The Garret And The Garden Or Low Life High Up

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Freeditorial

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Chapter One.
The Garret And The Garden Or Low Life High Up.
Sudden Friendships

In the midst of the great wilderness—we might almost say the wilds—of that comparatively unknown region which lies on the Surrey side of the Thames, just above London Bridge, there sauntered one fine day a big bronzed seaman of middle age. He turned into an alley, down which, nautically speaking, he rolled into a shabby little court. There he stood still for a few seconds and looked around him as if in quest of something.

It was a miserable poverty-stricken court, with nothing to commend it to the visitor save a certain air of partial-cleanliness and semi-respectability, which did not form a feature of the courts in its

.

"I say, Capting," remarked a juvenile voice close at hand, "you've bin an sailed into the wrong port."

The sailor glanced in all directions, but was unable to see the owner of the voice until a slight cough—if not a suppressed laugh—caused him to look up, when he perceived the sharp, knowing, and dirty face of a small boy, who calmly contemplated him from a window not more than a foot above his head. Fun, mischief, intelligence, precocity sat enthroned on the countenance of that small boy, and suffering wrinkled his young brow.

“How d’ee know I’m in the wrong port—monkey?” demanded the sailor.

“’Cause there ain’t no grog-shop in it—gorilla!” retorted the boy.

There is a mysterious but well-known power of attraction between kindred spirits which induces them to unite, like globules of quicksilver, at the first moment of contact. Brief as was this interchange of politenesses, it sufficed to knit together the souls of the seaman and the small boy. A mutual smile, nod, and wink sealed, as it were, the sudden friendship.

“Come now, younker,” said the sailor, thrusting his hands into his coat-pockets, and leaning a little forward with legs well apart, as if in readiness to counteract the rolling of the court in a heavy sea, “there’s no occasion for you an’ me to go beatin’ about—off an’ on. Let’s come to close quarters at once. I haven’t putt in here to look for no grog-shop—”

“W’ich I didn’t say you ’ad,” interrupted the boy.

“No more you did, youngster. Well, what I dropped in here for was to look arter an old woman.”

“If you’d said a young ’un, now, I might ’ave b’lieved you,” returned the pert urchin.

“You may believe me, then, for I wants a young ’un too.”

“Well, old salt,” rejoined the boy, resting his ragged arms on the window-sill, and looking down on the weather-beaten man with an expression of patronising interest, “you’ve come to the right shop, anyhow, for that keemodity. In Lun’on we’ve got old women by the thousand, an’ young uns by the million, to say nuffin o’ middle-aged uns an’ chicks. Have ’ee got a partikler pattern in yer eye, now, or d’ee on’y want samples?”

“What’s your name, lad?” asked the sailor.

“That depends, old man. If a beak axes me, I’ve got a wariety o’ names, an’ gives ’im the first as comes to ’and. W’en a gen’leman axes me, I’m more partikler—I makes a s’lection.”

“Bein’ neither a beak nor a gentleman, lad, what would you say your name was to me?”

“Tommy Splint,” replied the boy promptly. “Splint, ’cause w’en I was picked up, a small babby, at the work’us door, my left leg was broke, an’ they ’ad to putt it up in splints; Tommy, ’cause they said I was like a he-cat; w’ich was a lie!”

"Is your father alive, Tommy?"

"'Ow should I know? I've got no father nor mother—never had none as I knows on; an' what's more, I don't want any. I'm a horphing, I am, an' I prefers it. Fathers an' mothers is often wery aggrawatin'; they're uncommon hard to manage w'en they're bad, an' a cause o' much wexation an' worry to child'n w'en they're good; so, on the whole, I think we're better without 'em. Chimleypot Liz is parent enough for me."

"And who may chimney-pot Liz be?" asked the sailor with sudden interest.

"H'm!" returned the boy with equally sudden caution and hesitancy. "I didn't say chimney-pot but chimley-pot Liz. W'at is she? W'y, she's the ugliest old ooman in this great meetropilis, an' she's got the jolliest old 'art in Lun'on. Her skin is wrinkled equal to the ry-nossris at the Zoo—I seed that beast once at a Sunday-school treat—an' her nose has been tryin' for some years past to kiss her chin, w'ich it would 'ave managed long ago, too, but for a tooth she's got in the upper jaw. She's on'y got one; but, my, that is a fang! so loose that you'd expect it to be blowed out every time she coughs. It's a reg'lar grinder an' cutter an' stabber all in one; an' the way it works—sometimes in the mouth, sometimes outside the lip, now an' then straight out like a ship's bowsprit—is most amazin'; an' she drives it about like a nigger slave. Gives it no rest. I do declare I wouldn't be that there fang for ten thousand a year. She's got two black eyes, too, has old Liz, clear an' bright as beads—fit to bore holes through you w'en she ain't pleased; and er nose is ooked—. But, I say, before I tell you more about 'er, I wants to know wot you've got to do with 'er? An' w'at's your name? I've gave you mine. Fair exchange, you know."

"True, Tommy, that's only right an' fair. But I ain't used to lookin' up when discoorsin'. Couldn't you come down here an' lay alongside?"

"No, old salt, I couldn't; but you may come up here if you like. You'll be the better of a rise in the world, won't you? The gangway lays just round the corner; but mind your sky-scraper for the port's low. There's a seat in the winder here. Go ahead; starboard your helm, straight up, then 'ard-a-port, steady, mind your jib-boom, splice the main-brace, heave the main-deck overboard, and cast anchor 'longside o' me!"

Following these brief directions as far as was practicable, the sailor soon found himself on the landing of the stair, where Tommy was seated on a rickety packing-case awaiting him.

"Now, lad," said the man, seating himself beside his new friend, "from what you tells me, I think that chimney-pot—"

"Chimley," remarked the boy, correcting.

"Well, then, chimley-pot Liz, from your account of her, must be the very woman I wants. I've sought for her far an' wide, alow and aloft, an' bin directed here an' there an' everywhere, except the right where, 'till now. But I'll explain." The man paused a moment as if to consider, and it became evident to the boy that his friend was labouring under some degree of excitement, which he erroneously put down to drink.

"My name," continued the sailor, "is Sam Blake—second mate o' the Seacow, not long in from China. I didn't ship as mate. Bein' a shipwrecked seaman, you see—"

"Shipwrecked!" exclaimed the boy, with much interest expressed in his sharp countenance.

"Ay, lad, shipwrecked; an' not the first time neither, but I was keen to get home, havin' bin kep' a prisoner for an awful long spell by pirates—"

"Pints!" interrupted the boy again, as he gazed in admiration at his stalwart friend; "but," he added, "I don't believe you. It's all barn. There ain't no pints now; an' you think you've got hold of a green un."

"Tommy!" said the sailor in a remonstrative tone, "did I ever deceive you?"

"Never," replied the boy fervently; "leastwise not since we 'come acquaint 'arf an hour back."

"Look here," said Sam Blake, baring his brawny left arm to the elbow and displaying sundry deep scars which once must have been painful wounds. "An' look at this," he added, opening his shirt-front and exposing a mighty chest that was seamed with similar scars in all directions. "That's what the pirates did to me an' my mates—torturin' of us afore killin' us."

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed the urchin, in a tone in which sympathy was mingled with admiration; "tell us all about it, Sam."

"Not now, my lad; business first—pleasure arterwards."

"I prefers pleasure first an' business arter, Sam. 'Owever, 'ave it yer own way."

"Well, you see," continued the sailor, turning down his, "w'en I went to sea that time, I left a wife an' a babby behind me; but soon arter I got out to China I got a letter tellin' me that my Susan was dead, and that the babby had bin took charge of by a old nurse in the family where Susan had been a housemaid. You may be sure my heart was well-nigh broke by the news, but I comforted myself wi' the thought o' gittin' home again an' takin' care o' the dear babby—a gal, it was, called Susan arter its mother. It was at that time I was took by the pirates in the Malay Seas—now fifteen long years gone by."

"W'at! an' you ain't bin 'ome or seed yer babby for fifteen years?" exclaimed Tommy Splint.

"Not for fifteen long year," replied his friend. "You see, Tommy, the pirates made a slave o' me, an' took me up country into the interior of one o' their biggest islands, where I hadn't a chance of escapin'. But I did manage to escape at last, through God's blessin', an' got to Hong-Kong in a small coaster; found a ship—the Seacow-about startin' for England short-handed, an' got a berth on board of her. On the voyage the second mate was washed overboard in a gale, so, as I was a handy chap, the cap'en he promoted me, an' now I'm huntin' about for my dear little one all over London. But it's a big place is London."

"Yes; an' I suspect that you'll find your little un raither a big un too by this time."

"No doubt," returned the seaman with an absent air; then, looking with sudden earnestness into his little companion's face, he added, "Well, Tommy Splint, as I said just now, I've cruised about far an' near after this old woman as took charge o' my babby without overhaulin' of her, for she seems to have changed her quarters pretty often; but I keep up my hopes, for I do feel as if I'd run her down at last—her name was Lizbeth Morley—"

"Oho!" exclaimed Tommy Splint with a look of sharp intelligence; "so you think that chimleypot Liz may be your Lizbeth and our Susy your babby!"

"I'm more than half inclined to think that, my boy," returned the sailor, growing more excited.

"Is the old woman's name Morley?"

"Dun know. Never heard nobody call her nothin' but Liz."

"And how about Susan?"

"That's the babby?" said the boy with a grin.

"Yes—yes," said Sam anxiously.

"Well, that babby's about five fut four now, without 'er boots. You see 'uman creeturs are apt to grow considerable in fifteen years—ain't they?"

"But is her name Blake?" demanded the seaman. "Not as I knows of. Susy's wot we all calls 'er—so chimley-pot Liz calls 'er, an' so she calls 'erself, an' there ain't another Susy like her for five miles round. But come up, Sam, an' I'll introduce ee—they're both over'ead."

So saying the lively urchin grasped his new friend by the hand and led him by a rickety staircase to the "rookeries" above.

