Worthy of His Name

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WORTHY OF HIS NAME

BY

EGLANTON THORNE

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD WORCESTER JUG," "ALDYTH'S INHERITANCE," ETC.

"Let no man predicate
That aught the name of gentleness should have,
Even in a king's estate,
Except the heart there be a gentleman's."

GUIDO GUINICELLI

LONDON

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD
AND 164, PICCADILLY

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WORTHY OF HIS NAME.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW LODGER.

"SO you like your new lodger, Sally Dent?"

"Ay, he's a gentleman, he is."

"A gentleman! That means that he pays you reg'lar, I s'pose?"

"It means a good sight more than that, though it's true he give me a fortnight's rent in advance, and said I shouldn't never be a loser by he, for

he'd take 'isself off when he'd no money to pay me. I tell you, he's a real gentleman."

"That's a good 'un!" laughed a man, who stood mending a fence near enough to the women to hear what they said. "Do you think him so, because he came home as drunk as a lord last night? A pretty gentleman! But maybe you wasn't aware of that fact."

"Wasn't I? There ain't much 'appens in my 'ouse that I ain't aware on. But if he was drunk, he be'aved 'isself like a gentleman, and didn't make no noise. We've all our little weaknesses, and I 'opes I knows how to make allowance."

Sally Dent's appearance accorded with her tolerant tone. She was a tall, fine woman, who might have been comely had she taken more care of her person. She had an abundance of light wavy hair, but its rough, dishevelled condition robbed it of all beauty. The expression of her round fat face was too easy by far, and its ruddy hue suggested that she too might have her "little weakness," and that a fellow-feeling made her so "wondrous kind" towards her lodger's infirmity. Her dirty, torn gown, the grimy doorstep on which she stood, the blackened passage beyond, the state of the child clutching at her gown as he poised himself on his unsteady feet, all bore witness to a life that was a careless drifting on the currents of inclination.

"He's got a boy, ain't he?" asked her neighbour, a gaunt, angular female, who looked to have a temper, and altogether more character than the indolent Sally.

"Yon's the boy," returned Sally, pointing across the road.

Mrs. Minn glanced in the direction indicated. The houses of Lavender Terrace—why Lavender Terrace it would be hard to say; the purity and fragrance which we associate with the name of the old-fashioned country flower were not characteristics of the foul, narrow lane—faced a line of railway, and trains were continually passing on the other side of the high, tarred fence. At one spot a heap of refuse—broken earthenware, battered kettles, and such old shoes as even the dwellers in Lavender Terrace were forced to discard—was banked against the fence.

On the top of this heap, attaining a still greater elevation by balancing himself by one foot upon an upturned flower-pot, stood the boy, absorbed in watching the passing trains. He was a small, slight boy, looking only eight, though two years older. His face was turned from the women, and the fact concerning him most evident to the eye of the observer was the very dilapidated state of his garments. So ragged were they, that it was a matter of wonder how they held together.

As Sally's neighbour eyed the little lad, she gave a short laugh.

"He looks like a gentleman's son, don't he now? He has no mother, I s'pose?"

"She's dead, I believe. Ay, you may laugh, Mrs. Minn; but there's gentlefolks as come down in the world, and, if I'm not mistaken, this lodger of mine comes of gentlefolk. You should see the Bible he has in his room, one with gilt edges and lined with silk, like the gentry use. I ought to know, for I've lived in good service and seen what's what. And I can tell you he's a scholard, for one day I wanted a letter wrote to my old mistress, and I made so bold as to ask him to do it for me, and you may believe me, he wrote such a letter as a gentleman might 'a'wrote. She noticed it, she did, and asked me who'd wrote it."

"The more shame to him to have fallen so low," said the carpenter, hammering vigorously. "There's some excuse for us poor chaps, who have had a hard struggle all our days, if we take a drop too much to cheer us sometimes; but a man who has had eddication, and all the advantages money can give, ought to be ashamed of hisself if he can't behave as he should. I know if I had had such chances—"

But what he would have done under more fortunate circumstances remained untold, for at that moment Mrs. Dent's lodger made his appearance. He came round the sharp bend by which the lane turned from the main road, a man above the middle height, but with stooping shoulders and feeble frame. His clothes were deplorably shabby, but they looked the shabbier for their cut and style, which revealed the skill of a high-class tailor. His face was sharp and wan, but it had a refinement of feature which was not due merely to the wasting of disease. The deep-seated anguish that

looked out of his eyes, the settled bitterness expressed by the drooping corners of the delicate mouth, would have struck pain to the heart of a sensitive observer.

Mrs. Minn was hardly such a one, but she felt a novel sensation of pity, as with instinctive courtesy he stepped from the path to make room for her. In spite of his depressed, crushed air, he walked and bore himself in a different fashion from any other man living at Lavender Terrace. It was the first time he had been seen abroad in daylight since he came to Mrs. Dent's, and the neighbours observed him curiously.

"Gus, I want you," he called to his son, halting for a moment ere he turned into the house. The voice was weak and hoarse; but it had some quality other than weakness or hoarseness, which gave it an unusual sound to the ears of the listeners.

The boy sprang down from the rubbish heap and hastened after his father. Perhaps the sight of the parcel wrapped in newspaper which his father carried under his arm quickened his steps. Gus was pale, and his face showed a faint reflex of the melancholy expression stamped upon his father's; but it had the brightness which comes of a liberal application of soap and water. If he was one of the most ragged boys in the lane, he was also one of the cleanest. He looked up into Mrs. Minn's face as he passed her. His clear, frank blue eyes, his sweet, gentle expression affected her strangely.

"God bless him! He's a pretty boy," she said, though she was not wont to pray God to bless her own children.

Sally Dent ventured on no familiar greeting as her lodger entered the house. There was something about the silent, melancholy man that held her in awe.

"So that's your lodger," said Mrs. Minn, lowering her voice. "But how ill he looks! I never saw any one so ghastly. You mark my words, Sally Dent, he won't be your lodger long."

CHAPTER II.

GUS' REAL NAME.

GUS followed his father into the small back room which was their home. It was a comfortless room, with an unmade bed in one corner and a small table in the middle, on which was a penny bottle of ink, a couple of quill pens, and a dingy remnant of blotting-paper. It also contained two rickety chairs and a large, old-fashioned trunk, on the top of which lay about a score of books, most of them in a more or less shabby condition. The few poor articles of furniture were the property of Sally Dent; only the trunk, the books, and the writing materials belonged to her lodger.

The room was small, but it was not close. The window, grey with dust, was open at top and bottom, letting in the fresh, soft air of the fair May day. Lavender Terrace was not shut in from the winds of heaven. Before it ran the railway, and behind lay stretch of waste ground, around which new houses were rising. It was neither in London nor in the country, but one of those dreary new neighbourhoods to be found on the skirts of the metropolis which have lost their rural charm ere yet they have gained the advantages and respectability of a suburban locality. There were fields still at Glensford, and through one of them a stream made its way; but its banks were littered with rubbish, and its waters choked and befouled by the refuse cast into them. There were generally gipsy carts to be seen in these fields, and gipsy children with bare feet and tangled locks disporting themselves by the stream.

Gus watched his father silently, but with eager eyes, as he unrolled the paper parcel, and brought to view a loaf of bread and some slices of cooked ham. Then, without words, the boy went to a small cupboard by the fireplace, brought out the remnant of linen which did service as a tablecloth,

with plates, knives and forks, and as rapidly as possible made the few simple preparations for their meal. The last of these was to place before his father a tall black bottle and a tumbler.

It was now two o'clock, and this was the first meal of the day; yet ere he attacked the food, for which he had so keen an appetite, the boy bent his head and repeated a brief grace. It was the habit in which he had been reared, and its omission would have drawn on him a reprimand from his father.

The boy ate hungrily, but a few mouthfuls seemed to content his father. He laid down his knife and fork, mixed himself a tumblerful of spirit and water, and sat slowly sipping it, and watching his boy the while with his hopeless, melancholy eyes.

"Gus," he said suddenly, "what is your name?"

"Gus Rew," answered the boy, with a smile. His spirits were rising as he took the sorely needed food, and he fancied that his father's mood was also waxing cheerful.

"No, that is not your name," was the unexpected reply.

Gus looked at his father with a shrewd, discerning glance. He was taking but a moderate draught; he never drank deeply so early in the day. Had it been night, Gus would have wondered at no strange, inexplicable words that might fall from his lips; but he did wonder now.

"What do you mean, father?" he asked.

"The name by which the people here know us is not our real name. I called myself Devereux once when we lived in another part, but people soon cut it down to Rew, and I let it be so. Shall I tell you your right name, Gus?"

"Yes," said the boy, forgetting to eat in his astonishment.

"Augustus Devereux Carruthers."

"My!" exclaimed Gus, his eyes opening wide in astonishment. "That's a good long one."

"It is your name, however. Can you remember it?"

"I don't know as I can," replied Gus.

"Then I'll write it down for you. It may be of importance to you some day that you should know your right name. But mind, boy, you are to keep it to yourself. Not a word to any one about it unless I give you leave."

Gus nodded.

"Now, if you've finished, clear the table and get me pen and ink."

The boy obeyed.

With a hand that trembled visibly, the hand of one who habitually drank to excess, but which yet resembled the white, well-kept hand of a gentleman, Gus' father wrote his name on a slip of paper.

"There it is," he said, laying down the pen; "there it is—the name of a gentleman. Gus, do you know that you are a gentleman by birth?"

"A gentleman!" repeated Gus, more astonished than ever.

"Yes; do you know what a gentleman is?"

"A swell," said the boy.

"I wish you would not use such expressions!" cried his father, with a frown. "But there, what else can I expect? How should you know any better? I suppose you think a gentleman is just a man who wears good clothes and has plenty to eat and drink?"

"Yes," said Gus.

"Well, then, let me tell you that money and fine clothes have nothing to do with being a gentleman. A gentleman is one who is brave, who speaks

the truth, who is honest and faithful—"

He checked himself abruptly. His eye had fallen on the black bottle. His head drooped, his voice faltered as he went on to say, "I was a gentleman once, Gus, and your mother was a lady. Ay, a true lady she was, though she served in a shop. Mind you, boy, it's not the kind of work one does that makes of a man a gentleman, or of a woman a lady; it's the way in which the work is done that makes all the difference."

"If you were a gentleman once, father," asked the boy eagerly, "how was it that—?" His eyes falling on his parent's shabby, threadbare garments completed the question.

"You may well ask," returned his father in a tone of intense bitterness. "Gus, there are those who would tell you that that unmade me," he pointed as he spoke to the black bottle; "but, lad, that is not the truth. I was undone by one who tempted me, betrayed me, made a very cat's paw of me to serve his own ends, and then turned against me and denounced me. Ah! there are such men in the world—men who do the fiend's work, who drag others down to ruin, whilst they stand proud and firm. And he goes softly; he is honoured and courted, whilst I—Heaven help me!"

The last words escaped as a cry of pain. The man's face had grown deadly pale; it was contorted by the anguish that was bringing out great beads of perspiration on his brow. His hands clutched his breast; he drew each breath in agony. With a cry, Gus rushed to the door to summon help; but a gesture from his father stayed him. In a few moments, the paroxysm of pain was past. The man's hands relaxed their grasp, his breath came more freely, his pallor grew less deathlike. He made a reassuring sign to the boy, and even tried to smile. Gus had seen him suffer thus before, but never had he had so severe an attack.

As he recovered strength the man's eyes fell on the slip of paper and the name written on it.

"We must find a safe place for this," he said. "Bring me the Bible, Gus."

It lay on the top of the trunk, a square Oxford Bible, bearing date 1828, bound in dark leather, richly embossed. The thick boards were lined with crimson silk, and fastened with handsome clasps. Gus' father took the book into his hand with reverent touch. He opened it, and with his penknife lightly lifted the silken lining from one side, pushed the slip of paper within, then, wetting the silk slightly, pressed it again into its place.

"There," he said, "that will adhere, and no one will know there is anything beneath. But you will know; you must remember. Gus, promise me, poor though you are, you will try to be a gentleman."

"Yes, I'll try, father."

"And you'll never touch that?" waving his hand towards the black bottle. "You've told me before that you will never taste strong drink, but I want to hear you say it again."

"I will never take it, father."

"Say, 'So help me God!'"

"So help me God!"

A look of relief came to the father's haggard face. He poured out a little more of the spirit, drank it hastily, then pushing bottle and glass from him, he said—

"Now put that away, Gus, and bring me your lessons."

"Have you no work to do, father?" asked the boy, with brightening face.

"Not at present. I am to call for it at six o'clock, so I have plenty of time to hear you."

CHAPTER III.

GUS MAKES A PROMISE.

THE life of Augustus Devereux Carruthers grew no easier as the days went on. Surely no child of gentle birth had ever so rough a bringing up, or so early made acquaintance with the darker phases of life. His father had sunk lower and lower, benumbing his faculties by strong drink, till even the drudgery of copying for law-stationers was well-nigh beyond his weakened capacity.

At length that failed, and when he came to Glensford with his boy, he was trusting for their maintenance to such chance jobs as might come to the hand of a forlorn man, broken-down alike in health and fortune. By the sale of some of his books, he had obtained the sum that he had paid in advance to Sally Dent—the only means by which he could be sure that the money would not find its way across the counter of the large and flourishing public-house which stood at the corner of the green.

Gus knew often what it was to miss a meal in these days; often he went supperless to bed, where he slept soundly in spite of hunger, till his father roused him by stumbling into the room about midnight; for the craving for strong drink was taking a stronger and stronger hold upon the unhappy man. He would at any time go without food that Gus might have the last crust in the cupboard; but as long as he could get the money for it, drink he must have. So the few poor possessions contained in the old trunk found their way one after another to the pawnshop, till almost everything of value was gone.

Much as he suffered, Gus never told himself that he had a bad father. It was such a common thing at Lavender Terrace, and other places where he had lived, for fathers, and even mothers, to drink and neglect their children, that Gus accepted the fact quite philosophically. To have a drunken father was to him only such a calamity as to have a lame father or a blind father would have been. It was a thing that could not be helped, and must be endured. But one truth concerning the matter had been grasped by Gus. His

father frequently told him that if he never began to drink, he would never want to drink; and Gus was resolved that he would not begin such an undesirable habit.

One day, when they had been in Sally Dent's house for about a month, and things were at a very low ebb with her lodger, Gus was called by his father to accompany him to another part of London, where an election was about to take place, and there was a chance of employment in circulating bills from house to house. Gus came willingly. He liked nothing better than to be with his father, who, even in his worst hours, never struck or ill-used him.

They had a long and weary walk ere they arrived at the place they sought. The committee rooms were easily found. The house was made conspicuous from a distance by the flags and banners which waved about it, as well as by the crowd of ill-clad, wretched-looking men gathered before the door.

"We come too late, I fear," said Gus' father despondently, as they halted on the outskirts of the crowd. Suddenly his eye caught a placard raised high above the heads of the people. Gus saw a quick change pass over his father's face. It grew ashy white, his eyes gleamed fiercely, his hands were clenched. In terror the boy imagined that a paroxysm of pain had seized his father; but it was not so. His eyes were riveted on the name of the candidate.

"Philip Darnell," he murmured; "that man! What does it mean?" Then eagerly, he grasped the arm of a man who stood near him: "Tell me—whose election is this? I do not understand."

"Whose election? Who is the candidate, do you mean? Why, Philip Darnell. Ah, you had not heard? Sir Robert Leicester has retired, and Philip Darnell has just been nominated."

"That man! I'm glad I know. Serve him! I'd sooner die!"

"Would you? Dying's not so easy, let me tell you," returned the other, eyeing him curiously. "I know he ain't extra, this Philip Darnell, if all folks

say of him is true; but what of that? What does it matter to us as long as he pays us our money?"

But the man known as Rew recoiled from him as he spoke. The words sounded hideous in his ears. What did it matter, indeed? "I'd rather die!" he muttered again, and made his way hastily out of the crowd.

"You'd better go to Arthur Brown; he's the people's candidate!" shouted the man to whom Rew had spoken, and then touched his forehead, and winked at a neighbour, intending to convey his belief that the man who refused to serve Philip Darnell was half-crazed.

Gus was much perplexed. He watched his father anxiously, as retiring a little from the crowd, he leaned exhausted against some palings and wiped his brow.

Suddenly, with clatter and commotion, a handsome carriage dashed into the street. It was drawn by a pair of fine bay horses, decorated with rosettes of blue ribbon. Several gentlemen were seated in it, one, a dark man, with florid face and beaming smile. Gus' father started forward excitedly.

"There he is!" he cried. "There is Philip Darnell. Look, Gus, look; there is the man who worked your father's ruin! See, he rides in his carriage, men gather about him, and I—look what he has made of me!"

"Father, what did he do?" cried Gus, bewildered.

"Do! Don't ask me. I tell you, if there were justice in this world, that man would stand beside me, degraded as I am. Look at him, Gus! Look, that you may know him again!" And he pointed to where Philip Darnell had alighted in the midst of the crowd, and was shaking hands ostentatiously with every one who came forward. "Remember that to that man you owe it that you have been brought up in rags and misery; and if ever you have the chance, requite him for the wrong he has done you and me. Promise me, Gus, that if ever in coming years it is in your power, you will have revenge on him. Promise, boy, I say."

"I promise," said Gus, urged by his father's passionate tones. But as he said the words, he was amused to think how unlikely it was that a poor ragged little boy such as he was should ever have it in his power to inflict a punishment on the rich, grand man.

The gentlemen passed into the house, the eager crowd about the door gradually dispersed; but Gus' father still stood helplessly clinging to the palings. His face was pale to ghastliness; he was trembling with excitement.

"What will you do, father?" Gus asked. "Will you go to the other place?"

"I can go nowhere," his father replied. "We must get home, Gus; that is all we can do now."

At that moment, a little pony chaise came down the street, driven by a young girl of about sixteen. Seated bolt upright beside her was a lady considerably older, whose face wore a nervous, anxious expression. Possibly the pretty grey pony held political opinions of another order to those of Mr. Philip Darnell; but whatever the cause, the sight of a small hand-cart on which were mounted several huge blue-and-white placards, standing near the house in which this candidate had established his headquarters, had a disturbing influence on the little animal. He shied violently, and would not proceed, but kept backing towards the opposite pavement in a way which greatly alarmed the elder lady.

"Oh, Edith!" she cried. "What did I tell you? I said it was not safe for us to come alone. Oh, do stop it, and let me get out! I am not nervous as a rule, but this is too much."

"Dear aunt, there is no danger," said the girl in a sweet, calm voice. "Don will be all right in a moment; it is only that he is a staunch Tory, and does not like—Oh, thank you!"

The thanks were for Gus, who had darted forward and laid his hand on the pony's bridle. Patting pony's neck, and soothing it with coaxing words and sounds, he quickly succeeded in leading it past the objectionable cart. The girl thanked him with a radiant smile, then leaning forward dropped a

sixpence in palm. Gus looked after her as she drove away with a strange sensation of pleasure; it was not the sixpence only that made him glad, it was her kind look, her smile.

He turned to his father with sparkling eyes. "Now, we can have some breakfast," he said.

But his father, too, was looking after the chaise with an eager, wistful gaze.

"How strange that the voice should be so like," he murmured; "and an Edith, too, just such another Edith!"

"Did you know her, father?" asked Gus, full of wonder.

"Know her, boy! Do I look like a man that would know ladies?"

And he sighed heavily as he turned to go home. Never had he been more conscious of his wretchedness and degradation. But to Gus, the gift of the sixpence and the young lady's smile had brought a great influx of cheerfulness. The sun was shining brightly; there were flowers at the street corners, and he, poor ragged boy that he was, looked bright enough to match the day.

Half of the sixpence was soon expended on a breakfast of bread and milk, of which his father would scarce partake. The way home was long and weary. So weak and breathless did Gus' father find himself, so often was he forced to pause and rest, that it was late in the afternoon ere they reached Lavender Terrace.

After resting awhile, Gus' father went out again, carrying with him the remainder of his diminished stock of books, leaving only the Bible, which he would fain preserve. Gus had no expectation of seeing him again till a late hour of the night; but, to his surprise, in about an hour his father returned, with no sign about him of having entered a public-house during his absence. He laid some money on the table, sighing to see how little it was.

"A copy of the first folio," he murmured, "to fetch no more than seven shillings! And my Dante—ah, well, what does it matter now?"

"Ask Mrs. Dent to be good enough to step here for a moment," he said to Gus.

Gus had apparently some difficulty in bringing Mrs. Dent; but she came at last with a somewhat unsteady step, her face flushed, her eyes dazed and sleepy.

"Mrs. Dent," said her lodger, with a certain quiet dignity, which had clung to him through all his misfortunes, "here is the money I owe you. I gave you notice a week ago that I should leave to-morrow, and it is still my intention. You know I promised to take myself off when I no longer had the means to pay you."

"It's true you said it," exclaimed Sally; "but do you think I'd be hard on a gentleman? I can tell you I knows a gentleman when I sees one; and, as I was a-saying to Mrs. Minn the other day, it's easy to see that you've come down in the world. What does it matter if you're a bit hard up? If you don't pay at once you'll pay some time, and if not, there's them belonging to you as will."

Her words made her lodger wince.

"You are mistaken," he said quietly; "I am not a gentleman, and I have no friends who will ever trouble themselves about me. Take the money, please, and understand that we leave to-morrow."

The woman took the money and went away, muttering to herself.

"Where are we going to-morrow, father?" Gus asked, as soon as they were alone.

His father had seated himself by the table, and was drearily contemplating the few shillings that remained on it. He looked up only to say, "I do not know."

Gus was startled, but something in his father's manner withheld him from asking further questions.

"Come and read to me, Gus," said his father, after a minute.

"What shall I read?" asked the boy.

"We have but one book now," said his father, pointing to the Bible.

Gus took the Bible and opened it. He remembered that the chapter he had last read to his father was the first of St. Mark's Gospel, so now he began to read the second chapter. His father did not appear to be paying much attention to what he read; but as Gus finished the account of the healing of the paralytic, his father suddenly said, as if speaking to himself:

"He called him 'son;' and yet I suppose he had led a wicked life. And without a word spoken between them, He forgave his sins."

Gus waited a few moments, but his father said no more, so he went on and finished the chapter. Then, being very tired with their long tramp, the little boy closed the book, and began to prepare for bed.

His father sat still, lost in thought. He was not looking forward to the days that might come—days probably of hunger and want and weary wandering, with no sleeping place save a corner in a common lodging-house, or a bench in the open air. Somehow the hopeless future seemed to have lost its power to appall him. His mind was back in the past, living over again the days that had been. Then, with a heavy sigh, he came back to the present.

"Did you speak, father?" Gus asked, half-raising himself from the bed into which he had crept.

But the words his father had murmured were not addressed to him.

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice

Nella miseria.

"There is no greater sorrow
Than to be mindful of the happy time
In misery."

This man, whose memory so readily recalled the immortal words of Dante, had had no mean culture. He had passed through a University course with distinction; he had early won laurels in literature; a grand career at the Bar had been prophesied for him when he entered upon his profession. But this was what he had made of the future that had seemed so full of promise.

In misery! Ah, verily, a misery those only know who can recall the "happy time," and set in sharp and bitter contrast that which is, and that which "might have been!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE LODGER LEAVES.

EVENING wore into night, but Gus' father still sat absorbed in melancholy thought. Once more the past was living before him. He was back in the days of his childhood, a happy boy, idolised by his proud father and petted by the sister a few years older than himself, who, his mother having died when he was too young to know her, was his tender guardian.

Then passed in review his school days at Eton; then his college days, when he had won a name for himself, and been lauded by the men of his college; but in which—alas!—he had taken the first steps along the path which had proved such a swift descent, taken them gaily and triumphantly,

with the belief that he was showing himself a man of spirit and superior sagacity.

