyes with his ragged sleeve.

'What's the matter now, my lad?'

'Please, Mester, there's a big lad out there; 'e seen me come in, an' 'e'll take the cake off me as soon as I gets out!'

'Well, stay here and eat it, then.'

'But I'll be worse 'ungry to-night, an' won't 'ave nothink fer supper ef I eats it now!'

Again his ragged sleeve was rubbed across his eyes, while he stood, as if undecided what to do.

'I'll tell yer what, Mester'—this in a more hopeful tone—'would yer mind puttin' it down the back of me jacket an' 'e'll not see it?'

The boy advanced to the counter, and the kind-hearted, pleasant-faced man behind it leaned over and reached down to the very small jacket, into the back of which he managed, with some difficulty, to cram the round, flat cake.

The boy bent his head and leaned forward over the counter to assist the operation, and while the cake was being pushed lower and lower down his back, his small nimble fingers unhooked the man's watch-chain, gently lifted the watch out of his waistcoat pocket, and before he raised himself, had slipped it into the lining of his own jacket.

'There, my lad, it's safe now,' he said.

'Thank yer, Mester,' the child replied, and quietly left the shop.

Two minutes afterwards a big, ragged lad ran into the same shop, calling out excitedly—

'I say, Mester, do you know what that lad's done as was in 'ere a minute since?'

'What do you mean?' the manager asked quickly.

'Why, Mester, 'e's took yer watch an' chain!'

'Nonsense,' he was answering impatiently, when he glanced down at his waistcoat. His watch and chain were gone!

Enraged at being so taken in, he took one leap over the counter and out of the door to catch the little thief.

The instant he had left the shop the big lad made for the till, emptied its contents into his pocket, and, dashing out again, made off in the opposite direction to the one taken by the manager. In the gathering darkness both boys were soon beyond the reach of pursuit, and by roundabout ways and quiet streets made their way to the appointed place of meeting.

Phil arrived first. He had had a long, sharp run, and had never once been caught sight of by his pursuer. He sank down thankfully on to some stone steps leading up to the railway station, his heart beating like a sledge hammer and his eyes glazed and dim from his exertions.

As he sat and thought things over, he determined not to keep the watch and chain in his possession a moment longer, and he made straight

for the place where he had sometimes gone with goods for Sam, handed it over, received ten shillings for it, and waited about for Moke.

Although Moke's part had not been so difficult as his own, Phil felt very anxious about him, and every minute seemed an hour until he appeared.

'I was 'fraid summut 'ad 'appened to yer, Moke,' he whispered.

'Let's go somewheres quiet an' count it,' Moke replied.

The finding of a quiet spot was, however, very difficult, and as they wished to stay close to the railway station they managed at length to get beyond the platforms to the lines where many empty goods waggons were shunted.

Into one of these they climbed. It was a large covered van, and contained an open case of straw in which some goods had evidently been packed, also a tarpaulin with the word 'Liverpool' painted on it in large white letters.

The waggon stood near to one of the railway lights, and now the boys were able to form some idea of the amount of the money Moke had taken.

The sight of one golden sovereign among the silver struck terror into Phil's heart. He had never taken anything like that before, and when they found that they had three pounds, besides the proceeds of the watch, the boys decided that

they had better not face the streets and the police again that night, but stay where they were till early morning, and then walk along as near the lines as they could to the first station out of the city, and there take tickets for Liverpool.

With the help of the straw and the tarpaulin they felt that they had got better quarters than they expected, while the large cake in the back of Phil's jacket served them both for supper. They were worn out with their long fast and the many miles they had gone during the day, and slept as soundly in their strange refuge as if they had been in their well-known cupboard in Spinning Field.

Phil dreamed that he was on board a vessel on its way to Canada, when a sudden movement of their resting-place half woke him. Believing it to be a part of his dream, he settled to sleep again, Moke snoring at his side, and did not know that an engine had been attached to the long line of empty trucks, and that he and Moke were being rapidly carried along in an opposite direction to Liverpool.

The rolling and bumping of the truck as it was rapidly whirled through the Peak district, and the constant shrill whistles of the engine as it rushed in and out of the tunnels, at length roused him completely, and, waking Moke, they discussed the position they were in.

It was quite dark, as they had carefully replaced

the sliding door of the truck, to make it a more secure hiding-place.

'I wonder if we're on th' right line for Liverpool?' said Phil. 'Supposin' we was goin' th' other way.'

'We're gettin' tooked for nothink, an' shall 'ave more tin fer our tickets.'

'But, Moke, are yer sure as we're goin' ter Liverpool?'

'I 'opes so. I tell yer what, Phil, as soon as ever we makes a long stop you an' me must slip out quiet, wherever we are, or we'll get run in fer travellin' without tickets.'

The boys did not sleep any more, and were soon conscious of a slackening of speed, a stop, and then shouted instructions and the shunting of the truck they were hidden in on to a side line, after which they heard the rattle of the train going away, the sound becoming fainter and finally ceasing. They lay still for a short time, and then cautiously opened the sliding door an inch or two and looked out. They saw that they were outside some large station on a siding, and as all seemed quiet they cautiously left their shelter, and keeping at the back of the railway buildings, gradually made their way round to the station, which they found to their disappointment was not Liverpool, but D——.

It was, however, a town, and their city life soon led them to find out a neighbourhood where coffee was being sold to workmen.

After securing a good breakfast, Phil inquired of the man with the coffee barrow how far it was to Liverpool.

'Pretty near ninety miles, I should say,' he replied. 'D— is reckoned to be about halfway between Manchester and Birmingham.'

Phil shivered and turned away when Birmingham was mentioned; he had not forgotten Sam's words which he had overheard while sheltering in the hut, and congratulated himself on not having been taken *there*, as it seemed that Sam had friends there, and he had spoken of it as a sort of prison, which Phil could not escape from if once taken there.

It was evident to the boys that they would have to stay where they were for a time. They were safe from the police, and no doubt would soon find a barrow or some other profitable way of investing their capital.

Finding, however, that even the workmen looked at them curiously, and that no boys were about the streets half so ragged as themselves, they decided on seeking an old clothes shop, which they found without much difficulty, and having bought there various odd items of clothing

for Moke, also caps and boots for both, they felt more comfortable, as they saw that they now were clothed something like the boys of their kind and were quite unlike the ragged lads who had stolen the watch.

As Phil looked back on that day of their arrival in this strange town, it seemed to him like a far-off dream. He remembered how they had heard rumours of a fire, and had gone with the crowd in its direction. The coming of the fire-engine was fresh in his memory, as he had climbed a lamp post to watch its progress.

Somehow he had got separated from Moke, and, as he watched the distant fire he saw a little girl just beneath him get free from her mother's hand and run across the road towards the crowd at the very moment when a farmer's light cart was coming round the corner, driving at a rapid pace towards the market. The mother, with a baby in her arms, had evidently not noticed the escape of the little child, nor did she heed the farmer's shout as he tried to rein in his horse. From his elevated position Phil had seen it all, and before he had heard the shout, had slidden down and, darting across the road, snatched the child almost from under the horse's hoofs, swung her backwards, and had himself nearly escaped unhurt, but not quite. A wheel had struck his

head, and then passed over his right arm. Of this he knew nothing at the time, as he had been unconscious when carried into the Infirmary, nor had he yet seen Moke since the accident, although he found that he had been to the doors constantly, and had done his best to gain admittance.

When at length Moke was allowed to see Phil, he had much to tell.

'What d'yer think, Phil?' he said excitedly, 'I've got proper work, I 'ave. It was them togs as done it. You remembers the fire? Well, they was puttin' on men ter clear away the burnt buildins' after it, an' as I was standin' watchin', the foreman ses, "We wants another 'and 'ere, a big lad 'll do. 'Ere, you chap," 'e ses ter me, "get 'old o' that iron, ef you're lookin' fer a job"; an' I've bin workin' with th' same man as I started with every day since.'

Much as Phil enjoyed this visit, he was scarcely strong enough for it, and when feverish symptoms returned, the doctor murmured something about 'shock to the system,' and forbade the nurse to admit Moke for another week.

The broken arm was going on well, and Phil was feeling no pain now, though he was still weak and spiritless, when he heard a great altercation going on outside the ward one morning. A loud voice was saying: 'Not admit *me*, the one who

has the best right of anyone to see the little chap! Me that have driven in when it isn't market day, and could ill spare the time! Well, I'll not ask you to admit me, I'll admit myself! Tell your doctor as it was Farmer Bridges who came to see the boy. The same one whose horse would have killed that child but for this clever little chap. Tell him I couldn't rest another day without seeing him, doctor or no doctor!' and putting the nurse aside with his big hand, the farmer walked into the ward.

He was a portly person, whose figure absolutely filled up the doorway. A red waistcoat surmounted his corduroys, and on his broad, honest, red face, which seemed to be a continuation of the waistcoat, was a look of kindliness and pity, which explained how it was that anyone in need or trouble turned instinctively to him for help. He soon found Phil's little bed, and his eyes grew suspiciously moist as he took the small, thin hand in his own large red one, and noticed the white and careworn face and sad eyes of the child.

'Got a father or mother, little chap?'

Phil shook his head.

'Who do you live with?'

'Nobody but Moke. 'E's my pal, an' we gets our livin' on th' streets; leastways, we did in

Manchester, afore we comed 'ere,' Phil managed to say.

'That's all right,' the farmer replied cheerily; 'then you shall come right home with me, and I'll see if I can't make a farmer of you!'

A look of interest dawned on Phil's face at these words, and a faint colour came into his cheeks as he said, wistfully: 'Oh, I'd like that; Moke an' me we wants to be teached 'ow to do farmwork, so as we can go ter Canada. Will yer really teach me?'

'To be sure I will,' cried the farmer, slapping his knee with great satisfaction.

'You get well as quickly as you can, and I'll come and fetch you in my trap as soon as ever that doctor will let you get up. You were a smart little chap, and a brave one, too, to save that little one from my horse. I'd never have had another happy hour if we'd run over her; I'd sooner have had my right hand cut off than have done such a thing. Ay, four of 'em, if I'd had 'em! Now I must go, or this lady,' indicating with his huge thumb the advancing nurse, 'will be giving me up to the police,' and, with a tender pat to Phil's little head, he hastily left the ward.

CHAPTER XI

Threefold

When Farmer Bridges repeated his visit to the Infirmary on the following day he found Phil much better, and the nurse believed that he could be removed within a few days. Neither doctor nor nurse knew how much the farmer's visit had had to do with his rapid change for the better.

The idea of being considered a hero for what he had done had never dawned on him, and the farmer's words of praise came like balm to his poor little wounded heart, smarting as it was with pain and sorrow at having done that which must separate him from his dear teacher, who would now, he felt sure, be thinking of him as a wicked thief, and would never look at him again until he could restore fourfold what he had taken. That time seemed very very far off, but he could at any rate be taking the first step towards it by going with this kind friend who had promised to teach him all about farming.

He greeted the farmer with a bright smile when he called for him on the appointed day. Farmer

Bridges was preparing to lift him up in his arms and carry him down to the trap, but Phil objected, saying that he was well now except for his arm, and could walk quite well.

'I say, nurse,' said the farmer, 'haven't you got a coat or something for him to wear? It's not fit for him to drive eight miles this cold day in only those poor, thin clothes.'

'We don't provide overcoats for patients,' was her curt reply, in a tone which said, 'I have not forgotten your first call here, when you defied me and came in without leave!'