Chapter Two.
Flowers in the Desert.

Beauty and ugliness form a contrast which is presented to us every day of our lives, though, perhaps, we may not be much impressed by the fact. And this contrast is presented in ever-varying aspects.

We do not, however, draw the reader's attention to one of the striking aspects of the contrast—such as is presented by the hippopotamus and the gazelle, or the pug with the "bashed" nose and the Italian greyhound. It is to one of the more delicate phases that we would point—to that phase of the contrast wherein the fight between the two qualities is seen progressing towards victory, and ugliness is not only overborne but overwhelmed by beauty.

For this purpose we convey the reader to a scene of beauty that might compare favourably with any of the most romantic spots on this fair earth—on the Riviera, or among the Brazilian wilds, or, for that matter, in fairyland itself.

It is a garden—a remarkably small garden to be sure, but one that is arranged with a degree of taste and a display of fancy that betokens the gardener a genius. Among roses and mignonette, heliotrope, clematis and wallflower, chrysanthemums, verbenas and sweet-peas are intertwined, on rustic trellis-work, the rich green leaves of the ivy and the graceful Virginia creeper in such a manner that the surroundings of the miniature garden are completely hidden from view, and nothing but the bright blue sky is visible, save where one little opening in the foliage reveals the prospect of a grand glittering river, where leviathans of the deep and small fry of the shallows, of every shape and size, disport themselves in the blaze of a summer sun.

Beauty meets the eye wherever turned, but, let the head of the observer be extended ever so little beyond the charmed circle of that garden, and nearly all around is ugliness supreme! For this is a garden on the roof of an old house; the grand river is the Thames, alive with the shipping of its world-wide commerce, and all around lies that interminable forest of rookery chimneys, where wild ungainly forms tell of the insane and vain efforts of man to cope with smoke; where wild beasts—in the form of cats—hold their nightly revels, imitating the yells of agonised infants, filling the dreams of sleepers with ideas of internal thunder or combustion, and driving the sleepless mad!

Susy—our Susy—is the cause of this miracle of beauty in the midst of misery; this glowing gem in a setting of ugliness. It is her modest little head that has bent over the boxes of earth, which constitute her landed property; her pretty little fingers which have trained the stems and watered the roots and cherished the flowers until the barren house-top has been made to blossom like the rose. And love, as usual, has done it all—love to that very ugly old woman, chimney-pot Liz, who sits on the rustic chair in the midst of the garden enjoying it all.

For Liz has been a mother to that motherless bairn from her earliest years. She has guarded, fed, and clothed her from infancy; taught her from God's Book the old, old story of redeeming love, and led her to the feet of Jesus. It would be strange indeed if Susy did not love the ugly old woman, until at last she came to regard the wrinkles as veritable lines of beauty; the nut-cracker nose and chin as emblems of persistent goodness; the solitary wobbling tooth as a sign of unconquerable courage; and the dark eyes—well, it required no effort of imagination to change the character of the old woman's eyes, for they had always been good, kindly, expressive eyes, and were at that date as bright and lively as when she was sweet sixteen.

But chimney-pot Liz was poor—desperately poor, else she had not been there, for if heaven was around and within her, assuredly something very like pandemonium was underneath her, and it not unfrequently appeared as if the evil spirits below were surging to and fro in a fierce endeavour to burst up the whole place, and hurl the old woman with her garden into the river.

Evil spirits indeed formed the dread foundation of the old woman's abode; for, although her own court was to some extent free from the curse, this particular pile of building, of which the garden formed the apex, had a grog-shop, opening on another court, for its foundation-stone. From that sink of iniquity, literal and unmitigated—though not unadulterated—spirits of evil rose like horrid fumes from the pit, and maddened the human spirits overhead. These, descending to the foundation-den, soaked themselves in the material spirit and carried it up, until the whole tenement seemed to reek and reel under its malign influence.

But, strange to say, the riot did not rise as high as the garden on the roof—only the echoes reached that little paradise.

Now it is a curious almost unaccountable fact, which no one would ever guess, that a teapot was the cause of this—at least a secondary cause—for a teapot was the chief instrument in checking, if not turning, the tide of evil. Yes, chimney-pot Liz held her castle in the very midst of the enemy, almost single-handed, with no visible weapon of offence or defence but a teapot! We say visible, because Liz did indeed possess other and very powerful weapons which were not quite so obvious—such as, the Word of God in her memory, the love of God in her heart, and the Spirit of God in her soul.

To the outside world, however, the teapot was her weapon and shield.

We have read of such a weapon before, somewhere in the glorious annals of city missions, but just now we are concerned only with the teapot of our own Liz of chimney-pot notoriety.

Seated, as we have said, in a rustic chair, gazing through the foliage at the busy Thames, and plying her knitting needles briskly, while the sun seemed to lick up and clear away the fogs and smoke of the great city, chimney-pot Liz enjoyed her thoughts until a loud clatter announced that Susy had knocked over the watering-pot.

“Oh! granny” (thus she styled her), “I’m so sorry! So stupid of me! Luckily there’s no water in it.”

“Never mind, dear,” said the old woman in a soft voice, and with a smile which for a moment exposed the waste of gums in which the solitary fang stood, “I’ve got no nerves—never had any, and hope I never may have. By the way, that reminds me—Is the tea done, Susy?”

“Yes, not a particle left,” replied the girl, rising from her floral labours and thereby showing that her graceful figure matched well with her pretty young face. It was a fair face, with golden hair divided in the middle and laid smooth over her white brow, not sticking confusedly out from it like the tangled scrub on a neglected common, or the frontal locks of a Highland bull.

“That’s bad, Susy,” remarked old Liz, pushing the fang about with her tongue for a few seconds. “You see, I had made up my mind to go down to-night and have a chat with Mrs Rampy, and I wouldn’t like to visit her without my teapot. The dear old woman is so fond of a cup of tea, and she don’t often get it good, poor thing. No, I shouldn’t like to go without my teapot, it would disappoint her, you know—though I’ve no doubt she would be glad to see me even empty-handed.”

“I should just think she would!” said Susy with a laugh, as she stooped to arrange some of the fastenings of her garden, “I should just think she would.

Indeed, I doubt if that dear old woman would be alive now but for you, granny.”

The girl emphasised the “dear” laughingly, for Mrs Rampy was one of those middle-aged females of the destitute class whose hearts have been so steeled against their kind by suffering and drink as to render them callous to most influences. The proverbial “soft spot” in Mrs Rampy’s heart was not reached until an assault had been made on it by chimney-pot Liz with her teapot. Even then it seemed as if the softness of the spot were only of the gutta-percha type.

“Perhaps not, perhaps not my dear,” returned old Liz, with that pleased little smile with which she was wont to recognise a philanthropic success a smile which always had the effect of subduing the tooth, and rendering the plain face almost beautiful.

Although bordering on the lowest state of destitution—and that is a remarkably low state in London!—old Liz had an air of refinement about her tones, words, and manner which was very different from that of the poor people around her. This was not altogether, though partly, due to her Christianity. The fact is, the old woman had “seen better days.” For fifty years she had been nurse in an amiable and wealthy family, the numerous children of which seemed to have been born to bloom for a few years in the rugged garden of this world, and then be transplanted to the better land. Only the youngest son survived. He entered the army and went to India—that deadly maelstrom which has swallowed up so much of British youth and blood and beauty! When the old couple became bankrupt and died, the old nurse found herself alone and almost destitute in the world.

It is not our purpose to detail here the sad steps by which she descended to the very bottom of the social ladder, taking along with her Susan, her adopted daughter and the child of a deceased fellow-servant. We merely tell thus much to account for her position and her partial refinement—both of which conditions she shared with Susan.

“Now then,” said the latter, “I must go, granny. Stickle and Screw are not the men to overlook faults. If I’m a single minute late I shall have to pay for it.”

“And quite right, Susy, quite right. Why should Stickle and Screw lose a minute of their people’s work? Their people would be angry enough if they were to be paid a penny short of their wages! Besides, the firm employs over two hundred hands, and if every one of these was to be late a minute there would be two hundred minutes gone—nigh four hours, isn’t it? You should be able to count that right off, Susy, havin’ been so long at the Board-school.”

“I don’t dispute it, granny,” said the girl with a light laugh, as she stood in front of a triangular bit of looking-glass tying on her poor but neatly made hat. “And I am usually three or four minutes before my time, but Stickle and Screw are hard on us in other ways, so different from Samson and Son, where Lily Hewat goes. Now, I’m off. I’ll be sure to be back by half-past nine or soon after.”

As the girl spoke, footsteps were heard ascending the creaky wooden stair. Another moment and Tommy Splint entering with a theatrical air, announced —

“A wisitor!”

He was closely followed by Sam Blake, who no sooner beheld Susy than he seemed to become paralysed, for he stood gazing at her as if in eager but helpless amazement.

Susy was a good deal surprised at this, but feeling that if she were to wait for the clearing up of the mystery she would infallibly be late in reaching the shop of the exacting Stickle and Screw, she swept lightly past the seaman with a short laugh, and ran down-stairs.

Without a word of explanation Sam sprang after her, but, although smart enough on the shrouds and ladders of shipboard, he failed to accommodate himself to the stairs of rookeries, and went down, as he afterwards expressed it, “by the run,” coming to an anchor at the bottom in a sitting posture. Of course the lithe and active Susy escaped him, and also escaped being too late by only half a minute.

“Never mind, she’ll be back again between nine and ten o’clock, unless they keep her late,” said old Liz, after Sam had explained who he was, and found that Susy was indeed his daughter, and chimney-pot Liz the nurse who had tended his wife to her dying day, and afterwards adopted his child.

“I never was took aback so in all my life,” said the seaman, sitting down beside the old woman, and drawing a sigh so long that it might have been likened to a moderate breeze. “She’s the born image o’ what her dear mother was when I first met her. My Susy! Well, it’s not every poor seaman as comes off a long voyage an’ finds that he’s fallen heir to a property like that!”