Then followed the years in which he was engaged in reading for the Bar, and making his first successful essays in the field of literature. Then came his meeting with the sweet gentle woman whom, in defiance of his father's wishes, he married. Alienation from his home was the consequence. In less than two years, death closed the eyes of his wife, and he was left to rear their infant boy alone.

But sorrow had not made him wise; it had hardened him into recklessness. Then it was that Philip Darnell, clever, subtle, suave, crossed his path. Acquaintance with him had quickly ripened into a specious friendship. Through him had come the introduction to gaming clubs, and the inevitable embarrassment and misery which ensued; and when ruin stared the unfortunate victim in the face, Darnell had drawn near with base, insidious whisper, to suggest the forgery of his father's name.

He had yielded to the temptation; in an excited hour he had done a deed which darkened every coming hour with keenest remorse. Discovery had followed. The forgery had been traced to him; he was arrested, and only set at liberty because his father had refused to prosecute him.

But disgrace clung to him. His friends forsook him. Philip Darnell, repudiating the idea that he had ever suggested such a crime save as the merest jest, was the first to lift the finger of scorn at him. A terrible sense of degradation drove him into excesses from which he would formerly have shrunk. He drank to drown thought, and as the habit of drinking grew upon him, he sank into deeper and deeper depths of misery, dragging with him his young son.

Augustus Carruthers "went under," and was seen no more by the circle in which he had formerly moved. Yet, though he kept away from them, he was never far from his former haunts. But none of his old companions, passing him in the street, would have recognised in the shabby, bent man, prematurely aged, the man whose brilliant intellect had excited their admiration in other days.

Bitter in retrospect were those bygone days now to the forlorn man, seated in his miserable lodging. Miserable as it was, it was one he could no longer afford. He must wander forth on the morrow—whither? He was sorry for poor little Gus, but for himself, it hardly seemed to matter what followed. A strange lethargy fell upon him as he sat there. He grew cold, his limbs grew numb; but he never thought of going to bed.

Gus, rousing from his slumbers long past midnight, saw the candle flickering in the socket, and his father still seated at the table, leaning forward upon his elbows, his face half-hidden by his hands. He seemed to be murmuring something; but Gus could not catch the words. He thought his father must be praying.

"Father," Gus said presently; but there was no reply, and the child turned round and slept again.

The candle flickered and flickered, and at last went out. The first grey light of morning, stealing through the dingy pane, fell on a face of ashen hue, with sad, fixed eyes. The spirit that had looked out of those eyes had returned to the Father of spirits. The wasted, misspent life of the man was at an end. Gus awoke to find himself fatherless.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE NEIGHBOURS SYMPATHISED.

"I SAID he was a gentleman!" cried Sally Dent to the neighbours gathered about her doorstep. "But I didn't think he was a-goin' to die suddent, and give me all the bother of a inkwest, and the police comin' and goin', and such a commotion till you don't know whether your house is your own. I don't call that a gentlemanly thing to do."

"P'raps he couldn't help it," suggested Mrs. Minn. "Folks don't allus know when they're a-goin' to die."

"For goodness' sake, don't talk that way, Mrs. Minn!" cried Sally, excitedly. "It ain't lucky when there's death in the 'ouse a'ready! I'm sure I was that turned over when I saw what 'ad 'appened this mornin' that you might 'ave knocked me down with a feather. I was forced to take somethin' before I went into the room again, and I'm all of a tremble still."

"What sort of a corpse do 'e make?" asked another woman.

"A real beauty," replied Sally with enthusiasm. "You'd 'ardly know him, he looks so much younger; all the lines and creases is gone, and his face is just lovely. He looks the gentleman now, he do indeed! You go inside and take a look at 'im, if you doubt my word."

"Poor gentleman!" said Joe Clark, the carpenter, not satirically. "Whatever he was, he'd come down in the world, and had a lot of trouble. Well, there's an end to it now. What's to be done about the funeral, Mrs. Dent?"

"The parish must bury him," said Sally promptly; "he's left only a few shillin's, hardly enough to buy refreshments for the funeral. It is strange how he would pay me last night—seems as if he wanted to leave things all square like. It touched me at the time, for I've a feelin' 'eart."

"I'd be happy to knock him up a coffin jest for the cost of the wood," suggested Joe Clark, "if any one was inclined to 'elp. Them parish funerals is very humiliatin' to a man."

"That's a good thought, Joe Clark," said Sally Dent, who really had a kind heart. "I'm ready to pay my share, if so be as you're goin' to make a collection. Sure, and I'm thankful my good man did not come to be buried by the parish. We begun to put into a buryin' club soon as ever we was married, for, as I said, there was no knowin' what 'ud 'appen, or who'd be the first to go. And a real 'andsome funeral 'is was."

One and another of the neighbours declared their willingness to help. Nothing interested them like a funeral. They liked the idea of seeing the poor gentleman, who had never done them either good or ill, carried to his grave "as a gentleman should be." In a short time, sufficient money was raised to pay the hire of a hearse, behind which the neighbours might walk two and two, headed by the chief mourner, to the cemetery, which lay near Glensford. Sally Dent kept in reserve the few shillings she had found in her lodger's room to pay for "refreshments."

Meanwhile Gus cared not at all in what manner his father's body was borne to the grave. The boy was stunned by the trouble that had come so suddenly upon him. Childlike, though he had often seen his father weak and suffering, he had never thought that death would take him away. In losing his father, he had lost the only love, the only tenderness he could remember. It was terrible that he should be left alone in the world.

But the boy's thoughts did not go forward into the future as he sat motionless beside the bed on which lay the still, set form wearing the inimitable majesty with which death will invest even a pauper's form. The square, strong brow, the delicately chiselled nostril, the fine curve of the short upper lip, had the perfection of a sculptor's handiwork. But for Gus it was his father, and yet not his father. He looked with awe as well as grief upon that calm face. He shed no tears; but his blue eyes expressed a dumb anguish as they held their unfaltering gaze. He never willingly spoke or moved as one and another came and went, viewing the corpse and freely remarking on it.

The inquest held on the body of George Rew—for that was the name Sally Dent gave as her lodger's—was a simple affair. A medical man gave evidence of the existence of long-seated heart-disease, aggravated by a hard and intemperate life. Sally Dent bore witness to the character and habits of the deceased. She had brushed and plaited her abundant tresses, put on a tidy gown, and made herself quite presentable for the occasion, so that the coroner and jury were impressed with her respectable appearance. When the coroner asked what was to become of the orphan boy, and suggested that he should be sent to an industrial school, Sally announced her willingness to give the boy a home. He would be useful in looking after the little ones and

doing jobs in the house; she would see that he went to school regularly. And the coroner was satisfied that this would be a good thing for Gus, and commended the woman for her kindness to the boy.

The funeral took place on the day following that of the inquest.

Gus watched all the proceedings with unbroken composure till he saw the coffin closed over the face that he had grown to love in its cold, stone-like beauty. Then a bitter cry broke from him, and he threw himself, in an agony of grief, upon the bed on which his father had lain.

But he allowed himself to be raised, and struggled to keep back his sobs when Mrs. Minn and a friend came in to array him for the funeral in Mrs. Minn's eldest boy's best clothes, kindly lent for the occasion. Gus was too small to fill them, and with knickerbockers descending almost to his ankles, and a coat in which his slender form was lost, whilst the sleeves had to be turned back almost to the elbow to give freedom to his hands, the appearance of the chief mourner was decidedly grotesque. But the clothes were, by courtesy, black, and though shiny, they were whole, so they came up to the standard Lavender Terrace held of what was befitting to a funeral, which did not require nicety of fit.

The clothes, which he had not "proved," gave Gus considerable anxiety as he shuffled along behind the coffin, followed by as many of the denizens in Lavender Terrace as could get a half-day's holiday. He would far rather have worn the old, ragged garments, in which he could walk freely, without being harassed by dread lest he and his clothes should part company altogether.

Gus had seen funerals enough, but he had never before "assisted" at one, and perhaps the novelty of his position combined with a most unwonted sense of importance to blunt his sensibility of all that this event meant for him.

Is it not a merciful dispensation that the majority of us get through our darkest hours with a sense of numbness and unreality that spares us the full agony of the wrench which later we feel in its intensity? Gus only half realised that it was his father's form they were lowering into the grave. He

did not give way again to the wild grief that had shaken him when he saw the coffin-lid pressed down.

The general feeling of Lavender Terrace would have liked him to display more emotion. The neighbours around him made a grand flourishing of the rare pocket-handkerchiefs reserved for such occasions. But Gus maintained his composure, and shuffled back to the Terrace with outward calm, though with a heart that ached sorely.

The "refreshments" had been laid out in Sally Dent's front room. Into this apartment pressed every one who had attended the funeral. There was a grand drawing of corks, and gradually the odour of spirits diffused itself through the room. Gus had been carried into the room with the others against his will. He was watching for a chance of escape, when Sally's eye fell on him, and she beckoned him to her.

"Come, Gus," she said, "you should be the first served to-day. Take a long drink; it will do you good, for you've hardly tasted anything since you got up."

And she held out to him a glass of strong gin and water.

But Gus drew back with an air of repugnance. "No, thank you, I cannot indeed; I never drink spirits," he said.

"Oh, but you're bound to have a drop to-day; it's your father's funeral. It ain't lucky to refuse to drink at a funeral. Come now, it won't hurt you; and I say you shall have it, so there!"

"Yes, yes, young man, you'll have to take it, whether you will or not," said one of the men. "There's no gainsaying Sally. That's right, bring the glass here; we'll make him swaller it."

And he pinioned Gus' arms to his side, holding him in a grasp the boy was powerless to shake off. There was a general laugh as Sally advanced with the glass. Time enough had been given to tears and sighs. The reaction was setting in. It was only right to laugh and be jolly now, when the funeral was successfully accomplished.

"I won't drink it! I promised father I never would, and I won't!" cried Gus.

"That's a joke!" roared another man. "Promised his father, indeed! I'll be bound his father would never have refused a glass of good liquor."

Things were growing desperate with Gus. Sally was pressing the glass to his lips; he clenched his teeth, but the man, half-strangling him, forced his mouth open. Gus saved himself; however. With a sudden, tremendous effort, he struck out with his chin so forcibly that he sent the glass flying from Sally's hand to the floor, where it lay shivered.

"Well, of all ungrateful young varmints!" cried Sally, in her indignation. "After all we've done for you, buryin' your father like a gentleman, when, but for us, he must've had the parish hearse. One of my new glasses, I declare! Get along with you, do, if you can't behave better than that!"

Gus needed no second bidding to be off. He left the company lamenting the waste of good spirit, and rushed into the dismal back room which had been his home. It looked to his eyes more dismal than ever, now that the table and trunk which had supported the coffin stood bare. With a cry, he threw himself on his knees beside the bed, and hid his face in the tumbled bed-clothes.

"Oh, father!" he cried. "Father, father! What can I do without you?"

As the evening wore on, the sounds of mirth in the adjoining room grew louder and wilder. No one gave a thought to the fatherless boy. He crouched there alone and comfortless, till he forgot his sorrow in sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

GUS WINS A NAME.

AFTER that night, Gus could no longer call the back room home. Sally Dent performed the task she described as "turning it out" on the following day, and by night it was not only ready for another lodger, but another lodger had possession of it. In the "turning-out" process, Sally came upon the Bible, which she had already observed with much interest. She was struck anew with the beauty of the embossed cover and the watered silk lining.

"Here, Gus," she called to the boy, "you'd better let me keep this; it's too good for you to 'ave knocking about. It'll be some set off against all I've done and shall do for you. It isn't many folks would take a strange brat into their 'omes; but I've a feelin' 'eart."

"It was father's," said Gus, looking wistfully at the book. "Sometimes I used to read a bit of it to him."

"Well, maybe you shall read me a bit of it some day," said Sally; "it won't be the first time I've listened to it. I used to go to church and Sunday school reg'lar once; but I've no time to attend to religion now. You'd best let me 'ave it, anyhow."

Gus said no more, feeling that it was useless to oppose Sally's wish. She carried the Bible into her room, and there opened it once more, to admire the beautiful style of the binding. Then she noticed that the reading was not broken up into verses, as in the Bibles with which she had been familiar. Glancing over a page, as this fact struck her, the words met her eyes, "The wages of sin is death."

Sally closed the book, and put it from her hastily. The words had stung her. The wages of sin! Was she earning those wages? She knew she was a sinner, but the thought had never troubled her. She loved sin, but she hated to think of death. She could enjoy the excitement of a funeral, but it was awful to think of the time when she would lie cold, and stiff, and dumb, as she had seen her lodger lie.

"Well, well," she muttered to herself; "it is what we must all come to, good or bad."

Yet she knew there was a vast difference between the sinner's death and the death of the righteous. But she hastily wrapped the Bible in brown paper, and put it far from reach at the back of a high shelf; then feeling "all of a tremble," betook herself for comfort to a certain black bottle.

Sally found a corner for Gus in the cold, draughty attic in which her two little boys slept. The old black trunk, the few worthless possessions left in it, and his father's clothes, she sold, retaining the money, to which she considered she had the best right. So Gus was left with nothing to call his own save his very ragged clothes.

Sally had announced her intention of mending his rags, and, if possible, setting him up with a few fresh garments; but her indolence was such that her purposes were ever "halting" ones, and it was best not to count upon the fulfilment of her good intentions.

Though Gus had now been several weeks at Lavender Terrace, he knew little of the boys of Glensford. His father had discouraged his making acquaintance with them, and had kept him as much as possible within the house. But Sally had no notion of a boy's "hanging round" at all hours. Gus was thrust into the society of the boys who disported themselves in the lane.

On the day following his father's funeral, he was observed by them with some curiosity.

"What's your name?" asked one of the boys.

"Gus," he answered.

"It were your father, wer'n't it, as were buried yesterday?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Is it true what the folks were a-sayin', that he were a broken-down gent, one of the swells?"

"He was a gentleman once," said Gus.

"A gentleman! My word! What do you call yoursel'? P'raps you're a gent too?"

"No, I'm not," said Gus; "but I mean to be a gentleman some day."

"Well, if that ain't good! Look here, all you fellers, this chap says he's goin' to be a gentleman. Don't he look it just? Look at his breeches, look at his shoes! Oh, what a fine gentleman! Do hold me, some one, I shall die of laughin'!"

The other boys roared with laughter as they gathered about Gus. He had a sorry time of it. In vain he tried to escape from his tormentors; they were all bigger and stronger than he, and when, hot with rage, he tried to strike out with his tiny fists, their mirth increased tenfold. They danced round him, they pelted him with mud, they plucked at his garments till the rents therein were double their former size, and all the while they shouted —"Gentleman, Gentleman Gus!"—till their voices were hoarse.

Gus had won for himself a name. The title thus dubbed clung to him. Henceforth he was known at Lavender Terrace as "Gentleman Gus."

Gus was at last delivered by the appearance of Sally Dent, who rushed into the group, and administering blows indiscriminately, soon scattered the boys. She was dismayed to see Gus' condition.

"Good gracious, boy!" she cried. "What did you want to go with those big fellows for? A nice state they've put you in, and goodness knows when I shall have time to set a stitch in your clothes. Indeed, it strikes me they're past mendin'. But never mind, just come 'ere, and look after the baby a bit."

Looking after the baby soon became the chief occupation of Gus' life. It was weary work. He wondered sometimes if such a big, lumping baby had ever been known before. Dragging it about in his arms, or sitting with it on a doorstep, he had much time for meditation, and his mind dwelt often upon his father.

Like many another child, he had hardly known that he loved his father till his father was taken from him. Now he missed him sorely, and longed to hear his voice again, telling him what he should do and what not do. He did not forget the promise he had given to his father; but it puzzled him greatly how he was to keep that promise. His father had once been a gentleman, and he, Gus, had said that he would try to be a gentleman. But what did it mean to be a gentleman? One day he ventured to put a question on the subject to Mrs. Minn's eldest son.

"Dick," he said, "do you know anything about gentlemen?"

"Gentlemen! What do yer mean? Swells?"

"Yes," said Gus; "what sort of people are they?"

Now Dick was employed as an errand boy in a grocer's shop, and he was besides a greedy devourer of cheap literature, so that he spoke as one who knew.

"Fellers as 'ave got lots of tin, and don't do no work. They eats and drinks the best of everythink, gets jolly drunk, and never pays their bills if they can 'elp it. Oh, it's fine to be a gentleman!"

"Is it?" said Gus doubtfully. "Would you like to be a gentleman, Dick?"

"Wouldn't I just!" returned Dick, with a knowing wink. "I'd have the times of it."

Dick's explanation only increased Gus' difficulties. Could that be what his father meant by being a gentleman? Certainly his father had been in the habit of getting drunk, but he had been most careful to pay every penny they owed. Besides, his father had made him promise never to touch strong drink; so, clearly, getting drunk did not belong to being a gentleman. No; his father had said that a gentleman must be brave, and honest, and truthful. Were there two kinds of gentlemen, Gus wondered, or were Dick's ideas on the subject utterly mistaken?

CHAPTER VII.

A CHIVALROUS EXPLOIT.

SALLY DENT'S new lodger, like her former one, was a quiet man. She gave him this character, and the neighbours soon agreed that she was not mistaken in so doing. He moved and spoke so quietly that it was never easy to tell whether or not he was in the house, and he had a way of appearing suddenly with his noiseless, cat-like tread which was startling to nervous people.

He was a man who could lean motionless against the railway fence for half an hour, watching all that went on in the lane, without exchanging a word with any one, and who could listen to a fierce quarrel between neighbours without betraying by the least sign which of the contending parties had his sympathy. Yet when addressed, he was neither surly nor morose, nor did he show any reluctance to speak of his past history. He was a locksmith by trade, he said; had been in the employ of an ironmonger, but had been dismissed on account of the bad times, and now lived by any chance jobs he could get.

He was a man past forty years of age, and he brought a son and a daughter with him to Lavender Terrace. The son was a rough, evil-looking lad of sixteen, and the daughter a delicate little girl of twelve. This man, Lucas by name, would sometimes go off of a morning with his tool-bag over his shoulder, and be absent for several hours; but on other days he would hang about the lane, or busy himself in his room, so that his search for employment was not very vigorously prosecuted. But as he continued to pay regularly the rent of his room, Sally Dent did not concern herself about his habits.

Lucy Lucas was a shy, timid child, with an unnaturally grave expression and sad-looking eyes. She was lame from chronic hip disease, and went out little, for she was frightened of the rough boys who frequented the lane. That her fears were not unfounded was proved one evening about a fortnight after her arrival, when, in her brother's absence, she ventured as far as the public-house to fetch the beer for her father's supper.

Unfortunately there were many boys at Glensford with the cruel instinct of the bully who delights to torment and even torture those who are weak and defenceless. The sight of Lucy limping along, and carrying, with considerable danger of spilling its contents, the well-filled beer-jug, was hailed with delight by a group of these boys, who were hanging about in doubt how to spend the evening.

"Hurrah! Here comes the beer; now we'll have a drink!" they cried, and rushed upon poor little Lucy, crying, "Give us a drink, give us a drink!"

"I can't," said Lucy, white with fear; "it's for father's supper. I can't give it to you."

"It's for my supper, I tell you," said the ringleader of the band, "and I mean to have it, so hand it over."

He put out his hand to seize the jug; Lucy jerked it back suddenly, with the result that half the contents went over her frock and apron.

"There, there, there! You'd better have given it to us!" they cried, closing round her. "We means to have it."

The poor child in her helplessness began to cry aloud. The sound brought "Gentleman Gus" to the rescue. He knew Lucy; she had spoken kindly to him once or twice; but had she been unknown to him, he would have gone to her assistance just the same. He had so far the instincts of a gentleman that it would have been impossible for him to stand by and see a girl ill-treated without attempting to strike a blow in her defence.

Undaunted by the number and strength of the boys, Gus threw himself into their midst. Seizing the stretched out for the beer, he inflicted such a

vicious pinch on it, that it was drawn back with a yell of pain. Then he dashed upon the assailants, kicking out right and left with all his might. They recoiled a little in their surprise, and he shouted to Lucy to run away. But running was impossible for her, and whilst one boy dealt Gus a blow that made his nose bleed, and another assisted in "polishing him off," the rest closed around Lucy again. But only for a moment.

A stinging blow on the head sent the foremost boy staggering backwards, whilst a voice in low, but most impressive accents exclaimed, "You young blackguard! I'll teach you to touch my girl again!"

It was Lucas, who, unperceived, had entered the lane in time to see his daughter's distress and Gus' gallant rush to her aid.

"Oh, father!" Lucy cried. "Don't let them hurt Gus; he was so good, so brave."

But Lucas needed no such admonition.

"You leave that little chap alone!" he said to the boys. "And if ever I find you hurting him again, it will be the worse for you."

The boys slunk away, muttering beneath their breath.

Gus emerged from the fight bloody and breathless.

"You're a brave little chap," said Lucas admiringly; "a well-plucked 'un, upon my word! Now come with me, and I'll wash your face before your mother sees you."

"He's got no mother, father," said Lucy. "Don't you remember I told you he'd no one belonging to him? He lives with Mrs. Dent, but she's no relation."

"Ah," said her father, regarding Gus more closely with a shrewd, observant glance. "Well, come along, lad; we'll fix you up, and you shall have your supper with us to-night. He's your champion, Lucy, and must be

rewarded. You are looking quite white with the fright, my lass. Those fellows did not hurt you, did they?"

"No, father; it was only the fright," she said.

But he continued to watch her anxiously.

It was strange to Gus to be entertained as a guest in the room so familiar to him. But it looked very different. There were white curtains at the window, which had been well cleaned since Gus saw it, and flower-pots on the sill. A thick curtain hung on an iron rod near Lucy's little bed, and was drawn across the room at night. An old easy chair stood by the fireplace, some pipes and a jar of tobacco were on the mantelpiece, a clean cloth covered the table, which was neatly laid for supper, and a saucepan simmering on the fire emitted a very inviting odour.

Gus was rather startled to see Lucas close the door and lock it as soon as they were within the room. Then he turned to the boy, and said in his lowest, most impressive tones—

"Look here, youngster, no splitting, mind you, as to anything here. We're glad to see you, you're welcome to your supper; but you're just to keep things to yourself. Do you understand?"

Gus nodded. "I won't tell nothin' to nobody," he said.

And Lucas was satisfied.

With Lucy's help, Gus soon removed all traces of the fray, whilst Lucas went to fetch some more beer. When her father returned, Lucy, who was very womanly for her age, dished up the supper. It was rabbit, stewed with vegetables; a more appetising meal than Gus often had, and he thoroughly enjoyed it. Lucas talked to him as he ate it, asking many questions, apparently with the view of forming an opinion of the boy's capacity.

When supper was almost over, the son came in. He appeared astonished and not over pleased to see Gus there. He spoke roughly to his

sister and surlily to his father, to whom he gave some information in such curious phraseology that it was wholly unintelligible to Gus.

A little later Gus took his departure. Lucas said good-night to him kindly, and invited him to come in and out whenever he liked. It was dull for Lucy, he said, to be so much alone.

When he had gone, the father and son looked at each other significantly.

"A well-plucked young 'un that," said Lucas. "It strikes me, he'll serve our little game."

"Not he," returned his son, with an oath. "He's a jolly sight too green."

"Think so?" said Lucas. "Well, we shall see. I mean to try what I can make of him."

CHAPTER VIII.

GUS' NEW FRIENDS.

GUS saw much of Lucas and his daughter in the days that followed. He was often invited into their room, and the man showed much interest in him. Sometimes Lucas would pat Gus on the back, and tell him he was a smart fellow, and he would make a man of him. Lucy, too, was kind to him, but she was very sad and quiet. Gus supposed it was being so weak and lame made her sad.