'Oh, that's all he has, is it? All right, we'll see what we can do;' and placing Phil in the trap, he drove slowly to a clothier's shop, and bought a warm overcoat and cap, in which Phil hardly knew himself, his wonderment increasing when a small cloth suit was also chosen and made into a parcel, and he heard the farmer inquiring for knitting yarn, 'same as my missus always gets,' he said to the shopman; 'for I know we'll not be in the house an hour before she'll want to start knitting stockings for the child, so I'd best take it along with me ready against she asks for it!'

The long drive to the farm was Phil's first sight of the real country. He felt too weak and tired, however, to ask questions, and when they drove up to the door of a substantial-looking farmhouse

on the hillside, he made no objection to being taken up in the farmer's arms and carried into the comfortable kitchen.

The novelty of his new surroundings and the warmth produced by the largest fire he had ever seen in his life, soon revived him, and his eyes roamed round the immense kitchen, noticing particularly the brightness of everything the place contained, the shining brass and copper articles near the fireplace, the deep, clear red of the tiles, and the extreme whiteness of the hearth. Not even at No. 27 had he seen anything so wonderful as this kitchen seemed to him.

Mrs. Bridges was as kind and cheery as the farmer himself, and brought him a steaming bowl of soup before she would let him talk at all. Then noticing how sleepy the warmth and food had made him after the long, cold drive, she lifted him on to the comfortable sofa in the kitchen, and soon saw him drop into a sound sleep. This lasted so long that he was scarcely conscious of being undressed and carried upstairs to a small bed which had been put up in a room close to Mrs. Bridges' own, where he slept till it was broad daylight, and awoke feeling that all the tiredness had gone, and that he could enjoy to the full the comforts and delights of his new life.

Day by day Phil's health improved, and he was

'MR. BRIDGES, WILL YER SHOW ME WHICH TREES THE POTATOES GROWS ON?

soon able to follow Farmer Bridges as he went about the buildings. The farm was a perfect paradise to him. The dogs quickly became his dear friends, nor was it long before he was helping to drive the cows home, and watching the milking and butter-making with the deepest interest.

In a fortnight's time he rewarded Mrs. Bridges' care by looking a different child, and his funny questions and quaint remarks were a source of the greatest amusement to the whole household.

'What do yer think sonny asked me to-day, Missis?' the farmer said one evening, as he smoked his pipe after Phil was sound asleep in bed. 'I was going round the orchard and remarking on the blight that's come on some of the apple trees, and if he didn't say to me quite innocent-like: "Mr. Bridges, will yer show me which trees the potatoes grows on?"'

The farmer indulged in a hearty laugh, and then observed that Phil had got a friend who wanted to get work on a farm.

'Do you think he might get on at Beresford's Farm, Missis? Since Dan'l, their cowboy, went to America in the fall, they've had none, and I don't see why this lad shouldn't do. Phil says he's been used to farmwork, and if it would make sonny happier to get him there, I might as well see about it.'

The result of this conversation was that Moke was established in the coveted position of cowboy at a farmhouse not very far away, where he was to receive such wages as would enable him to save a few shillings every month towards the boys' cherished scheme of going out to farm in Canada.

As weeks passed on, Phil was eager to be taught something of farmwork, and when his arm was quite well Mrs. Bridges let him take a basket and go round the hens' nests to collect the eggs. He was shown which were the sitting hens whose eggs he must not touch, and where the nests were from which he could get eggs. He felt proud and happy as his basket filled, and he was able to carry them in to Mrs. Bridges, while her praises for his quickness in finding so many made him even more diligent in hunting for nests the following day.

In his efforts to exceed yesterday's number, he stayed out an unusually long time, and the sharp, dry, spring air made him particularly hungry. As he glanced at his basket a great longing for one of these eggs seized him. He knew that an egg was frequently given him, and that if he went into the kitchen Mrs. Bridges would give him bread-and-butter at once if he said he was hungry; and yet, in spite of all this, the old habit was too strong for him.

Setting down his basket and seizing the largest egg it contained, he knocked a small hole in it and swallowed the contents, carefully hiding away the shell.

The newlaid egg ought to have tasted far better than those Phil could remember enjoying in the city, but somehow it *did not*, and he carried his basket into the house and quietly set it down, avoiding Mrs. Bridges' eye.

As he wandered out again, feeling far from happy, the thought of 'teacher' flashed through his mind.

What would he say if he knew of this theft? Even now, amidst all the unusual comfort and happiness that Phil was enjoying, the thought of 'teacher' always brought a lump into his throat. His idea of the Great Teacher in the story of Zacchæus being the same person as his own beloved teacher still filled his mind, and he always felt as if those kind eyes were on him wherever he went, and as if they grew stern whenever he did anything wrong.

He sat down behind a haystack and cried, as he thought of his teacher's disappointment in him.

His next idea was to try and repay the egg, and he wondered how he could possibly get one to pay Mrs. Bridges back—no, not *one*, but *four!*

Teacher would never forgive him unless he paid back fourfold, any more than he did Jackears until he had done the same thing.

Phil moped about a good deal during the next few days; he could not get rid of the thought of the stolen egg.

One day he wandered down a lane leading past a lonely cottage. On the roof was a pretty little kitten, mewing pitifully, and as he came nearer he found a young woman with a baby in her arms, looking anxiously up at it.

'How's it got up there?' Phil asked.

'I don't know, I'm sure,' she answered, 'but it's been there all day, poor thing, and my man not coming home to-night. I don't see as 'ow I'm to get it down.'

'I thinks I could, Missis.'

'Well, now, if you can I'll give you summat, for the poor little thing be a great pet.'

It was not long before Phil, by the help of a young tree, up which he swarmed and got on the cottage roof, had brought the kitten down and placed it in the woman's arms.

'Well, you be a clever little lad, and so young, too!' she exclaimed, stroking her recovered pet. 'What'll I give you now? There's oat-cakes and milk—would you like them—or p'r'aps a penny to buy lollipops?'

'Have yer got any eggs, Missis? I'd sooner have them!'

'To be sure I have,' she answered; and going round to the back of the cottage, she stooped and felt in her hens' nests, bringing out three. 'There,' she said, 'that's all I have, and nice fresh ones they be.'

Phil thanked her, and retraced his steps to the farm, trying all the way to devise some means of getting another egg, and wondering how he could pay back these three unknown to Mrs. Bridges.

At length a bright thought struck him. Only that morning he had found a hen sitting on eggs in a corner of a field under a hedge; he had noticed that she had only a few under her, and Mrs. Bridges had told him to leave her alone, as she would bring her chickens to the farmyard when they came out.

To this field Phil now bent his steps, and in spite of angry pecks from the hen, he managed to push his three eggs under her wings, and turned away with a lighter heart.

Mrs. Bridges would get three chickens instead of the one egg he had stolen.

He now went daily to watch this hen, and by the week-end he found her nest deserted, the broken shells telling of the chickens which had come out, and she herself proudly stepping about

the farmyard with four little yellow, fluffy balls running after her.

Phil's three eggs, to his great surprise, were left in the nest, and he was too new to the country to understand why they were not hatched.

'P'r'aps it's because I only paid back *three*,' he said to himself; 'but I'll have to give them to Mrs. Bridges some'ow.'

He cautiously approached the kitchen with the three eggs in his cap, and was delighted to find it empty. Stepping across the floor on tip-toe he pushed open the door of Mrs. Bridges' store-room, where a large bowl of eggs stood, brought in that morning. Phil cautiously laid his three among them, and crept out as if he had been a thief.

'Goodness me, what's come to my hens?' said Mrs. Bridges that evening, as she was busily preparing a pudding for supper. 'Everyone of these eggs came in to-day, and here's two bad, one after another. Seems as if some of you's brought in sitting-hens' eggs!'

Phil was not in, or his guilty face would have surely betrayed him, and being blissfully ignorant, he was saying to himself—

'I did try! and I think teacher won't mind it bein' *threefold*, unless I can get another egg to make it four!'

Moke's establishment at the neighbouring farm was a great pleasure to Phil, as they could sometimes meet on Sundays.

On one of these occasions Moke confided to him his anxiety about the money which they had brought with them from Manchester.

'I 'aven't touched it,' he said, 'cept'n' a few coppers, an' them I've paid back. What are we goin' ter do with it, Phil? It's awful 'ard fer me to 'ide it.'

'I'll get Mrs. Bridges to take care of it, Moke. I told 'er as we were savin' for Canada, an' I'm sure she'll keep it safe for us.'

Accordingly, on his next visit, Moke brought the little packet of money and handed it to Phil, together with a shilling or two of his own earnings to add to their store.

'I'm glad we 'aven't touched *that* money,' Phil said, with a sigh of relief, when Mrs. Bridges had locked it up safely; 'it seems as if it will be easier to pay it back. P'r'aps we'll be able to earn enough for our tickets without usin' it, Moke, as you're gettin' wages now, an' I 'opes I will soon.'

'Missis, where are you?' the farmer's loud cheery voice inquired the day following that of Moke's visit. 'Here's a message from th' schoolmaster at Hazelgrove to know whether little sonny

here can go to school with the children from th' cottages down below? What do you say?'

'To be sure, it will be good for the child to have others to play with. If you're going to keep him a bit till the summer comes on, he can't do better.'

In consequence of this conversation Phil had the new experience of going daily to school with other children.

The schoolmaster soon discovered that he had in him a scholar of a very different type from the other village lads, and he bestowed great pains on Phil, when he found how quick and intelligent the child was.

With the boys Phil was popular at once. They gazed open-mouthed at his acrobatic feats, and respected him in proportion to his abilty to climb trees, run races, etc., better than themselves. He could always, too, attract eager listeners as he told stories of city life, and related experiences which sounded like fairy tales to them.

Under ordinary circumstances the confinement of a school would have been irksome to the little street arab; but the new influence which had come into his life was powerful enough to make him desire to do anything likely to please his absent friend, and when once started in the paths of learning he got on well, spurred on by the

evident pleasure the schoolmaster and his wife took in teaching him.

They had a little nephew staying with them at their pretty school-house, and with this boy Phil very soon struck up a friendship. Ronny was expected to help with various matters in the house and garden. Phil eagerly offered to share these duties with him, and being far the most energetic of the two, they were more often done by him than by Ronny. Little by little he became so useful and such a favourite at the schoolhouse, that when Ronny went home in the early summer, Mr. Fenton asked Farmer Bridges to let Phil stay with him altogether, promising to keep him at school and to have him to live with them as Ronny had done.

The farmer gladly consented, and the boy departed with a light heart to his new home, Mrs. Bridges telling him that he must come and have tea at the farm every alternate Sunday.

Phil looked round on his new domain with the eye of a landowner! The ducks and hens were now to be his personal care. Mr. Fenton's young pig welcomed him with a curious squint in its small slits of eyes when he came out with its food, and the task of shying clods and other handy substances at any stray cats and dogs which might

be hanging round near the chickens and ducklings was altogether to his taste.

But it was among the flowers that Phil lingered the longest. To see the roses bud and then burst forth into flower was to him a never-ending wonder. How different they were to the single blooms done up with wire which he had seen for sale in the streets of Manchester!

There was one large climbing rose tree spreading itself all over the schoolhouse wall, which flowered luxuriantly. Phil's delight in this one was great; and when all was quiet, and he was sure that no one was looking, he would press his lips to one after another of the beautiful yellow blooms which were within his reach, not knowing why he did it. Poor little fellow—he had never been kissed in his life, as far as he could remember, until he came to Mrs. Bridges', and the love which he could have lavished on a fond mother he now transferred to the flowers.