“You may well be proud of her,” said old Liz, “and you’ll be prouder yet when you come to know her.”

“I know it, and I’m proud to shake your hand, mother, an’ thankee kindly for takin’ such care o’ my helpless lassie. You say she’ll be home about ten?”

“Yes, if she’s not kep’ late. She always comes home about that time. Meanwhile you’ll have something to eat. Tommy, boy, fetch out the loaf and the cheese and the teapot. You know where to find ’em. Tommy’s an orphan, Cap’n Blake, that I’ve lately taken in hand. He’s a good boy is Tommy, but rather wild.”

“Wot can you expect of a horphing?” said the boy with a grin, for he had overheard the latter remark, though it was intended only for the visitor’s ear. “But I say, granny, there ain’t no cheese here, ’cept a bit o’ rind that even a mouse would scorn to look at.”

“Never mind, bring out the loaf, Tommy.”

“An’ there ain’t no use,” continued the boy, “o’ bringin’ out the teapot, ’cause there ain’t a grain o’ tea nowheres.”

“Oh! I forgot,” returned old Liz, slightly confused; “I’ve just run out o’ tea, Cap’n Blake, an’ I haven’t a copper at present to buy any, but—”

“Never mind that old girl; and I ain’t quite captain yet, though trendin’ in that direction. You come out along wi’ me, Tommy. I’ll soon putt these matters to rights.”

Old Liz could not have remonstrated even if she had wished to do so, for her impulsive visitor was gone in a moment followed by his extremely willing little friend. They returned in quarter of an hour.

“There you are,” said the seaman, taking the articles one by one from a basket carried by Tommy; “a big loaf, pound o’ butter, ditto tea, three pound o’ sugar, six eggs, hunk o’ cheese, paper o’ salt—forgot the pepper; never mind.”

“You’ve bin an’ forgot the sassengers too—but here they are,” said Tommy, plucking the delectable viands from the bottom of the basket with a look of glee, and laying them on the table.

Chimney-pot Liz did not look surprised; she only smiled and nodded her head approvingly, for she felt that Sam Blake understood the right thing to do and did it.

Soon the celebrated teapot was going the round, full swing, while the air was redolent of fried sausage and cheese mingled with the perfume of roses and mignonette, for this meal, you must know, was eaten in the garden in the afternoon sunshine, while the cooking—done in the attic which opened on the garden—was accomplished by Sam assisted by Tommy.

“Well, you air a trump,” said the latter to the former as he sat down, greasy and glowing, beside the seaman at the small table where old Liz presided like a humble duchess.

We need hardly say that the conversation was animated, and that it bore largely on the life-history of the absent Susy.

"You're quite sure that she'll be here by ten?" asked the excited father for the fiftieth time that afternoon.

"Yes, I'm sure of it—unless she's kep' late," answered Liz.

But Susy did not return at the usual hour, so her impatient father was forced to conclude that she had been "kep' late"—too late. In his anxiety he resolved to sally forth under the guidance of Tommy Splint to inquire for the missing Susy at the well-known establishment of Stickle and Screw.

Let us anticipate him in that quest. At the usual hour that night the employés of Stickle and Screw left work and took their several ways home ward. Susy had the company of her friend Lily Hewat as far as Chancery Lane. Beyond that point she had to go alone. Being summer-time, the days were long, and Susy was one of those strong-hearted and strong-nerved creatures who have a tendency to fear nothing.

She had just passed over London Bridge and turned into a labyrinth of small streets on the Surrey side of the river, when a drunken man met her in a darkish and deserted alley through which she had to pass. The man seized her by the arm. Susy tried to free herself. In the struggle that ensued she fell with a loud shriek, and struck her head on the kerb-stone so violently that she was rendered insensible. Seeing this, the man proceeded to take from her the poor trinkets she had about her, and would have succeeded in robbing her but for the sudden appearance on the scene of a lowland Scot clad in a homespun suit of shepherd's plaid—a strapping ruddy youth of powerful frame, fresh from the braes of Yarrow.

Chapter Three.
A Visitor from the North.

How that Lowland Scot came to the rescue just in the nick of time is soon told.

"Mither," said he one evening, striding into his father's dwelling—a simple cottage on a moor—and sitting down in front of a bright old woman in a black dress, whose head was adorned with that frilled and baggy affair which is called in Scotland a mutch, "I'm gawin' to Lun'on."

"Hoots! havers, David."

“It’s no’ havers, mither. Times are guid. We’ve saved a pickle siller. Faither can spare me for a wee while—sae I’m aff to Lun’on the morn’s mornin’.”

“An’ what for?” demanded Mrs Laidlaw, letting her hands and the sock on which they were engaged drop on her lap, as she looked inquiringly into the grave countenance of her handsome son.

“To seek a wife, maybe,” replied the youth, relaxing into that very slight smile with which grave and stern-featured men sometimes betray the presence of latent fun.

Mrs Laidlaw resumed her sock and needle with no further remark than “Hoots! ye’re haverin’,” for she knew that her son was only jesting in regard to the wife. Indeed nothing was further from that son’s intention or thoughts at the time than marriage, so, allowing the ripple to pass from his naturally grave and earnest countenance, he continued—

“Ye see, mither, I’m twunty-three noo, an’ I wad like to see something o’ the warld afore I grow aulder an’ settle doon to my wark. As I said, faither can spare me a while, so I’ll jist tak’ my fit in my haund an’ awa’ to see the Great Bawbylon.”

“Ye speak o’ gaun to see the warld, laddie, as if ’ee was a gentleman.”

“Div ’ee think, mother, that the warld was made only for gentlemen to travel in?” demanded the youth, with the gentlest touch of scorn in his tone.

To this question the good woman made no reply; indeed her stalwart son evidently expected none, for he rose a few minutes later and proceeded to pack up his slender wardrobe in a shoulder-bag of huge size, which, however, was well suited to his own proportions.

Next day David Laidlaw took the road which so many men have taken before him—for good or ill. But, unlike most of his predecessors, he was borne towards it on the wings of steam, and found himself in Great Babylon early the following morning, with his mother’s last caution ringing strangely in his ears.

“David,” she had said, “I ken ye was only jokin’, but dinna ye be ower sure o’ yersel’. Although thae English lassies are a kine o’ waux dolls, they have a sort o’ way wi’ them that might be dangerous to lads like you.”

“H’m!” David had replied, in that short tone of self-sufficiency which conveys so much more than the syllable would seem to warrant.

The Scottish youth had neither kith nor kin in London, but he had one friend, an old school companion, who, several years before, had gone to seek his fortune in the great city, and whose address he knew. To this address he betook himself on the morning of his arrival, but found that his friend had changed his abode. The whole of that day did David spend in going about. He was sent from one place to another, in quest of his friend, and made diligent use of his long legs, but without success. Towards evening he was directed to a street on the Surrey side of the Thames, and it was while on his way thither that he chanced to enter the alley where poor Susan was assaulted.

Like most Scotsmen of his class and size David Laidlaw was somewhat leisurely and slow in his movements when not called to vigorous exertion, but when he heard the girl's shriek, and, a moment later, saw her fall, he sprang to her side with one lithe bound, like that of a Bengal tiger, and aimed a blow at her assailant, which, had it taken effect, would have interrupted for some time—if not terminated for ever—that rascal's career. But the thief, though drunk, was young, strong, and active. It is also probable that he was a professional pugilist for, instead of attempting to spring back from the blow—which he had not time to do—he merely put his head to one side and let it pass. At the same instant David received a stinging whack on the right eye, which although it failed to arrest his rush, filled his vision with starry coruscations.

The thief fell back and the Scot tripped over him. Before he could recover himself the thief was up like an acrobat and gone. At the same moment two policemen, rushing on the scene in answer to the girl's shriek, seized David by the collar and held him fast.

There was Highland as well as Lowland blood in the veins of young Laidlaw. This sanguinary mixture is generally believed to possess effervescing properties when stirred. It probably does. For one moment the strength of Goliath of Gath seemed to tingle in David's frame, and the vision of two policemen's heads battered together swam before his eyes—but he thought better of it and restrained himself!

"Tak' yer hands aff me, freens," he said, suddenly unclosing his fists and relaxing his brows. "Ye'd better see after the puir lassie. An' dinna fear for me. I'm no gawn to rin awa'!"

Perceiving the evident truth of this latter remark, the constables turned their attention to the girl, who was by that time beginning to recover.

"Where am I?" asked Susy, gazing into the face of her rescuer with a dazed look.

"Yer a' right, puir bairn. See, tak' ha'd o' my airm," said the Scot.

“That’s the way, now, take hold of mine,” said one of the constables in a kindly tone; “come along—you’ll be all right in a minute. The station is close at hand.”

Thus supported the girl was led to the nearest police station, where David Laidlaw gave a minute account of what had occurred to the rather suspicious inspector on duty. While he was talking, Susan, who had been provided with a seat and a glass of water, gazed at him with profound interest. She had by that time recovered sufficiently to give her account of the affair, and, as there was no reason for further investigation of the matter, she was asked if her home was far off, and a constable was ordered to see her safely there.

“Ye needna fash,” said David carelessly, “I’m gawn that way mysel’, an’ if the puir lassie has nae objection I’ll be glad to—”

The abrupt stoppage in the youth’s speech was caused by his turning to Susy and looking full and attentively in her face, which, now that the colour was restored and the dishevelled hair rearranged, had a very peculiar effect on him. His mother’s idea of a “waux doll” instantly recurred to his mind, but the interest and intelligence in Susy’s pretty face was very far indeed removed from the vacant imbecility which usually characterises that fancy article of juvenile luxury.

“Of course if the girl wishes you to see her home,” said the inspector, “I have no objection, but I’ll send a constable to help you to take care of her.”

“Help me to tak’ care o’ her!” exclaimed David, whose pride was sorely hurt by the distrust implied in these words; “man, I could putt her in my pooch an’ you alang wi’ her.”