The boy saw and heard many things when he was with them which made him wonder. He noticed that though Lucas had no regular employment, he was never without money. He would speak to the

neighbours of the bad times; but their badness seemed in no way to affect his comfort. His food was of the best; he had dainties on his table that were to be seen on no other in Lavender Terrace. He told Gus that he bought them for Lucy's sake, whose appetite required much tempting; but the fact remained that he had the power to spend money as none of his neighbours could. Certainly he had not the fatal weakness which had dragged Gus' father down into the lowest depths of misery. He never drank to excess. Some beer with his meals and an occasional glass of spirits was all he took. But the spirit was of the best quality, as was also the tobacco which he smoked.

"A gentleman could not have better, Gentleman Gus," he said one day to the boy, when he was in a merry mood.

"Gentleman Gus indeed!" snarled Jack, with a contemptuous glance at him.

"You hold your tongue!" cried his father. "I tell you he shall be a gentleman.

"You do as I tell you, my lad," he added, patting Gus on the shoulder, "and I'll make a gentleman of you."

Gus' colour rose with pleasure. He had no doubt Lucas could help him to be a gentleman, for the man was in many respects different from the other men who dwelt at Lavender Terrace.

But Jack scowled more darkly than before, and muttered something the boy could not understand. Gus was no favourite with him.

A few days later, Lucas invited Gus to come for a tramp with him and his son. Gus felt honoured by the invitation, and gladly accepted.

They started early in the afternoon. Lucas carried his workman's bag, so Gus concluded he was going in search of employment. They walked a long way in a Westerly direction from Glensford, passing through one suburb of London after another. They did not go to the shops, as Gus expected.

Lucas seemed more interested in the large handsome houses they passed—houses standing by themselves in gardens, and in which only rich people could dwell. The amount of curiosity concerning these which he displayed was something astonishing. Now he would steal along a shrubbery to get a nearer view, or swing himself lightly to the top of a wall. Gus saw with admiration how quick and nimble Lucas and his son were in their movements. He wished he could climb as well. Even a tall spiked fence seemed to offer them no obstacle if they wished to get to the other side. As they went on they talked to each other in a jargon Gus could not understand, but he could see they were not of one mind, and that Jack was out of temper with his father.

At last, when the sun was sinking low in the west, and Gus was growing very weary, Lucas said, as they approached some shops—

"Come, little chap, you're getting tired and hungry, I can see. You go to that shop and get yourself a glass of milk and a good big bun. Jack and I'll go on to the next pub, and you can come to us there; but I know it's no good asking you to take a drink of beer. And you're right, my little lad. Drink steals a man's brains, and he who muddles his head with it, can never succeed in business which requires keen wits. Now go and get your grub, and then come on to us."

As he spoke he handed Gus a bright two-shilling piece, bidding him bring back the change correctly. Gus thanked him, and ran off.

The woman in charge of the confectioner's shop looked coldly at the very ragged little boy who came in and asked for a glass of milk and a bun.

"Can you pay for it?" she demanded.

Gus promptly handed her the two-shilling piece. She looked at it suspiciously, then threw it on the counter. The sound it made seemed to confirm her suspicion. She looked at it once more, then gave it back to Gus.

"That is not good money," she said; "where did you get it?"

"Mr. Lucas gave it to me."

"And who is Mr. Lucas?"

"He's a friend of mine," said Gus; "but what do you mean about the money?"

"I mean that it's a bad florin; one that never came from the Mint. There's been a good many of them about lately. I was deceived by one once, but I shall not be again. Come, if that's all the money you've got to pay with, you'd best be off."

"I'll tell Mr. Lucas," said Gus, turning away disappointed; "I'm sure he did not know it was bad money."

"I daresay!" said the woman. "That's a likely story. Where's this Mr. Lucas that you talk about?"

"He's close by—just a little further along the road," said Gus.

The woman followed him to the door, her looks full of suspicion. It is so easy to believe the worst of those in whose appearance poverty is conspicuous. She looked up and down the road, but saw no man.

"You good-for-nothing young scamp!" she cried. "Don't come here with your false coin and your lies again. Be off with you, quick, or I'll give you to the police!"

Gus was bewildered. He had not been in the shop more than a minute, he could not understand how Lucas and his son had got so quickly out of sight.

"They were going to the public-house," he said.

"There's no public-house just here," said the woman, "and I can tell you this is not the place for you or your friends—if you have any. We're honest people here. Come, be off with you, or I'll call a policeman!"

Gus moved away feeling much disturbed. He could not bear to think that the woman looked upon him as a cheat, for he had been trained to strict honesty, and, in spite of what Dick had said, he was convinced that a

gentleman should always act on the square. He walked on in the direction Lucas and his son had taken, wondering what had become of them. When he had gone a little distance they suddenly appeared before him, springing over a fence that skirted some fields.

"Well, boy, have you got my change?" asked Lucas.

Jack burst into a roar of laughter as Gus told his story, ending with the words, "I told her I was sure you did not know it was bad money."

Lucas laughed too for a moment, but seeing Gus' troubled look, he checked himself.

"Never mind, lad," he said, "you've done your best. I mean you could not help it, if the woman would have it, it was bad money."

"Wasn't it?" asked Gus eagerly.

"Of course it wasn't bad money," replied Lucas, laughing; "it was good money—very good money indeed."

Something in his manner made Gus uneasy. He began to be troubled with doubts concerning his new friends.

"Didn't I tell you?" cried Jack, turning to his father. "Didn't I tell you he was too green for anything?"

"Never you mind," returned the other; "he'll be all right by-and-by. Here, Gus, take this penny; you shall not lose your bun. There's another shop a little further on, and meanwhile here's our pub."

CHAPTER IX.

AT SUNDAY SCHOOL.

IT was not often that Gus could get away from the baby for a whole afternoon; but on the following Sunday, he found himself once more at liberty. Sally Dent had gone to visit a relative who lived in London, and had taken the baby with her. So Gus started forth for a ramble with a delightful sense of freedom. It was a lovely June day, lovely with that first freshness of the summer, which in the neighbourhood of London so quickly sullies.

Glensford looked its best on such a day. There were daisies and even a few lingering buttercups in the fields; the hedges were green; the stream, in which boys were bathing and paddling, rippled clear and bright in the sunshine. It was warm enough to make the ice-creams, which a man was selling at a corner of the green, very tempting to the youth of the place.

Gus had seldom a penny in his pocket, so ice-creams were not for him. He passed them by, turned his back on the boys noisily disporting themselves in the stream, and walked off in the direction he had taken with Lucas and his son a few days earlier. He thought he should like to go over some of the ground again, and look at his leisure on the large houses and pretty gardens along the road.

He found the way without difficulty. He saw much to interest him as he went along. Numbers of bright, neat-looking children passed him on their way to Sunday school. Some of them carried flowers in their hands. Gus had never been to Sunday school, and he wondered as he heard them talking what it could be like. Here and there a church bell was tinkling to summon people to the afternoon service.

Gus walked on briskly for some time; but when he had gained the top of a long hill, he felt hot and tired. Looking round, he saw on the left a small iron building, about which a number of children were gathering, like bees hovering and buzzing about a hive. Gus crossed the road and stood by the palings watching them curiously, and they looked at him with equal curiosity; but not one addressed him, for his clothes looked so very old, whilst they were all arrayed in their "Sunday things."

But suddenly Gus felt a light touch on his shoulder, and turning, saw a young lady standing beside him.

She was very pretty, with an abundance of fair hair neatly braided beneath her white straw hat, and soft blue eyes that were looking at him with the kindest of glances. They were indeed very like Gus' own eyes; but he did not know that. He was accustomed to make his toilette without the aid of a looking-glass, and had but the vaguest notion of the appearance he presented to the world.

But as he gazed into the young lady's kind eyes, he had a confused notion that he had seen them before. And trying to recall when and how they had met, he hardly heeded the words she addressed to him.

"Why are you standing here, little boy? Will you not come into school?"

The sweet, gentle voice, too, seemed familiar. The next moment there flashed on Gus a recollection of the day preceding his father's death, the cart covered with flaring posters, and the frightened pony he had led past it. This was the young lady who had driven the pony. He was so surprised at the discovery that he stared at her without speaking.

"Won't you come in?" she said again. "Do; I am sure you will like it."

"I'll come if you like," Gus answered then, "but I don't know nothing about it."

"That's right; come along."

And he followed her into the schoolroom, and to the corner where she held her class, and where already several boys were seated. Most of them were older, and all of them far more respectable in appearance than Gus. In the conscious glory of Sunday coats and clean collars, they looked askance at the little stranger their teacher brought with her. They drew away from him as he entered, and nudged each other as they eyed the rents in his garments.

Their teacher appeared unaware of the sensation the new scholar created. She gave him a place beside her. Perhaps she saw that though ragged, he was perfectly clean. Early that morning, when few other boys were astir, and the water was deliciously fresh, Gus had taken a good dip in the Glensford stream. It was his habit to do so every morning.

There were several other classes in the room, and for a while Gus was too much interested in observing all that was going on and the strange place in which he found himself, to be aware of the ill-will his companions began to manifest towards him.

It was a pleasant room, with pictures on the walls, and prettily coloured screens stood at hand, by which the classes would be partitioned off from each other when the teaching began. But first the superintendent, standing on a small platform at the end of the room, gave out a hymn, which was sung, and then he prayed.

The prayer was not a comfortable time for Gus. First he received a kick, and then a sharp pinch on the arm; and then some one inflicted on him the peculiar torture which is caused by seizing a single hair growing on a person's head, and tugging it out by one mighty pull. In vain Gus tried to discover and avenge himself on his persecutors. The boys were too quick for him, and all alike presented a devout appearance the instant he turned.

When the class began to read the lesson, it appeared that Gus, despite his poverty-stricken aspect, could read as well as any boy present, and better than some of them could. The teacher praised his reading, and the boys did not like him the better in consequence. Soon the young lady perceived the treatment to which Gus was being slyly subjected.

"For shame, boys!" she said. "Is that the way to treat a stranger? I am really ashamed. And I hoped I was going to make gentlemen of you."

Gus looked up quickly. Perhaps it was his vivid look of interest which made her say the next moment:

"Now tell me, what is a gentleman?"

The answers were various. One boy said that a gentleman was a rich man; another that he was one who knew a great deal; and a third suggested that he was one who had good manners. He, the teacher told him, was nearest to the truth.

"Because," said she, "truly good manners spring from a good heart. No one who acts unkindly to another, no one who takes advantage of the weak and helpless, no one who cheats and lies, is a gentleman. It is the gentle heart that makes the gentleman. Love is the law of his life. Oh, boys, the truest gentleman that ever lived was the Lord Jesus Christ, and you must follow His example if you would deserve the name of gentleman."

Gus listened eagerly. This was the kind of gentleman his father had wished him to be. Dick was altogether wrong.

There was at least one attentive scholar in the school that afternoon—one who missed no word that his teacher spoke of the love and graciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; one to whom the Gospel story was not entirely new, but who saw for the first time that day what the story meant for him.

Gus was sorry when the lesson came to an end, sorry when the last hymn was sung, and the scholars began to pass out of the schoolroom. The young lady asked him with a smile if he would not come again; but Gus remembered the baby and shook his head. Just then a gentleman came forward to claim her attention, and Gus slipped away, followed by a gentle:

"Do come if you can."

Gus was full of thought as he took his way home. So the Lord Jesus Christ was the one perfect gentleman whom he must imitate if he would become a gentleman. There was a great deal about Him in the Bible, Gus knew. He wished he had paid more attention in the days when he used to read the Bible to his father. He wished he had that Bible again. What had Sally Dent done with it? Would she give it him, he wondered, if he were to ask her for it?

It was evening when Gus got back to Glensford. On a warm evening, when the dwellers at Glensford yearned for a breath of cool air, they would

climb to the top of the sloping field to the right, which was already half built over. There were many persons in the fields to-night, but quite at the top of the high field, clearly outlined against the sky, Gus saw Lucy seated alone. He hastened to join her.

Lucy did not see him till he was almost at her side. She sat motionless upon the bank, gazing before her, and her face was sadder than ever, Gus thought. The fresh breeze brought no glow to her cheek, nor could the beauty of the sunset kindle gladness in her eyes. The view from the top of the hill was very fine. Behind Lucy, shrouded by a veil of smoke, London lay, but before her were meadows and hills, some of the hills wooded, and some covered with houses, to which distance gave picturesqueness, whilst immediately below lay the extensive cemetery of Glensford. When Lucy saw Gus, she smiled; but it was a poor little smile, which only seemed to emphasise the sadness of her eyes.

"Where have you been, Gus?" she asked. "I have seen nothing of you all the afternoon."

"I have been a long way," said Gus, with some importance; "right over there where you see those houses. And I have been to Sunday school."

"To Sunday school!" said Lucy surprised.

"A young lady asked me to come in, and she looked so nice and kind that I thought I would, just to see what 'twas like."

"And how did you like it?"

"Very much," said Gus; "though the boys led me a pretty life at first. I meant to give them something for themselves when we got outside, but somehow I didn't. It seemed to me more gentlemanly to take no notice of them."

"You are right," said Lucy, smiling. "Oh, Gus, I'm so glad you're not like those horrid boys who are always fighting and quarrelling. Do you know, I used to go to Sunday school once?"

"Did you?"

"Yes; it was when my mother was living." And Lucy's face grew sadder than before.

"She is dead now?"

"Yes, she died five years ago. Gus, since I have been sitting here and looking down there—" she pointed in the direction of the cemetery—"I have been wishing that I too could die; it would be so good to lie there beneath the trees and rest for ever."

"Oh, Lucy, why should you say that?"

"Because I am always so tired," she replied; "so tired and full of trouble. There was a man here in the fields this afternoon. He had a harmonium, and he played and sang to the people about there being sweet rest in heaven. And he talked about Jesus, and how He would forgive us our sins and take us to heaven if we asked Him; but somehow I didn't seem to care. I don't know as I want to go to heaven; but I do long to lie still and be at rest."

"But what would your father do without you, Lucy? Think how it would grieve him if you died."

"Yes, I suppose it would," she said sadly.

"Of course it would," replied Gus, almost indignantly; "why, there isn't anything he wouldn't do for you. He is always buying things for you. There isn't another girl—"

"Oh, Gus, I know!" she interrupted him, with fresh sadness in look and tone. "But I'd gladly give them up. I'd gladly live on dry bread and go bare-foot if only I could be sure—that things were honestly come by."

She said the last words very low, as if speaking to herself; but Gus heard them.

He started, and looked up at her with consternation painted on his face.

"Oh, Lucy, you don't mean—"

"Hush, hush!" she whispered, turning on him a white, frightened face. "What did I say? I should not have said it. Don't think of it again, Gus. I did not mean anything, indeed."

"Lucy, you might tell me."

"There is nothing to tell; indeed I know nothing, only I am full of fear. Please, Gus, never speak of this again. And now come in with me, and I will give you some supper. Father and Jack will not be home till late. Do come and cheer me. You shall tell me about the lesson at Sunday school, and we can read about it in mother's Bible. I have her Bible, but I seldom read it, because it makes me so sad to think that I shall never read it to her again."

Gus willingly consented. He said little as they went down the field, Lucy moving slowly and with difficulty. He was overpowered by the astounding conviction which had come to him. The doubts suggested by the affair of the bad florin had received unexpected confirmation. He felt sure now that Lucas was a dishonest man.

CHAPTER X.

GUS SEES HIS TEACHER AGAIN.

THE summer weeks passed by, and brought little variation into Gus' life. Only the baby seemed to grow daily heavier, and to weary him more and more as he dragged him about in the heat. And as the baby's mother grew more addicted to "taking something," and resting after it, she thrust every task she could upon the boy who had to "earn his keep." But Gus never grumbled. He did his best sturdily; he did not lose patience with the

baby, restless, struggling, fretful little mortal though he was, nor was he ever cross to the other little ones who called Sally Dent mother. But he prized every leisure moment he could spend with Lucy.

Sometimes on a Sunday they could get a quiet hour together, and then they would read from Lucy's Bible some passage in the history of the Lord Jesus—"the truest gentleman as ever was," as Gus loved to say, remembering the lady's words. And already the little boy's life was guided by a conscious effort to follow the example of the highest, holiest Manhood.

Lucas continued to treat Gus kindly, but Gus did not see much of him or of his son during the summer weeks. They would often be away from home for several nights, and Lucy never seemed to know exactly when they would return. And as Gus saw no fresh indications of anything being wrong, he ceased to think about those words from Lucy which had so startled him. He noticed that things seemed less prosperous with Lucas than formerly. There was not so much butter and jam going, and Lucy's cookery did not send forth such savoury odours. Perhaps Lucas had given up his dishonest practices, and was living strictly within his lawful means. Gus was glad to believe this.

One day, when summer was fairly gone, Lucas asked Gus if he could go out for a tramp with him and Jack.

Gus had little hope that Sally Dent would let him go, but he ran to ask her. At first she said she could not spare him; but when she heard that Lucas wanted him, she gave her consent. Lucas was too good a lodger for her to risk offending him.

Gus set out in capital spirits. It was a bright autumn day. The air was fresh and invigorating, the sunshine brilliant. Already the trees were touched with warm brown and gold, and in the gardens which they passed the dead leaves lay thick.

Strange to say, Lucas and his son took Gus exactly the same tramp they had taken him before. He passed and looked with interest on the little iron schoolroom in which he had had his first experience of a Sunday school. A little further on was the shop where he had tendered the bad

florin. Gus' cheeks glowed with shame now as he thought of it, and he slunk quickly past the shop, hoping the woman would not see him.

A little farther on along the road was a large house, "standing in its own grounds," as the advertisements say. Beyond the garden lay fields, so that the position of the house was quite isolated. This house seemed greatly to interest Lucas and his son. They hung about the gate for some time, furtively watching a gardener who was engaged in sweeping the lawn. The garden was bright with chrysanthemums and dahlias, but not prettier than many they had seen; so that Gus wondered why they lingered there so long. At last they heard a church clock strike twelve, and soon afterwards the gardener laid down his broom and disappeared.

"Now, Gus, come with me," said Lucas.

He led him a little way up the shrubbery, till they were almost in sight of the house; then he said—

"Look here, if you do as I tell you, I'll give you twopence. I want you to go all round the house—this way, see—till you come to the kitchen door, where you must knock and ask for a piece of bread."

"I'm not a beggar," said Gus, colouring.

"Well, never mind, ask for a drink of water—anything. Don't be a duffer. I'll make it sixpence, if you do it to please me; and just keep your eyes open as you go; see if the windows under the verander come right down to the ground, and find out if they keep a dog, and whether there's a man-servant, and what time they have their dinner."

"But who am I to ask?" said Gus, looking bewildered.

"Find out without asking if you can, but if not there's the cook; surely a pretty boy like you can get round the cook. And not a word about our being here, mind. Now, off with you."

Gus moved away reluctantly. He did not like the errand; had he had the least idea for what purpose Lucas desired this information, he would have

refused to seek it.

He followed the path which ran in front of the verandah. It was not the direct path to the kitchen, but Lucas had purposely sent him that way. Yes, the windows beneath the verandah came to the ground; Gus noticed that, and then, turning the corner of the house, he found himself before a window of the same description, which stood wide open to the sunlight, and his unexpected appearance startled a young lady, who sat just within, and scared away a poor half-starved kitten, to whom she was giving a saucer of

milk. The young lady uttered a faint cry as she rose quickly; but the next moment she recognised Gus, and smiled on him.

"Why, you are Gus!" she said. "The poor little Gus whom I had in my class one afternoon. I hoped you would come again, but you have never been."

"I couldn't get away any more," said Gus.

"And were you coming to see me now?"

"No. I didn't know you lived here. I was going to the kitchen to ask for a drink of water."

"Will milk do as well?" asked the young lady, filling a glass from a jug which stood on the table. "Here, sit down and drink it. You look tired."

Gus gladly seated himself on the step of the window, and the girl, who evidently thought that he needed to be cared for as much as the starved kitten, gave him a large slice of cake.

"Now tell me where you live, and what you do with yourself?" she said.

"I live at Glensford," he replied; "that's a long way from here."

"Have you a mother?" she inquired, looking pitifully at Gus' deplorable attire.

"My mother has been dead a long while, and father died a few months ago," he said. "I live with Mrs. Dent, and mind her baby."

"Poor child!" said the young lady. Her voice was soft and caressing as she said this, and Gus thought he had never seen such sweet blue eyes as those that were bent on him. And she, at the same time, was struck with the beauty of his large, innocent blue eyes.

"My father and mother are living," she said; "but they are in India. That is a great way off."

"And you live here?" said Gus, suddenly remembering that he was there to gather information.

"Yes, in my grandfather's home."

"It's a big house," said Gus, glancing round. "I s'pose you don't live here all by yourself?"

"Certainly not," said the girl, laughing. "An aunt, my father's sister, is here for a while, taking care of me, and there are the three servants besides."

"No man?" asked Gus.

"No man-servant, if that is what you mean; but my grandfather of course lives here, only just now he is away on a visit."

"Oh," said Gus. So far he had had no difficulty in getting the information he wanted, and just at that moment the kitten came creeping round the corner of the window.

"Here's your kitten," said Gus.

"It's not my kitten," said the girl; "it's a poor stray thing."

"Haven't you got a kitten of your own?" asked Gus.

"No," she replied; "I think I must adopt this one."

"P'raps you've a dog?" he suggested.

"No, I have not," she replied. "We had a splendid dog here—dear old Towser—but he died in the spring, and grandpapa has not yet got another. He was such a good house-dog; it is a pity he died."

"It is," said Gus, quite innocently. He had finished his cake, and he remembered that Lucas and Jack were waiting for him; but on his own account, he felt in no hurry to depart.

"Take another piece of cake," said the young lady; "I am sure you must be hungry."

"No more, thank you," said Gus. "I must be going. I was hungry, for it's about the time we have our dinner."

"What, at twelve o'clock? That seems very early to me."

"Does it?" said Gus. "What time do you have your dinner then?"

"Not till seven o'clock in the evening; but we have a meal in the middle of the day which is almost like a dinner."

"Two dinners! My word!" exclaimed Gus in amazement; but ere he could say more, a lady entered the room into which he was gazing. She was tall, angular, and severe of aspect. She had a very high nose, and very thin lips, and very cold eyes. She advanced with much dignity till she observed the open window and the ragged boy seated on the sill. Then she threw up her hands, and gave a scream.

"Good gracious, Edith! What have you here?"

"Only a poor little boy, aunt; he came to my class one afternoon," Edith began hurriedly to explain.

But her aunt scarce heeded her words.

"How could you?" she said reproachfully. "Is this the time, when we are left without a protector, to encourage a young scamp like this to come to the house? There is no knowing what may come of it. He may—there, be off with you, boy; you'll get nothing more here. Be off; we want no tramps here; we'll set the dog at you, if you don't move quickly!"

And as Gus hastily sprang up, she pushed to the glass doors and bolted them.

"Oh, aunt!" cried Edith, unable to help laughing, though she was vexed, "How could you say that, when you know we have no dog?"

"My dear, I said it with a purpose. I don't want him to come here and murder us all in our beds. It is not that I am nervous—you know I am not nervous—but one must be cautious. You should not have let him sit there. He may have brought scarlet fever or small-pox. I will tell Jane to scrub that window-sill." And she rang the bell sharply to summon the housemaid.

"What a pity!" murmured Edith to herself. "I wanted to get him some better clothes, and now aunt has frightened him away there is no knowing when I shall see him again."

Meanwhile Gus was hurrying to the gate as fast as his feet could carry him. Lucas stood awaiting him uneasily, but his face brightened when he saw Gus approaching.

"Well, youngster, you've been a long while," he said. "I began to be afraid something had happened. It's to be hoped you've made good use of the time."