When, therefore, he saw two of these same yellow roses in the hand of one of the schoolboys one evening, he ran forward with crimson cheeks and angry looks—

'You've been stealing our roses,' he said. 'Come along with me, and we'll show them to Mr. Fenton.'

'They aren't yours,' the boy answered sulkily; 'I got them from me aunt.'

'Don't tell no more lies!' Phil remarked sternly. 'Do you think I don't know our own roses? I knows 'em as well as our hens knows their own chicks! Come on, now, I aren't going to tell no tales, but I'll make you come and tell him yourself.'

Phil's energy and determination made up for lack of physical force, and the culprit was dragged along most unwillingly in the direction of the schoolhouse.

As soon, however, as they came in sight of its rose-covered walls his courage failed, and putting the two roses into Phil's hand, he broke away crying —

'There they be, I'll give them back, but don't tell on me!'

'I aren't going to let yer off like that,' Phil said, eyeing the little thief severely, and, if the truth must be told, enjoying the situation extremely.

'Them as steals has to pay back four times as much as they took! Let's see; you took two, and four times two's eight—that'll be six more roses you've got to bring,' he added triumphantly, after a minute spent in reckoning.

'But I haven't none,' the boy whispered.

'You'd better go and ask that *aunt* o' yours as you mentioned to give you some, for you've got

to bring the other six before next week. Any colour'll do, only they must be *six*, mind!'

The following day two red roses were put into Phil's hand, with a whisper, 'I can't get no more,' to which he replied with another whisper, 'That's half! I'll want four more'; and going into the schoolhouse he put the roses in water by the side of the two yellow ones.

Towards the end of the week he reminded the miserable boy that the master kept a cane in his desk, and late on Saturday evening he found him hanging about the schoolhouse with four *wild* roses in his hand.

'I couldn't really get none,' he said earnestly, 'and I've been all day finding these. They be scarce yet, is the wild 'uns!'

'I hadn't ought to let you off,' Phil said, reluctantly taking the flowers; 'these is nothing like so good as our yellow ones, but I'll look over it this time if you won't take no more.'

The boy shuffled away, having had such a lesson about stealing flowers as he was not likely to forget.

'Wherever did you get wild roses from, Phil?' Mrs. Fenton asked. 'I thought there were none out yet.'

'It was one of the lads brought them.'

'Ask him where he found them, Phil. Who

was it, I wonder? it was a very kind thought to get them for us.'

'I don't think he'd like to be asked,' Phil replied confidentially; 'you see, he didn't do it *willing*, he *had to!*'

'What do you mean?'

'It were this way,' said Phil, relapsing in the excitement of the moment into the old ways of speech which he was learning now to avoid. 'The lad tooked two of *our* roses, 'e did! An' I telled 'im I'd fetch 'im to th' Master if 'e didn't pay back *fourfold*. 'E bringed two red 'uns—they isn't dead yet—an' th' two 'e tooked, an' these was ter make up the eight!'

Mrs. Fenton smiled, and answered quietly—

'I hope you will always act up to that yourself, Phil; but you must not talk like a little street urchin, you know! You forgot then, did you not?'

CHAPTER XII

On the Broad Atlantic

CLAD in overcoat, fur cap and rubbers, Jack, taller, broader and more manly-looking than when he left England, was plunging along the rough track to the post office at Morris, Manitoba, to get his mail. It was now over a year since he had left England, and after the long winter he was feeling a little lonely, and wishing for the time when he should have got on well enough to take up land for himself and have Dorothy with him.

Letters were particularly welcome while in this frame of mind, and Jack was well pleased with the two bulky ones and the papers and magazines which were handed to him.

'I say, you've got my share as well as yours,' said another fur-capped and top-booted youth, who had come on a similar errand and found nothing waiting for him.

'Sorry, Sandy,' Jack replied, in anything but a sorrowful tone, for he was feeling at that moment the peculiar sort of pleasure which a schoolboy

has in getting a holiday while his schoolfellows are all at work.

Dorothy's letter was read on the way back to the farm. This one was more interesting than usual.

It ran as follows :—

"Burton Road,

"D——.

'My dear Jack,

'I was so glad to get your last letter. I am sure it is dreadfully lonely for you now that the other boy has left, and I am very lonely too. I have been spending Easter with Mrs. Miller in Manchester, and came back to school yesterday. I think I told you about our guardian's bad illness. It was pneumonia and something else, and the doctors ordered him away to the south of France after it. He is there now. It was so lonely in Manchester without him. He took Phil's disappearance very much to heart, Mrs. Miller says. How strange it seems that those two boys have never been heard of since that dreadful burglary! But Uncle Miller feels sure that they are safe somewhere, because those dreadful people Phil lived with don't seem to have found him. Several times strangers have been at the house begging, and trying to get to know where Phil was! One pretended to be his grandmother, and another said she was his aunt! But

Uncle Miller was sure that they were some of those Spinning Field people disguised.

'It does seem strange that the boys have not let us know where they are.

'Do you know, Uncle Miller was sent for one night to see a sick man, and it turned out to be one who had injured a boy and got him put in prison, years ago. The dying man gave Uncle Miller some money which he had saved for that boy, and asked him to try and find him, or if he could not, to use it to help some other who needed it. Uncle quite believes that the boy was Moke! Fancy how splendid for him if he is right, and if we can find him! I only wish those who robbed poor father would make that up to you and me, so that you could get some land of your own and I could come out to you!

'Our guardian gave me a letter for Moke before he went away. He gave cook one too, for he feels sure that the boys will be found some day, and then Moke will hear about his money. I used to carry mine in my pocket whenever I went into the city, and I was always looking about for a sign of either of them, but since I came back to school I have not much hope of finding them.

'It was yesterday when I wrote this about Moke and Phil, and I had to stop, as it was time for our

walk. Such a wonderful thing happened! What do you think? I have seen Moke, and, do you know, he tried to run away from me!

'We were walking through the market-place of D—— and, of course, going two-and-two. All at once I saw a tall farm boy stoop to pick up a big turnip which had rolled away from the cart he was unloading. I should never have recognised him, for he looked so respectable and so clean, but I saw him blush as he caught sight of me, and I crossed over and asked him if his name was Moke? Then I saw in a minute that it *was* he! He retired behind the cart and tried to hide, so I called him again, and I said, "Moke, I have a letter for you. It is from your teacher. Don't run away. It has some good news in it!" Then he came creeping round the cart again to where I was, and I told him I would bring the letter or he could come and fetch it.

'I asked him if Phil was with him, and he said, "No." Our governess then came across to fetch me away, and I had only time to say "Come to 'Kirby,' Burton Road" before I had to go on with the others. He has not been yet, but I find that some of the girls noticed the name on the cart, so that we know what farmer he is with, and it he does not come soon Miss Sturrock will go with me to the market next Friday to look for him.

'I know that Uncle Miller advises Moke, in his letter, to spend his money in going to Canada, so that perhaps he may be coming out this spring! I only wish Phil was going too. He would be safe there, and it would be lovely to have them to work *on our farm* (when we get it), wouldn't it?'

When Jack had read the letter he began to think over the various farms he knew, and decided on visiting one or two of them as soon as he could get a day off, believing that he might find an opening for this boy whom Dorothy spoke of, at one of them.

To be sure, he was only a rough street lad, and would not be much of a companion to Jack; still, the fact of his connection with those left at home was enough to make the rather lonely boy look forward with pleasure to his coming, and determine to help him to a start and to look after him as much as he could.

Meanwhile, the subject of his thoughts was passing through much bewilderment of mind. He had not gone to the house Dorothy had mentioned, neither had he been to D—— again since the day when he had so unexpectedly met her. Moke decided that he would wait until he could see Phil and get his advice.

He spent his evenings sitting gazing blankly before him, in reality trying to solve the problem of 'teacher's' letter being for *him* and not for Phil, wondering also if 'teacher' was with Miss Dorothy, and how much he knew about the theft.

At length, one Saturday morning (the day before the Sunday for Moke and Phil's monthly visit to Farmer Bridges) he was sent for by his master, who handed him a letter.

'It's from a lady in D——,' he said. 'She asks me whether I've got a farm lad called Moke? If so, I am to give him this. She doesn't seem to know your other name, and I don't think I do; but I suppose it's all right?'

Moke took the letter and read it over and over again before he could master its contents. It was the one his teacher had left for him with Dorothy. Was he dreaming, or had this good fortune really happened to him? He said nothing about the letter to anyone. Their life in Manchester had trained the boys to keep their own counsel, and Moke was still turning the whole matter over in his mind as he tramped along the muddy lanes which led to Farmer Bridges' house.

Before he came in sight of it he met Phil, who had come to meet him.

'Oh, Phil,' he exclaimed, 'I've sech news for yer

to-day! Do yer know as I've seen Miss Dorothy, an' she's sent me a letter from teacher!'

At the mention of Dorothy and 'teacher' all the colour left Phil's cheeks, and he stood staring at Moke with a hunted look in his eyes, like one prepared to turn and fly from ambushed enemies.

'Is Miss Dorothy here?' he whispered at last, creeping closer to Moke.

'Why, no, Phil, in course not; an' teacher he's away in furrin parts the letter says.'

The tension on Phil's face relaxed as he heard this, and he proposed climbing on to a fence near by while Moke told him more.

They were soon reading the letter together:—

'DEAR MOKE,

'I have been ill, and am going abroad until the cold weather has gone. In case you should come back to Manchester and find your way to my house, I am leaving this letter for you.

'A certain ex-police officer died here a few weeks ago. As I have a Mission Service for the police I was sent for to see him, and he told me that he had wronged a lad called Andrew Morcambe some years ago, by getting him imprisoned unjustly for stealing. He was very unhappy about it, and asked me to take charge of his savings (£20), and to keep them for this boy,

in case I could find him. If not, I was to use them for some other boy who needed a start in life. I believe *you* are the boy he wanted to find, as Phil told me your story.

'If you think you are, send this letter to the Rev. B——, whose address I enclose, and he will send for you and compare your story with the particulars that I have given him. I strongly advise you to emigrate to Canada with this money. The chaplain will make all arrangements for you, and will also see to your outfit, etc., if you go before I return. I should greatly like to see you; but I cannot advise you to wait, as you are in danger of discovery by the men you formerly lived with, if you remain either in Manchester or Liverpool.

'I want to know where Phil is, and it will be quite safe to tell the gentleman I am sending you to. He is one of the chaplains who takes parties to Canada. He will possibly be going out himself in the early summer. I hope you are both honest lads, and do not forget the lessons we had at the Ragged School. It has troubled me much that you have never let me know where you were.

'Your Ragged School Teacher,

'NORMAN MILLER.'

'It's all right enough,' Moke remarked, when they had read the letter through three times, in

order to properly grasp the wonderful news it contained. 'It's sure to be th' same bobby as I telled yer of, an' my name 'ad used ter be Handrew once, I knows.'

'I suppose "Moke" was the short for that other one, "Morcambe"?'

'Yes. It's a long time since I've 'eard Handrew; but now what 'ull we do, Phil?'

This was a knotty point, and the boys talked it over so long that they found themselves late for tea when they came in.

'Come along, boys, your tea's getting cold,' Mrs. Bridges exclaimed. 'I expect you've a lot to talk about when you get together!'