Of this remark Mr Inspector, who had resumed his pen, took no notice whatever, but went on writing while one of the constables prepared to obey his superior’s orders. In his indignation the young Scot resolved to fling out of the office and leave the police to do as they pleased in the matter, but, glancing at Susy as he turned round, he again met the gaze of her soft blue eyes.

“C’way, lassie, I wull gang wi’ ye,” he said, advancing quickly and offering his arm.

Being weak from the effects of her fall, Susy accepted the offer willingly, and was supported on the other side by a policeman.

In a short time the trio ascended the rookery stair and presented themselves to the party in the garret-garden just as Sam Blake and Tommy Splint were about to leave it.

It is impossible to describe adequately the scene that ensued—the anxiety of the poor seaman to be recognised by his long lost “babby,” the curious but not unnatural hesitancy of that “babby” to admit that he was her father, though earnestly assured of the fact by chimney-pot Liz; the surprise of David Laidlaw, and even of the policeman, at being suddenly called to witness so interesting a domestic scene, and the gleeful ecstasy of Tommy Splint over the whole affair—flavoured as it was with the smell and memory of recent “sassengers.”

When the constable at last bid them good-night and descended the stair, the young Scot turned to go, feeling, with intuitive delicacy, that he was in the way, but once again he met the soft blue eyes of Susy, and hesitated.

“Hallo, young man!” cried Sam Blake, on observing his intention, “you ain’t agoin’ to leave us—arter saving my gal’s life, p’raps—anywise her property. No, no; you’ll stop here all night an’—”

He paused: “Well, I do declare I forgot I wasn’t aboard my own ship, but—” again he paused and looked at old Liz.

“I’ve no room for any of you in the garret,” said that uncompromising woman, “there ain’t more than one compartment in it, and that’s not too big for me an’ Susy; but you’re welcome, both of you, to sleep in the garden if you choose. Tommy sleeps there, under a big box, and a clever sea-farin’ man like you could—”

“All right, old lady,” cried the seaman heartily. “I’ll stop, an’ thankee; we’ll soon rig up a couple o’ bunks. So you will stop too, young man—by the way, you—you didn’t give us your name yet.”

“My name is David Laidlaw; but I won’t stop, thankee,” replied the Scot with unexpected decision of manner. “Ye see, I’ve been lookin’ a’ this day for an auld freen’ an’ I must find him afore the morn’s mornin’, if I should seek him a’ nicht. But, but—maybe I’ll come an’ speer for ’ee in a day or twa—if I may.”

“If you mean that you will come and call, Mr Laidlaw,” said old Liz, “we will be delighted to see you at any time. Don’t forget the address.”

“Nae fear—I’ll putt it i’ my note-buik,” said David, drawing a substantial volume from his breast pocket and entering the address—‘Mrs Morley, Cherub Court’—therein.

Having shaken hands all round he descended the stair with a firm tread and compressed lips until he came out on the main thoroughfare, when he muttered to himself sternly:

“Waux dolls, indeed! there’s nane o’ thae dolls’ll git the better o’ me. H’m! a bonny wee face, nae doot but what div I care for bonny faces if the hairt’s no’ richt?”

“But suppose that the heart is right?”

Who could have whispered that question? David Laidlaw could not stop to inquire, but began to hum—

“Oh, this is no my ain lassie,

Kind though the lassie be,—”

In a subdued tone, as he sauntered along the crowded street, which by that time was blazing with gas-light in the shop-windows and oil-lamps on the hucksters’ barrows.

The song, however, died on his lips, and he moved slowly along, stopping now and then to observe the busy and to him novel scene, till he reached a comparatively quiet turning, which was dimly lighted by only one lamp. Here he felt a slight twitch at the bag which contained his little all. Like lightning he turned and seized by the wrist a man who had already opened the bag and laid hold of some of its contents. Grasping the poor wretch by the neck with his other hand he held him in a grip of iron.

Chapter Four.
Dangers Threaten.

The man who had been thus captured by David was one of those wretched forlorn creatures who seem to reach a lower depth of wretchedness and degradation in London than in any other city in the world. Although young and strongly made he was pale, gaunt and haggard, with a look about the eyes and mouth which denoted the habitual drunkard. The meanness of his attire is indescribable.

He trembled—whether from the effects of dissipation or fear we cannot say—as his captor led him under the lamp, with a grip on the collar that almost choked him, but when the light fell full on his haggard face a feeling of intense pity induced the Scot to relax his hold.

“Oh, ye puir meeserable crater!” he said, but stopped abruptly, for the man made a sudden and desperate effort to escape. He might as well have struggled in the grasp of a gorilla!

“Na, na, my man, ye’ll no twust yersel’ oot o’ my grup sae easy! keep quiet noo, an’ I’ll no hurt ’ee. What gars ye gang aboot tryin’ to steal like that?”

“Steal!” explained the man fiercely, “what else can I do? I must live! I’ve just come out of prison, and am flung on the world to be kicked about like a dog and starve. Let me go, or I’ll kill you!”

“Na, ’ee’ll no kill me. I’m no sae easy killed as ’ee think,” returned David, again tightening the grasp of his right hand while he thrust his left into his trousers-pocket.

At that moment the bull’s-eye light of an advancing constable became visible, and the defiant air of the thief gave place to a look of anxious fear. It was evident that the dread of another period of prison life was strong upon the trembling wretch. Drawing out a handful of coppers, David thrust them quickly into the man’s hand, and said—

“Hae, tak’ them, an’ aff ye go! an’ ask the Lord to help ’ee to dae better.”

The strong hand relaxed, another moment and the man, slipping round the corner like an unwholesome spirit, was gone.

“Can ye direck me, polisman,” said the Scot to the constable, as he was about to pass, “t’ Toor Street?”

“Never heard of it,” said the constable brusquely, but civilly enough.

“That’s queer noo. I was telt it was hereaboots—Toor Street.”

“Oh, perhaps you mean Tower Street” said the constable, with a patronising smile.

“Perhaps I div,” returned the Scot, with that touch of cynicism which is occasionally seen in his race. “Can ’ee direck me tilt?”

“Yes, but it is on the other side of the river.”

“Na—it’s on this side o’ the river,” said David quietly yet confidently.

The conversation was here cut short by the bursting on their ears of a sudden noise at some distance. The policeman turned quickly away, and when David advanced into the main street he observed that there was some excitement among its numerous and riotous occupants. The noise continued to increase, and it became evident that the cause of it was rapidly approaching, for the sound changed from a distant rumble into a steady roar, in the midst of which stentorian shouts were heard. Gradually the roar culminated, for in another moment there swept round the end of the street a pair of apparently runaway horses, with two powerful lamps gleaming, or rather glaring, above them. On each side of the driver of the galloping steeds stood a man, shouting like a maniac of the boatswain type. All three were brass-helmeted, like antique charioteers. Other helmets gleamed behind them. Little save the helmets and the glowing lamps could be seen through the dark and smoky atmosphere as the steam fire-engine went thundering by.

Now, if there was one thing more than another that David Laidlaw desired to see, it was a London fire. Often had he read about these fires, for he was a great reader of books, as well as newspapers, and deeply had his enthusiasm been stirred (though not expressed) by accounts of thrilling escapes and heroic deeds among the firemen. His eyes therefore flashed back the flame of the lamps as the engine went past him like a red thunderbolt, and he started off in pursuit of it.

But, as many people know, and all may believe, running in a crowded London street is difficult—even to an expert London thief. Our Scot found that out after a sixty-yards' run; then he had the wisdom to stop, just as a little boy leaped out of his way exclaiming—

"'Ullo, Goliah! mind w'ere you're a-goin' to. I wonder yer mother let you hout all alone!"

"Whar's the fire, laddie?" demanded David, with some impatience.

"'Ow should I know, Scotty! I ain't a pleeceman, ham I? that I should be expected to know heverythink!"

As the engine had by that time vanished, no one could tell where the fire was, and as the street had reverted to its normal condition of noise and bustle, David Laidlaw gave up the search for it. He also gave up as hopeless further search for his friend that night, and resolved to avail himself of one of those numerous establishments in the windows of which it was announced that "good beds" were to be had within.

Entering one, the landlord of which had a round jovial countenance, he ordered tea, toast, and sausages, with pen, ink, and paper. Having heartily consumed the former, he devoted himself to the latter and proceeded to write a letter. Here is the epistle:—

“Bawbylon, I dinna ken where.

“5th July 18—.

“Dear Mither—Here I am, in Lun’on, an’ wow! but it is an awfu’ place! ’Ee’ll no believe me, but I’ve been lost twa or three times a’ready, an’ I’ve had a kine o’ fecht an’ a rescue, an’ been taen to the polis office, an’ made some freens, an’ catched a thief (an’ latten ’im aff wi’ a caution an’ a wheen bawbees), an’ seen a fire-engine that lookit as if it was gawn full gallop to destruction. Ay, wumin, an’ I’ve fawn in a’ready wi’ a waux doll! But dinna ye fear, mither, I’m ower teugh to be gotten the better o’ by the likes o’ them. An’ noo I’m gawn to my bed, sae as to be ready for mair adventurs the mornin’. Ye’ll admit that I’ve done gey ’n’ weel for the first day. At this rate I’ll be able to write a story-buik when I git hame. Respecks to faither. Yer affectionate son, David.

“P.S.—The lan’lord’s just been in, an’ I’ve had a lang crack wi’ him aboot the puir folk an’ the thieves o’ this Great Bawbylon. Wow, but I am wae for them. Seems to me they have na got a chance i’ the battle o’ life. He says he’ll tak’ me to see ane o’ their low lodgin’-hooses the morn. Guid-nicht.”

We turn now to a very different scene—to a West End drawing-room, in which is to be found every appliance, in the way of comfort and luxurious ease, that ingenuity can devise or labour produce. An exceedingly dignified, large, self-possessed yet respectful footman, with magnificent calves in white stockings, has placed a silver tray, with three tiny cups and a tiny teapot thereon, near to the hand of a beautiful middle-aged lady—the mistress of the mansion. She is reading a letter with evident interest. A girl of seventeen, whose style of beauty tells of the closest relationship, sits beside her, eagerly awaiting the news which is evidently contained in the letter.