Gus told how kind the young lady had been to him, and repeated all that had passed between them. As he did so Jack appeared; he had been across the fields to take a survey of the house from the back.

Lucas burst out laughing when Gus told how he had learned that there was no dog belonging to the house. "Upon my word," he said, patting Gus on the back, "you're a well-plucked one; we'll send you on that business again. He couldn't have done it better, could he, Jack?"

Jack chuckled, but suggested that they had better be moving on. So they turned towards home again.

Apparently their purpose in coming out was accomplished. Both Lucas and his son seemed greatly entertained and pleased at what had happened. Gus could not understand much that they said to each other as they walked along. They seemed to be laying plans of some kind. Once Jack said emphatically, with a nod in the direction of Gus, "Things will go all right, if you keep him out of it, not unless."

Whereupon Lucas turned angrily upon his son, being clearly of another opinion. Whatever was the matter in dispute, they continued to wrangle over it all the way home. Gus could not understand what it was they were quarrelling about, but he had an uneasy consciousness that it somehow concerned himself.

CHAPTER XI.

LUCAS' "JOB."

THE next morning at an early hour Lucas went forth with his workman's bag upon his shoulder. Gus heard him tell Sally Dent that he had had the luck to get a good job of work, which would probably keep him out till late at night. Then, beckoning Gus to walk beside him a few steps, Lucas said to him, as soon as they were beyond the houses, and no one was within hearing—

"Look here, Gus; I want your help in a job I have in hand to-night. If you're a good little chap, and do what you're told, and ask no questions, I'll give you a bob, a whole bob, for yourself, do you hear?"

Gus nodded, and his eyes sparkled with pleasure. It was rare good fortune for him to have the chance of earning a shilling.

"Can I do the work, do you think?" he asked anxiously. "Is it easy?"

"Oh, your part's easy enough," said Lucas, with a laugh. "All you've got to do is to obey orders. Now listen to me. Jack will bring you this evening to meet me. You must leave home at six o'clock—not a minute later. Now mind, I depend on your coming, and you must not disappoint me. If you've got the baby to mind, you can give it to Lucy, and she will look after it. Now promise me that you will come."

"I'll come," said Gus; "I'll be sure to come; but what am I to do?"

"Never mind what you have to do; I'll show you when you come. You are to do whatever I tell you, do you hear?"

"Yes," said Gus; and with that Lucas dismissed him, and the boy ran back to the house.

Gus wondered many times that day what the work could be for which Lucas needed his help. In the afternoon, Sally Dent gave the baby to his care, and when evening came, she lay in a drunken slumber. Gus amused the baby and kept the other children quiet till it wanted but a few minutes to six o'clock. Then, with the baby in his arms, he knocked at Lucy's door.

Lucy opened the door a little way and looked out; then, seeing it was Gus, she opened the door wider, and invited him to come in. Jack was seated at the table, hastily devouring a substantial meal.

"So you've come," he said, nodding to Gus; "that's right. We must be off in a minute or two."

"Is Gus going out with you?" asked Lucy in surprise.

Her brother only nodded.

"Yes, I'm going," said Gus; "and I've brought you the baby, because Mrs. Dent's asleep, and there's no one to mind him. I hope you won't find him a trouble; your father said you'd take him."

He held the baby out to Lucy as he spoke, but she had turned very white, and seemed to have lost all strength. Instead of attempting to take the baby she sank on to a chair, weak and trembling.

"Ah, I see you're not strong enough to hold him," said Gus, full of sympathy. "He is heavy; but perhaps he will lie on the rug for a bit. He'll keep quiet sometimes if you give him something to suck. A potato's as good as anything. I wish you needn't have him, but I promised your father I'd go."

"And you'd better keep that promise, and any other you've made to my father, let me tell you," said Jack significantly.

A shiver ran through Lucy's slender frame, but she controlled herself and said—

"Have you had your supper, Gus?"

"No," said the boy, looking wistfully at the well-spread table.

"You must have some then," she said quickly; "you cannot go out without having eaten."

"Give him a hunch of bread, and let him eat it as he goes along," said Jack, rising from the table as he spoke.

Lucy began to cut some bread and butter, whilst Gus carefully placed the baby on the hearth-rug and gave him a spoon to amuse himself with. Having buttered two thick pieces, Lucy placed between them a slice of cold bacon; then, as she thrust the whole into Gus' hand, she whispered, "Oh, Gus, I wish you were not going with them! Be careful; oh, do be careful!"

"Now then, are you coming?" cried Jack roughly from the door.

Gus could not reply to Lucy. He felt uneasy as he hurried after Jack, and he wondered why Lucy had bidden him to be careful. Did she know more about the evening's job than he?

For a while Gus and Jack trudged on in silence. Gus had often to break into a trot in order to keep up with Jack's long strides. They took the way Gus now knew so well, and which he had twice before trodden in Jack's company. The day had been dull, and night was closing in early. A grey mist was creeping over the fields, and the wind, which blew in their faces, brought with it tiny drops of rain.

When they had gone some distance, and were in a lonely part of the road, Jack suddenly halted beneath a lamp-post, and drew something from beneath his coat.

"There, lad, do you know what that is?" he inquired, pointing at Gus the thing he held.

Gus recoiled in a manner that showed he knew it to be a deadly weapon.

"Ah, I see you do know," said Jack coolly; "that's my father's revolver, and I'd have you know he'll think nothing of turning it against you if you do not please him in this night's business. He'll just hold it like that and fire, and you'll be as dead as a door-nail in half a second."

Gus trembled at the prospect. Having shown him this incentive to obedience, Jack put the firearm back into its place, and they marched on again. A little further, in the darkest part of the road, Lucas met them.

"Here you are then," he said in a tone of relief. "You are a little late; I began to fear something had gone wrong. The dinner-bell has rung. We need not have feared it would not be dark enough by seven. I've got a ladder that the painters left in the garden below. Things are all as square as possible, and in another ten minutes it will be safe."

They went on a few steps, and then halted at a gate. The place seemed familiar to Gus.

"You wait here," said Lucas, "whilst Jack and I go in; I'll come for you in a minute. Have you brought my revolver, Jack?"

Gus saw the revolver handed over to Lucas. His heart misgave him. How he wished the night's business was over!

Jack and Lucas passed into the shrubbery, and Gus stood alone, cold and miserable. The mysterious character of Lucas' proceedings alarmed him. He longed to run away, but he dared not, and the next minute Lucas was again by his side.

"Now come with me," he said; "and, mind you, if you don't do exactly as I tell you, it will be the worse for you. You are not to ask questions, but just to do as I tell you; do you hear?"

"Yes," said Gus; but he felt sick at heart as Lucas hurried him up the garden.

Gus saw dimly before him a long, low house, with a verandah. In spite of the gathering mist, he recognised it as the house in which Miss Edith lived. There was the window where, on the previous morning, he had sat and been regaled with cake and milk. The window was closed and shuttered now, and so were all the windows on the ground-floor. But at the side of the house was a small window, which was open a little way. Against this a ladder had been placed.

"Take off your shoes," said Lucas to Gus.

The boy obeyed trembling.

"Now, Gus," said Lucas in low, deliberate tones, which nevertheless had a certain thrill of excitement, "you're to go up that ladder and get in at that window. You will find yourself in the bath-room of the house. The door is open, and you can pass out into the passage, and go into all the bedrooms on this side the house. You must look quickly round the room, and take everything of value. If there's a watch on the dressing-table take it; every brooch, every ring take. Slip them into your pocket, and bring them to me. Now see how cleverly you can manage it."

Gus heard him in the utmost bewilderment and terror.

"That would be stealing!" he cried. "Oh, I can't steal!"

"Hold your tongue!" cried Lucas, shaking him roughly; "it's not stealing—at least it is not your stealing, it's mine. The window is too small for me to get through, so you do it for me."

"Oh, I can't do it; don't ask me!" cried Gus.

"You can, and you shall," said Lucas. "What are you afraid of? The family's in the dining-room having dinner, the parlour-maid is waiting on them, the cook's busy in the kitchen, and the housemaid has gone for a

holiday. No one will hear you; you can get all there is, and be back in five minutes. Go along with you."

"I can't!" cried Gus, falling on his knees before the man. "I can't do that! Please, Mr. Lucas, do not ask me! Indeed, I cannot steal!"

"There, what did I tell you?" said Jack, turning to his father. "There's no doing anything with a boy like that. I said he would spoil it all, and so he has."

"But he shall not spoil it!" cried Lucas fiercely. "I'll see to that. Gus, you go up that ladder and do as I tell you, or, as sure as I stand here, I'll blow your brains out. See—" and he drew out his revolver—"if you do not go at once, I'll fire. Now, are you going?"

The aspect of the man was so fierce, he looked so capable of executing his threat, that instinctively Gus shrank from him and turned towards the ladder. Jack pushed him on to the lowest rung, and feeling that the weapon was still pointed at him, Gus went up the ladder, closely followed by Jack.

"Go on, go on," said Lucas, "or I fire."

Jack opened the window as wide as he could, and helped Gus to get into the room.

"Now go on," said Jack, pointing to the door. "Go through all the rooms, and be sharp back. We'll half kill you, if you don't bring all you can find!"

Thus urged, Gus passed out of the bath-room into the passage, and Jack waited nervously for his return. Five minutes passed, ten minutes, but the boy did not return.

"What can be keeping him so long?" asked Lucas anxiously, at the foot of the ladder. "They'll have done dinner directly. Can't you whistle to him?"

"It's hardly safe; some one might hear," said Jack. Nevertheless, he attempted a soft whistle.

"Can they have got hold of him?" asked Lucas nervously. "We must be off if he does not soon appear."

"Little humbug! I said he would spoil all," returned Jack. "What's to be done?"

At that moment there was the sound of a window opening at the other side of the house, followed by what seemed like a splash and a faint scream. Almost instantly another window was thrown up with a noise, and a female voice screamed shrilly, "Help, help! Thieves! Murder! Help!"

Jack was down the ladder in a second.

"Confound him, it is all up!" cried Lucas; and waiting only to throw the ladder into the shrubbery, they were off.

CHAPTER XII.

A GAME OF "HIDE-AND-SEEK."

PASSING out of Jack's sight, Gus found himself in a dimly lighted corridor, on to which several rooms opened. It was a relief to get away from Jack; but yet Gus felt his position to be embarrassing in the extreme. Here he was in Miss Edith's home, where he had no right to be, and for a purpose the very thought of which made him tingle all over with shame.

But Lucas had made a grand mistake in supposing that Gus was to be driven by bribe or threat to take part in a burglary. He would rather have died than have laid his hand on any of Miss Edith's possessions.

"He may kill me if he likes," Gus said to himself, though not without a shiver at the thought, "but he shall not make me steal."

At the moment Gus was creeping cautiously along the corridor, moved by a desire to get as far from Jack as possible. Suddenly he resolved that he would not go back to the men who awaited him outside. He would look about him for some hole or corner in which he could hide till the morning. Lucas could not force him to come out; he could not make his way into the house in search of him. The criminal object which had brought Lucas and his son to the house gave Gus an advantage over them. It would be easy, Gus thought, to tell Miss Edith all in the morning, and ask her to protect him from the rage of Lucas and his son.

Perfect stillness reigned in the house as Gus cautiously stepped along the passage, his shoeless feet making no sound on the thick carpet. He came to a door which stood partly open, and peeping round it saw a large and comfortably furnished bedroom, lighted by the glow from a bright fire. The gleam shone on the dressing-table, with its handsome toilet mirror, dainty drapery and ornaments, and Gus saw there a gold watch hanging on a pretty stand.

"Ah, Lucas would like that," he said to himself, and passed on smiling. But in vain he looked about for some place in which he could hide. Oh for some cupboard or recess in which he could lie safely till the morning!

He had reached the end of the corridor, and stood at the head of the stairs. To the right a narrow passage turned off. It was almost in darkness, and Gus stole along it, hoping to find the shelter he sought.

Presently he became aware that he was close to the head of a narrow staircase; a light flashed in his face, and he saw a portly female form, bearing a lighted candle, slowly ascending.

Gus started off in the darkness, fell over a pail, and made a clatter which caused the woman to scream in alarm, dashed through the first open doorway, and found himself in a small bedroom. There was no place to hide, nor any way of escape save through the window. It was unhasped, and Gus threw it up in a moment. In the dim light he could see some kind of platform below, and he sprang out. He jumped on to the thin and rather rotten planks which covered the top of a cistern. They gave way with him, and with a faint cry Gus fell through into the cold water. Happily the cistern

was only half full, and in a few moments he had scrambled out again. But crouching behind the cistern on the narrow sloping roof, he found himself in considerable peril.

The woman he had startled had been too frightened to follow him; but now she threw up the landing window, and screamed lustily for help.

"'Elp, 'elp! Thieves! Murder 'elp!" she screamed; and then Gus heard the sound of steps hurrying to her assistance.

"Oh, cook! What is it? Whatever is the matter?" cried a voice, which Gus recognised as Miss Edith's.

"Cook, cook, control yourself; it is absurd to give way like this! I insist upon knowing what has happened!" said some one, uttering the words in very shaky accents.

"It's burglars, mum; it's 'ouse-breakers!" sobbed the cook. "I see'd 'em, miss, as true as I'm a-standin 'ere—leastways I 'eard 'em. There was some one rushed along the passage in front of me, and out o' that winder. He fell into the cistern, he did, and he's just got out. I 'card 'im a-shakin' 'isself not a minute agone."

"Burglars! Good gracious! And we without a man in the house! Oh, Edith! What will become of us? I said it was wrong of the colonel to leave us so unprotected. Some one must fetch a policeman; the house must be searched. Martha, you must fetch a policeman."

"That's easier said than done, if you'll excuse me, ma'am," said Martha, evidently shrinking from the task. "For my part, I don't believe there's been no man here. I don't suppose cook saw anything bigger than a cat. She's so nervous, she's frightened at her own shadow, cook is."

"A cat! Are you a cat?" returned the cook, indignantly. "I tell you it was a full-grown man as comed along the passage. He fell over the pail, and I 'eard 'im swear, I did. He's down there now somewhere, I'll be bound. You get a lantern and see."

"No, thank you," said Martha, drawing back; "I am not going on to that roof, if I know it. I won't risk my neck for the sake of any burglar."

"Perhaps it was a stray cat," said Edith, catching at the suggestion. "I daresay Mary left her window open, and so it got in. A cat can startle one dreadfully, and things seem so much larger when you cannot see them properly."

"The house must be searched," said her aunt solemnly. "I cannot close my eyes to-night till I know every corner of the house and grounds has been searched. I am not nervous, as you know; but this is a serious matter. I insist upon some one's fetching a policeman."

"As sure as I'm a livin' woman, it was no cat," muttered cook under her breath.

"I suppose I had better go in search of a policeman," said Edith. "I can see Martha is not inclined to do so, and cook is far too upset."

"You, Edith! You must not go; I cannot have you leave me! Suppose the man should appear when I was alone!"

"Why, then, auntie, you would be equal to the occasion, no doubt."

"Had we not better ring the alarm bell?" suggested Martha. "Mr. Thornton's valet, which is a very civil young man, would be sure to come across to know what was the matter."

"I have no doubt he would," said Edith, who was aware that the young man in question was enamoured of Martha.

Miss Durrant, who of late had exercised much ingenuity in devising means of preventing Martha from seeing Mr. Thornton's valet, now caught eagerly at the maid's suggestion.

Martha accordingly hurried off to ring the bell, and the others drew back from the raw, cold atmosphere of the night, cook finally closing the windows, lest the burglar should be disposed to return.

Shaking with cold and fear, Gus could hardly keep himself from falling from the roof. What should he do? He must get away somehow—but how? Crouching low, and supporting himself on his hands, he looked over the edge of the gutter. Immediately below was a small square window. Having first wrung all the water he could from his ragged clothes, and shaken himself thoroughly, Gus tightly clutched the gutter and swung himself off the roof, and after hanging perilously for a moment or two, managed to get his feet planted on the narrow window-sill below. Happily the window was open an inch or two at the bottom. Steadying himself against the wall with one hand, Gus, in extreme peril of falling headlong, pushed up the lower window-sash with the other.

The next moment, feet foremost, he fell rather than climbed through the window. A roll of carpet broke his fall, and gathering himself up, he found he was in a small room full of boxes and other lumber. He made some noise as he tumbled over these on his way to the door, but the sound was lost in the clamour of the alarm bell, which Martha was now pulling lustily.

Gus was at a loss what to do. If the house were immediately searched, there was little hope that he could escape detection, and though he had previously thought it would be easy to tell everything to Miss Edith, he had now a horror of being dragged forth before all the household, and branded as a young housebreaker. If only he could find his way back to the bath-room window, and descend by the ladder!

Opening the door of the lumber-room as gently as possible, he stole into the passage. There was no one about, for Miss Durrant had forbidden any one to go through the house at present, and she and Edith had returned to the dining-room. Cook was keeping watch at her bedroom window, and Martha was at the top of the attic stairs pulling the bell.

Swiftly and noiselessly the boy glided along the passage, ascended a short flight of stairs, and found himself again in the corridor where was the bath-room. But though the window stood open, the ladder was gone. Gus leaned out, but could see nothing in the darkness. He knew that the window was too high above the ground for him to venture a leap.

Clearly, Lucas and his son had decamped and left him to his fate. Gus closed the window, and turned away in despair. What should he do?

Just then the sudden opening of a door, a blast of cold air through the house, and the sound of excited voices below, assured Gus that Mr. Thornton's valet had arrived, and was receiving a warm welcome from the unprotected females. No time was to be lost. Gus fled desperately along the corridor.

The warm glow from the fire-lit bedroom seemed to invite him. Wet and shivering, Gus ran instinctively to the glowing hearth, and for a few moments forgot his embarrassing position in the delight of warming himself. Then he became aware of steps and voices on the stairs. A procession was approaching armed with fireirons, and headed by Mr. Thornton's valet, flourishing the kitchen poker.

"I must beg you to search thoroughly every room," Miss Durrant was saying. "It is not that I am nervous, but I think it only right to satisfy ourselves that there is no man concealed upon the premises."

"To be sure, ma'am, to be sure," the valet replied. "I only wish I could ketch the man; but I'm afraid he's had time to get away."

Gus could not see the fierce manner in which the valet brandished his weapon as he spoke; but the words were enough. With a hare-like instinct, the boy rushed for the nearest covert. Between him and the door was the bed. Curtains hung at the head, the sheet was folded back, the large downy

pillows, with frilled edges, were invitingly exposed. Straight at the bed dashed Gus.

As he slipped behind the curtain, his quick eyes saw an aperture at the back of the pillows which seemed to offer him a hiding-place. Quick as thought, he sprang up, and wriggled himself along till he lay, as small as possible, between the bolster and the wooden board at the head of the bedstead. Had he not been very thin and slight, he could not have worked himself into such a position without disarranging the bed. But with such eel-like dexterity did he move that when, a few minutes later, the armed force entered the room, the bed looked pretty much as the housemaid had left it before she went out.

The valet, poker in hand, advanced into the room, followed by Martha, who carried the tongs. Then came Miss Durrant, who had armed herself with a finely polished brass poker, one of the ornamental kind which rarely see actual service; next was cook, and Edith brought up the rear, because no one else was willing to come last, there being a general impression that if the burglar were passed by the van-guard, he would be likely to fall upon the rear.

The valet courageously looked under the bed and under the skirt of the dressing-table. At Miss Durrant's suggestion, he opened her wardrobe, and passed his hand through the dresses that hung there. Emboldened by his example, cook passed her hand cautiously over the surface of the feather-bed, but did not think of looking behind the pillows, though it did occur to her to look in the coal-box, which could not have sheltered a "Tom Thumb" of burglars.

"I can't help thinking it was nothing but an old cat," remarked Martha, keeping, in spite of this assertion, close to the side of their gallant protector.

"You think it a cat, do you?" replied cook, with a snort. "Well, all I can say is, I never knew before that you was so mighty afraid of cats. One would think you was a mouse."

The resources of Miss Durrant's room seeming to be exhausted, the band passed on to the next. Gus, who had hardly dared to breathe whilst

they were in the room, drew a long sigh of relief as he heard them passing up the corridor.

Tramp, tramp, tramp went the procession, now in the servants' rooms, now in the attic, finally descending again to the lower regions. The valet, who had got out on the roof and examined the cistern, was certain that some living creature had fallen into it; but the splashes on the slates and the shattered plank gave no conclusive evidence as to the size and nature of the intruder. He readily adopted the idea suggested by Martha, and amused himself with twitting the cook with having mistaken a cat for a man.

The policeman, who arrived late at the scene of excitement, leaned towards the same opinion; and though he went round the grounds with his bull's-eye, failed to discover the ladder hidden amongst the shrubs, or to see any traces of the burglars.

Martha's explanation was accepted by every one save the cook. Miss Durrant even went so far as to say she was certain it was a cat, and that if cook had only exercised proper self-control the house and neighbourhood need not have been alarmed. She repudiated the idea of being nervous herself, but was, nevertheless, very restless and fidgety during the remainder of the evening.

As the commotion in the house gradually died away, Gus no longer listened intently to every sound. Drowsiness crept over him as he lay warm and snug behind the pillows. At last, notwithstanding every cause for uneasiness, he fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN INNOCENT BURGLAR.

HOW long Gus had slept, he could not have told, when he was awakened by the sound of voices in the room. For a moment he imagined, with a thrill of fear, that Lucas and Jack were at hand, ready to execute the violent threats with which they had driven him into the house. But the voices, one high and thin, the other low and sweet, could not well be mistaken for those of men. Hot and half-suffocated in the narrow space in which he lay, Gus gradually remembered how he came to be in such a position, and knew that the voices he heard were those of Miss Durrant and her niece.

"I feel convinced now, Edith, that it was only a cat."

"That is very likely, aunt."

"You have looked under the bed, Edith?"

"Yes, and there is certainly no cat there."

"No; there is really nothing to be alarmed at. I am not at all nervous, still, I am glad that Mr. Thornton has allowed his man to sleep below to-night. It is well to have a man on the premises."

"Yes, in case the cat should create another disturbance."

"Or cook be ridiculous again."

"Martha seemed in more danger of such an attack when they went to bed; but in either case the eloquence of Mr. Thornton's valet would be of service."

"It is a strange thing," said Miss Durrant thoughtfully, without heeding her niece's words. "I should much like to know what it really was that jumped out of the window and fell into the cistern."

At that moment a curious muffled sound came from the back of the bedstead. A sudden sense of the absurdity of the situation had smitten Gus, and a laugh escaped him almost unawares.

"What is that?" exclaimed Miss Durrant, with a start. "Edith, did you hear it?"

"I noticed nothing, aunt. What sort of noise did you hear? I daresay it was only a mouse."

"A mouse! How can you name such a thing to me, Edith? You know I should faint if I saw a mouse."

"Would you, aunt—you, with all your self-control! Is a mouse so much worse than a cat?"

"Don't laugh at me, Edith. I am not nervous of ordinary things, but I cannot endure a mouse. There! What was that?"

"It was only the bedstead that creaked; old furniture will creak sometimes, you know," Edith replied.

"Well, I have been thinking that in case there should be any disturbance to-night, it would be nice—don't you think so?—for us to be together. It is not that I am nervous; but you have a cold, and you would be warmer here than in your own room, so I think you had better come and sleep with me."

"Very well, aunt, if you wish it; but I really do not think you need fear another disturbance. However, if you feel nervous—"

"I am not nervous, Edith; you mistake me quite, if you think that. It was only that I thought you, with your cold, would be better here."

"Oh, my cold is almost gone, so if that is all, I would rather sleep in my own room. Good-night, aunt. There is nothing to be afraid of now."

"I am aware of that, thank you. Good-night, Edith," said her aunt, in rather severe accents.