'I've had a letter about you, Moke,' the farmer said, as the boys sat down to the table. 'I didn't know Miss Dorothy knew aught about *you;* but there, if she didn't write and ax me to tell her the name of the man you were with? What do you know of her, I wonder? A fine girl, Miss Dorothy, and will make a good job of the farm she hopes to go to some day! Poor lass, she's had a hard time—first losing her mother, then her father, and now having to part with her brother! You mind, Missis, how bitter she cried over that, when she come here to see you after young Jack had sailed for Canada?'

'Ay, I do, poor lass! "Oh, Mrs. Bridges,"

she ses, "what wicked folks there is in the big cities! I wonder whether those bad boys who robbed that shop and took father's watch will ever know what a cruel thing they did? He was so upset that he had a fit next day, and now we've lost him, all through their wicked deed!" You see,' she added, noticing the eager interest in Phil's face, 'the brother was all she had left then, and he was to have stopped here for a year or two if their father had lived. That's partly why she took it so hard. He's been in Canada over a year now.'

Phil's face was growing whiter and more strained at every word Mrs. Bridges spoke, and but for being suddenly called to the door, she could hardly have failed to notice it. He slipped out of the house while the farmer was repeating his question about Dorothy.

Moke said as little as he could in reply, telling the farmer that he had seen her once in the place he used to live at, and that somebody had left him some money to go to Canada with, and did not know where he was to be found, and the letter was sent to tell him about it.

The farmer congratulated him and advised him to go, and then Moke went off to find Phil.

Poor little lad! He was sobbing his heart out in a quiet corner of the orchard, and Moke's

attempts at comfort only seemed to make him worse.

Phil felt that to have robbed Miss Dorothy's father was almost as bad as if he had robbed teacher himself! His heavy and continuous sobs quite frightened his duller comrade.

'Look 'ere, Phil,' he said at length, casting about in his mind for any crumb of comfort he could find to offer, 'look 'ere! If we both goes orf to Canada an' starts earnin' money right orf, we'll be able ter pay that there fourfold in no time, and Miss Dorothy'll be able to come out ter 'er brother p'r'aps.'

'Oh yes, Moke, do let's! We daren't stop here now. She might be coming to see Mrs. Bridges, and then what would we do? Let's get off quick, Moke, and don't you tell her I'm here. Oh, fancy it being Miss Dorothy's father! It's dreadful, it is. We never knew, or we'd not have done it, would we?'

'In coorse not. Don't cry, Phil; you come an' 'elp me write th' letter, an' we'll send it ter-morrer; an' p'r'aps in a week we'll be orf.'

Mrs. Bridges did her best to comfort Phil when he came into the house to say good-night, believing that he had been grieving over the coming separation from Moke. Her surprise was therefore great when the schoolmaster walked across

some weeks after, to show Farmer Bridges letters which had come from the emigration chaplain in Liverpool. These were in reply to what Moke had written, and they stated that he had taken passages for both Moke and Phil by a vessel sailing a week hence. He also enclosed railway tickets for the two boys, and told them to come to Liverpool on the Tuesday by a certain train. He said he would meet them, see about their outfit, and take them on board on the Thursday. He wrote with authority, as one who had received instructions, and Mr. Fenton seemed to think that they could not detain Phil, although he considered him quite unfit for rough farmwork.

'I suppose the chaplain knows what he's about,' he said in conclusion, 'and I don't see what we can do; but I shall write and ask him if he has had instructions from the boy's friends, before parting with him.'

'Ay, do,' the farmer answered. 'It's seemed a bit strange about these lads from the first day they come. They don't tell us much, and I sometimes think they've run away from their folks. If th' chaplain as you speak of knows their friends, of course he's got the best right to act for them, though I'd a-liked to keep little sonny, I would! You've made him quite a little gentleman

since you had him—a year ago, isn't it? and clever with his books, too! Well, well, it's a pity he's going. He's as different from th' other as a peach is from a turmit! A sort of boy as might turn out to be a hearl, or summut like that! Still, I don't see as we can stop him if his friends wishes him to go.'

After the schoolmaster's visit no further opposition was made to the boys' plans, and with a sad heart Phil said farewell to the happy home he had had in the village schoolhouse, and waved a last goodbye to the farmer, who took him to the railway station.

'I'll come back and see you again some day, Farmer Bridges,' he called out, as the train began to move—'when I get rich, I mean!'

How little they either of them knew how strangely that promise was to be fulfilled, and how little the worthy farmer guessed what a reward he was to receive in the future for his kindness to the little homeless city waif, who had been so strangely thrown in his way!

When the great ship had sailed, and the two boys were on their way to new scenes, Phil never thought of inquiring why the chaplain on board took such special notice of him, nor why he planned and arranged his future movements quite

differently from those of the bigger boys. Nor did he attempt to question his authority when he found that he was to be left in the Andrew's Emigration Home in Montreal, and go daily to school for a time, while Moke went forward at once into Manitoba.

How startled he would have been, had he known that these instructions about him had been given by the friend from whom he was even now running away, not daring to face him until he could in some measure undo the hasty deed of that last day in Manchester; a deed which he found had had more sad consequences than he cared to dwell on.

As the weather was fine and calm, and there was a large number of emigrants on board the Allan Liner, the chaplain held services on the steerage deck, and finding how deeply interested Phil was, and what a help his clear, treble voice was in the singing, he made use of him to carry hymn books from his cabin and to go round the deck with him when he distributed copies of the Gospels and other portions of the Bible in various European languages to any on board who belonged to those countries. They were received with the most heartfelt gratitude. Many an emigrant's eye filled with tears as the neat little copy of the Gospels or Psalms, in his own

language, was presented to him to take to his new home.

One day, during one of the services, the chaplain beckoned Phil to his side, and sent him to his cabin for a pile of books which he had forgotten to bring down with him. It was a fine, warm day and he found that almost all the cabin doors were fastened back to admit the air. He had therefore to step inside one or two to be able to find the number that he wanted. He peeped into one for this purpose, and finding that it was not the right one was passing on, when something bright lying on the cabin floor caught his eye. It was a large silver coin, which had evidently been dropped, and was lying half under the door, its edge just appearing beyond it.

Old habits were too strong for Phil at this sight. Without a moment's thought he stooped and picked it up, then darted into the next cabin, which was the chaplain's, and began to collect the books for which he had been sent. One of them fell on the floor, and opened as it fell. It was a copy of St. Luke's Gospel in French. Phil was looking curiously at the unknown language it contained, when his eye caught the name of the Divine Teacher and Saviour, whom he had learned to love, and to whom he had begun to pray. It seemed strange to him that while other words

were unknown to him, this one Name was almost the same as in his own Bible. It brought to his mind the looks, tones, and words of his teacher in Manchester, and with the thought of *him* a great horror of what he had just done overwhelmed Phil. Always quick to act in any matter, he now slipped out of the cabin, and finding all quiet outside, flung the coin he had taken into the next one, and was soon on his way back to the deck where the service was being held.

He found that the singing was over and that the chaplain was preaching. His attention was instantly riveted. He had caught the name of Zacchæus.

'Men,' the chaplain was saying, 'I don't know anything about your past lives, but I do know that there are sure to be some among you who are in the same position as this man, and I want you to make the same choice. There may be those of you who have gone wrong in the old country, it may be through drink or gambling or other things, and you are going out to a new land to get a new start. I want you to make this voyage a time for cutting off the old habits, root and branch. It was not a light or an easy thing for a successful business man like Zacchæus to sweep away at one stroke all the ill-gotten gains, possibly of a

lifetime. It must have been like the cutting off of his right hand. But listen to the Saviour's voice, as He says: "If thy right hand cause thee to stumble (or sin), cut it off and cast it from thee." The voice of conscience may be speaking to some of you now, as it did to Zacchæus. Are you going to barter your soul, or are you going to do as he did, and cut adrift, at once and for ever, from the thing which has dragged you down? Look up into the strong face of love which is at this moment yearning to hear your voice speak the words Zacchæus did, and lay hold of His Arm of Power to carry you through.'

When the sermon was over Phil made his way to the far end of the deck, and stood there for some time, looking at his own small right hand, while some new thoughts were passing through his mind.

'Look here,' he said at last, holding up his hand and addressing it in a whisper, 'you'd ought to be cut off, you ought. What did you do that bad thing for? I'd *like* to cut you off, I would! I won't never get my fourfold paid, if you're going on like this. You makes me miserable, you does,' he continued, giving the offending hand a smart stroke with the other; 'but I don't think I could work with only one, or I'd go to the doctor and have you off this very minute. I know what

I'll do with you! You shan't have no more chances; you shan't never touch another penny as long as you lives. I'll begin to use the other right off, and I'll see if it won't behave better than you.'

'What are you so slow about, Phil?' his companion inquired at their next meal, as he was laboriously cutting his food with his left hand.

'Never you mind,' he replied, looking severely at the right one. 'I'd cut that one off if I could, as the chaplain said; it's been behaving bad, and I'm going to learn the other to work for me. I believe it will do better when it's got used to it.'

When the great disembarking took place at Quebec, several of the gentlemen gave Phil silver before he left the ship, and all remarked that he took it rather doubtfully, and always with his left hand.

'Please, sir, will you keep this for me?' he said, handing it to the chaplain within five minutes of receiving their gifts; 'I don't want to have no money, and you'll please take care of it to pay things for me and Moke.'

CHAPTER XIII

Life on a Canadian Farm

Two years passed away, and the returning spring found Moke and Phil quite settled down in their Canadian farms. Moke had found his vocation, and wished for nothing better than his present life. He had grown into a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with bronzed face and a look of quiet contentment in his pale grey eyes. His horizon reached no further than the broad fields where he worked, the comfortable farm-house, where he found kindness and plenty, and also the guiding and controlling hand of the farmer, which he seemed to need and to lean on most of all. The animals on the farm were his dear friends and comrades, and as going from one farm to another would have necessitated a parting from them, he remained where he was first placed, the farmer considering that his faithfulness to duty and care of his interests made up for the fact that Moke had only one pace, and that a fairly slow one.

The long walk or ride to the church on Sundays

was the only recreation he seemed to think of, and his Bible was read and his daily prayers were said with the same regularity as his work on the farm was done.

Moke had one desire, which floated about in his mind as a sort of airy castle, too fragile to be anything but a fascinating dream. Some day, he was told, Miss Dorothy was coming out to Manitoba, and her brother and she were to take up land of their own. Moke hoped that, when the time came, he might go with them and be their one hired man to help to work their small farm.

He felt that to live in the same house with that young lady as mistress would be like eating green corn and maple sugar every day of his life!

He also felt that to get near to Dorothy would give him a chance of seeing Phil sometimes. It seemed to Moke as if a widening gulf was separating him from Phil in these days. He had felt it first on shipboard, as they came out together to this new land. The ladies and gentlemen had noticed Phil a good deal, taken him on to the upper deck, questioned and talked to him, and Phil, instead of appearing shy and bashful, had chatted and told stories and seemed to feel quite at home with them.

Although a steerage passenger, he had become, in a measure, the pet of the ship, and had been

taken into the saloon concert to sing a song and recite something he had learned. The chaplain, too, had called him his little choir leader, and in all this Moke had no share.

In his slow way he had come to see that Phil was fit to be with the 'swells,' and that the year spent in the schoolmaster's house had lifted him on to a higher level. He was the same cheery little comrade to Moke, but there was an indescribable difference, and Moke felt his own stupidity and roughness more and more when in Phil's company. He had come to think of Phil in the same list with Jack and Dorothy, and even with his late teacher.