“Oh, I am so glad, Rosa! they have found traces of her at last.”

“Of who, mother—old nurse?” asked Rosa.

“Yes, your father’s old nurse; indeed I may say mine also, for when I was a little girl I used to pay long visits to your grandfather’s house. And it seems that she is in great poverty—almost destitute. Dear, dear old nurse! you won’t be long in poverty if I can help it!”

As she spoke, a handsome man of middle age and erect carriage entered the room. There was an expression of care and anxiety on his countenance, which, however, partly disappeared when the lady turned towards him with a triumphant look and held up the letter.

“Didn’t I tell you, Jack, that your lawyer would find our old nurse if any one could? He writes me that she has been heard of, living in some very poor district on the south side of the Thames, and hopes to be able to send me her exact address very soon. I felt quite sure that Mr Lockhart would find her, he is such an obliging and amiable man, as well as clever. I declare that I can’t bear to look at all the useless luxury in which we live when I think of the good and true creatures like old nurse who are perishing in absolute destitution.”

“But being disgusted with our luxury and giving it all up would not mend matters, little wife,” returned Jack with a faint smile. “Rich people are not called upon to give up their riches, but to use them—to spend well within their means, so as to have plenty to spare in the way of helping those who are willing to help themselves, and sustaining those who cannot help themselves. The law of supply and demand has many phases, and the profits resulting therefrom are overruled by a Higher Power than the laws of Political Economy. There are righteous rich as well as poor; there are wicked poor as well as rich. What you and I have got to do in this perplexing world is to cut our particular coat according to our cloth.”

“Just so,” said the lady with energy. “Your last remark is to the point, whatever may be the worth of your previous statements, and I intend to cut off the whole of my superfluous skirts in order to clothe old nurse and such as she with them.”

Rosa laughingly approved of this decision, for she was like-minded with her mother, but her father did not respond. The look of care had returned to his brow, and there was cause for it for Colonel Brentwood had just learned from his solicitor that he was a ruined man.

“It is hard to have to bring you such news, darling,” he said, taking his wife’s hand, “especially when you were so happily engaged in devising liberal things for the poor, but God knows what is best for us. He gave us this fortune, when He inclined uncle Richard to leave it to us, and now He has seen fit to take it away.”

“But how—what do you mean by taking it away?” asked poor Mrs Brentwood, perceiving that her husband really had some bad news to tell.

“Listen; I will explain. When uncle Richard Weston died, unexpectedly, leaving to us his estate, we regarded it you know, as a gift from God, and came to England resolving to spend our wealth in His service. Well, yesterday Mr Lockhart informed me that another will has been found, of later date than that which made me uncle Richard’s heir, in which the whole estate is left to a distant connection of whose very existence I had become oblivious.”

"Well, Jack," returned the lady, with a valiant effort to appear reconciled, "but that is not ruin, you know. Your pay still remains to us."

"I—I fear not. That is to say, believing the estate to be mine, I have come under obligations which must be met and, besides, I have spent considerable sums which must be refunded—all of which, if I understand the law of the land rightly, means ruin."

For some moments Mrs Brentwood sat in silent meditation. "Well," she said at length, with the air of one who has made up her mind, "I don't understand much about the law of the land. All I know is that my purse is full of gold just now, so I will snap my fingers at the law of the land and go right off to visit and succour our dear old Liz."

Chapter Five.
A Night of Adventures.

According to arrangement, David Laidlaw was taken the following evening by his landlord, Mr Spivin, to see one of the low lodging-houses of London.

Our adventurous Scot had often read and heard that some of the low quarters of London were dangerous for respectable men to enter without the escort of the police, but his natural courage and his thorough confidence in the strength of his bulky frame inclined him to smile at the idea of danger. Nevertheless, by the advice of his new friend the landlord, he left his watch and money, with the exception of a few coppers, behind him—carefully stowed under the pillow of his bed in his shoulder-bag. For further security the door of his room was locked and the key lung on a nail in an out-of-the-way corner, known only, as Mr Spivin pointed out, to "their two selves."

"But hoo dis it happen, Mr Speevin," asked David, as they walked along the streets together, "that ye can gang safely amang the thieves withoot a polisman t' proteck ye?"

"Oh, as to that," replied the jolly landlord, "I'm connected with a religious society which sends agents down among them poor houtcasts to convert 'em. They hall knows me, bless you. But I ain't a-goin' with you myself. You see, I'm a very busy man, and engagements which I 'ad forgotten prevents me, but I've made an arrangement with one o' the converted thieves to take you to a few of the worst places in London. Of course he can pass you hevery where as one of his friends."

To this David made no reply, save with a slight "Humph!" as he looked earnestly at his companion. But Mr Spivin wore an expression of seraphic candour.

“Here he is,” added the landlord, as they turned a corner and drew near to a man in mean attire, who seemed to be waiting for some one. “He’s rather disreputable to look at, only just been converted, an’ not ’avin’ ’ad the chance yet to better himself.—But—hallo!—you seem to know him.”

The last exclamation and remark were called forth by the look of surprise on Laidlaw’s face, and the air almost of alarm on that of the mean-looking man—alarm which was by no means unnatural, seeing that he was none other than the fellow who had attempted to rob our Scotsman the previous night.

David, however, was quick to recover himself. “Know him!” he cried, with a hearty laugh, “ay, I ken him weel. I lent him a helpin’ haund last nicht, no’ far frae here.”

“Surely he was not beggin’?” exclaimed Mr Spivin in tones of virtuous reproof, “for a noo convert to go a-beggin’, you know, would be houtrageous!”

“Na, na,” answered David, with a quiet and somewhat cynical smile, “he wasna beggin’, puir lad, but I took peety on ’im, an’ gee’d ’im some bawbees. So this is yer new convert, is he? an’ he’s to be my guide? He’ll do. He’ll do. Sae I’ll bid ye guid-nicht, Mr Speevin.”

As the Scot held out his hand in a very decided manner the landlord was obliged to depart without further enlightenment, after cautioning the “converted” thief to take good care of his friend.

When he was gone the Scotsman and the ex-convict stood looking silently at each other, the first with an earnest yet half-sarcastic smile, the other with a mingled expression of reckless amusement, in which, however, there was a trace of anxiety.

“Weel noo,” said the former, “aren’t ye an oot-an’-oot blagyird?”

“If you mean by that an out-and-out blackguard,” answered the thief, “you’re not far wrong.”

“Ye’re honest the noo, ony way,” remarked the Scot, with a nod. “Noo, my man, look ye here. Ye are nae mair convertit than yer freen’ Speevin is, though I took him for a rale honest man at first. But bein’ a blagyird, as ye admit, I’m wullin’ t’ hire ye in that capacity for the nicht. Noo, what I want is t’ see low life in Lun’on, an’ if ye’ll tak’ me to what they may ca’ the warst haunts o’ vice, I’ll mak’ it worth yer while—an’ I’ve got mair siller than ye think for, maybe.”

A stern frown settled on the thief’s face as David spoke.

“I suppose,” he said, “that you want me to show you the misery and destitootion among the poor of London, that you may return to your ’ome in the North and boast that you ’ave ‘done the slums!’”

“Na—na, ye’re quite mista’en, man,” returned David quickly; “but I want t’ see for mysel’ what I’ve heard sae muckle aboot—to see if it’s a’ true, for I’m wae—I’m” (correcting himself) “sorry—for the puir craturs, an’ wud fain help some o’ them if I could. Noo, freen’,” he continued, laying his huge hand gently on the man’s shoulder, “if ye want to earn something, an’ll tak’ me t’ where I want t’ gang—guid. If no’—I’ll bid ye guid-nicht.”

“Do you know,” said the man, with a furtive glance at David’s kindly face, “the risk you run from the men who live in such places if you go alone and unprotected?”

“I ken the risk they run if they daur t’ meddle wi’ me! Besides, I’ll be naether alane nor unproteckit if I’ve you wi’ me, for I can trust ye!”

A peculiar smile played for a moment on the haggard features of the thief.

“Scotchman,” he said, “whatever your name may be, I—”

“My name is David Laidlaw, an’ I’ve nae cause t’ be ashamed o’t.”

“Well, Mr Laidlaw,” returned the thief, in vastly improved language and tone, “I’m indebted to you for a good supper and a warm bed last night. Besides, yours is the first friendly touch or kind voice that has greeted me since I was discharged, and you’ve said you can trust me! So I’ll do my best for you even though you should not give me a penny. But remember, you will go among a rough lot whom I have but little power to control.”

“Hoots! c’way, man, an’ dinna waste time haverin’.”

Saying this, he grasped his guide by the arm in a friendly way and walked off, much to the surprise of a policeman with an aquiline nose, who turned his bull’s-eye full on them as they passed, and then went on his way, shaking his head sagaciously.

As the ill-assorted pair advanced, the streets they traversed seemed to grow narrower and dirtier. The inhabitants partook of the character of their surroundings, and it struck our Scotsman that, as ordinary shops became fewer and meaner, grog-shops became more numerous and self-assertive. From out of these dens of debauchery there issued loud cries and curses and ribald songs, and occasionally one or two of the wretched revellers, male or female, were thrust out, that they might finish off a quarrel with a fight in the street, or because they insisted on having more drink without having the means to pay for it.

At one particular point a woman "in unwomanly rags" was seen leaning up against a lamp-post with an idiotical expression on her bloated face, making an impassioned speech to some imaginary person at her elbow. The speech came to an abrupt end when, losing her balance, she fell to the ground, and lay there in drunken contentment.

At the same moment the attention of our explorer was drawn to a riot close at hand, occasioned by two men engaged in a fierce encounter. They were loudly cheered and backed by their friends, until all were scattered by two powerful constables, who swooped suddenly on the scene and captured one of the combatants, while the other almost overturned David as he ran against him in passing, and escaped.