She followed her niece to the door, which she closed after her, and secured both by lock and bolt. Then casting a nervous glance round her, she began to take off her dress.

Whilst aunt and niece had been talking, Gus had been wriggling about in search of some loophole that would afford him a view into the room. None such presenting itself, he drew himself to the edge of the bed, and cautiously thrust out his head. Even so it was not easy to see, and his position was perilous in the extreme, as he tried to turn his head so as to get a look into the room.

By the time he had succeeded in so poising himself that he could see what was going on, the lady stood at her dressing-table, engaged in brushing her hair. In her young days, her abundant brown tresses had been much admired. They were no longer abundant, and their hue had faded, but their possessor, scarce conscious of the change Time had wrought, took pride in them still. She stood before her mirror regarding complacently the reflection it presented whilst she slowly brushed her hair. Every now and then she paused for a few moments of breathless listening; but no sound broke the stillness of the house, and gradually the fears that haunted her grew less insistent. At last, with a sigh, she laid down the brush, rolled her hair into a neat little knob at the back of her head, and then moved to the fireside to warm her feet before going to bed.

And now Gus became seriously uneasy. He was tired of lying in that close, cramped position; he could not remain there all night. Besides, he had grave misgivings as to how his position would be affected by the lady's getting into bed. Would her head rest less easily because he lay there behind the bolster? Would she be likely to discover his presence?

It seemed to Gus that his position would be improved if he could manage to slip noiselessly out of the bed, and hide himself beneath it for the rest of the night. So he edged himself further and further out of the bed, till quite half his body was exposed to view behind the curtain, and his hands firmly rested on the floor. But how to draw out his legs and drop down and out of sight without making any noise was a difficult problem.

And just as he became aware of the exceeding difficulty of his position, Miss Durrant rose, and moved towards the bed. Gus tried to wriggle back into his lair, but that was not to be done in a moment. The lady was conscious of a strange movement behind the curtain. She drew it aside, then, arrested by terror, stood for a moment staring into the eyes that met hers; the next she shrieked wildly, and ran for the door. She struggled desperately with lock and bolt; she tore the door open; she rushed into the passage, screaming at the top of her voice:

"Murder, murder!"

A second or two of silence, and then a sudden rush and stir through the house. Doors opened, voices, steps made themselves heard. Edith was the first to appear in response to those wild screams. She came running from her room, white and trembling from the shock of alarm; but she was brave.

"A man in my room! A man in my bed!" shrieked her aunt, like one distracted. "In my very bed—waiting to murder me! Don't go in, Edith; don't go near! He'll kill you! Oh, where is that man-servant?"

The individual demanded appeared at that moment. He was armed with the poker, but he looked white and dazed.

"Where is he?" he asked, his teeth chattering as he spoke.

"Don't go in, Mr. Simpkins—don't, now!" cried Martha imploringly, from over the banisters. "He's a ferocious burglar, and he'll brain you—for a dead certainty he will. Go and fetch a policeman, but don't go in yourself."

Mr. Simpkins did not like the prospect of being brained, and the advice struck him as excellent.

"Well, I am only one man," he admitted, as though it were possible he had been mistaken for half a dozen; "so perhaps it would be best to make fast the door, and go in search of a policeman."

"You must not leave us, Mr. Simpkins; we cannot be left!" cried a chorus of female voices, and Miss Durrant sobbed out that they might all be murdered before he came back.

"We'll lock the door, any way," said Simpkins, with reviving spirits. "Where's the key?"

The key was of course on the other side of the door. Miss Durrant had slammed the door behind her as she rushed from the room.

Simpkins looked at the door, and hesitated. Edith, whose wits were not paralysed by fright, had observed that all this while no sound came from the room. Neither window nor door had been opened. She began to feel incredulous concerning her aunt's burglar.

"I'll get the key," she said; "I'm not afraid to open the door. I daresay it is only another cat."

"A cat, Edith!" cried her aunt indignantly. "Why, I saw the man's eyes —such fierce eyes—gleaming at me, and his hair all tangled over his face. Oh, Edith!"

For Edith at that moment opened the door, and peeped cautiously round it. She saw the burglar at once. He had emerged from his hiding-place, feeling further concealment useless, and now stood on the hearth-rug in his ragged, clinging garments, with his fair hair falling disordered over his face, which expressed the utmost confusion and shame.

"Why, it's a boy!" said Edith, and she advanced into the room.

Gus came forward to meet her, his hands outstretched imploringly. "Oh, teacher, I'm so sorry!" he said. "I would not have come, but I couldn't help it. Lucas brought me; he made me come into the house."

"You young scoundrel!" cried Simpkins, valiant once more, as he came forward and seized the lad roughly. "I'll teach you to find your way into people's houses; I'll give you up to the police! Now, tell me, what have you taken?"

"I have touched nothing," said Gus. "Lucas told me to take the watches and things; but I would not do it. I would rather die!"

"A likely story that!" said the valet, with a sneer.

"I believe him," said Edith. "I know this boy; he was in my class one Sunday, and he came here the other day. Now, Gus, tell me all about it."

Encouraged by her kindness, Gus simply and without hesitation told the whole story of his acquaintance with Lucas, and how Lucas had first brought him to the house to make inquiries, and to-night had tried to make a tool of him, in order to gain possession of the ladies' valuables.

Miss Durrant had fled to the top of the house when Edith opened the door of her bedroom, but presently she found courage to return, and when she saw the diminutive proportions of the burglar, her dignity also revived.

"You will remember, Edith," she said, "that I told you how dangerous it was to encourage such a young scamp."

"You did, aunt," said her niece quietly; "but I cannot believe that this boy came here with an evil purpose."

"He's told you a parcel of lies, that's what he's a-done," said Simpkins. "I'll take him right away to the police-station; it ain't too late."

"Yes, take him; take him by all means," said Miss Durrant; and Edith in vain remonstrated.

But for the faithful Martha, who protested that it was not safe for Mr. Simpkins to go alone, since some of the gang might be lurking at hand ready to rescue the boy at the cost of Mr. Simpkins' life, Gus would have soon been consigned into the hands of the guardians of the peace.

"Let's lock him in the cellar for the night," suggested the humane Martha; "he can't do no harm there, and he can't possibly get out."

"But the cold, Martha," said Edith; "the cellar will be miserably cold."

"Oh, I'll warm him, the young scoundrel!" said Simpkins, giving Gus a premonitory shake.

"Stay, Simpkins, I cannot have him ill-treated," said Edith firmly. "You must make him a warm bed in the cellar, if you put him there for the night. And, Martha, see that he has something warm to put on in the place of these damp clothes. I rely on you to attend to my wishes. To-morrow morning grandpapa will return, and he will decide what shall be done with the poor little prisoner."

Miss Edith was a favourite with her grandfather's servants, and Martha would not lightly disregard her wishes. Simpkins held the boy by one arm, and Martha grasped the other, and they marched him off between them.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD-BYE TO LAVENDER TERRACE.

THERE was considerable excitement in the house the next morning. As early as possible, the police were informed of the attempted burglary; but so much time had been lost that it seemed doubtful if they would succeed in tracing Lucas and his son. The ladder they had used was discovered lying against the wall at the back of the shrubbery, but further sign of them there was none. Doubtless they had made their escape across the fields which lay at the back of the house, and hastened to another part of London.

Policemen were about the colonel's house in the morning; they searched the grounds, asked questions, and made various suggestions, but without much result. Gus was questioned and cross-questioned, but his story never varied. He told it with such simple directness and with such a guileless look in his blue eyes, that even the policemen, accustomed to believe the worst of human nature, were impressed with a belief in his truth.

At an early hour, two policemen surprised Sally Dent by a visit. She pointed out her lodger's room to them, and said that she believed he was not yet up. The door was indeed locked; but in vain the policemen knocked on it and shook it. No sound came from within; and when they burst it open, lo, the birds had flown! They must have made their way out by the window, and across the low wall of the garden. They had left little of value behind, and Lucas had neglected to pay his last week's rent—a fact which destroyed Sally's faith in the old saying of there being honour amongst thieves.

Sally could remember that her lodger had come in some time during the evening with his workman's bag over his shoulder, and had bidden her "good-night" as he turned into his room; but she was uncertain as to the exact hour of his return. Her head was apt to be in rather a hazy condition at that period of the day.

"It might have been eight o'clock; it might have been half-past; it might have been nine; I really could not say. A civil-spoken man was Lucas," Sally said. "If indeed he were a burglar, I have never been more

deceived in a man in all my life. And Gus, too! To think of what I have done for that lad, and he must needs go and take up with a lot of thieves! But have had enough of him; he shall never darken my doors again—a good-for-nothing young rascal! I'll let him know that I will only have honest folk here."

"The little lad's honest enough, if all's true that he says," replied one of the policemen. "It's a common dodge of them burglars to make a child their tool; but I think these got hold of one of the wrong sort."

About noon, Edith's grandfather returned to his disquieted household. Colonel Carruthers had seen service in the Crimea, and was now past seventy years of age; but his tall, slight figure still retained its erect, soldierly bearing, and his eyes their keen, bright glance. His expression was somewhat stern, his manner haughty; but the man was kinder than he appeared. He had known sore disappointment and pain in earlier days, and the trial had hardened his demeanour, and perhaps intensified his pride; but beneath this surface severity was concealed a warm heart—a heart that could feel the sorrows of others, a heart that could love faithfully and long. Very dear to the old colonel was his grandchild, Edith Durrant, the child of his only daughter.

The colonel listened with some impatience to Miss Durrant's account of the alarm of the past night, and did not hesitate to interrupt her now and again with a short, sharp question. He had never much patience with poor Miss Durrant; her fussiness annoyed him. Yet she had good cause to be grateful to the colonel. He had delivered her from the ill-paid, thankless position of a fine lady's companion, and given her a comfortable home as the mistress of his house and guardian of his young granddaughter, the eldest child of her brother, who was in India with his regiment.

"Where is the young rascal?" asked Colonel Carruthers, when he had been told the whole story.

He spoke gravely; but there was an amused gleam in his eyes, which Edith understood.

"He is downstairs, grandpapa," she replied; "the policeman wanted to take him away, but I thought you would like to see him."

"Like to see him, indeed! I don't know that I particularly care to see the young rogue."

"He is not at all the kind of boy you would think," said Edith. "I'll tell them to send him up."

A few minutes later Gus stood before the colonel. The boy had had a bath, and his face looked fresh and bright; but he still wore his ragged clothes. It was beyond the resources of the household to provide him with a better suit, since he was far too small to wear anything of the colonel's.

"Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?" the colonel asked with sternness, as he raised his eyes and looked keenly at the boy. Then his stern look relaxed. A strange expression came over his face. Wonder was in it, and something not unlike fear. What was there in the innocent child's look that caused the old man's glance to fall, and his lips to tremble? The blue eyes, looking out from beneath the thick curly hair all tumbled over the brow, seemed so familiar. The face was just such another sweet, innocent child's face as had once made the brightness of his own home. It was as if he were looking upon a little ghost.

The ragged, threadbare clothes seemed odd and out of place; but the face was the very image of the face that so often haunted his mind, floating in the mists of old memories, stabbing his heart with a sense of its guileless, boyish charm—the face of the boy who had loved to climb his knee and listen to his stories of camp-life, the boy who had listened with such a thoughtful, intelligent look, and had always so many questions to ask. But that was long years ago. This child was some beggar's brat, brought to the house by burglars, and the other boy—

Ah, that boy, so clever, so engaging, so full of promise, where was that boy now?

Edith wondered that her grandfather looked down and studied the blotting-pad on his desk ere he addressed another word to the boy, who

made no attempt to reply to his greeting.

After a minute, the colonel looked up, and said with his former incisiveness—

"What is your name?"

"Gus," the little fellow replied.

The colonel gave a start. The effect of that name on him was like an electric shock. For that other boy, whom this one so vividly recalled, had been familiarly known as "Gus."

But the thrill passed, and the next minute he spoke in his usual tone.

"How came you to be in my house last night?"

Gus answered readily now, telling again the story he had already told so many times. The colonel had heard it from other lips before, which was as well, perhaps, for he did not now listen with the closest attention. The child's voice and look as he spoke affected his listener strangely. He said little more to the boy, but soon sent him away.

"Is it not as I said, grandpa?" Edith asked. "He is not what you would expect, not an ordinary street Arab, is he now?"

"No, indeed," said the colonel dreamily. "I wonder if his story is true."

"I have not a doubt of it," said Edith.

"Ah, he has won your heart, I see. And yet—a child put into a house to steal! Well, well, it's a strange world."

"And he is all alone in it," Edith said gently; "a child with no one to care for him."

"That's not our concern; we can't help that. We only know that he came here to steal our things."

"That he was brought here to steal them," said Edith.

"Well, have it as you will; it does not make much difference. What's to become of him now?"

"That's what I want to know, grandpa. Will you send him to the police-station?"

"Why not? It's for the State to decide what shall be done with such a young ragamuffin. They'll send him to an industrial school, I suppose."

"That is what the policeman said; but, grandpa, that boy, with his sweet face and gentle ways, to mix with boys of the worst sort—"

"Probably he is one of that class himself, Edith. Depend upon it, the young rogue knows the value of those gentle ways. Now what do you want me to do—not adopt the lad, surely?"

"No, grandpa, not that," said Edith, smiling; "but I was thinking, if we could send him to Mr. Mouncey, he would know what to do with him."

"Mouncey! What made you think of him? Upon my word, that's not a bad suggestion. Mouncey's fond of ragamuffins. He'd make something of him, if any one could. But why should we trouble about it? Better leave him to the magistrate."

"Grandpa, that little boy was in my class one Sunday afternoon; I felt strangely drawn to him; I do still. I am sure he is a good boy."

Colonel Carruthers was silent for a few moments. Across his mind had come again the vision of that other boy, with his broad, fair brow, his open, innocent gaze. His face contracted as if with pain. A heavy sigh escaped him ere he said—

"Do not trust too much to appearances, Edie. These sweet, innocent-looking children are very disappointing. This boy will most likely turn out a scoundrel. But I'll think about it; I will see what I can do."

The colonel did think about it, with the result that he decided to send Gus to Rayleigh, a village in Kent, where the colonel had a small estate, and consign him to the care of the Rev. Sebastian Mouncey, a clergyman who took a special interest in orphan lads, and had instituted a cottage home for them in his parish. But the police desired that Gus should be detained at hand for a day or two, that he might be ready to identify Lucas and his son if they were arrested. But though the police made every effort to track the burglars, and expressed confidence in their ultimate success, the two men appeared to have got well out of their reach.

Gus did not feel particularly glad when Edith told him of the plan that had been made for him. He would rather have gone back to his old life at Sally Dent's. It was a poor home he had with her, but he could hardly remember the days when he had known a better one. Sally had been kind to him in her way, and now he knew he was not to return to them, he was conscious of a strange drawing of the heart towards Sally and her children, and all the people with whom he had lived at Lavender Terrace. He became aware that he had an affection even for the baby—the heavy, fretful, exacting baby, who had so often made his arms to ache, and tried his patience to the utmost.

And Lucy—Gus thought of her with an aching heart. He longed to know what had become of her, and wondered sadly if he should ever see her again. Gus begged that he might be allowed to go and say good-bye to Sally and her children ere he went away into the country.

Edith thought the wish quite to his credit, and persuaded her grandfather to grant it. But he was still suspicious of the lad, and thinking it might be a ruse to effect an escape, he resolved to accompany Gus to Glensford.

Though Sally had declared that Gus should never darken her doors again, she received him kindly, being impressed by his appearance in the neat new suit of clothes in which Edith had seen him arrayed, and also by the stateliness of the gentleman who accompanied him.

The colonel did not enter the house, but stood on the doorstep, in a position to see that Gus escaped neither by window nor door from Sally's

room, into which she had drawn him.

Sally questioned him eagerly as to all that had happened since he left her house; she admired his clothes, she pressed him to drink from her black bottle, whilst the children gathered round him, pleased to see their old friend again.

"Mrs. Dent," said Gus, when at last Sally paused, "I wish you would give me that Bible of father's. I should like to take it with me where I am going; I have nothing that belonged to him. You have it still, have you not?"

Mrs. Dent hesitated. She glanced at the high shelf on which the Bible lay, and then through the half-open door at the colonel's stately form. She longed to refuse the request. She never read the Bible, but none the less she wished to keep that handsome copy. But she knew she had no right to keep it from the boy, and she believed that if she refused, Gus would call the colonel to insist upon her giving him his own. So reluctantly she climbed on a chair, and lifted down the book. She undid the paper in which it was wrapped, and looked regretfully at the embossed covers.

"One don't often see a Bible like this," she remarked, and with that she opened it.

Strange to say, it opened at the very page on which she had last closed it, and again the warning words met her glance, "The wages of sin is death."

She started, closed the book, and thrust it from her.

"Take it!" she cried. "Take it, and welcome. I don't want it. It's not the book for me. I can't bear to be reminded of death and the grave, and all dismal things."

And of sin—she would fain forget that there was such a thing as sin, and that she was a sinner.

"What have you in that parcel?" asked the colonel, when the boy presently came out of Sally's room.

"My father's Bible, sir."

The colonel's person stiffened visibly. He elevated his chin, drew his military cloak about him with an air of annoyance, and with a commanding gesture signed to Gus to precede him as they passed out of Lavender Terrace.

"That's cant," he said to himself; "wants to do the religious, does he? His father's Bible, indeed! As if a boy whose father believed in the Bible would ever have fallen so miserably low!"

A profound distrust of those whom he was wont to describe as the "lower orders" was engrained in the colonel's character, and especially was he doubtful of any such if they professed to be religious.

CHAPTER XV.

RAYLEIGH.

WITH that visit to Lavender Terrace, Gus' old life came to an end. The next morning Edith and her grandfather saw him into the train for Rayleigh.

Mr. Mouncey, the energetic young vicar of Rayleigh, would meet him at the other end of his journey. Edith had no fear for him, since he was going to Mr. Mouncey; yet the boy had already won for himself such a place in her heart that she felt parting with him.

"We shall come to Rayleigh in the spring, I hope," she said, "so I shall see you then, Gus."

The boy smiled his sweet, winsome smile, but tears rose suddenly in his eyes. He was leaving this kind friend, he was leaving behind every one

he had ever known, and going to a place of which he knew nothing, and his heart sank within him at the thought.

"Look here, young sir," said the colonel sharply, "mind you do your duty where you are going. You attend to what Mr. Mouncey says, and he will make a man of you."

Make a man of him! What sort of a man? Gus wondered, as Miss Edith's form receded from his view, and he knew that the train was bearing him out of London. A gentleman—such a gentleman as his father had wished him to be? That was what Gus desired to become.

Rayleigh was a long, straggling village, with few houses that were not the dwellings of working people. A deep, still river ran through the place, and supplied the need of its chief industry, the large paper mill that stood upon its banks.

Most of those who dwelt in the small brick cottages were engaged in the mill. The long lines of these cottages were not picturesque, but the village could boast the beauty of a fine old church, with an ivy-mantled tower. Close to the church was the vicarage, a large square house, once the home of a numerous family; but the former vicar had removed to another living, and his successor, being young and unmarried, seemed out of place in the big house. But he was a warm-hearted, genial man, and soon gathered plenty of life about himself.

Within a stone's throw of the vicarage was his cottage home for orphan lads, a veritable home, where, under the care of a good-natured, motherly widow, the boys lived a free and happy life. The vicar showed them a kindness which fell little short of that of a father. The boys had well-nigh the run of the vicarage. They dug and tended the garden, which was one of the best in the neighbourhood, and were rewarded with the finest of the fruit and vegetables.

Mr. Mouncey supplemented the instruction they received at the village school with informal classes held of an evening in his large old dining-room. He had had no intention of founding an orphanage. A desire to befriend a poor woman who had lost her husband, and two young lads who

had been deprived of both father and elder brother by an accident at the mill, had led to the opening of the cottage. Other orphan lads in the neighbourhood, who must otherwise have been sent to the nearest workhouse, were, as time went on, placed in it. Sometimes friends at a distance asked the vicar to take charge of a forlorn lad; but, as a rule, the inmates of the cottage were boys whose antecedents were well known to Sebastian Mouncey. Gus was the first who came there with a stigma upon him—a boy who had associated with thieves.

But Mr. Mouncey had a welcome for him, not alone because of the generous way in which the colonel, whilst prophesying to Mr. Mouncey the disappointment of his hopes, had been ever ready to open his purse to increase the funds by which the cottage home was maintained; but also because the utter friendlessness of the boy was a sure passport to Sebastian's heart.

He kept to himself all that the colonel had told him of Gus' history. The boy should not begin his new life at Rayleigh with an ill name. And whatever fears the vicar might have concerning his new charge, he showed no suspicion of him. Nothing could be kinder than the way in which he welcomed Gus.

Gus, as he looked into his face, and met the glance of Mr. Mouncey's kind, earnest eyes, said to himself, "A gentleman—one of the right sort." And this conviction deepened in the boy's mind as he came to know Sebastian Mouncey better. His was indeed the gentle heart from which springs the gentle life.

As for Mr. Mouncey, he was delightfully surprised at the appearance of the boy committed to his care. Simple-hearted as a child himself, and frank almost to eccentricity, he was quick to feel the charm of the boy's artless grace. Gus was not at all the kind of boy he expected to see. He was not a boy of a low type. There was no sign of deceit, meanness, or rascality on his small, well-formed features. The clergyman looked at him, and marvelled.

It was curious how quickly the two came to understand each other. A bond was forged between them from the hour of their meeting.

Gus got on well with the boys in the cottage home. He was friendly with them all, but he made no special friend of any one. It was the vicar who was his friend.

Mr. Mouncey soon discovered that the boy had unusual abilities. He took trouble and sacrificed time in order to give Gus further instruction than he obtained at the village school. He began to teach him Latin, and was astonished at the rapidity with which he mastered the rudiments of that language. Once when the vicar was teaching him, Gus let fall a word which showed that his father had understood Latin.

"Your father?" said Mr. Mouncey in surprise. "Then he was an educated man?"

"My father was a gentleman once," said Gus, with unconscious dignity.

"Once!" repeated the vicar. "What do you mean?"

"He was a gentleman once," said Gus again; "but then—" The boy paused, and a deep flush of shame dyed his face.

"An educated man who lost his character, and sank to be the companion of thieves and vagabonds," thought the vicar, and forbore to question the boy further. All he said was, "You must be a true gentleman, Gus."

The boy looked at him with quick, questioning glance.

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me
It's only noble to be good—"

Quoted Mr. Mouncey.

Gus' eyes flashed a quick, comprehensive response, but he made no other reply.

The first winter which Gus spent in the country was a happy one. He now made acquaintance with the real country, which is very different from the suburban country on which London so greedily encroaches.

Gus thoroughly enjoyed the long rambles Mr. Mouncey would sometimes take with the boys on a clear, frosty day. Gus loved to see the grass and hedges all glittering with hoar-frost, or to hear the crisp silvery leaves crack beneath his tread as they walked through the woods. He thought the trees looked beautiful, with their great branches, bare save for ivy or lichen, outlined against the blue sky. He loved to watch the birds and squirrels, and even hares made tame almost by severe cold, and to learn all Mr. Mouncey could tell him of their habits. How Gus enjoyed, too, the novel delight of learning to skate on the frozen river, and the effects of the first heavy snowfall, the work of clearing the church and vicarage paths, and the snowballing, which the boys were not likely to omit.

And no less, though in a different way, he enjoyed the bright Sunday services in the beautiful old church, and the class in the vicar's dining-room on Sunday afternoons, when he talked to the boys of the one perfect life of the God-man, through the knowledge of whom we may become "partakers of the Divine Nature."

In the spring, Colonel Carruthers and his granddaughter, accompanied by Miss Durrant, came to Rayleigh.