Phil had, as usual, fallen on his feet. His stay in the Andrew's Emigration Home at Montreal had been brief. The Superintendent of the Home sent him to a place called Cypress River, in Manitoba, to live with a young man there who was lonely, and wanted a companion.

Phil had expected to find a rough farmer, but instead of this he found himself met by a gentleman, dressed like the 'toffs' he used to envy in the old days, and speaking like his old teacher. Phil clambered into the rigg beside him and was greeted as 'matey,' and received as if he had been a little brother.

'That's my shack, Phil,' the young man said,

pointing out a small wooden house on a hillside, after they had driven some miles.

'Do you think you can be happy there?' he continued; 'you will see no one but me for six days of the week, except you count the dogs and horses and calves as companions, as I have learned to do.'

The shack was placed in a lovely spot. Just behind, a little bluff sheltered it, and beyond the cultivated land surrounding it the prairie stretched away, unbroken by any dwelling as far as eye could see. The rising ground on which the shack stood gave it a special charm after the long miles of prairie land through which Phil had travelled.

He found it a very nice wooden house, the walls of its one sitting-room being decorated with golf clubs, tennis rackets, Indian paddles, photographs of college groups, football teams, and many reminiscences of the old country, while one end was completely filled with books, packed closely together in what were evidently home-made book-shelves. Some choice skin rugs covered the floor, and a comfortable reclining chair placed near the book-shelves, and facing the open window, showed what its owner's chief recreation was. The kitchen, with a tiny bedroom leading out of it, led on to a small dairy, stable and cowhouse.

Phil's quarters were in the upper room of the

little dwelling, where, among a quantity of boxes and packing-cases, a little place had been cleared for his small shake-down.

'Look here, Phil,' said the master of the small domain, as they sat at tea together in the bright kitchen, 'I did not have you to work hard, but chiefly for company. I've lived here for three years, and needed no one with me; but I was a bit seedy last winter, and I decided then to have a companion. We divide the work between us, but I take the labourer's portion, and you the housemaid's. Do you see? Think you can sweep out the kitchen, wash up, feed the hens, and help me with the garden?'

'I can do lots more than that,' Phil replied, in rather an injured tone. 'I thought you were going to let me ride the horses, and milk the cows, and make the butter! I might want a little showing how, but I've seen those things done at Farmer Bridges'; and I should be able to fetch letters and things, if you taught me to ride a horse.'

'Hear, hear! Splendid! I see I have got a comrade with some grit in him,' his hearer exclaimed, laughing heartily. 'Come along, Phil, let's see how you shape at riding a broncho I have. We'll have our first riding lesson right away.'

The way Phil stuck to the broncho as it careered about the field showed Weston that he need not fear for his safety; and the wonderful way in which the boy flung himself on to a horse, before it became aware of his intention to mount, excited his wondering admiration.

That night he questioned Phil closely about his former way of living, and told him that his answers were more entertaining than a new novel.

'Look here, you're a little chap,' the young man said, as Phil prepared to ascend to his shake-down; 'you won't think it necessary to cry yourself to sleep, shall you, as small boys are supposed to do on their first night among strangers? I hope you are going to be happy here; you come right down if you feel lonely, bring a rug and roll yourself up before the stove near me.'

'No, thank you,' Phil answered, in a hurt tone, 'I don't never cry. There's only one person ever saw me, and I shan't be lonely, and may I get up and go out just as soon as I wake? I'll be awful quiet.'

'To be sure you may,' his hearer said, much amused, and Phil's cheery 'Good-night, sir,' as he reached his sleeping room somehow warmed and cheered the young man's heart.

'The little chap's saying his prayers,' he said to

himself later, as, sitting beside the stove before turning in, he heard Phil's voice speaking continuously above him. 'I think I had best say mine, too; this place has not heard the sound of prayers lately, and I believe I ought to give thanks for my little comrade, for he seems just the sort I wanted, and scarcely expected to get. Wherever has he got his nice ways and manners, coming from the sort of life he tells me of!'

As days and weeks passed on, Weston and Phil became more and more to each other. The young man wondered how he had got on so long alone.

Phil learned the duties of the small farmstead very quickly. He sometimes got into trouble for attempting things he did not understand, but never for idleness. His voice became strong, through so much singing in the open air, and the pair arranged a series of cries and coo-ies to mean certain things when they were working at long distances from each other.

On Sundays the rigg was got out, the best clothes put on, and the two appeared at Cypress River Church as well groomed and up-to-date as if they lived close to a tailor.

Those Sundays were great events to Phil. They often stayed at the houses of some of the people living at the little town, after the afternoon service, and drove home in the starlight. Weston

was churchwarden, and Phil was in the choir. The one sermon a week, which the clergyman drove twelve miles to preach, and the one service a week, which many of them drove ten miles to attend, made a deeper impression, and was more thought of and talked over, than if they had enjoyed the privileges and opportunities of those at home.

In the winter Weston began to teach Phil, and to introduce him to some of those beloved books of his. Phil was a bright and eager pupil, and his growing devotion to the young man made him willing to take any trouble to please him.

It had been arranged, when Phil came to Cypress River, that he should receive his wages at the end of the year. As the time drew near he had many anxious thoughts as to what he should do with the money when he got it, and how convey it to the right quarter.

When, therefore, Weston offered him a fifty dollar bill and asked him what he was going to do with it, he hesitated, changed colour, and putting his hands behind him, seemed quite at a loss for an answer.

'Come, Phil,' his friend said, 'can't you trust me enough to tell me what you are thinking about? It's quite clear that you have something on your mind; why not let me help you if I

can? I'm older than you, and I daresay I can advise you.'

They were sitting in the kitchen, well-warmed by the stove, for the autumn evenings were cold, and Phil raised his troubled eyes to his companion's, wondering whether he dare tell him his whole story.

'Why, Phil,' the young man exclaimed, 'what's the matter with you, matey? Is there anything that went wrong with you before you came to me? Don't fear to tell me. I've got enough laid to my own account to make me very lenient with other people's faults! Out with it, old man. Don't be afraid!'

Thus exhorted, Phil, feeling his great need of advice and help, hesitated no longer, but plunged at once into the heart of his story.

He began with that which lay the most heavily on his mind, namely, the robbery of the watch and till, and was hurrying on to explain his desire to repay this, when his hearer broke in, with exclamations of admiration—

'*You* concocted that clever plan! Do you mean that it all came out of that little head of yours, and that you carried it out yourself, with only the help of a slow comrade? Why, Phil, you'll be Governor of the Dominion yet! Splendid!' and Weston leaned back in his chair and laughed

heartily. Phil's mournful and astonished looks soon, however, recalled him to a sense of his mistake.

'Well? What next? Of course it was awfully wicked of you, and I oughtn't to laugh. Tell me what you did with the money.'

When the story was finished, and Phil had explained the whole matter, his friend thought for a minute or two, and then gave his advice.

'Now, Phil,' he said, 'I don't agree with your idea of sending your money to the young lady whose father happened to be in the shop you robbed. I expect that, from what you tell me, the shop would be one of several owned by some company, and therefore the persons to whom to restore what you took from the till would be those who belonged to this company. I think you said it was fifteen dollars? Then twelve pounds is about the sum you would pay, if you are *determined* to restore four times as much as you took! That is the sum I have just offered you for your year's work. Now about the young lady. You got ten shillings for the watch—four tens are forty—just two pounds. Still, I must tell you that the watch would probably be worth a great deal more. I should say another ten pounds would be more like four times its value. Did you say that Moke had saved something?'

'Yes, thirty-five dollars when I heard from him last. Then we left the money we took with Mrs. Bridges. We wanted to give the very same back, and not to touch it. She will have it all safe. Three pounds it was and ten shillings. All in silver and copper, except the gold I got for the watch, and a sovereign that was in the till.'

'Why, that makes up a little more than the exact money I named. There's twelve pounds for the shopowners, and Moke's and what Mrs. Bridges has for the watch. I should send it like that, if I were you; but I'd send it all to your good teacher at the Ragged School you speak of. You say he's a business man, and he will know best how to restore it to the right people. You had better write and tell Moke all your plans, and if he sends his money to me, I will take the first opportunity of getting it all sent off for you, if you like.'

Phil's thanks were hearty, but the sober look of care did not pass from his expressive face. He sat silent, thinking deeply.

'Come, Phil,' his friend urged; 'don't be so serious, man! You are doing what not one out of a hundred would do, and surely it ought to give you a light *heart*, even if it gives you a light *pocket!* What idea is in that head of yours now?'

'I was thinking about Miss Dorothy's father being dead, and how much she wants to come out

to her brother; but he hasn't even got a *little* farm yet, and I'm afraid she'll have to wait a long time. If we hadn't done that, her father might be alive, and she could have come sooner. I think Mrs. Bridges said something like that.'

'Don't bother your head about that, Phil. You've made splendid restitution for a little chap, and who knows what may be, some day? You may possibly have it in your power to completely clear off old scores, to the entire satisfaction of even a scrupulous little conscience like yours!'

After this talk Phil began to think about writing to his friend and teacher.

It was some time before Moke could be communicated with, and his money sent to Cypress River to go to England with Phil's; but while waiting Phil wrote and rewrote the letter which was to break the long silence between himself and his best friend.

He told everything, and not only expressed sorrow, but showed that the restitution he was now making was, in his own eyes, very incomplete. He meant, he said, to work hard and save up all his money to help to get a farm for Miss Dorothy's brother, so that she could come out to him. He spoke of how much he had missed his teacher, and how he hoped he would forgive him and write to him, now that he had repaid fourfold in the matter

of the robbery—and the whole letter breathed a longing for his old care and love.

Owing to much delay, the winter was well advanced before it could be sent, together with the eighty-five dollars which were to make up the twenty pounds of restitution money when Mrs. Bridges should add to it the amount in her hands.

During this second winter of Phil's life in Manitoba his friend was often ill. Once or twice Phil had ridden down to the post office at Cypress River to send a letter, asking the doctor to come to him.

At one time he stayed all night, and came and went once or twice a week, while Phil proudly undertook all the feeding of the sheep, cows and poultry, and waited on the sufferer as well.

The distant clergyman also came sometimes, and although Weston got better and about again, he gradually left more and more to Phil, and depended on him greatly.

One day, when the clergyman had come over, and Phil was preparing a substantial meal before he left them again for his long drive home, he heard Weston exclaim in some distress, 'My last link with the old life broken! I shall never think of going home now!' Phil saw that he held a

black-edged letter, which the rector had brought him, in his hand.

There was much low-toned conversation that day, and many glances were cast at him, as he stepped about as quietly as he could, trying to have all ready before their talk was over.

As the clergyman was leaving, Weston handed him a paper, saying, 'Do get it drafted as quickly as you can, and bring it over for me to sign—I shall not feel easy until it is signed.'

After this visit, Phil was concerned to find that his friend spent much of his time lying down, or sitting in his lounge chair, and sometimes he would hear a smothered moan as he passed in and out, seeing to their daily duties.

Weston often said that he must get some help for the farm before the spring work began, but he did not seem to mind about anything so long as the animals were fed.

Phil used to sit and talk to him as night came on, and Weston got him to tell him all he could remember of the Bible lessons learned at the Ragged School and while he was with Mr. Fenton in Derbyshire.