"Come down here," said the thief, turning sharp to the left and passing under a low archway.

It led to a narrow alley, which seemed to terminate in total darkness. Even Laidlaw's stout heart beat somewhat faster as he entered it, but he did not hesitate.

At the end of the passage a dim light appeared. It was thrown by a very dirty lamp, and disclosed a small court of unutterable meanness and inconceivable smells. One or two men had brushed past them, and David observed that his guide accosted these in a language, or slang, which he did not understand.

"I've got a friend in here," said his guide, opening a door and disclosing an extremely dirty room of about ten feet square. A woman with her back towards the door was busy at a wash-tub. Ragged clothes were drying on a clothes-line. A shattered bed, on which lay a bundle of straw and a torn blanket, stood in one corner; a rickety table in another. Water and soapsuds blotched the broken floor, amongst which played two little boys, absolutely naked.

"That's a woman that tries to keep respectable," whispered the thief, with something like a bitter laugh. "Hallo, Molly! here's a gen'lem'n as wants to bid 'ee good-night."

Molly raised herself, cleared the soapsuds from her thin arms, and turned a haggard but not dissipated face towards her visitor, who was almost choked, not only by the smell of the place, but by an uncontrollable gush of pity.

“My puir wumin!” he exclaimed, hastily thrusting his ever-ready hand into his pocket, “I didna mean t’ come in on ’ee unawears. Hae, ye’ll no’ objec’ to a wheen bawbees?”

He put all the coppers he possessed into the woman’s hand and hurried out of the room.

“Weel, weel,” muttered David, as they continued their walk through the miserable region, “I’ve gane an’ gie’d her a’ the siller I had i’ my pouch. Pair thing! She’ll need it, but I’ve naething left for onybody else!”

“It’s just as well, for there’s nothing left now for any one to steal,” said his companion.

“Whar are ’ee gaun noo?” asked Laidlaw.

The question put was not answered, for his guide, bidding him wait a minute, turned into a doorway and engaged in a low-toned conversation with a man. Returning to his friend with an air of indecision about him, the thief was on the point of speaking when a small party of men and women—evidently of the better classes—came round the corner and approached.

“Oho!” exclaimed the thief, drawing his companion into the shade of the opposite doorway, “we’re in luck. You see, this is what they call a low lodging-house, and the door-keeper thought that, respectable as you are in dress and looks, it might not be wise to take you in. But we’ll go in now at the tail o’ this lot, and nobody will take notice of you. Only follow close to me.”

Two of the “lot” who approached appeared to be respectably-dressed young men, carrying something like a large box between them. There were five altogether in the party, two of whom seemed to be plainly-dressed ladies.

They entered the house at once with a quiet “good-night” to the door-keeper, and were followed by the thief and David. Entering a very large irregularly-formed room, they proceeded to the upper end, where a huge coal fire blazed. The room was crowded with men and boys of varied appearance and character. From every rank in society they had gravitated—but all were stamped with the same brand—destitution! They were not, however, destitute of lungs, as the babel of sounds proved—nor of tobacco, as the clouds of smoke demonstrated.

Little notice was taken of the visitors. They were well known in that haunt of crime and woe. Angels of mercy they were, who, after the labours of each day, gave their spare time to the work of preaching salvation in Jesus to lost souls.

To the surprise of Laidlaw, the box before referred to became a harmonium when opened up, and soon the harmony of praise to God ascended from the reeking den. Then followed prayer—brief and to the point—after which an earnest appeal was made to the sorrowing, the suffering, and the criminal to come and find deliverance and rest in the Saviour.

We may not dwell on this. Some listened carelessly, some earnestly, others not at all.

“Come now,” whispered the thief to his friend, towards the close, “they’ll have spotted you, and will want to have a talk. We’ve no time for that. Follow me.”

David, who had been deeply interested, also wanted to have a talk with these servants of the King of kings, but his guide being already halfway down the room he was constrained to follow. Another moment and they were in the street.

Chapter Six.
Enemies Turned to Friends.

“You want to see as much as you can, I suppose?” remarked the thief as he hastened along. “Come, I’ll take you to our den.”

It seemed as if the man were leading his companion into deeper and deeper depths, for the dark passage into which they finally turned, and along which they groped their way, seemed to be the very vestibule of Pandemonium; cries as of fierce and evil spirits being heard at the farther end of it.

“Now,” said the thief, stopping, “whatever you do here, don’t show fight. This is a thieves’ den.”

The passage at its farther end became absolutely dark, so that the thief had to lead our hero by the hand. Turning abruptly to the right, they came upon a door through which there issued sounds of terrible revelry. A knock produced no effect. A second and louder knock resulted in dead silence. Then a female voice was heard inside. To it our thief replied in the language of the slums. Immediately the door was opened just enough to let the two men glide in; then it was shut with a bang and bolted.

“Hallo, Trumps, who ’ave you got here?” “W’ere did you pick ’im up?” “Is he a noo member?” shouted several voices, amid general laughter.

The speakers were among a company of men and women whose general appearance and reckless expressions of countenance seemed to indicate that they were past redemption. The den in which they sat drinking, smoking, and gambling consisted of a dirty room fitted with narrow tables, out of which opened an inner apartment. The door of this had been removed—probably for firewood in a time of scarcity. Both rooms were lighted with dim oil-lamps. Some of the company were beggars and tramps of the lowest type, but most were evidently of the vicious and criminal order. There was a tendency to unpleasant curiosity in regard to the stranger, but the thief, whom we may now call Trumps, put an end to this with a few slang words, and led his friend to a seat in the inner room, whence he could observe nearly the whole party and all that went on.

Some of the more intoxicated among them objected to be snubbed by Trumps, and were beginning to scowl at the visitor, no doubt with sinister intentions, when the outer door was again opened, and a young thief, obviously familiar with the place, entered, closely followed by a respectable-looking man in a surtout and a light topcoat. It required no second look to tell that the new-comer was a city missionary. Like our Scot, he had gained admission to the place through the influence of a friendly thief.

"Hullo, more visitors!" growled a big savage-looking man with an apron, who proved to be the landlord of the den.

Advancing quickly to this man, the missionary said, in a quiet gentle tone—

"You supply coffee, I see. May I have a cup?"

"No you mayn't, you spy! I know you, you canting wretch!"

He locked the door as he spoke, and then, striding forward in a towering rage, threatened vengeance on the intruder. The company, expecting a scene, rose en masse to their feet, while those in the inner room crowded to the front. Laidlaw, who was for the moment forgotten in this new excitement, followed them. He was well enough informed in reference to the work of the London City Missionaries to understand at a glance that one of those fearless men had managed to worm his way into the thieves' den, and was perhaps in danger of his life. That the man realised his danger was apparent from the fact that he stood erect and closed his eyes for a moment—evidently in silent prayer for help in the hour of need. The act probably saved him, for the ferocious landlord, although ready enough to crush defiance with a savage blow, did not quite see his way to dash his great fist into a mild, manly face with shut eyes! It was such an unusual way of receiving his onset that he hesitated and lowered his fist. Suddenly the missionary drew out a pocket-Bible, and, pointing upwards with it, said, in loud solemn tones, "A great white throne will be set up among the stars above us. The Saviour who died for sinners will sit upon it, and the dead that are in their graves shall hear His voice and live.

We shall be there!”

At this the people were silenced, apparently under a spell—some gazing upwards as if to see the throne; others staring into the missionary’s face in wonder.

“And I and you and you,” he continued, pointing to one and another, “shall be there: ‘We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.’ I am not an enemy, or a spy, but a servant of the Lord Jesus, who will be your judge at the last day. He is now the Saviour of the ruined and lost, and in His name I offer you mercy through the blood He shed for you upon the Cross. In His blessed Book it is written, ‘Whosoever believeth on Him shall be saved.’ I hope to come again before long to see you, friends. Now, landlord, open that door and let me out.”

The landlord, who seemed to be thoroughly taken aback, unlocked the door with a trembling hand, and the missionary passed out. But that was not the end of this remarkable visit. It was only the beginning of a grand work for Christ which afterwards took place in and around that thieves’ den. On this, however, we may not do more than touch here. Smitten in conscience, that landlord hurried out after the missionary and actually begged of him to repeat his visit. Then he returned to the den and found his people recovering somewhat from their surprise.

But, touched though the landlord was, he had by no means changed his character.

“Now, then,” he demanded, going up to David Laidlaw, “are you a missionary too?”

“Na, freen’, I am not; but I ’maist wush that I was, for it’s a graund wark t’ carry help t’ the destitute.”

“Well, guv’nor,” cried one fellow with a crushed nose and a huge black eye, “if that’s wot you’re a-’ankerin’ arter you can go a-’ead ’ere an’ ’elp us to yer ’eart’s content, for we’re all destitoot in this ’ere den. So, come along, table down all the cash you’ve got about you.”

“I’ll dae that wi’ pleasure,” said David, rising promptly, and turning all his pockets inside out. “Ye shall hae every bodle I possess.”

A general laugh greeted this proceeding, and one young thief shouted, “Well done, checkers,” (referring to his garments); “but ’ow comes it that you’ve bin cleaned out?”

“Plain as pea-soup,” cried another. “Don’t you see? He’s bin keepin’ company with Trumps!”

Here Trumps rose to explain. “No, pals, that’s not the reason; but just before comin’ here he gave away every rap he had to poor widow Grain.”

“He’s a brick!” cried one man, with a fierce oath.

“He’s a fool!” shouted another, with a fiercer oath. Regardless of the interruption, Trumps went on to explain how he had attempted to rob our hero, and been caught by him, and let off with a mild reproof and a lot of coppers. He also explained how that black-hearted villain Tandy Spivin (meaning David’s landlord) had hired him—Trumps—to take this “gen’lem’n” (pointing to David) “down into the den for a purpus—ahem! Of course, on bein’ introdooced to him,” continued Trumps, “I at once recognised the Scotchman I had tried to rob, and expected he would refuse to go with me; but I soon found that Scotty was a deep as well as a plucky cove, and wasn’t to be done out of his fun by trifles, for he said he would go to the slums with me because he could trust me—trust me, pals—note that!”