The colonel's house was at some distance from the vicarage, at the opposite end of the village. It was an old-fashioned thatched house, with a flower garden in front of it. A fir plantation stretched to the right, and behind, just beyond the well-stocked kitchen garden, rose a bit of breezy, furzy common, the top of which commanded a view all over the village.

Looking down, one saw the river stealing along the meadows with a gentle curve, now to this side and now to that, till it reached the large stone buildings, pierced by numerous small windows, where so many hands were employed in paper-making. Near the mill stood a large house, also of stone,

and an imposing structure in its way, with bay windows and turrets. This was the residence which the owner of the mill had built for himself. Observing the house and the well-laid-out gardens which surrounded it, one could hardly doubt that the business was a prosperous concern.

Yet, if rumour could be trusted, the mill had not paid well of late, and the proprietor was beset by difficulties. It was feared that a day might come when the working of the mill would be suspended; an event which threatened ruin to the hands employed. But months had passed since these rumours began to circulate, and the mill had gone on working all the same. And now that the winter was over, and signals of summer's approach were beginning to appear everywhere, anxiety ceased to burden the minds of the working folk.

On the April evening following that of their arrival at Rayleigh, Edith and her grandfather were walking across the common, enjoying the beauty of the sunset, when Mr. Mouncey climbed over the low stone wall, accompanied by two or three of his boys, Gus being one of the party. It was the colonel's first meeting with the vicar, and he greeted him heartily.

"This is never Gus," said Edith, turning to look at the boys, when she had shaken hands with the clergyman.

The boy had indeed greatly changed since she saw him. He had grown taller, and though slender, looked strong and well-formed. His hair, though closely cut, still showed a tendency to curl; his cheeks had now the bright hue of health; his eyes were blue as ever, and the smile which lit up his face as Edith spoke to him had all the old sweetness. But whilst it was the same sweet, boyish face, the seriousness of its expression had deepened. Gus had learned much and thought much since he left London, and his countenance revealed the quickened mental and spiritual life.

The colonel had nodded kindly to Gus. His eyes now took quick, observant survey of the boy as he stood talking to Edith. His glance seemed to sadden as it rested on the child.

"He has improved," he remarked in an undertone. "What do you think of him, Mouncey? How will he do?"

"Well," was the prompt reply; "I have not a doubt of it. I never had such a boy as Gus in my home before."

"Indeed! How does he differ from the others?"

"In every way. They are good lads, most of them, but their minds are dull and slow, their manners rough and boorish. There is a peculiar gentleness about Gus, a goodness of heart, an unselfishness, an innate charm, I hardly know how to describe. Then as to his mind—he can learn anything; he grasps my ideas in a moment. Oh, I have the highest hopes of him."

"I would not have, if I were you," said the colonel drily. "You are too sanguine, as I often tell you. Depend upon it, you will be disappointed."

"I am not afraid," said Mr. Mouncey, with a smile. "I can tell you, Gus is a little gentleman."

"Gus—Gus what?" asked the colonel abruptly. "I suppose he has another name?"

"Gus Rew," said Mr. Mouncey.

"Rew! You can't make much of that," said Colonel Carruthers. "It is not an aristocratic patronymic. But every one is a gentleman nowadays. The grand old name is indeed—

"Defamed by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use.

"Still, to apply it to the son of a burglar does seem to me going too far."

"I do not think that Gus' father was a burglar," replied Mr. Mouncey.

The colonel shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

Mr. Mouncey thought it advisable to introduce another subject.

"Have you heard of the change we are to have here?" he asked, pointing towards the mill.

"I have heard nothing; I only arrived last night."

"Mr. Gibson has sold the mill. You know, perhaps, that for some time past he has been carrying it on at a loss. Now he has made over the whole concern to some one else."

"And who is the purchaser?"

"Some one from London. Philip Darnell is his name."

As it passed his lips, Mr. Mouncey saw that the name was not unknown to the colonel. The old soldier gave a slight start, his colour changed, his brow contracted, as if with pain.

"You know this gentleman, perhaps?" Mr. Mouncey ventured to suggest.

"By hearsay only," replied Colonel Carruthers stiffly. "He is of your complexion politically, Mouncey. He came forward as a candidate for one of the suburban boroughs some time ago, but was not elected. You will perhaps find him a sympathetic companion."

Mr. Mouncey shook his head, and smiled good-temperedly. "He will hardly sympathise with my politics, I fear," he said. "He must be a rich man, and few rich men can tolerate such an out-and-out Radical as I am."

Another one present had caught the name of Philip Darnell, and was no less startled by it than the colonel. Gus stood near enough to hear it, and the sound sent a thrill through his boyish frame. Philip Darnell! His father's enemy! The man he had seen on that summer morning nearly a year ago, when he had made that long tramp with his father in search of employment,

and his father had refused the work when found because it was to be done for this man.

In the night that followed his father had died, and every incident of that last day together was vividly imprinted on Gus' memory. This was the man who had wrought his father's ruin, the man on whom he had promised to be revenged, if ever it was in his power. Was the chance coming to him now?

Gus remembered every word which his father had uttered concerning Philip Darnell; but other words which his father had said to him had almost faded from his mind. He had hardly given a thought since his father's death to the fact that Rew was not his real name. He had forgotten the slip of paper inserted within the lining of the old Bible; but now it suddenly flashed on his mind, and he wondered what was the long name his father had written that day.

At that moment Mr. Mouncey, was saying, "Good-evening, Colonel Carruthers."

Gus had heard the colonel's name often before; but a novel thought came to him as he heard it now. Had not the name his father had declared to be his sounded something like that—something like Carruthers? Could it be? But, no, it must be his fancy; it seemed impossible that a poor boy, such as he was, should have the same name as a gentleman like the colonel. And what did it matter what his right name was? Gus Rew was a nice, easy little name, which did very well for him.

CHAPTER XVI.

GUS BEGINS TO WORK FOR HIMSELF.

COLONEL CARRUTHERS remained but a few weeks at Rayleigh. He did not wait to see Philip Darnell established in Mr. Gibson's late residence.

Edith was sorry to leave the country in the lovely spring-time, when woods and fields were bright with flowers and with the songs of birds; but her grandfather seemed suddenly to have taken a dislike to Rayleigh. He was not to be persuaded to extend his stay, and soon after their return to the neighbourhood of London Edith learned, to her regret, that the colonel had let the Retreat, as his country house was named, to a gentleman for a term of three years.

Edith was sorry, not alone because she loved the place, but also because she had counted on seeing, from time to time, Gus, in whom she continued to feel much interest. She knew, however, that Gus could not be better off than in the care of Mr. Mouncey, so she tried to console herself with the reflection that he did not want her now, and the boys in her Sunday class at Glensford did. But somehow, there was not one of these boys whom she loved as she loved Gus. There was something so charming about the frank, manly boy; he was at once so gentle and so bold. She was disposed to say, with Mr. Mouncey, that she had never seen a lad just like him.

The news that Mr. Gibson had sold the mill was received with sorrow by his work-people. They had served him for so many years—some of the older men had worked for his father before they worked for him—that the idea of a new master was far from agreeable to them. And if Mr. Gibson, who had known the business all his life, had failed to make it pay, was it likely, they asked, that a stranger, who, if report said truly, had never tried paper-making before, was likely to succeed?

But Philip Darnell knew what he was about; the men soon saw that plainly enough. He had not purchased the concern without shrewdly calculating ways and means, and discerning how he could get good interest for his money. Changes were made at the mill. The old foreman, sorely to his mortification, was dismissed. Several of the old hands followed him.

The management of the mill was given to a man who came from London, and brought several workmen with him. A new method of paper-

making was adopted; and if the paper was not so good as formerly, it was produced at less cost, and found a readier market. Wages were cut down, and economy exercised in every direction. Some of the work-people refused to take the lower wage, and moved away from Rayleigh, in the hope of finding better-paid work elsewhere; but the majority were of opinion that a "bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and preferred to earn what they could at Rayleigh rather than risk coming to destitution in a strange place. But the change was bitter to them, and they regarded the new master with little favour.

But Philip Darnell cared not what might be the feelings cherished towards him by those whom he employed. To him, they were merely the "hands," human machines, out of which he was determined to grind as much work as possible, at the greatest profit to himself. He came with his wife and children to spend the summer at Rayleigh, and they took possession of the Mill House, as it was called, living there in a far more extravagant and showy style than the Gibsons had adopted.

Mrs. Darnell, magnificently attired, drove about in a handsome landau, drawn by a pair of spirited bays. She expected the men to touch their hats when they saw her, and the women to drop a humble curtsey; but she made no effort to enter into friendly relations with them. She would as soon have thought of going to work at the mill as of visiting the wives and mothers in their homes, as Mrs. Gibson had been wont to do. The grand lady in her carriage saw them separated from her by a wide chasm of social inequality, across which no sense of a common womanhood could draw her.

And the people were quick to feel that they were looked down upon, and to resent the fact. As the months passed on, the spirit of discontent deepened and spread. But the mill prospered, and Philip Darnell was pleased with the success of his new enterprise. He was making money by the business, and that was all he desired. He had no idea of any higher success than that of doing well to himself; no sense of any responsibility for the well-being of those who worked for him.

Another winter came, and another. There was little outward change at Rayleigh; but quietly, yet surely, the feeling of ill-will between employer and employed was growing stronger, and taking deeper root. Philip Darnell

had no consciousness of anything being wrong; he had never felt more prosperous and confident, nor more insolently disdainful of every one who tried to check the working of his will.

Sebastian Mouncey came in for a large share of contempt, because he would now and again intercede for some dismissed workman, or try in one way or another to make the mill-owner feel for his "hands" as men. It was in vain he made appeal for any sort of charity to Philip Darnell. He had no sympathy with the clergyman in his schemes for the benefit of his poor brothers and sisters; nor, though once on a Sunday his carriage—the distance was barely half a mile—carried him and his wife to the church door, had he any real belief in the truths the vicar endeavoured to teach.

Nearly three years had passed since Gus came to Rayleigh. He was "little Gus" no longer; but a strong, well-grown lad for his years. He had passed the highest standard at the village school, and had turned to good account his private lessons with the vicar.

Mr. Mouncey began to deliberate seriously concerning his future. He thought him no ordinary lad, and would have liked him to have further educational advantages. He tried to interest Colonel Carruthers, whom he still saw from time to time, whenever he had occasion to visit London, in the subject of Gus' future. But to his disappointment, the colonel hardly cared to listen to anything he could say about Gus.

"Nonsense, Mouncey!" he said once, speaking good-humouredly, but in a decided manner. "That lad has bewitched you. There is really nothing exceptional about him. He is a clever young rogue, I daresay; but in my opinion, you'll make a great mistake if you overeducate him, and try to lift him out of his true position. Can't you find him work at Rayleigh? Keep him there if you can, under your own eye, and don't send him up to London."

Unfortunately Edith Durrant was not present to take up Gus' cause. Her parents had lately returned from India, and she had left her grandfather's home, and gone to reside with them at Southampton. Mr. Mouncey knew that it was vain to seek her aunt's sympathy on behalf of Gus. Miss Durrant had never forgiven the boy for the fright he had caused

her by hiding himself in her bed. She continued to regard him as a burglar in embryo. Had she been consulted with regard to his future, she would probably have suggested that, for the good of society, he should be kept in close confinement for the rest of his life.

The vicar agreed with Colonel Carruthers in deeming it undesirable that Gus should return to the neighbourhood of London; but it was with a feeling of disappointment that he set himself to find work for Gus at Rayleigh. He spoke to the manager of the mill, and learned that he was in need of a smart lad, able to write a good hand and keep accounts. He was willing to take Gus into the counting-house, and try what he could make of him; and the vicar, thinking Gus well fitted for the post, gladly accepted it for him.

He fancied Gus would be pleased to hear of the arrangement he had made; but when he told him the boy's face flushed crimson, as if with pain, and for some moments he said nothing. Was he to go into the service of Philip Darnell? Was he to work for the man whom his father had refused to serve, even when they were almost starving? The idea was most repugnant to him.

"Why, Gus, you do not like the idea?" said Mr. Mouncey in surprise. "I thought you would be glad to begin to earn money for yourself."

"So I should be, sir," said Gus slowly, "but—" He paused.

"There is something else you wish to be. Have you set your heart on becoming a gardener?" said Mr. Mouncey, remembering that Gus had of late shown much interest in certain gardening operations.

"No, sir. I never thought of such a thing. It is not that I dislike the kind of work."

"Then what is it you dislike? I can see there is something wrong."

"If it were for any one else," murmured Gus, his face growing a deeper crimson.

Mr. Mouncey caught the words, and fancied he understood what they signified. He knew well how Philip Darnell was regarded by his work-people. The things that were said of him, and even the opprobrious epithets that some of his workmen did not hesitate to apply to him, had reached the ear of the vicar. He was far from holding Philip Darnell blameless in his conduct towards his work-people; but he had no sympathy with the feelings some of them were beginning to evince.

"Come, Gus," he said, rather sharply, "what foolish notion have you in your head? What can it matter to you for whom you work? The thing you have to see to is that you do your work well and nobly, remembering that you serve, not this master or that, but the Lord Christ."

But Gus looked troubled still.

"Mr. Mouncey," he asked presently, "did you ever have an enemy?"

"An enemy!" repeated Mr. Mouncey, a gleam of amusement lighting up his bright, open face. "Why, no, Gus, I do not believe I have ever had what you could call an enemy. I have created ill-will towards myself many a time by the things I have felt obliged to do; but the feeling has soon died away. No, I never had a downright enemy. What made you think of such a thing?"

Instead of replying to this question, Gus asked another.

"Suppose you had an enemy, sir; would you be willing to work for him?"

"Certainly I would serve him, Gus, in any way that I could. If I knew that a man was my enemy, I would do my utmost to change him into a friend. That is the Christian way. What did Jesus say? 'Love your enemies.' It is not hard to serve those whom we love."

"No, but it's hard to love those who have done us wrong," said Gus thoughtfully.

"You are right; it is hard. We need to seek of God grace to forgive our enemies. In some cases, one must begin to serve before one can love. If a man tries to do good to his enemy, he will presently find that he loves him."

"Then how about revenge?" asked Gus, remembering his father's words. "Are we never to have our revenge on those who have hurt us?"

"Never," said the vicar emphatically; "the idea of revenge is mean, and low, and spiteful, unworthy of a Christian and a gentleman. Unless, indeed, we seek it in the manner St. Paul points out, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

Gus was silent, pondering the vicar's words. That was not the kind of revenge his father meant. No; his father had hated this man, Philip Darnell, and had deemed himself justified in hating him with the bitterest hatred. He had longed for the power to punish him for the evil he had done. It would have been joy to him to see his enemy suffer pain.

But a Christian must not hate his enemy. Gus had never heard the old saying that "A Christian is God Almighty's gentleman;" but he had long ago resolved that he would be a gentleman after the pattern of Jesus Christ, and the resolve had become a power in his life. Now by which was he most bound—the law of Christ, or the promise he had given to his father?

The boy's simple, ingenuous mind soon saw its way through the difficulty.

"When I made that promise to father," he said to himself, "I did not know what I know now. And father did not understand the beautiful ways of Jesus, and that I cannot truly be a gentleman unless I follow them; for if he had, he would not have asked me to make such a promise. I will keep the promise, though: I will seek to be revenged on Philip Darnell; but it shall be in the Christian way. I do not know how I shall do it, for he is little likely to hunger or thirst; but there may be some way in which I can heap coals of fire on his head."

Whilst these thoughts were passing through Gus' mind, Sebastian Mouncey was watching him curiously. What was working in his mind? What had he heard concerning Philip Darnell? His enemy, indeed! It was a strange fancy; but the thoughts of youth are often incomprehensible to older minds, and Sebastian Mouncey was not the man to despise them on that account. He did not press Gus to speak, but waited; and presently the boy of his own accord said—

"I will go to the mill, if you wish it, sir."

"That's right, my lad," said Mr. Mouncey heartily; "I believe it is the best opening I can find for you. The manager, Mr. Ellary, is a kind-hearted man, and you will do well with him."

So on the following Monday morning, Gus began his work in the counting-house. He would still live at the cottage, but he was now to pay a small sum for his board and lodging, and he felt proud that he could do so.

From eight in the morning till six in the evening, with the exception of an hour in the middle of the day, when he went home to have his dinner, he was in the counting-house. It seemed irksome at first to sit so long before a high desk; but he worked well, and gave satisfaction to Mr. Ellary.

It was now late autumn, and Mr. Darnell had returned to his London residence for the winter, contenting himself with coming down once a week to see that things were going right at the mill, so that Gus saw but little of him.

The title of "gentleman" had not followed Gus to Rayleigh, but he deserved it as much as he had ever done. In his new position, he showed a courtesy, kindliness, and candour which the noblest-born could hardly have surpassed. As a natural consequence, he became a general favourite with the mill-hands.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MILL-HANDS "STRIKE."

IT was a Saturday evening towards the end of November. The six o'clock bell had rung, and the "hands," both men and women, were streaming out of Rayleigh Mill. The atmosphere was raw and cold, yet the work-people did not hasten to their homes, as they were wont to do. They gathered in knots outside the gates, talking eagerly. Some of the faces were flushed and triumphant, some pale and anxious-looking; but each told of unusual excitement. The younger people shouted and laughed; but their elders, especially the women, looked troubled. They were thinking forebodingly of empty cupboards and fireless grates.

As the last band of workers passed through the gates, the crowd broke into a loud "Hurrah!" The mill-hands had come out "on strike," and unless Philip Darnell yielded to their demands—which he had vowed he would not do—not one would enter the mill on Monday morning.

Amongst his employés, there was only one who had refused to join the strike, and that was the young clerk, Gus Rew. In vain, the men had urged him to forsake his post; in vain, when persuasions failed, had they resorted to threats. Gus was happy in his work, and satisfied with his pay; besides, he knew that Sebastian Mouncey disapproved of the action of the men. Had they listened to his counsel, their position might have been improved without such an exhibition of between master and men; but they had turned from their old friend to listen to the florid rhetoric and ardent appeals of a trade-unionist from London.

The mill-hands had passed out, and one of the great gates was already closed when Gus appeared, accompanied by Mr. Ellary.

"Here's that conceited youngster," muttered one of the men. "Hang it! He has Ellary with him, or we'd give him a jacketing."

"He shall have it yet," said another; "we'll flog the impudence out of the young sneak. He shall learn not to set himself against those older and wiser than himself."

"You had better leave the boy alone, I can tell you; it'll be the worse for any man who lays a finger upon him," said a tall, stalwart young fellow who stood near. The appearance of Gus' champion was so formidable that the men turned away, and uttered no more threats.

As Gus passed through the crowd, unconscious of the ill-will he had excited, an old man caught him by the hand, and said kindly, with lowered voice, "Gus, lad, you must join us. There are men ready to do you a mischief if you hold out. Their blood's up, and they don't care what they do. Come, lad, why should you turn against your old friends? Why risk your life for the sake of that scoundrel?"

"I will never turn against old friends; Mike, and as to risking my life, I cannot believe that any of the men would really do me harm. Why should they? They know I am their friend. But I cannot see that it would be right of me to throw up my work. I have no grievance."

"You might take up their grievances. It looks as if you had no feeling, to hold yourself aloof."

"Indeed I do feel for them," said Gus, looking troubled, "and so does Mr. Mouncey; but—"

"Oh, parson's agin us too. Parsons always take the side of the rich against the poor."

"That's not true," said Gus, with a touch of indignation in his tone. "No one feels for the poor more than Mr. Mouncey. But he thinks the men have been too hasty."

"Oh yes; of course we're in the wrong," said Mike. "But, Gus, these men have been drinking; you had better take yourself out of their way."

Three of the roughest, most disreputable of the workmen were approaching. The dark scowl on the face of the foremost and his clenched fist boded no good to Gus; but the boy made no movement to escape. His blue eyes looked fearlessly into the angry eyes bent on him, and the calm, strong glance had its power. The man shrank and swerved before it as an animal might have done; his hand fell to his side, he muttered some contemptuous words about "a bit of a lad,"' and passed on with his comrades, one of whom dropped a large stone he had taken up, with the intention of hurling it at Gus.

"'Pon my word, you're no coward, lad!" cried Mike admiringly.

Rayleigh Mill looked dreary enough on Monday morning. Not a workman was in sight as Gus walked up to the gates at eight o'clock; but some one, unseen, was watching him, for suddenly a stone struck him on the temple, a little above the eye, with such force that the blood poured down his face. He stood outside the closed gates, trying to staunch the blood with his handkerchief, when Mr. Ellary came up.

"Who has done this, lad?" asked Mr. Ellary, with anger in his glance.

"I do not know, sir; no one was in sight when I looked round."

"A coward, whoever he was, to wound a lad for doing his duty! It is a mercy it missed your eye."

"Yes," said Gus, shivering from the shock.

"Poor boy!" said Mr. Ellary, as he drew out his keys and prepared to open the gate for himself, the gate-keeper having struck with the rest. "But the cut is not deep, I trust. There is lint and plaster in the office, and I will try what I can do as a surgeon."

The office was unswept, the fire unlit. The woman who was wont to perform those duties dared not put in an appearance that morning; so, as soon as Mr. Ellary had dressed his wound, Gus, though still feeling dizzy and sick, set to work to make a fire and put the place in order, whilst Mr. Ellary opened the letters and despatched a telegram to Philip Darnell.

Gus found many new tasks to perform that morning, and the time sped quickly. Soon after noon, Mr. Darnell appeared on the scene. He was much annoyed at what had occurred, but he was determined to carry matters with a high hand. The men should learn that he was not to be forced to do as they pleased. He would show himself master of the situation, and manage to work the mill without the help of the strikers.

Philip Darnell was conferring with the manager in his private room, when glancing through the window he saw Sebastian Mouncey approaching the office. A flush of anger mounted to his forehead. He had always disliked the clergyman; now he regarded him as the friend and supporter of the men. Doubtless he had come to urge their cause, and set forth their grievances. Instantly Darnell decided that he would not listen to the parson, would not even see him.

"Gus," he said, stepping quickly into the outer office, "Mr. Mouncey is at the door. Tell him I cannot see him. Say I am not here."

Gus looked at him in amazement.

"But, sir," he began to speak, then paused.

"Well, what?" demanded his employer angrily, as Mr. Mouncey's knock was heard.

"You are here, sir."

"I suppose I know that as well as you do; but I wish you to tell him I am not here. Say that I have returned to London."

"I cannot say that, sir," replied Gus, flushing.

"You cannot? How dare you answer me like that? Do as I bid you at once."

"I cannot," said Gus, speaking more firmly. "I will not tell a lie!"

A stinging box on the ears sent him reeling to the other side of the room.

"Take that!" roared Philip Darnell. "Take that for answering me with such impudence!"

His upraised voice brought Mr. Ellary in haste from the other room. At the sight of his astonished face, Mr. Darnell made an effort to recover his dignity.

"This young cur has grossly insulted me," he said. "Send him about his business at once. I refuse to have him longer in my employ. Why did he not join the strikers? He is one with them at heart. He only stayed that he might act the part of a sneak, a spy. Pay him, and send him off at once. I insist on it."

At this moment a succession of sharp knocks on the outer door showed that Mr. Mouncey was growing impatient.

"There's that stupid, meddlesome parson!" burst out Darnell in fresh anger. "Why can't he attend to his own business, and let mine alone? You must see him, Ellary; I will not. Go and send hint away somehow. Tell him I refuse to listen to any compromise, or to make any terms with the men."

Ellary, with a troubled face, went out, and Philip Darnell retreated into the inner room. He watched till he saw Sebastian Mouncey, with a grave, stern look on his usually cheerful face, pass out of the yard.