One evening he was taken suddenly worse, and Phil, terrified at seeing him so bad, begged leave to mount Dimsie, his own special mare, and ride over to Holland for the doctor.

'Yes, yes,' Weston said; 'but the rector first—tell him to come; I must sign a paper. Drive back in his sleigh with him. Quick, Phil! Don't lose a moment.'

Phil was surprised at his ready consent, and concluded that in his pain he had not noticed the time, for it was late in the evening; he had never allowed him to ride that distance except in daylight, having often told him that the wolves were not yet cleared out of these lonely parts. The boy remembered it, and hesitated; then he tried to forget his fears, and hurriedly mounted Dimsie, remembering, however, to strap a small lantern across his chest, as he had heard of others doing, for a safeguard.

The twelve-mile ride was a very terrible one to Phil. It was early in March, and the melting snows had flooded the lower-lying lands and converted the streams into torrents. The part of the ride which he most dreaded was the first few miles before he could strike the rough, but fenced-in track, across the open prairie.

He knew he could depend on Dimsie's speed, but he had to check her and go as slowly as possible while finding his way down to the ford where he would have to cross the river, a small one, which gave the name to the district.

The night was black, no single star being

A NEW TERROR SEIZED THE BOY AS HE HEARD A SNARLING GROWL NOT FAR AWAY.

visible, and at length Phil had to dismount and lead the mare down to the ford. He found, as he had feared, that the stream was swollen and that it was impossible to ride through.

He had now to decide whether to urge the mare to swim across, or to ride a mile or two out of his way and cross lower down, where a wooden foot-bridge had been roughly put up, which a horse could cross. He decided to take the latter course, and leading Dimsie up the bank again, began to take a cross country line, guiding himself by the sound of the rushing water. The track was so rough that he had to lead the way, holding his lantern close to the ground and encouraging the mare, who hesitated and stumbled in the darkness. Then came the thought of his suffering friend and of his earnest desire for haste. Phil was in an agony of mind, wondering whether he should ever reach Holland. All at once, the memory of that other terrible night journey came back to him, when he had flown across the city to warn his teacher of the burglars, and many a cry for help went up to his Heavenly Father's ears as he made his way painfully along.

As they were passing through some trees a new terror seized the boy, as he heard a snarling growl not so very far away. He trembled and stood still; then he remembered hearing a railway man

telling of a night journey across the railway track, and of how he only escaped a wolf by swinging his lantern right and left as he went along. Tremblingly Phil did the same, and although his knees shook as he went forward, the thought of his friend kept him from turning back, and having safely passed through the trees he found the ground less broken, and ventured to mount.

The low growls now frightened Dimsie, and she began to swing over the rough ground in a way she had refused to do before. Phil held on with one hand and waved his lantern about with the other, and at length reached the foot-bridge, which was only a few inches deep in water, and could be easily crossed. The worst of the journey was now over, and urging Dimsie to her utmost speed, the boy was soon at the town.

Both doctor and clergyman were gone to bed when he reached their houses, but he was not long in waking both of them and urging them to go to his friend at once. They thought it best for Phil to stay the night at the Rectory while they drove over to the lonely shack, for he was trembling and exhausted from his long and difficult journey.

The sun was high next morning when they returned, and they found Phil watching for them outside the little town.

'How is he, sir?' he asked earnestly, as they pulled up on seeing him there.

'He is gone, my boy,' the clergyman said, descending and laying a kind hand on Phil's shoulder. 'We told him of your brave ride, and he smiled and said, "God bless the boy!" His pain had left him when we got there, and he was able to sign a paper which leaves his little farm, with the house and furniture and all the stock, to *you*, Phil. You will have to get someone to come and stay with you until your friends in England can advise you whether to sell it or what to do with it!'

On hearing of his friend's death Phil turned away to hide his grief, and let them drive on. He wandered away until out of sight of the houses, and then threw himself down on the grass to think. It was hard to realise that the friend with whom he had lived these two years was really gone.

He had told Phil once that he did not think he should get better, but the boy had not believed it.

After a time the thought of his new possessions came into his mind. Of the value of the small farm, with its land and homestead, sheep, cows, horses, and simple agricultural implements, he had very little idea; but as he continued to think over it, a new light broke over his face, and a bright smile replaced the signs of grief.

Had he not been earnestly longing to see his old friends really happy, and to have the power to atone for the injury he had unwittingly done to them? Was not this unlooked-for legacy intended for him to use in making them happy, and in clearing away the last shadow between himself and the dear friend whose image perpetually filled his mind?

Phil thought it all over for a few minutes; then, starting to his feet and lifting his eyes and hands to the clear, blue sky above him, he said reverently, 'Behold, Lord! I give this farm to restore fourfold what I took, and of all the money I earn after this I shall give half to the poor, to pay back other things, because I can't find all the people I took from.'

A warm sense of heart-to-heart fellowship with the Divine Person to whom he had been speaking filled his soul with joy as he retraced his steps to the Rectory, saying softly to himself, 'There's nothing between us now! I know now what Jackears felt like when he'd given up all he had, to make amends for what he had taken from others; and I expect the Master smiled on him as he is doing now on me!'

That evening a letter was posted to Mr. Miller, telling him the whole story, and asking him how to manage the matter of making over Phil's new

possessions to Jack and Dorothy. Not a word was said about his own future, although Phil had to choke down a rising sob, as he thought of giving up Dimsie and parting from the dogs and the other animals on the farm.

By the advice of his friends at the Rectory, Phil also wrote to Moke, asking him whether he could come and stay with him for a few weeks until he heard from England. There was little doing just then on the farm where Moke was employed, and he was able to come at once and help Phil to manage his newly-acquired property.

The two had happy times together, Phil's spirits rising daily, and poor Moke sharing his joy, as he told him that they could both hold up their heads now as real honest fellows, the debts of the past being all cleared off.

CHAPTER XIV

A Great Discovery

PHIL'S first letter containing the story and reasons of his flight, and also his year's earnings, had been a great joy to Norman Miller. He had formed a fairly correct idea of the causes of the boys' disappearance, connected as it was with the attempted burglary and the efforts which he knew were being made by the Spinning Field gang to find them.

Several disguised persons had been to his house at different times to try and get information from the servants, and the inquiries were invariably for *Phil* (not Moke) from persons who declared themselves to be his relatives.

Sam's constant and persistent efforts to find the boy by these means made him suspect that Phil's person was of some real value to these people, and the more he inquired into it the more convinced he became that the boy belonged to someone who would be prepared to pay a large sum of money if he was produced and given up.

While he was abroad he told the whole story to

a French solicitor, who was staying at the same hotel, and with whom he had struck up a friendship. It was his suggestion that the boy might possibly be the child of Mr. Miller's own sister, and that the man called 'Sam' knew it, and wanted to extort money for giving him up! Still, there was much mystery about the whole affair, and he tried not to let it fill his mind without some real evidence.

On his return to England, he lost no time in visiting Farmer Bridges and also the schoolmaster with whom Phil had lived.

When Mrs. Bridges heard the story of Phil's life and was also told of the French solicitor's suggestion, she was 'struck all of a heap,' as she expressed it, and hastened to produce a small likeness of Phil which the schoolmaster had taken before he went to Canada.

The resemblance to his sister struck Mr. Miller at once, although he tried to make little of it, as he did not dare to entertain too many hopes.

He had always suspected that the long silence of the two boys and their evident intention to hide, even from him, pointed to a consciousness of some wrongdoing; but when Phil's letter told him the story of their danger, flight, and determination to pay back *fourfold* before writing to him, he was quite overcome.

The roll of dollar bills which the letter contained was also a great surprise. The amount was large for the boys to have saved in little over eighteen months.

A brief note which was enclosed from Mr. Weston informed him that Phil had refused to receive anything whatever for himself for his year's work, but had wished his entire wages to be sent to England.

'Ah, if all the lads took my lessons to heart as this one has done,' he exclaimed with emotion as he counted the money, 'what a reaping there would be!'

'Can I have a word with you, sir?' Smith said after one of the Sunday evening mission services for the police, at the branch nearest to Mr. Miller's Manchester house.

'To be sure; walk down with me.'

'It's rather a delicate matter I want to mention, sir, and I hope you'll pardon me if it seems as though I was interferin' in a family affair, but as it's your safety as I'm anxious about, I feel as I must speak.'

'What is it, Smith?'

'Was you aware, sir, that a certain person named Dampier has just come from Paris, and has been seen in this city?'

'No, Smith, I was not. You mean, of course,

the man who ran away with and married my poor sister, and who has been so many years in prison for the great jewel robbery in London? I did not know that he was in England, or I should have sought him out.'

'You would, sir? Do you know that he makes no secret of his hatred of you, and has as good as threatened to do you harm when at liberty again?'

'The fact is, Smith, that I want to know from his own lips whether my poor sister left a son. There have been so many strange circumstances connected with the little lad who went out to Canada, that sometimes I wonder whether he *does* belong to me in any way. Since he went I have searched everywhere for information, but I can't get any light on the matter.'

'Well, sir, if I might advise, I wouldn't let him know how anxious you are about it. From all I can hear he'd be glad to do you a bad turn, and as he's been seen in St. A—— Square looking across at your office, it seems as if he's thinkin' of seein' you there; and I hope, sir, you'll warn your clerks not to leave the office if he calls. We have a London detective comin' down to-night to watch him, as there's some talk of an affair he's been concerned in in Paris since he was liberated. It's a remarkable fact that the leaders of the Spinning Field gang have been seen in Paris at the same

time he was there. We are all glad to be rid of them here.'

'A gentleman to see you, sir,' said one of the clerks, appearing at the door of Mr. Miller's private room, just at closing time that evening.

'Show him in, James,' he said, 'and do not leave the office till he goes out.'

The person who came in gave his name as Simpson, but one glance at his appearance when he turned down the high collar of his overcoat and took off his hat decided Mr. Miller who his visitor was.

The significant way in which he was motioned to a chair at some distance from the door, while Mr. Miller seated himself close to a small window which communicated with the outer office, showed him that he was known, and without any delay he introduced the object of his visit.

'You ask me my business,' he said; 'may I ask you to furnish me immediately with the address of my son, and tell me by what right you have interfered with my plans for him, and assumed authority over him?'

Mr. Miller's heart gave a throb of joy, and he turned to his desk as if to search for a paper, but in reality to hide his emotion.

'We have never met, Mr. Dampier,' he answered quietly; 'and you will pardon me saying that we can scarcely meet as relatives!

If you wish to extort money from me you have not chosen the best way in claiming as your son one of the street arabs whom I work among and try to help.'

'I tell you that the boy you have sent away somewhere *is* my son, and you cannot legally withhold him from me.'

'Of course you are prepared to furnish me with proof of this? You have not yet told me what boy you are referring to.'

'Proof! I can give plenty of proof! Is not his certificate of baptism enough? Molly took care to have it entered in the same book as her own marriage lines—and is not old Margaret, who knew all about the boy's birth, still living in the Holloway Workhouse? I suppose you want to get hold of the small properties which are his in his mother's right, as well as all her money which you unjustly got willed to you after her marriage! I tell you I *will* have the boy—the law is on my side! Where is he?'

'What boy do you speak of?'

'Phil, to be sure; he is fourteen by now, and likely to be very useful to me.'