A loud explosion of laughter interrupted the speaker at this point.

“What!” exclaimed several voices, “said ’e could trust you, Trumps?”

“Ay,” cried the thief, looking suddenly fierce, “and why not? Isn’t it said, ‘There’s honour among thieves?’”

“Thrue for ye,” cried a big burglarious-looking Irishman, “sure there’s honour ’twixt the likes o’ you an’ me, Trumps, but that gen’lem’n an’t a thief!”

“That’s so, Bill,” exclaimed another man, with bloodshot eyes and beetling brows; “an’ it’s my opinion that as the cove hain’t got no browns ’e ought to contribute ’is checker suit to the good o’ the ’ouse. It would fetch summat.”

The interest in the missionary’s words seemed to be passing away, for at this point the language and looks of some of the company made David Laidlaw feel that he was indeed in a ticklish position. The threats and noise were becoming louder and more furious, and he was beginning to think of the hopeless resource of using his fists, when a loud exclamation, followed by a dead silence, drew every eye to the door.

The girl to whom the keeping of it had been intrusted had neglected her duty for a moment. In letting one of the company out she incautiously stood looking through the open chink into the dark passage. That instant was seized by two tall and powerful limbs of the law, in cloth helmets and with bull’s-eye lanterns, who pushed quietly but quickly into the room. Shutting the door, one of the constables stood with his back against it, while the other advanced and examined the faces of the company one by one.

There was dead silence, for the constables were men of business, not of words, while the criminals, some of whom became grave as well as silent, seemed very anxious not to attract undue attention.

The particular person “wanted,” however, was not there at that time. On coming to David, who met the glare of the bull’s-eye with his grave smile, the constable looked surprised.

“I think, young man,” he said in a low voice, “you’ve come to the wrong shop here.”

“That’s my business,” replied David coolly.

“Well, you know best of course, but if you’ll take my advice you’ll come out of this place along with us.”

“Na. I’ll bide where I am. I’ll trust them.”

“Brayvo! well done, Scotty!” burst from the company, whose courage quickly revived when they found that no one there was “wanted.”

The policemen laughed and went out.

“Noo, freen’s, I want to say a word,” said David, rising. “I’m gaun awa’, an’ it’s ower late t’ mak’ a speech the nicht, but I want t’ ask leave t’ come back here again an’ hae a crack wi’ ye. I want t’ ask ’ee some questions, an’ gie ye some guid advice. May I come?”

“Of course you may, Scotty,” said the landlord, grasping David’s hand and receiving a good-humoured squeeze that made him wince. “You’re a trump, and we’ll give you the freedom of the ’ouse. Won’t we, pals?”

“Agreed, agreed,” shouted the whole company; “and we’ve got two Trumps now!” added a wag, amid much laughter and staves of, “He’s a jolly good fellow,” during the singing of which Laidlaw and his friend took their departure.

Having marked the position of the den well and taken its bearings they said good-night cordially and separated, the thief to his lair, and the Scotsman to his lodging, where he fully expected that the “villain” Tandy Spivin had availed himself of the opportunity to rob him.

But he was wrong. He found his bag, with his watch and money and his little all, intact as he had left it.

Chapter Seven.
Mischief Brewing.

David Laidlaw was one of those comfortably constituted men who eat heartily, sleep profoundly, and lie thinking in bed in the mornings—when awake—with philosophic intensity.

On the morning after his first day in London our hero's mind had to grapple with the perplexing question, whether it was possible that a man with a jovial face, a hearty manner, well-off to all appearance in a worldly point of view, and who chanced to have a man's money at his mercy yet did not take it, could be a deceiver and in league with thieves. Impossible! Yet there were the damaging facts that Mr Spivin had introduced a thief to him as a true and converted man, and that this thief, besides denying his own conversion, had pronounced him—Spivin—a black-hearted villain!

"It bothers me!" said David at length, getting over the side of the bed, and sitting there for some time abstractedly stroking his chin.

Pondering the subject deeply, he dressed, called for breakfast, met Spivin with a quiet "guid-mornin', freen," said that he had had "a pleesant time o't i' the slums," and then went out to visit his friends in Cherub Court. Before going, however, he removed his money from his bag, put it in an inner breast-pocket, and paid his bill.

"You won't be back to dinner, I suppose," said the landlord in his genial manner.

"Na. I'm gaun to plowter aboot a' day an' see the toon. I may be late o' comin' in, but ye'll keep my bed for me, an' tak' care o' my bag."

Spivin said he would do so with such hearty goodwill that David said, mentally, "He's innocent."

At the moment a tall dark man with a sharp intelligent expression entered the house and bade the landlord good-morning. The latter started, laughed, winked, glanced expressively at the Scotsman, and returned the stranger's salute in a tone that induced David to say, mentally, "He's guilty."

Gravely pondering these contradictory opinions, our hero walked along until he found himself close to the alley which led into Cherub Court. A female yell issued from the alley as he came up, and Mrs Rampy suddenly appeared in a state of violent self-assertion. She was a strong, red-faced woman, who might have been born a man, perhaps, with advantage. She carried a broken-lipped jug, and was on her way to the shop which was at least the second cause of all her woes.

Standing aside to let the virago pass, Laidlaw proceeded to the court, where, to his great surprise, he found Tommy Splint sitting on a doorstep, not exactly in tears, but with disconsolation deeply impressed on his dirty young face.

“Eh, laddie, what’s wrang?” exclaimed the Scot, his mind reverting anxiously, and strangely enough, to the “waux doll.”

“O, Mr Laidlow” exclaimed the boy.

“Na, na,” interrupted David, “I’m no laid low yet, though the Lun’on folk hae done their best to bring me t’ that condeetion. My name’s Laid-law, laddie. Freen’s ca’ me David, an’ ye may do the same; but for ony sake dinna use that English Daivid. I canna thole that. Use the lang, braid, Bible a. But what’s the maitter wi’ ye?”

“Well, Mr Da-a-a-vid,” returned the boy, unable to resist a touch of fun even in his distress, “they’ve bin an’ dismissed our Susy, wot’s as good as gold; so she’s hout o’ work, and chimley-pot Liz she’s fit to break ’er hold ’art, ’cause she ain’t able to earn enough now to pay the rent of ’er room, an’ the landlord, what’s a lawyer, ’e is, says two weeks’ rent is overdue, and ’e’ll turn ’er hout into the street to-morrer if it’s not paid.”

“That’s bad news, Tammy,” said Laidlaw, thrusting both hands into his pockets, and looking meditatively at the ground. “But why doesna Sam Blake, the waux—, I mean Susy’s faither, lend them the siller?”

“’Cause he’s gone to Liverpool for somethink or other about ’is wessel, an’ left no address, an’ won’t be back for two or three days, an’ the old ooman ain’t got a friend on ’arth—leastwise not a rich ’un who can ’elp ’er.”

“Hoots, laddie, ye’re wrang! I can help her.”

“Ah, but,” said the boy, still in tones of disconsolation, “you don’t know chimley-pot Liz. She’s proud, she is, an’ won’t take nuffin from strangers.”

“Weel, weel, but I’m no’—a stranger, callant.”

“I rather think you are!” replied the boy, with a knowing look.

“Ye may be richt. Weel, I’ll no’ gi’e them the chance to refuse. What’s the name of the lawyer-body that’s their landlord?”

“Lockhart. John would be ’is Christian name if ’e wos a Christian. But a cove with a Christian name as is not a Christian do seem an absurdity—don’t it? They say ’e’s about the greatest willian out o’ Newgate. An’ ’is office is somewhere near Chancery Lane.”

“Weel, Christian or no Christian, I’ll gi’e him a ca’,” said David; “are they up there enow?” he added, with a significant motion of his head towards the garden on the roof.

“Yes, both of ’em—’owling. I couldn’t stand it, so came down ’ere to veep alone.”

“Weel, ye better stop where ye are, an’ veep—as ye say—a wee while langer. I’ll gang up to see them.”

A minute more and David, tapping at the garret door, was bidden to enter by a sweet voice which caused the slightest imaginable sensation in his heart! Susan was there alone—not ’owling, as Tommy had expressed it, but with the traces of tears obviously about her eyes. She blushed deeply and looked a little confused as David entered, probably because of being caught with the signs aforesaid on her cheeks.

“Guid-mornin’, Miss Blake,” said David earnestly, giving the girl a warm shake of the hand. “O lassie, but I am sorry to hear that ye’re in trouble! I do assure ye that if a pund or twa would help yer granny—”

“’Sh, Mr Laidlaw!” said Susan, looking furtively round and speaking low. “Granny will hear! You must not offer her money. From father, indeed, if he were here, she would accept it, but not from a—a stranger.”

“Am I, then, such a stranger?” asked David in a peculiar tone, for the word sounded cold and disagreeable.

Again Susan blushed, yet felt a tendency to laugh, as she replied, “Well, you know, although you have helped me in trouble, it is not very long since we met. But come and see granny; she’s in the garden—and, please, don’t speak of our troubles.”

“Weel, weel, please yersel’, lassie,” returned the Scot, almost sternly, as he followed Susan into the garden on the roof, where old Liz sat in her rustic chair resting her head on her hand, and looking sadly at the sunlight, which flickered through the foliage on to the zinc floor. Despite Susan’s caution Laidlaw sat down beside the old woman and took her hand.

“Noo, Mrs Morley,” he said, “it’s o’ no use me tryin’ to haud my tongue whan

I want to speak. I’m a plain north-country man, an’ I canna thole to see a puir auld body in trouble withoot offerin’ t’ help her. I’ve been telt o’ Susy’s misfortin’ an’ aboot the rent, and if ye’ll accep’—”

“No, sir, no,” said old Liz firmly, but without any look of that pride with which she had been credited. “I will not accept money from—”

“But I’m no’ askin’ ye,” interrupted David, “to accep’ money as a gift—only as a loan, ye ken, withoot interest of course.”