A little later Gus went out, and took his way to the cottage where he lived. He was somewhat soothed by a few kind, regretful words from Mr. Ellary; yet the boy's heart was sore and angry. A sense of injustice burned within him.

After all—so it seemed to him for a moment—he might as well have joined the strikers. Surely, now, it was only natural that he should hate Philip Darnell. He had shown himself his enemy, as he had been his father's enemy in days gone by. A fierce longing for revenge awoke in Gus' heart. For a while he was wholly possessed by angry, resentful feelings; but better thoughts succeeded. Like a breath of pure air from the eternal hills came to his mind the gentle words of Jesus:

"'I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.'"

Gus paused ere he reached the cottage, and stood still in deep thought, suddenly, painfully convicted of duty. Oh, it were easier to forgive the man who threw the stone which gashed his forehead, than the one who had so misunderstood him, who had called him a sneak and a spy! Yet he must forgive both. He must put all hatred, all bitterness, out of his heart.

How hard it was to be a gentleman in any degree like Jesus Christ! So hard it seemed, that Gus well-nigh despaired of such attainment; yet he felt that there was nothing else in life worth striving after. He could be satisfied with nothing less.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GUS HAS HIS REVENGE.

PHILIP DARNELL was determined that his work-people should not get the better of him. Since they had chosen to go out on strike, they must take the consequences of their folly. He would soon find others to fill their places. He went back to town that same day resolved to find men; and they were not hard to find. Ere the next day closed, he had engaged a sufficient number, and it was arranged that they should travel down to Rayleigh on the following day by a train which arrived there late in the evening.

Mr. Ellary had the difficult task of providing for their accommodation within the mill buildings. He could gain no help from the villagers. Everybody sympathised with the strikers, and one and all refused to stretch forth a finger in the service of Philip Darnell.

How it became known that he was sending men down to work at the mill no one could explain. Doubtless the sight of the large supplies of necessaries which kept arriving from London suggested the idea to the strikers, on the alert to guard their rights.

Every precaution Mr. Ellary could take failed to secure the strangers from a warm reception. The strikers collected and mobbed them as they came out of the station. Brickbats were thrown, and one man was seriously injured. The darkness of the night favoured the attacking party, and the village police were overpowered. Many of the new-comers were persuaded or frightened into turning back ere they reached the mill gates. The band of men whom Mr. Ellary at last succeeded in getting within was little more than half the number of those who had come to Rayleigh, and they were in a sadly disheartened frame of mind.

But though his new arrangement did not work well, Philip Darnell was not disposed to give in. He brought more men down from London, and established himself for a while at the Mill House, that he might be at hand to assist and support Mr. Ellary.

Week after week passed on, and the mill was kept going, though not without difficulty, owing to the inexperience of the new mill-hands. Meanwhile, the strikers and their families were suffering sorely. Children sickened and died, and their death was laid to the charge of Philip Darnell. When a spell of severe weather set in, and there still seemed no prospect of a termination of the strike, the general feeling of resentment towards Philip Darnell grew to a white heat. One day his effigy was carried the whole length of the village, followed by a mocking, hooting crowd, and finally burnt on the common behind the colonel's house.

Sebastian Mouncey began to fear that the mill-owner would not escape personal violence.

The clergyman did what he could to relieve the poor families in the straits they had brought on themselves; but he had no power to bring about a better state of things, since Mr. Darnell refused to listen to any mediator.

Nor was Gus idle. He had found plenty to do since he was dismissed from the mill. The colonel's house was now empty, and there was work for boys to do in weeding and hoeing the garden. But Gus had a way of finding tasks for himself in addition to those with which the vicar provided him. He went in and out of the cottages, greeted everywhere with a welcome; for since it became known that he, too, was a sufferer from Philip Darnell's tyranny and injustice, all the old friendliness towards him had revived.

If there was an over-worked mother to be helped, or a sick child to be amused, or any job to be done to which he could give his strength and skill, Gus was ready to meet the need. He was never so happy as when he was helping others.

Christmas was close at hand. It promised to be the gloomiest Christmas the villagers of Rayleigh had ever known. It was the night of the twentieth—a night long remembered at Rayleigh. Gus was sleeping in the tiny room he had to himself beneath the thatched roof of the cottage. He was never a heavy sleeper, and towards morning the melancholy howling of a dog roused hint from his slumber. The sound seemed to come from the direction of the mill. Sitting up in bed to listen, Gus was surprised to see a red glow in the sky. Was it the herald of the dawn?

He hurried to the little casement beneath the eaves. Then he saw that the glow came from behind the mill, and from it, showing dark against the copper-coloured sky, rose a thick column of smoke. As Gus gazed in bewilderment, unable at once to conceive the meaning of what he saw, a flame shot through the smoke.

Gus sprang from the window, and rushed to the top of the stairs, crying, "Fire! Fire!" Hustling on his clothes, he was abroad as soon as any one, and flew to rouse those who were sleeping at the mill. As he hurried along, he soon perceived whence the smoke came. It was not the mill, but Mill House that was in flames.

The men were quickly roused; but for a while the greatest confusion prevailed. There was a fire-engine belonging to the mill, but the new hands did not understand how to use the gear, and the firemen wert of course

amongst the strikers. Even in this extremity they held back, mindful of their wrongs.

"Let him burn!" Gus heard a man say. "He has done his best to starve us; he would not care if we and our children perished. Let him burn, I say!"

"For shame, Ned!" cried Gus passionately. "Are you a man, and talk like that?"

There was no time for more words. The boy was working with an energy which put to shame every half-hearted man. Mr. Ellary and the vicar were now on the spot, issuing commands, and working so hard themselves that few could resist the contagion of their example. But work as they might, things seemed against them. The hose was out of order; there was a terrible delay ere it could be got to work. Meanwhile, in the still frosty air the fire was burning fiercely, and spreading all along the front of the house.

Gus was one of those who helped to drag the fire-escape round to the burning house. No sign of life was apparent in the front, where the fire raged fiercest. Happily there were few persons in the house.

In the absence of his wife and family, Mr. Darnell had been content with the services of a married couple, formerly servants of his, who had been left in the house as caretakers. These two were presently seen at an upper window at the back of the house, crying for help, in a state of the utmost terror. They had tried to escape, but the stairs which led to their rooms were in flames. In a few minutes, by means of the fire-escape, they were brought safely to the ground.

"Where is Mr. Darnell? Is he awake?" demanded several voices.

"We cannot tell," was the reply; "he sleeps at the other side of the house—the room with two windows, to the right of the great door."

The room to the right! Just where the flames were gathering most fiercely! The fire-escape was promptly brought to the spot, but the flames were now shooting outwards and upwards with such fury that it was found

impossible to use it. Shout after shout was raised, but no voice responded, no sign of life was apparent anywhere.

"He is beyond help by this time," said one of the men.

And a momentary sense of awe fell even upon those who a little before could have cried, "Serve him right!"

"There must be some way of getting to him—something can surely be done!" cried Sebastian Mouncey, aghast at the thought of Philip Darnell

being thus abandoned to his fate.

But the lower rooms and the staircase were in flames; it would be madness to attempt to enter, and the amateur firemen were by no means disposed to risk their lives in an heroic effort to save that of the man they hated. All they would do was to apply the hose freely, trusting thus to check the progress of the flames.

But whilst they hung back, deeming rescue hopeless, one, who had certainly no less cause to regard Philip Darnell as his enemy, was resolved to dare his utmost rather than let him perish without making an attempt to save him.

A shout was suddenly raised, and looking up, Mr. Mouncey perceived that Gus had ascended by means of the fire-escape at a point to which the fire had not extended, and was advancing along a narrow stone coping towards a window which adjoined those of Mr. Darnell's bedroom. The ledge was so narrow that the attempt was most hazardous.

After that one instinctive shout, the crowd held their breath as they watched his slow, cautious advance. Presently he was lost in a cloud of smoke. Then again they saw him. He had reached the window, and was clinging to its framework. They saw him break the wide pane with his elbow. The heat had loosened it, the whole sheet of glass came out easily; but the smoke rolled out through the opening, and as the brave lad crawled within, they saw him no more.

The men below raised another ringing shout. Sebastian Mouncey could not join in it. A mist passed before his eyes, a sickening dread oppressed his heart.

Mr. Ellary murmured, "A hero, if ever there was one; but he cannot come out alive!"

Gus had entered the dressing-room connected with Mr. Darnell's bedroom. The rush of smoke that met him was almost overpowering, but drawing his woollen muffler closely over his mouth, he pressed through into the next room. The air was heavy with smoke; already the floor felt hot

beneath his feet, but Gus stumbled across it, till he found the bed and the form stretched in stupor upon it.

There was no rousing the sleeper, and every moment passed in that suffocating atmosphere was full of danger. By main force—happily he was strong for his years—Gus dragged the unconscious form out of bed, and across the floor into the dressing-room. Here there was water, and dashing it upon the face of the sleeper, and then shaking him violently, Gus roused him to a sense of his awful peril.

Philip Darnell raised himself from the floor, but, shivering and bewildered with terror, seemed powerless to move, whilst the blinding smoke rolled towards them. Flames were already licking about the window by which Gus had entered. It was impossible to escape by that.

"Put this over your face," cried Gus, seizing a towel from the washstand, "and come with me."

Clutching his wrist, he drew him into the passage. Fresh clouds of smoke rolled to meet them. Flames were leaping upwards from the burning staircase. Philip Darnell shrank back in terror; but Gus, with the strength of desperation, dragged him on through the dense smoke down the passage, and into one of the back bedrooms, where the atmosphere was clearer. Gus made for the window, threw it up, and stepped out upon the sill. Darnell managed, with his help, to get up beside him, clinging to the casement; but the man was shaking so, that it seemed impossible that he could long retain his hold. They tried to shout; but their voices were choked, and only a faint sound escaped them.

The fire was at a distance from them now; they had only to fear the smoke, the suffocating, choking smoke. How long could they hold out against that? Would it hide them from those below?

"Is there any hope?" asked Darnell faintly.

"Yes, there is hope," Gus said. "I hear a shout. I believe the people see us. Hold on with all your might."

"I can't hold on much longer," was the reply. Then, as a thought struck him, Darnell tried to peer through the smoke at the boy who stood beside him. "I don't know you," he said; "who are you?"

In moments of extreme peril, the past comes back to us with extraordinary vividness. At that instant, there flashed upon Gus' mind all that his father had told him of his past history, and of the way in which he had been wronged by Philip Darnell. He remembered how his father had told him that he was by birth a gentleman; and the name rightfully his, though so long forgotten, stood forth distinctly before him now, as though written on the murky atmosphere in letters of fire.

There was scarce a pause ere he said calmly, in reply to his companion's question, "I am Augustus Devereux Carruthers."

Darnell's ear caught the words. He started violently, lost his balance for a moment, and, but for Gus' quick grasp, must have fallen. Gus did not loose his hold of him again.

There were more shouts from below. The people had seen them. The fire-escape was being brought to the spot. No time was lost by those below; but the waiting seemed awful to the two who stood on the window-sill.

Gus dared not look down. His head was growing dizzy, his limbs numb. His hands still kept their grasp of Philip Darnell and of the window-frame, but they were growing lax; they seemed not to belong to him.

There was another shout. The fire-escape was in position. Some one was mounting rapidly. But just as Philip Darnell's arm was grasped by Sebastian Mouncey, Gus on the other side relaxed his hold, staggered, and fell to the ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

A REVELATION.

WHEN they lifted Gus from the ground they found that he had broken his thigh, and it was feared that he might have sustained still more serious injuries. Mr. Mouncey helped to carry him to the vicarage, which was nearer than the cottage in which he lived, and the village surgeon was soon in attendance on him.

Philip Darnell, too, was made welcome to the vicarage, and to all he stood in need of that Mr. Mouncey could supply. He was unnerved by the sudden shock and the narrow escape he had experienced, but otherwise uninjured.

Meanwhile, the best efforts that could be made with the one small engine were powerless to check the progress of the fire. After a while two fire-engines from neighbouring districts arrived on the scene; but by that time the fire had gained such a hold that it was impossible to save any portion of the house. It burned on till midday, and when evening fell the ruins were still smouldering. On the morrow, little save the outer shell of the house remained. The fire which destroyed the Mill House was a never-to-be-forgotten event in the annals of Rayleigh.

A thorough investigation was made, but the origin of the fire could not be traced. No one appeared to have known anything about it till Gus gave the alarm. Yet Philip Darnell was convinced that it was the work of an incendiary; and though Sebastian Mouncey would fain have believed otherwise, he thought it only too probable that this was the case. He had heard many a muttered threat of revenge.

What more likely than that some of the most lawless of the strikers, finding themselves baffled at every turn, and powerless to win an advantage by any overt act, should have chosen this way to strike a blow at their oppressor? But though detectives came from London to search out the

matter, nothing transpired that could lead to the conviction of the criminal and his confederates, if such there were. The affair remained a mystery.

For Sebastian Mouncey, Gus formed the most absorbing interest of the next few days. The lad's injuries were so great that at first it seemed almost impossible that he could recover. Whilst he lay unconscious, Mr. Mouncey was constantly beside his bed, sharing the watch of the skilled nurse, and manifesting the devotion of a father towards the orphan lad. All the village there appeared to share his anxiety. In almost every home were those who were hoping and praying that Gus' life might be saved.

And yet, perhaps, none desired his recovery more than did Philip Darnell. He felt that if Gus died, his face would haunt him to the end of his days, like that of an accusing angel with eyes full of reproach. Was it a frenzied fancy, born of his terror and anguish, or had the boy indeed uttered that name as they stood on the window-sill, the name of the man whom he would never willingly recall, yet could not banish from his memory? Ah, he would give anything now to be able to forget the man whom he had pushed down in the world's mire, and over whose prostrate form he had then stepped to his own advancement!

"Be good enough to let me know every day how the boy is," he said to the clergyman, ere quitting Rayleigh for London; "and draw upon my purse for whatever he wants. If you think it well, I will send down a surgeon from London. I cannot forget that he has saved my life."

"Thank you," said Mr. Mouncey. "I will see to it that Gus wants for nothing. He has many friends who will be only too happy to do everything in their power for him."

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Darnell quickly. "I mean, what do you know of his history before he came to Rayleigh?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Mouncey, "except that his father was an educated man, who had sunk into the lowest depths of poverty."

"Ah," said Darnell, his colour deepening as he spoke; "was, you say; then his father is dead?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Mouncey; and no more was said about Gus.

That night, the high fever, which had been one of the gravest symptoms of Gus' condition, began to subside, and in the morning he was conscious. But he was very weak, and at first could remember little of what had happened. The awful fire, his gallant rescue of Philip Darnell, and the danger he had shared with him, seemed all part of the delirium through which he had been passing. But gradually things became clearer to him.

"There was a fire, was there not?" he said to Mr. Mouncey as he sat beside him. "I did not dream it?"

"No," said his friend; "there was indeed a fire. The Mill House was completely burned; there is nothing left of it but the walls."

"Ah, then it is as I think," said Gus; "there was a fire, and I got in at the window and I woke him—and then afterwards I fell, and that was how my leg was broken. But he did not fall, did he?"

"You mean Mr. Darnell? He was brought safely to the ground. He owes his life to you, Gus, for if you had not gone to him, he must have perished."

"I am so glad," said Gus fervently, and tears came into his eyes.

He lay still, too weak to ask more questions, and Sebastian Mouncey avoided speaking about the fire, for he feared to excite him.

From that day Gus began to improve, and though his progress was very slow, it went on steadily. One day the good woman with whom he had lived, and who had been a kind friend to him ever since he entered her home, came to see him. He asked her to let him have some of his possessions that were at the cottage, amongst other things his Bible. She promised to send one of the boys to the vicarage with them as soon as she reached home.

So it happened that when Mr. Mouncey returned from his afternoon's round of visits, and looked into the sick-room to ascertain how Gus was

getting on, he saw the old Bible lying on the counterpane by his side. The large thick book, with its unusual style of binding, at once attracted his attention.

"Why, what have you here, Gus?" he asked, laying his hand on it.

"My father's Bible, sir," was the reply. "I thought I should like to read a bit, but my arms ache so when I try to hold it."

Mr. Mouncey looked at the Bible with interest. He took it up, and examined curiously the thick leather covers, with their lining of watered silk. He noted, with the keen eyes of a connoisseur, the strong yet flexible binding and the exquisitely clear type in which the paragraphs were printed.

"This is a beautiful Bible, Gus," he said; "old, yet in excellent preservation. I see it was printed in 1828."

He was standing at the window, holding the book up to the light as he spoke. The next moment a slip of paper fluttered from it to the ground.

"What is this?" asked Mr. Mouncey, as he picked it up.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gus, in a tone of pleasure. "That is the paper father put inside with my name upon it. The silk must have come ungummed. He wrote my real name upon the paper, and slipped it inside the lining to keep it safe."

"Your real name!" said Sebastian Mouncey. "Are you not then Gus Rew?" He looked at the paper he held in his hand, and read in tones of astonishment, "'Augustus Devereux Carruthers.' Is that your real name?"

"Yes, that is my name," replied Gus; "father said so; he wrote it down that I might know it. I remember I thought it was a very long one."

Sebastian Mouncey was startled. He stood silent, lost in thought. He had heard something of the story of Colonel Carruthers' unhappy son. He knew that he had brought shame on his father, and had been cast off and disowned by him in consequence.

"Gus," he said presently, "do you know that your name is the same as the colonel's?"

"I thought it was," said Gus, "but I could not be sure. I had almost forgotten the name. Does it make any difference?"

"It might make a good deal of difference," said Mr. Mouncey gravely; "or, on the other hand, it may be only a coincidence. But it is nothing to trouble about, Gus," he added, seeing an uneasy look on the boy's face; "don't think any more of it now."

But whether Gus thought more of it or not, the possibility suggested by the discovery he had made was not to be banished from Mr. Mouncey's mind, and he could not rest till he had despatched a letter to the colonel by the night's mail.

CHAPTER XX.

NO LONGER A HUMAN WAIF.

GUS was too weak, and suffering too much pain in his broken limb, to think long of the words that had passed between him and Mr. Mouncey. When the pain and weariness became more than he could bear, the medical man would give him a strong sedative, under the influence of which he would sleep for hours. But for the relief thus gained, he could hardly have borne the strain of constant pain.

One afternoon, after sleeping for several hours, he woke to find a lady seated by his side. She was not young; her form was full and matronly, and her countenance was a pleasant one to look upon. She was knitting, and her expression was rather sad; but when she looked up and met Gus' gaze she

smiled brightly on him. Her sweet smile and the look of her blue eyes seemed familiar to Gus; yet he felt sure he had not seen her before.

"So you are awake at last," she said, bending over him, and laying her hand tenderly on his curly hair; "and how do you feel now, Gus?"

There was a strange thrill in her voice, as of feeling resolutely restrained.

"Better," he replied, smiling back at her; "much better."

"That is right," she said brightly. "And now for the beef-tea. I must not forget nurse's instructions. Please do not begin to talk till you have had some beef-tea."

She turned quickly to the fireplace, where, keeping warm on the hob, was the beef-tea.

Gus was not particularly fond of this strengthening beverage; but somehow it looked more inviting than usual as the lady poured it out, and brought it to him on a little tray, with some tiny chips of toast daintily arranged on a plate.

"Has nurse gone away?" he asked, when he had emptied the cup.

"Yes, she was called to another, a more urgent case, and we felt obliged to let her go. I am here to take care of you, if you will let me."

"You are very kind," said Gus, regarding her with some wonder. "Are you a nurse, then?"

"Not professionally; but I have had much experience of nursing," replied the lady gently. "I believe I can take proper care of you."

"Oh, I am sure of that," said Gus quickly. "Will you tell me what your name is, please?"

"My name is Durrant," she replied; "I am Edith's mother."

"Miss Edith's mother!" said Gus looking very pleased. "Ah, to be sure! I remember hearing that you had come home from India."

"That was some time ago," said Mrs. Durrant. "Gus, will you be very much surprised if I tell you that I am not only Edith's mother, but also your aunt?"

"My aunt!" repeated Gus, in astonishment. "But how can that be? I have not an aunt."

"You did not know that you had one," said Mrs. Durrant, trying to smile, but with tears rising in her eyes. "Gus, from what Mr. Mouncey has told me, and from seeing that Bible, which I recognise as one which formerly belonged to my mother, I am convinced that your father was my only brother—the brother left so early to my care, and dearer to me than words can tell; but who—alas!—wandered into evil ways, and was lost to us whilst yet he lived."

Here, in spite of every effort to control herself, she broke down and sobbed. Gus began to sob too, for he was still very weak. Seeing his emotion, Mrs. Durrant tried hard to check her own.

"Gus," she asked presently, "did your father never speak to you about his sister Edith?"

"No," said Gus; "he never said a word about his past life, till a few weeks before he died. Then he told me what my right name was, and that he was a gentleman by birth, although he was so poor and miserable. And he made me promise that I would try to be a real gentleman. Are you sure he was your brother?"

"I have not a doubt of it, Gus. My father has gone to make what inquiries he can at the place where you lived; but he, too, I am sure, is convinced in his own mind. If I had doubted before, I should have known the truth as soon as I saw you, for you are so like what your father was at your age. Yes, Gus, I am indeed your aunt, for you are the child of my own dear, but most unhappy brother. Oh, how I love you for his sake!"

"I am so glad," said Gus, as she bent down and kissed him; "I thought I belonged to no one."

Then he said no more, for he saw that his aunt was overpowered by painful memories. He lay still, musing on the wonderful fact he had learned. Edith Durrant was his cousin, the colonel was his grandfather. How strange it was to think of it! He was glad, and yet there was sorrow in his heart. To think of what his father's early home must have been, of his father and his sister, and then to recall the misery and squalor and sin in which his days had ended! Oh, the pity of it! Gus felt that he could never cease to be conscious of that.

The same thought was wringing with anguish the heart of his grandfather. As he recalled every incident of the past, Colonel Carruthers could no longer refuse to see that he himself had been greatly to blame. He had been too fond, too indulgent a parent in his son's childhood, and too hard, too unrelenting when his son, in later life, chose to cross his will.

Why had he been so angry with his son because he had taken his wife from a social circle which he, the military man of fashion, considered inferior to his own? She was good and gentle, he had been told, and yet he had despised her. There had been no shame, no wrongdoing then. Why had he suffered the fact of his son's making a mésalliance, as he had deemed it, to alienate them so entirely? Perhaps, had he stifled his pride, and received the low-born bride with kindness, his son would never have made his swift descent into shame and misery. Ah, how bitter it was now to see, as he did so clearly, that his son's future might have been entirely different had he acted another part from that which, in his pride and resentment, he had so stiffly maintained!

It was late in the evening. Gus had had another sleep, from which he awoke refreshed. He was lying still, watching with languid enjoyment the shapely white hands of his aunt as they plied the knitting-needles, when Colonel Carruthers entered the room.

There was nothing in the least like a scene. The colonel was not one to give way to emotion under any circumstances. Whatever he felt as he gazed on the fair, open face of the boy, and saw again the strong likeness to his

own son, which had struck him so forcibly when first he looked on Gus, his countenance retained its usual quiet, inflexible demeanour.

His tone was constrained and almost cold as he said, "How are you now, my boy?" At the same time extending his hand in a formal fashion.

"Much better, thank you, sir," Gus replied, timidly grasping the outstretched hand.

"That is well," said the colonel. Then observing an eager, wistful look in Gus' eyes, he said, turning to his daughter, "Have you told him, Edith?"

"Yes, father."

The colonel made no rejoinder. He seated himself in such a position that Gus could only see his side face, and sat gazing into the fire.

Thinking they would get on better alone, Mrs. Durrant quitted the room.