His anxiety about Phil helped Mr. Miller to keep quiet, and to answer none of the charges brought against himself. He only said: 'As soon as you furnish me with the proofs I ask I

shall be prepared to answer you; but you are mistaken about money matters. Of course you could not hear much about them, as you have been so long away.'

'Mistaken, am I?' Dampier answered, rising in a threatening way. 'Who should know better how things are going on than one's lawyer? I can tell you that Whittaker, the lawyer, having his relations living at Hazelgrove, close to your property, was not likely to be misinformed, and he has managed to get news to me, even while I was "*away*," as you kindly remind me.'

'James, will you show this gentleman out?' said his master, opening the sliding window.

'In three days you shall have the proof you ask,' Dampier said, as he strode out.

When he had gone, Norman Miller fell on his knees and gave thanks for the good news he had heard, feeling quite convinced of its truth. Oh, how he longed to take his little nephew in his arms and to tell him that he belonged to him! Then he was seized with a desire to know more, and he prepared to take a night train to London, and himself see the woman of whom his brother-in-law spoke.

'So Charles Whittaker has been the snake in the grass, has he?' he said to himself, as he had leisure to think over the interview while travelling.

'Possibly the visits to us at Hazelgrove have been paid with the purpose of gleaning information about our affairs or Phil's. It is a mercy that our house was empty while Phil was at the schoolhouse there, and that he got away to Canada when he did.'

Once arrived in London, there was no difficulty in getting an interview with old Margaret in the Holloway Workhouse. Having been an inmate over twelve years, she was well known there, and he found her a pleasant, chatty old body.

'Bless yer heart, sir,' she said, in answer to his first question, 'know Mrs. Dampier? Of course I did, poor dear! They lodged with me in Holloway, and I'll ne'er forget as long as I live the way she took on when she found out as the smart young feller she'd married were a "sharper." She stood up to him, she did, and told him as she'd ruined her life and given up a dear brother whom she loved a lot better than him! Oh, she could talk straight when roused, the poor dear! After that she pined away, till the baby came. That did her a lot of good. She made me take it and have it christened at the same church she was married at, before it were a week old! "For fear," she said, "as he'd call it some outlandish name." She used to say as her brother would find the child some day, and it should bear his

name, and be registered in the same church books as her marriage was. They had words over it when he come in, but he was too late. He said he'd never call the child aught but Phil, from the good haul he had the week it was born, when he shared in some robbery of Phillips, the merchant! He never got caught nor suspected for that.'

'What name did his mother give him?'

'I can't rightly remember, sir; what be your name? I'd know it again, I think.'

'Norman Miller.'

'Why, to be sure; that's it! The poor thing fretted herself to death, and wouldn't never write to her people or let them know where she were, and she died before little Phil could walk. I was paid to keep the child, till one day I got news that his father had been took up for a big jewel robbery. I never got no word nor no pay after that; times was bad, and I lost money in some shares as I'd bought, and I couldn't pay my way, and me and the child had to come here. He was fetched away one day by someone his father sent, and I never knew naught about it, till he were gone.'

Old Margaret was made happy by a promise of a tiny cottage in the country, close to the gates of the house where Molly was born, and then Mr. Miller hastened forward to the church which she

had named, to get a copy of Phil's baptismal certificate. He found all exactly as she had told him, and at once returned to Manchester, prepared to take legal advice as to whether he could refuse to tell the father where the boy was.

Smith was waiting for him when he got home. 'I thought, sir,' he said, 'as you'd wish to know about the person we were speaking of a few days ago.'

'Who do you mean, Smith, Mr. Dampier?'

'Yes, sir. The information from Paris came yesterday, and the detective who was watching him had him arrested at once. It's for some very big fraud on the Continent, I believe, where he's been since he came back, until just now. It seems that "Sam," who has been a tool of his, has turned "King's evidence" against him, finding himself in danger.'

On hearing this news Mr. Miller decided to take no steps until he saw how the matter would end; and when he heard that a sentence of ten years' penal servitude had been passed upon Dampier, he felt that all obstacles to his claiming Phil were removed, and that he might now consider him, as it were, his own son.

CHAPTER XV

Hopes Fulfilled

THE search for Phil's identity had brought vividly before her brother's mind the circumstances of his young sister's unhappy end. He could not get rid of the thought of her sufferings, and also of his father's harshness, but for which, as he could not but think, things might have been different.

His own feelings of pain at being in any way connected with such a character as Dampier made him realise what Molly had suffered when the knowledge of her husband's real character and way of life came to her.

If there had only been *home love* to fall back upon at that crisis, he felt sure that she would have flown back to the home nest for counsel and help; but with things as they were, he could well understand why she had not done so. No doubt Dampier had been attracted by her beauty, but at the same time he was sure to have informed himself of what share of her father's property was likely to come to her at his death.

As Charles Whittaker had been his father's solicitor, it was easy to see how Dampier had got his information; and he had no doubt that her father's severe letters, telling her about his change of will after her marriage, had largely caused the cruelty and neglect of which there was such clear evidence.

He had never in his heart blamed his step-mother for the events which took place during his absence in India. He knew his father's iron will too well to suppose that she would ever have dared to brave his wrath by interceding with him for his own daughter, and he could well understand the intense mortification it must have been to her to find that her husband's family connections included such a well-known swindler as Dampier had become. Mingled, however, with these sad thoughts came the recollection of his poor sister's confidence in him about her boy.

It seemed, from what old Margaret had told him, that she had never doubted his finding and claiming the child.

No suspicion of his father's determined efforts to conceal him and to bring him up as a trained sharper seemed to have occurred to her, and her brother was indeed thankful that such fears had not added to her griefs.

While walking through the busy streets to the

Midland railway station to meet Dorothy, who was coming to stay with them, Mr. Miller's thoughts travelled back over the experiences of the last three years, and he realised that if, instead of obeying the voice of conscience, which called him to give his life and energies to fighting sin, crime and wrong in the great city, he had chosen the smoother path, and had gone back to India, as he had been strongly tempted to do, his dear little nephew would have been left a prey to the worst class of men, and would never have been found by him.

If God had set such a wonderful seal of approval of his choice, in the gift of Phil, he could now throw himself into the work of saving the city boys with renewed earnestness and hope.

There was a light in his eye and a joy in his heart which had been absent when he met Dorothy on her first visit to them after her mother's death, and she at once noticed the difference.

'How bright you look, Uncle Miller, and how good of you to come and meet me!' she said, coming forward eagerly towards him.

'How tall you have grown, Dorothy!' he exclaimed in surprise, not having seen her for some months, and being quite charmed with her looks and manners and general womanliness.

Dorothy had lately left school, and had been staying at B—— with Mrs. Arthur, who had begged for her company after losing her husband. She chatted brightly all the way home, and he determined to say nothing about his wonderful news until they joined Mrs. Miller.

The evening post came in before he could begin his story, bringing Phil's second letter, which told of the death of Mr. Weston, and of his own wish to hand over his newly-acquired property to Jack, the son of the man he had robbed.

'Oh, Uncle Miller, is anything the matter?' Dorothy said in an awed whisper, laying her hand affectionately on his arm, as she saw that a tear had dropped on the letter as he read, while at the same time a fervent 'Thank God' escaped his lips.

'Nothing but good news, my child—wonderful news both for you and for me! Dorothy, could you be ready to go out to Canada in a month's time, do you think?'

'To Canada? To Jack! Oh! Uncle Miller what do you mean? Is that letter from Jack?'

'No; this is from Phil, but it tells me news you will rejoice to hear. Come, mater,' as Mrs. Miller joined them, 'come and listen to the remarkable story I have to tell Dorothy.'

'Why, Norman! you seem upset—whatever's

the matter? I hope it's good news, and not bad.'

'Very good news,' he said, turning to Dorothy. 'She can go out to Jack at once, as soon as her outfit can be got ready; and I rather think I may take her myself.'

'What nonsense, Norman! You can't seriously think of burying Dorothy on a lonely Canadian farm, at her age! I have been arranging a round of festivities for her, and I have been promising myself as much pleasure in chaperoning her as she will have in all the gay doings I have planned for her.'

Mrs. Miller glanced approvingly at the tall, handsome, attractive girl; but Dorothy, with a little of her old impetuosity, broke in: 'How good and kind you are, Mrs. Miller? but really I do not care for these things; I long to be at work doing something that is really needed. Please tell us your news,' she added, turning eagerly to her guardian; 'I do want to know what stroke of good fortune Jack has had!'

'Did you ever hear what happened to your father a week or two before his death, Dorothy? I mean about the watch and money which were stolen from him?'

'Yes, I did. You told Jack about it before he went abroad, and he told me. Has your good news anything to do with that?'

'Certainly it has; a very great deal. Now listen. One of the two persons who robbed your father has suddenly and unexpectedly come into possession of a small Canadian farm, in one of the prettiest parts of Manitoba, and he is determined to hand over the whole farm, with homestead, stock and farm implements, as a gift to Jack, to atone for the wrong he did to him in robbing his father and perhaps hastening his death!'

'Oh, how wonderful!' the girl cried, clasping her hands. 'It is almost too good to be true! A whole farm—ready made—to belong to Jack? What does he say to it?'

'Jack knows nothing about it, and will not know till I tell him.'

'That seems very strange, Norman,' the elder lady remarked. 'Surely, as Jack is in Canada he should hear of his good fortune before you do.'

'Listen, and I will explain. The two boys who took the watch and the contents of the till were two of my Ragged School lads! They were in sore straits, having been frightened away from the poor shelter they called home, and also robbed of their little savings. They had resolved to give up thieving and to get into an honest business, and had saved a little money for this purpose. It was when they were made desperate by their savings

being stolen from them, and their chances spoiled, that they robbed the till of one of the shops of which your father was manager at the time.

'Ever since that day, the one who thought of the plan has been saving all the money he has earned towards repairing the wrong. He has set his heart on repaying *fourfold*, and he hopes that this farm which is now left to him will be worth enough to do it.'

'You don't mean Phil!' both the ladies exclaimed in one breath.

'Yes I do—bless the lad! Is he not a boy to be proud of?'

'Then you have really found out where he is at last?'

'Yes; he has written to me, but not till lately. Not till he could pay fourfold.'

'Well, I must say that boy has wits enough to get to be Chancellor of the Exchequer some day,' Mrs. Miller exclaimed, wiping the moisture from her eyes. 'He's behaved like a gentleman.'

'What should you say, mater, if I told you that Phil is a son of a lady in your own class of life? What should you say to his having been found out to be related to *us?*'

'To us! You don't mean to say that poor Molly had a son after all, and that it is Phil!'

'Yes, mater, I have sufficient evidence to prove

it even without the testimony of his father, whom I have seen!'

'What, that scoundrel Dampier! Surely he is not at liberty?'

'He was at liberty, but is now in safe custody again, and will not be free till Phil is of age, so that we need have no fears on his account.'

'What shall you do with Phil, Norman?'

'Bring him home, when I've seen Jack and Dorothy nicely settled on the farm, and let his education be finished first of all. Come, Dorothy, don't let us separate to-night without singing a hymn of praise, for we all have much to give thanks for.'

'Whatever's come to the master?' the servants said, on returning to the kitchen after evening prayers. 'He might have had a fortune left him by the way he spoke; and Miss Dorothy seems just as pleased.'

Cook had been kept to speak to her master after the other two had left the dining-room, and in the midst of their conjectures she came back to them, dropped into a chair, flung her apron over her head and sobbed and cried while trying to impart to the younger maids the good news she had just heard.