But still the colonel sat silently gazing into the fire, and Gus, as he watched him, grew nervously anxious for him to speak. At last, when Gus felt his endurance strained to the utmost, the colonel broke the silence.

"Gus," he said, "they tell me you saved the life of Philip Darnell."

This remark seemed to require no reply, and Gus was silent, waiting for more.

"It is a strange thing," continued the colonel after a pause, speaking in a low, bitter tone. "You could not know it, but that man was your father's worst enemy. He was the cause of your father's ruin. I had long suspected him of playing a double part, but I did not learn the truth till a few years ago, when I learned it from one of your father's former companions, who, unknown to Philip Darnell, had been in the whole secret. He was dying when he told me how Darnell had enticed and ensnared my son into the crime for which he was afterwards the first to denounce him. Yes, he revealed to me the whole conspiracy. I could confront Darnell with it, but

what would be the good? He has done nothing that the law can punish, and it is all too late as far as your father is concerned. Would to God it were possible to undo the errors of the past!"

There was a wail of pain in the colonel's tone. He was silent for a few moments, and when he spoke again it was in a colder, quieter manner.

"It is useless to talk of the past," he said; "but, Gus, if you had known what I know of that man, you would not have rushed so eagerly to his rescue."

"But I did know," said Gus in a low tone; "my father told me."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed the colonel, turning quickly to look at him. "What did your father tell you?"

"We saw Mr. Darnell once. He was driving in a carriage," said Gus, "and my father pointed him out to me, and told me to remember that he was his and my worst enemy. And he bade me have my revenge on him, if ever it was in my power. I can never forget what father said, for it was only the day before he died."

"You knew that? He told you that?" said the colonel in a tone of extreme surprise. "And yet you risked your life to save that man! How could you?"

"I only wanted the more to save him because of that," replied Gus, speaking with an effort. "Don't you see, it was my revenge?"

For a few moments his grandfather was, from sheer amazement, unable to reply. He stared at Gus like one astounded. Then his eyes fell, his head drooped, and he sat silently pondering the boy's words.

"Gus," he said at last, in low, unsteady tones, "you are a gentleman."

Gus' face glowed with pleasure, but he made no reply.

There was a long pause.

The colonel was bending forward, gazing into the fire. Then he spoke again.

"Gus," he said slowly, "you are more than a gentleman; you are a Christian." And with that, he rose and went hastily from the room.

CHAPTER XXI.

DEEDS AND THEIR FRUIT.

"GUS, I have good news for you," said Mr. Mouncey, as he entered the pleasant morning-room at the Retreat, when Gus was resting on a sofa, whilst his Cousin Edith sat near, busied in giving the last touches to a little water-colour drawing.

The colonel had again taken up his abode in his house at Rayleigh, and thither had Gus been conveyed as soon as he was strong enough to bear the removal. His aunt had been obliged to return to her home at Southampton, but Edith had come to make a long stay with her grandfather, that she might be her cousin's companion.

"Good news!" repeated Gus, looking eagerly into his friend's face. "Oh, please tell me what it is!"

"The strike is over," said Mr. Mouncey, his countenance radiant with satisfaction. "Mr. Darnell has at length decided to take back all the old hands, except a few whom he considers past work, and to give them the extra pay they asked."

"You do not mean it!" cried Gus delightedly. "Why, it hardly seems possible that it can be true. I never thought Mr. Darnell would give in."

"To tell you the truth, Gus, I think your influence has had some weight in the matter."

"Mine?" said Gus. "How could it? I never said a word to Mr. Darnell about the strike."

"Ah, but he knows which side has your sympathy. And once, when he spoke to me of your having saved his life, and said how he wished he could do something for you, I ventured to hint that he could not please you more than by helping those poor starving families in the cottages. I scarcely expected my words to have any effect, but it seems they had."

"I am so glad," said Gus, earnestly. "Oh, Mr. Mouncey, it is indeed good news!"

For a few moments Mr. Mouncey did not reply. He was thinking how such a noble deed as Gus had done enriches our human life, and how far its elevating influence may extend.

"You remember old Mike Newman?" he said presently. "I fear he will never work again; he is very ill with rheumatic fever. He has a great wish to see you, Gus. Could you get so far, do you think? There is something weighing on the poor old man's mind. Perhaps he will tell his trouble to you; I cannot draw it from him."

"I can drive you there in the pony chaise this afternoon if you like, Gus," said Edith.

And Gus willingly fell in with the suggestion. Several weeks had passed since the night of the fire, and he had made fair progress. He was now able to get about a little with the aid of crutches. It was feared that his cure would be so far imperfect that he would always walk with a slight limp. The thought of this was a trouble to his grandfather, but Gus would not let it trouble him.

When Gus entered Mike's cottage on his crutches, he found the poor old man even worse than he had been led to expect. But, though in great pain, Mike was conscious, and presently, as they talked together, it seemed

to Gus that his anguish was as much that of the mind as of the body. At first his words appeared so wild and incoherent that Gus fancied he must be wandering; but gradually he found a clue to their meaning.

"Eh, Master Gus," he said, "the pain is just like a fire in my bones—a fire burning me whilst I live. And sure, if ever man deserved to be burned I'm that man. The very pains of hell have got hold on me, and it's to hell I'm going!"

"Don't say that, Mike; you need not go to hell."

"I must, lad, I must! For a man that's sinned as I have there can be no mercy. I'm as bad as a murderer, that's what I am."

"And if you are, Mike, there's mercy even for such. Don't you remember how Jesus Christ prayed for His murderers?—'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!'"

"Ah, but I knew what I was doing. I knew it was a crime for which I might be hanged; but I didn't care. If I'd seen what it would all lead to! I never thought, Gus, that you would suffer! To see you come limping in, so mild and patient, was almost more than I could bear. And yet it would have been worse if he had died. You've saved me from the guilt of blood."

"Mike, what do you mean? Of what are you thinking?"

"Can't ye guess, Gus?"

"Are you thinking of the fire, Mike? Do you know more about it than I?"

"I know more about it than any one else, lad. Oh, if I dared to tell you! Maybe you wouldn't be so hard on me as some. Oh, this fire, this fire in my bones! I shall not rest in my grave, I'm thinking, if I don't confess the truth."

"If there's anything on your conscience, Mike, you'd better confess it to God, not to me."

"I can't, I can't!" groaned the old man. "Besides, God knows. Isn't He punishing me for it now?"

"Mike," said Gus gravely, "do you know how the fire began?"

"Do I know?" muttered Mike. "Who should know if I do not?" Then, suddenly turning his eyes on Gus, he asked in shrill, sharp tones—

"Lad, do you think that fire was kindled without hands?"

"Mike!" exclaimed Gus, with consternation in his voice. "You don't mean to say that any one was wicked enough to set fire to the house on purpose?"

"Ah, truly," was the reply, in broken, quavering tones; "there was one wicked enough, and that was Mike Newman. You are horrified, Gus; but it made me mad to feel that I was ground down and trampled on by a man no better than myself, just because he was rich and I was poor.

"The strike brought more trouble into my home than into any other in the village. My daughter, poor soul, when her husband's wages ceased, made a brave struggle to live on almost nothing. How she managed I cannot tell. She grew to be mere skin and bone, for many a meal she would go without for the sake of her children. But then they sickened, and Willie—you remember our brave, bonny little Willie—was the first to go. The twins followed, and she, poor soul, could not bear up after the loss of her babes. She was soon laid beside them. They're all four sleeping under the old elm in the churchyard.

"Do you wonder I felt wild with Darnell? How could I bear to think of his living in ease and plenty, his wife and children wanting nothing, and ours starved like that! I said there was no such thing as justice in heaven or earth. God was against us too. He was the God of the rich, not of the poor. I thirsted for revenge. I longed to do something with this weak old arm that should make Darnell smart. I used to long for a gun, that I might take a shot at him some night after dark. But I knew my aim would be unsteady, and that I should miss my mark. Then the thought struck me that I would set fire

to his house. That was not easy; but when the devil tempts a man to sin, he opens up the way for him.

"I was hanging about that night near Darnell's house. It was midnight. I had been to the Rising Sun. A man from London had been there speaking to us chaps, and when he'd said his say, he treated us to a glass all round. His words had stirred my blood, and mayhap the liquor was too strong for me, for I had tasted scarce a morsel that day. I was passing the door leading into the court at the back of the house, when a sudden gust of wind blew it open. No one is afeard of thieves at Rayleigh, and Brown and his wife had forgotten to make it fast before they went to bed.

"Something said within me, 'Now's your time.' I went in and looked about. The lights was all out; every one in the house was abed. There are no shutters to the kitchen window. I broke a pane, and opened it with little trouble. I climbed in, found a box of matches, and then went down to the cellar. I knew my way, for I'd had a job of cutting and piling wood there once. There was wood stored there then, and on the other side of the cellar stood a barrel of paraffin oil. I carried the wood over, an armful at a time, and piled it about the barrel; I found some straw, and added that, and then I set fire to the heap. I only waited to see that it would burn, and then I hurried away. No one saw me, and the fire destroyed all traces of my having entered the house. I went home and to bed, but I could not sleep; and before morning the rheumatics had seized on me so that I could not move. The pain has never left me since."

"Oh, Mike! How could you do such a thing?" cried Gus aghast. "How did you feel when you knew the house was burning away, and nothing could check the flames?"

"Feel! I felt like a fiend that night. I chuckled to myself, and thought how cleverly I had done it. I hoped Darnell would be burned. But afterwards—ah, lad, afterwards, it was as if there were a fire burning within me. I knew I had done the devil's work. And when they told me how you had risked your life to save Darnell—you whom he had misjudged and struck, to whom he had been no better than to me and mine—oh, Gus, I felt real bad then! Your conduct showed me the blackness of mine. I was thankful Darnell was saved; but I knew that all the same I was as bad as a murderer."

"Thank God I got to him in time!" cried Gus, much moved. "Oh, Mike, I might have done as you did, for I felt very bad towards him at one time, only I remembered—I had learned the best way of being revenged."

"What is that?" asked Mike.

"'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,'" repeated Gus.

"I've heard them words before; they're in the Bible, ar'n't they?" said Mike. "I used to learn the Bible when I was a boy. But I should never have thought of acting that way; and who does? Even those who pretend to be

religious, do they do as the Bible tells them? Look at Darnell now—don't he go to church?"

"That other people fail to do as they ought is no reason why we should not try to obey the Bible," said Gus.

"P'raps not," said Mike; "and yet I don't see it's fair to expect us poor folks to behave better than those who have everything they wants. But the Bible's true; I know that. It says the 'wicked shall be turned into hell,' and that's where I'm going. I shall be tormented in flames, longing for a drop of water to cool my tongue. 'Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' There's Bible words for you."

"And these, too, are Bible words," said Gus, and he repeated: "'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' So you see, Mike, God will forgive your sin, if you ask Him."

The old man shook his head mournfully. "Nay, nay, lad; it's too late for that. There's no hope for me, none. I am a murderer, and my part is in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

"But there is hope," said Gus earnestly; "Jesus will receive sinners. Oh, Mike, if you will not listen to me, will you not tell Mr. Mouncey all?"

"Nay, lad, I can tell no one but you. I said to myself I would tell you, if you came in, but no one else."

"Then will you let me tell Mr. Mouncey what you have told me?" asked Gus.

After much persuasion, Mike consented to this.

Gus lost no time in seeking Sebastian Mouncey, and repeating to him the sad story he had heard. He did not see Mike again.

On the following evening, Mr. Mouncey came to tell him that the poor old man was dead.

Gus was shocked. He had not thought the end so near.

"I thought he would have lingered longer," said Mr. Mouncey. "Poor fellow! He bitterly repented of his sin. He would have seen Mr. Darnell and asked his forgiveness, had there been time. Now it is for me to make his confession known. I think he died in peace, believing God had forgiven him; but there is something inexpressibly sad in such a death. Who dare judge him harshly? God only knows the true history of his life, and how far the sin of others was accountable for the bitter feelings which drove him to that mad act. Oh, when will men learn to recognise the bond of their common brotherhood? When will each understand that he is indeed bound to be his brother's keeper?"

The sad revelation made a profound impression upon Gus, as on many at Rayleigh.

But when spring flowers were blooming in the hedgerows, and spring breezes blew over the fields, the winter, with its gloom and misery, passed from the minds of the younger folk like a dismal dream. It was a busy time at the mill. The "hands" were beginning to recover some measure of prosperity. Their homes once more wore an air of comfort, their faces a look of health and cheerfulness.

But the Mill House stood a gaunt, grim ruin, and it was thought that Philip Darnell would never care to rebuild it. He seldom came to Rayleigh, and left the management of the mill almost entirely to Mr. Ellary. And no one regretted the proprietor's absence. He had had the chance of winning the love and esteem of his work-people, and he had let it slip. No concession he might now make could alter the feelings with which they regarded him.

The colonel began to talk of returning to London for the season. Gus was strong now, save for the limp that would never be overcome. One day his grandfather spoke to him of the plans he had made for his future.

"I have engaged a tutor for you, Gus, with whom I hope you will work your hardest, till you are sufficiently advanced to study with other young fellows of your age. I know you have good abilities, and, thanks to the

kindness of Mr. Mouncey, you have already received a far better education than could have been expected under the circumstances. Still, there are certain things that are necessary to fit you for the position of a gentleman. Of course I mean you to go to Oxford when you are old enough. I should have liked you to follow in my steps; I believe you have the making of a soldier in you, but that unfortunate weakness—"

"I could never be a soldier!" exclaimed Gus involuntarily.

"And why not?" asked the colonel, looking at him with some severity.

"I could never bear to kill others," said Gus, with a shiver; "I should like work that saved life, not destroyed it."

"That is not the way to look at the subject," said the colonel proudly. "I maintain that a true soldier saves life when he fights for his country and his Queen; but really, to hear the way some people talk, you would think a soldier was a mere butcher. There is no finer profession for a gentleman than the army."

Gus mused for a few moments over his grandfather's words; then he said, with some abruptness, "I don't know that I care to follow the profession of a gentleman."

"What do you mean?" asked the colonel sharply. "Not lead the life of a gentleman! I thought that was what you had always meant to be."

"Yes, I mean to be a gentleman," said Gus; "but I should not mind if people did not consider me one. It seems to me that there are two sorts of gentlemen in the world—the gentleman like Jesus Christ, and the gentleman who only cares for himself, his pleasures, his ease, his beautiful things, and does not mind how others toil and slave for him, nor what they suffer, as long as he gets all he wants."

Colonel Carruthers looked gravely at his young grandson, and was silent for a minute or two.

"I believe you are right, Gus," he said at last, with somewhat of an effort. "The experience of life has humbled my pride, and I see some things now in a different light from that in which I used to view them.

"There are two kinds of gentlemen—the conventional gentleman and the ideal gentleman. The highest gentleman in the land, as the world ranks men, has for his motto the words, 'I serve.' And He whom we reverence as our Lord and Saviour has taught us that true greatness consists in service.

"I would not for the world have you a useless, fine gentleman, Gus. But, my dear boy, you need training for the highest service. You must make the most of the talents God has given you. Since you have the power to do so, it is right that you should endeavour to attain the highest culture possible to you, in order that you may serve others in the best way that you can."

"I will do whatever you wish, sir," Gus replied, feeling the truth of his grandfather's words. "I am sure that father would have wished me to learn all that I can."

He spoke impulsively, but when he saw the shadow that fell on his grandfather's face, he would fain have recalled his last words.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

TEN years have passed, and their fleet steps have left enduring traces. Colonel Carruthers' tall, spare figure is less erect than formerly, his sight less keen, his memory less certain. He can no longer refuse to recognise the fact that he is an old man. He is glad to lean on the strong arm of his grandson when they walk together, glad to depend on him in many ways.

Miss Durrant continues to be the colonel's housekeeper, and is still a prey to nervous terrors, whilst believing herself one of the most strong-minded of her sex. The colonel's daughter and her younger children are frequent guests at his house; the young people are ardently attached to their cousin Gus, who is often to be found there, whilst their mother could hardly love him better if he were her son. Edith's visits to her grandfather's home are less frequent and of less duration than formerly; for some years since she went to a home of her own, and that none other than the old vicarage at Rayleigh.

At one time Colonel Carruthers would hardly have deemed Sebastian Mouncey a match for the granddaughter he loved so well; but his regard for the hardworking clergyman has strengthened considerably since he discovered in Mr. Mouncey's protégé the child of his own lost son; and, moreover, the colonel has learned to esteem goodness the highest nobility.

Edith was never ambitious in the world's sense; she has the noble ambition to serve others and make their lives brighter and better, so in working for the cottagers at Rayleigh she has found her right vocation, and is proving a true help-meet to the busy pastor.

And Gus. Let us look at him as on a March morning he enters the city hospital, in which he is studying as a medical student. He has given himself to the profession of medicine with all the enthusiasm of his warm, sound nature. He has the highest ideal of what the life of a physician should be, and the more material aspects of his calling cannot destroy it. To him, it seems to present the grandest possibility of following in the steps of the Lord Christ, and in little things as in great exhibiting the spirit of that "first true Gentleman that ever breathed."

He has applied himself with such energy to his studies, that already he is looked upon as one who promises to take a high position in his profession. No day, no hour scarcely of the past ten years, has been suffered to slip by without yielding him some permanent gain.

He is a man now. On his brow are the perpendicular lines which indicate hard thinking; his expression is grave and earnest, but he has still somewhat of the old boyish grace. His blue eyes have the same frank,

kindly glance, and when he smiles, as one of his comrades addresses him playfully, it is with the bright, winsome smile of yore.

As Gus enters the women's medical ward, and passes along it, his eyes are quick to observe a fresh patient. A young woman, with a white, worn, patient face, lies in a bed to his left. She looks very ill; but it is not her suffering appearance which makes him halt suddenly before her. There is something familiar in that patient countenance, in those sad, grey eyes.

"Lucy!" he exclaims, in a tone of astonishment. "Lucy!"

"That is my name," she replies, with a startled look; "but I do not know __"

"Lucy Lucas," he returns; "Lucy Lucas, who used to live at Lavender Terrace."

A hot, painful flush dyes the face of the young woman.

"Yes," she replies, "I was called by that name once; but it is long ago, and I cannot understand how you should know about me."

"Have you forgotten Gus?" he asks. "Poor, ragged little Gus?"

"Gus!" she exclaims, looking pleased. "You don't mean to say that you are that little Gus! 'Gentleman Gus' they used to call you. Oh, I have so often wondered what had become of you; but I little thought to find you here! And to think that you should know me again!"

"You have not altered much," says Gus; "only I am sorry to see you looking ill. I, too, have often wondered about you, and where you went when you left the Terrace so suddenly. But never mind that now," he adds gently, as he sees her look of pain. "You shall tell me about that by-and-by; I'll tell my story first."

And, regardless of the fact that the work of the day is before him, he sits down beside her, and tells her the history of his life since they parted.

She listens with close attention; but presently, he has to hurry away, with the promise that he will see her again in the evening.

It is growing dusk when again he finds himself at leisure to sit and talk with her; but he has found time during the day to inquire of the house surgeon concerning her. He learned that she was very ill. The long-seated hip disease had taken a new development; terrible abscesses were sapping her strength, which had been reduced, the surgeon thought, by poor living and close, sedentary occupation. As he heard it, Gus resolved within himself that there should be no more of that for Lucy. He was relieved to hear the surgeon say he did not consider the case a hopeless one.

"Lucy," says Gus gently, as he sits beside her, "will you not tell me about your life since last I saw you? You need not fear to speak freely to me. Where is your father?"

Once more the warm colour of shame rises in poor Lucy's face. For a few moments she cannot speak; then she summons courage to whisper—

"In prison, Gus."

Gus' face reflects the sorrow on hers.

"Oh, I am so sorry, Lucy," he says. "And yet—perhaps—"

"It is best," she murmurs; "it was terrible living as we did before. Do you remember the great burglary at Harrow, two years ago, when the burglars were captured?"

"To be sure, I remember it," says Gus; "there were three men, but their names—"

"Oh, my father never passed long by the same name. Our real name is Smith. My father and Jack were both concerned in the robbery; but they only sentenced Jack for seven years. My father shot a man in the struggle. He did not kill him, happily, but it made his guilt the greater, and he was sentenced for fourteen years."

"And you have been alone ever since?"

"Yes, I have been trying to earn money by needlework; but it has been so hard. They pay so little for it at the shops."

"My poor Lucy!" says Gus, with a sad smile. "I can see you have had a hard struggle; but you shall not go back to that life, Lucy. We will do all we can for you here; you must make up your mind to get well quickly, and when you are strong enough, I will send you to a pretty country place, where a lady, my cousin, will take good care of you, and find plenty of work for your clever needle. Don't cry; there are brighter days before you, I believe."

"You are very kind, Gus; you always were kind," Lucy replies, in a voice choked by tears. "I should not wish to get well; I have still the old longing for rest; but I have learned that our lives are in the hands of One who loves us, and knows better than we what is good for us, and whilst there is any chance of my helping father I would not die. I pray for him every day, and I trust that he may yet be saved from sin."

"God grant it!" says Gus earnestly. "Never give up hoping and praying, Lucy. There is no sinner whom Jesus Christ cannot save. I have learned that."

Leaving the hospital, Gus turns his steps towards a house in a quiet street close by, where he lodges from Monday till Saturday, for his grandfather's house at Norwood is too far from the hospital for him to return thither every night. It is a neat, respectable-looking house. The doorstep is clean; the window curtains as white as the London smoke will permit.

As Gus stands on the step, feeling for his latchkey, the door is opened from within, and a stout, comely woman, in middle life, appears with a tall, gaunt, anxious-looking woman by her side. Does the reader recognise an old acquaintance? In her tidy black dress and white apron, with her abundant tresses smoothly brushed and braided, and a more subdued expression than she wore in the old days, Sally Dent is indeed changed almost past recognition. And the big awkward-looking lad of about

fourteen, who is now visible at the end of the passage, was the unwieldy baby whom Gus used to carry about with such good-will.

Sally's eyes brighten as she sees Gus, and she exclaims, "Oh, Mr. Carruthers, I am glad you're come in! This is Mrs. Minn, as used to live in Lavender Terrace. Maybe you remember her? She's in great trouble about her daughter, as is took very bad. She wants to get her into the 'ospital. I told her I knew you'd be willing to do what you could."

Gus does remember Mrs. Minn. He shakes hands with her kindly, and makes many inquiries concerning her husband and family. He takes her into his own room, hears all about her daughter's case, clearly explains to her the steps she must take to secure admission to the hospital, and promises such help as he can give.

When at length, cheered by his kindness, Mrs. Minn takes her departure, she pauses for a moment at the door to say confidentially to Sally Dent, "He's a good one, he is. He ain't a bit ashamed to remember that he was once as poor as any of us. There are not many like he."

"No, indeed," responds Sally, and then a lump seems to rise in her throat, and check further utterance. She is thinking of all Gus has done for her,—how he sought her out in her wretched home; how he befriended her when she had sunk low in sin and shame. A poor, degraded wreck of womanhood, others would have cried, "Let the wreck lie; its recovery is hopeless!"

But not so he. How he had striven to win her back to sobriety! She herself had despaired of ever breaking from the sore slavery of drink; but he had encouraged her to persevere with the struggle. She had signed the pledge only to break it; she had relapsed again and again, and begged him to leave her to herself; but he would not give her up. It was through his kindness that she had been settled in this house, with medical students for her lodgers, and he had helped to place her children in respectable positions.

And now she is saved, redeemed in body and spirit, by the grace of Christ, from the awful power of sin! Work as she may—and she has learned

what work means—can she ever do enough to show her gratitude to him who, under God, has been her deliverer?

The thought of it all well-nigh overpowers her, and what she feels is not to be expressed. When words become possible, she only says in her most emphatic manner, "Ay, he is a gentleman, he is."

THE END.

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