'It isn't likely you'll care much about it,' she managed to say between her sobs, 'bein' new to the

family, an' Sarah an' Mary, as knew the blessed child, gone away to better theirselves (which they won't never do, as I told 'em). Fancy me a-washin' and dressin' that poor lamb, so careless-like, thinkin' 'im just a little street arab, an' 'im my own dear Miss Molly's son! Oh, it beats me, it does! Didn't I allus feel a sort of strange drawin' to that darlin' child, as if 'e were one of me hown—an' I were right! Oh, to think of 'im a-comin' 'ome, an' me a-tellin' 'im all the stories I knows about 'is poor young mother! It's just wonderful, it is! It's no wonder they was all so full of joy to-night!'

CHAPTER XVI

Conclusion.

AT the window of a Pullman sleeping car on the West train, as it rushed through the Lake Superior district, drinking in all the details of the wonderful and romantic country through which they were passing, sat Dorothy (with Mrs. Arthur beside her), leaning forward to listen to the information about the surrounding country which her guardian had heard from the brakeman.

It seemed to her an endless vision of water, islands, bays, headlands, rocks, and fir woods; and when night shut out the view they still rushed on, finding themselves, as daylight returned, entering the prairie, in the centre of which Winnipeg stands.

At the railway depôt there, watching eagerly for the arrival of the train, were two youths—one tall, broad-shouldered and bronzed, with an honest British face, and hands hardened with daily toil; the other slight and boyish, with strikingly handsome features, and dark eyes matching his curly, black hair.

The one would be taken for a prosperous young

Canadian farmer, hailing from the old country; the other would have easily passed for a public schoolboy, whose holiday life had given him a healthy colour.

Both were extraordinarily excited, for was not Dorothy coming to share and brighten Jack's life? and was not Phil's heart swelling with love and joy, as he remembered that he was the loved nephew of the man who had been his one hero in the hard, lonely, and unloved-life he had led before he met him?

It was something very new to Phil to know that he need never feel any anxiety for the future. He was still trying to grasp the thought when the train rushed in.

What meetings and greetings there were! Phil's eyes searched the line of cars for one face, and when he caught sight of it he ploughed his way through the mass of alighting passengers to reach it—stretching out his hands, and saying with a choking in his throat: 'Oh, teacher, I'm so glad you're come!'

It was a glad meeting to all, though few words were spoken.

Phil followed his newly-found uncle like a shadow whichever way he turned while the baggage was seen to.

When the hotel was reached and a private room

secured, there was much to tell and to hear. Jack had so far only been told of an opening there was for him, where Dorothy could be with him. He had now to hear about the farm which was to be *his own;* and while he was growing eloquent in his praises of the giver, his guardian quietly drew Phil forward and presented him to receive Jack's thanks.

To Phil it was a painful moment. The prominent thought in his mind was of the robbery, and not of the splendid restitution he was making; but Jack stopped his murmured words of sorrow by a hearty grip of his hand, telling Phil that he was the best chap going, and had made him the happiest fellow in all Manitoba!

'Well, Phil, how do you feel about it all?' said his uncle, as they two strolled out together after all the explanations had been gone through.

'Oh, I do feel so happy; I can't tell you how glad I am! You see, I should never have been fit to belong to you, uncle, if I hadn't paid back *fourfold.* I'd have felt I was a disgrace to you. I'm *so* glad I had the farm to pay with before you came.'

'I understand you, my boy; you feel that now there is nothing between us of known wrong.

'What do you say, Phil, to coming home with me and learning the many things you will

need to know before helping me to start and manage a boys' farm home on our Derbyshire property? It may help to save some more of the street lads from what you were saved from.'

'Oh, uncle, do you mean it? How lovely it will be! I did hope you'd take me back with you; I don't want *ever to leave* you again.'

After this there were some busy days spent in Winnipeg, getting all the household goods and Dorothy's piano and private belongings sent on to the new home, and then the whole party went off to see the farm for themselves.

Moke, who was now established as hired man and general factotum at the Cypress River Farm, came to the station to meet them.

The general greetings and handshakings at the depôt greatly amused the passengers in the train. Moke was much overcome at the change in Dorothy, who was, as he confided afterwards to Phil, 'more of a hangel than he'd ever thought of! but growed into such a real lady that he feared he wasn't good enough ever to be allowed to serve 'er.'

Reassured on this point, his bronzed face widened into a grin of satisfaction, which never seemed to leave it, as he hovered about his old and new friends, trying to find something he could do to serve them.

As soon as they came in sight of the homestead basking in the sunshine, with all its lovely surroundings, Dorothy's joy and delight were pleasant to see.

'Oh, Mrs. Arthur, won't we have a grand time fixing up that sweet place?' she exclaimed. 'It's a thousand times better than I ever expected!' And when the rigg pulled up and she sprang to the ground, she gave Phil a hearty hug, saying, 'You splendid boy! first earning this by your good work, and then making us so happy with it. You're just worthy of being Uncle Miller's boy, and that's the best praise I can give you!'

It was a great delight to the young people to look over their new possessions, and to be introduced to their own horses, cows, sheep, dogs, and poultry.

Then came the interesting work of planning for the enlargement and improvement of the homestead, all of which their guardian declared he should see carried out before he left the country.

When at length the time came for him to return home, a pretty white wooden house had risen in front of the simple shack, which had now to serve as kitchen and store-rooms for the family.

After Mr. Arthur's death, Mrs. Arthur had made Dorothy promise that she would have her to live with them in their Canadian home, absolutely

refusing to receive payment in any other way for the debt of long ago. She was bright and active, and was like a mother to Dorothy, whose delight in the new life she shared.

'Well, Dorothy, are you happy now that you have got your heart's desire?' her guardian asked, as, after a long, happy time spent together, he and Phil prepared for their journey homewards.

'I am happier than I could ever have believed possible,' she answered, 'and it is all your goodness that has brought it about. I can't find words to thank you! Do you know,' she continued after a few minutes' silence, 'I have a plan which Jack thinks a most excellent one, and I wonder what *you* will say to it? Jack tells me, and I see for myself, that there are many boys about here straight from England who are quite alone, so far as any good home influences go. I want to help them in some way. Perhaps I might use my music and singing to attract them, and get them to come to us on one recognised evening each week, all through the winter months and when farmwork allows of it. I could teach them glees and part-songs (boys always like singing), and between games, reading, and music they ought to have a good time, and we might get an influence over them and help them to keep straight. Mrs.

Arthur can "mother" them, and I think we can afford to make cakes and give coffee that evening. In time I may be able to introduce a little of the sort of teaching you used to give the boys in Manchester, I mean Bible teaching, to help them to remember the lessons they learned at home. Of course, we should let them see that no one was asked except straight, manly fellows who wish to do right. Do you think it a good idea, dear Uncle Miller?'

'Yes, my dear, I do; and I believe you may become a real centre of usefulness. Many a father and mother in the old country will bless you when they hear of your work amongst their boys. Always keep before you the thought of bringing out the good there is in the lads. Let all your efforts to amuse and attract them to your house be for the purpose of winning them to the service of our Divine Master, and you may do as great a work here as if you were labouring in the slums of a city. I will keep you supplied with books and magazines for lending and reading aloud, and you should speak to your rector about it, as I am sure he will help and guide you. Your homestead may be a centre of brightness and comfort as well as strength and godliness to the many young fellows scattered about these farms.'

'I am so thankful that our dear guardian has Phil to take home with him, aren't you, Jack?' Dorothy said, as they were coming back from seeing their friends off. 'It would have been so hard to think of him alone again, with all of us gone; but Phil's interests will fill his life and make him happy.'

'Yes; and did you ever see anyone so devoted as Phil is to him? Some people may say that our guardian, with all his gifts, wastes his life over the ragged school and similar work, but I don't think anyone who saw us settled in this nice home, and knew that it was the gift of one of his Ragged School lads, would agree with them.'

'Here, Missis, come and hear the best news you ever got!'

It was Farmer Bridges who spoke, his usually placid face full of excitement, as he held aloft a letter which he had been reading.

'What do yer think o' this?' he cried, as Mrs. Bridges hurried down the stairs at his call. 'Just you listen!'

'DEAR FARMER BRIDGES,

'You will rejoice with me, I know, when I tell you that Phil is indeed my dear sister's son, and that I am bringing him home from Canada.

'It is his great wish to come straight to Hazel-

grove on landing. He wants to thank you all for your goodness, and I also wish to introduce him to our old home. I shall send you word as soon as we arrive in Liverpool, and tell you what time we expect to reach B—— station. I daresay you will pass on this news to Mr. Fenton, the schoolmaster, and to anyone who knew Phil.

'Yours faithfully,

'NORMAN MILLER.'

'Oh dear, oh dear! why, it's never true, is it?' Mrs. Bridges exclaimed, wiping her eyes; 'it seems impossible—like. I tell you what, Mester! You and me is being paid back *fourfold* (as little sonny was so fond of talking about) for our bit of trouble in looking after him! Aren't we, now? There'll be no more talk of having to leave this farm and take a smaller one if times is bad, will there? Why, the very little lad we sheltered will be our landlord some day, after his uncle! And I can tell yer they'll neither of them hear of us turning out, rent or no rent!'

When the train steamed into the station at B—— on a certain bright summer morning, a considerable crowd of people were standing there, and high above them all was seen Farmer Bridges' bright red waistcoat, as he stood up in his trap to get a sight of the alighting passengers.

A hearty cheer arose from those assembled, as the two for whom they were eagerly looking appeared on the platform, and the stationmaster and other officials pressed forward to offer congratulations, for the Millers were an old and well-known family, and Mr. Miller especially was held in high esteem.

Phil had shot up rapidly in the two years of his Canadian life, and Farmer Bridges was still running his eye over the platform in search of a little boy, when a tall, active youth sprang into the trap beside him, and, wringing the farmer's hand, declared that he was going to drive him home himself, to show him how well he had got on in Canada.

His uncle got up at the back, and, amidst hearty cheers and greetings from the assembled friends, Phil triumphantly drove off, while the phaeton and ponies which had been brought to meet them had to trot gently home again with no passengers.

There were many to see and there was much to do during the few days Phil and his uncle spent at Hazelgrove, and it was not long before (having visited Manchester) they returned with the whole household, and took up their residence in the old home during the time that the all-engrossing building, which was to receive homeless city lads, was being designed and put up.

Mrs. Miller took to the new member of the family immediately, Phil treating her with a courtesy and attention which quite won her heart.

'My goodness, Norman!' she exclaimed, after her first sight of him, 'the boy is a real gentleman. Wherever did he get it all? And as to looks, why did you not tell me what a tall, handsome fellow he was? I'm quite proud of the boy.'

'Oh, mater, mater! what a long way good looks go with you,' her son answered, with his old bright smile; 'you won't have anything to say against the Ragged School in future, shall you?'

'Well, Phil, what subject are you going to take for your first lesson?' his uncle asked, as the young man, just come home from his first term at the university, prepared to walk down with him to the Sunday evening school to take a class there.

'Need you ask?' Phil said, with a merry laugh. 'I shall tell them of a little boy like themselves, whose only bit of knowledge of the Bible was about a man called "Jackears," and how, when he fairly started to be honest and restore fourfold, God gave him everything his

heart could desire—a dear uncle, and home, and friends—and even a big farm home in the country, to plan and to look after, where boys such as they are can get a good start in life. There will never be any Bible story to equal that of "Jack-ears" to me.'

THE END.

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