“Not even as a loan,” said the old woman. “Besides, young man, you must not fancy that I am altogether penniless. I ’appen to ’ave shares in an American Railway, which my landlord advised me to buy with my small savings. No doubt, just at present the dividend on the shares of the Washab and Roria Railway have fallen off terribly, but—”

“What railway?” asked Laidlaw quickly.

“The Washab and Roria. Somewhere in the United States,” said Liz.

“H’m! I was readin’ the papers yestreen,” said David. “Ye see, I’m fond o’ fishin’ aboot odd corners o’ the papers—the money market, an’ stocks, an’ the like—an’ I noticed that vera railway—owin’ to its daft-like name, nae doot—an’ its deevidends are first-rate. Ye could sell oot enow at a high profit gin ye like.”

“Indeed? You must be mistaken, I think,” replied the old woman, “for I ’ave ’ad almost nothink for a year or two. You see, my landlord, who takes charge of these matters for me—”

“That’s Mr Lockhart the lawyer, ye mean?”

“Yes. He says they’re losing money now, and there was no dividend at all last half-year.”

“H’m! that is strange,” said David, stroking his chin, “uncommon—strange!”

“D’you think Mr Lockhart has made a mistake, Mr Laidlaw?” asked Susan hopefully.

“Ay, I think he hes made a mistake. But ’oo’ll see. An’ noo, to change the subjec’, I’ll tell ’ee aboot some o’ the adventur’s I had last nicht.”

From this point David Laidlaw entertained old Liz and Susy and Tommy Splint, who had by that time joined them, with a graphic account of his adventures in the slums, in the telling of which he kept his audience in fits of laughter, yet spoke at times with such pathos that Susan was almost moved to tears.

“Noo, I must away,” he said at length, rising. “I’ve got partikler business in haund. Come wi’ me, Tammy. I’ll want ’ee, and I’ll come back sune to see ye, auld Liz. Dinna ye tak’ on aboot losin’ yer place, Su—, Miss Blake, lass. Ye’ll git a better place afore lang—tak’ my word for ’t.”

On the way down-stairs Laidlaw and his little companion passed a tall gentleman and two ladies who were ascending. Ere the foot of the stair was reached, loud exclamations of recognition and joy were heard in the regions above.

“I say!” exclaimed Tommy Splint, with wide-open eyes, “ain’t they a-goin’ of it up there? Let’s go back an’ listen.”

“Na, ye wee rascal, we’ll no’ gang back. If ye want to be freen’s wi’ me ye’ll no daur to putt yer lug to keyholes. Come awa’. It’s nae business o’ yours or mine.”

They had not gone far in the direction of Chancery Lane when, to their surprise, they met Sam Blake, who had changed his mind about the visit to Liverpool. David at once seized him by the arm, and made him walk with them, while he explained the circumstances in which his daughter and old Liz had been so suddenly placed.

“Wouldn’t it be better for me,” said Sam, “to steer straight for the garden than to go along with you?”

“Na—ye’ll gang wi’ me. It’s plain that they hae auld freen’s veesitin’ them at the gairden, sae we’d better lat them alane. Besides, I want ye for a wutness; I’m no much o’ a polis man, nevertheless I’m gaun to try my haund at a bit o’ detective business. Just you come wi’ me, and niver say a word till ye’re spoken to.”

“Heave ahead then, skipper; you’re in command,” returned the sailor with a quiet laugh. It was echoed by little Tommy, who was hugely pleased with the semi-mysterious looks and nods of his Scottish friend, and regarded the turn affairs seemed to be taking as infinitely superior to mere ordinary mischief.

Arrived at Chancery Lane, they soon discovered the office of John Lockhart, Esquire, Solicitor. Entering, they found the principal seated at a table covered with papers and legal documents of all kinds. Both the lawyer and the farmer felt, but did not show, some surprise on looking at each other.

Chapter Eight.
Dark Designs.

The lawyer was first to speak. “It strikes me I have seen you before,” he said, looking at Laidlaw with a sharp steady gaze.

“Ay, sir, an’ I’ve seen you before,” returned the latter with an extremely simple look. “I saw ye whan I was comin’ oot o’ the hoose o’ Mr Speevin, whar I’m lodgin’.”

“Oh, exactly!” returned the lawyer with a bland smile; “pray be seated, gentlemen, and let me know your business.”

They obeyed,—Sam Blake with an expression of stolid stupidity on his countenance, which was powerfully suggestive of a ship’s figurehead—Tommy with an air of meekness that was almost too perfect.

It would be tedious to detail the conversation that ensued. Suffice it to say that David said he was a Scotch farmer on a visit to London; that he possessed a good lot of spare cash, for which, at the time being, he got very small interest; that he did not understand business matters very well, but what he wanted to know was, how he should go about investing funds—in foreign railways, for instance, such as the Washab and Roria line.

At this point he was interrupted by Mr Lockhart who asked what had put that particular railway into his head, and was informed that the newspapers had done so by showing it to be the line whose shares produced very high dividends at that time.

“I’m richt I fancy?” said David.

“Yes, you are right, and I could easily put you in the way of investing in that railway.”

“Have the shares been lang at this high figure?” asked Laidlaw.

“Yes; they have improved steadily for several years back.”

“What say ye to that freend?” demanded David, turning to Sam with a triumphant look.

Sam turned on his friend a look as expressionless as that of a Dutch clock, and said sententiously, “I says, go in an’ win.”

“I says ditto!” thought Tommy Splint, but he meekly and wisely held his tongue.

Meanwhile the lawyer went into another room, from which, returning after a short absence, he produced a bundle of Reports which fully bore out his statement as to the flourishing condition of the Washab and Roria Railway.

“Weel, I’ll see aboot it,” said David, after a few moments’ consideration, with knitted brows. “In the meantime, sir, what have I to pay to you for yer information?”

Mr Lockhart said he had nothing to pay, and hoped he would have the pleasure of seeing him soon again.

“Noo, isn’t that a blagyird?” demanded Laidlaw, when they were again in the street.

“No doubt he is,” replied Sam; “but how will you manage to haul him up and prove that he has been swindling the old woman?”

“Hoo can I tell? Am I a lawyer? But I’ll fin’ oot somehoo.”

“Well, mate, while you are finding out,” returned the sailor, “I’ll go to Cherub Court. So, Tommy, will you go with Mr Laidlaw or with me?”

The boy looked first at one and then at the other with a curious “how-happy-could-I-be-with-either” expression on his sharp countenance, and then elected to accompany the sailor. On the way he told Sam of the “swell visitors” to the garret, whom Laidlaw had prevented him from going back to see.

“Quite right he was, Tommy, my boy,” said his friend. “It is easy to see that you have not profited as much as you might from the example and teaching of my dear Susy an’ chimney-pot Liz.”

“Chimley-pot,” murmured the boy, correcting him in a low tone. “Vell, you could ’ardly expect,” he added, “that a child of my age should git the profit all at once. I suppose it’s like a bad ease o’ waxination—it ha’n’t took properly yet.”

“Then we must have you re-vaccinated, my boy. But tell me, what were the swells like?”

The description of the swells occupied Tommy all the rest of the walk to Cherub Court, where they found old Liz and Susan in a state of great excitement about the visitors who had just left.

“Why, who d’ye think they was?” exclaimed the old woman, making the fang wobble with a degree of vigour that bid fair to unship it altogether, “it was my dear sweet little boy Jacky—”

“Little boy! Granny!” cried Susan, with a merry laugh.

“Of course, child, I mean what he was and ever will be to me. He’s a tall middle-aged gentleman now, an’ with that nice wife that used to visit us—an’ their sweet daughter—just like what the mother was, exceptin’ those hideous curls tumblin’ about her pretty brow as I detest more than I can tell. An’ she’s goin’ to be married too, young as she is, to a clergyman down in Devonshire, where the family was used to go every summer (alongside o’ their lawyer Mr Lockhart as they was so fond of, though the son as has the business now ain’t like his father); the sweet child—dear, dear, how it do call up old times!”

“And didn’t they,” broke in Tommy, “never say a word about ’elpin’ you, granny, to git hout of your troubles?”

“’Ow could they offer to ’elp me,” returned old Liz sternly, “w’en they knew nothink about my troubles? an’ I’m very glad they didn’t, for it would have spoiled their visit altogether if they’d begun it by offerin’ me assistance. For shame, Tommy. You’re not yet cured o’ greed, my dear.”

“Did I say I was?” replied the urchin, with a hurt look.

Lest the reader should entertain Tommy’s idea, we may here mention that Colonel Brentwood and his wife, knowing old Liz’s character, had purposely refrained from spoiling their first visit by referring to money matters.

After a full and free discussion of the state of affairs—in which, however, no reference was made to the recent visit to the lawyer, or to the suspected foul play of that gentleman—the sailor went off to overhaul Messrs Stickle and Screw in the hope of inducing that firm to retain Susy on its staff. Failing which, he resolved to pay a visit to Samson and Son. As for Tommy, he went off in a free-and-easy sort of way, without any definite designs, in search of adventures.

That evening old Liz filled her teapot, threw her apron over it, and descended to the court to visit Mrs Rampy.

“Well, you are a good creetur,” said that masculine female, looking up as her friend entered. “Come away; sit down; I was wantin’ some one to cheer me up a bit, for I’ve just ’ad a scrimidge with Mrs Blathers, an’ it’s bin ’ard work. But she ’ave comed off second best, I knows.”

As a black eye, dishevelled hair, and a scratched nose constituted Mrs Rampy’s share in the “scrimidge,” Mrs Blathers’s condition could not have been enviable. But it was evident from Mrs Rampy’s tone and manner that a more powerful foe than Mrs Blathers had assaulted her that afternoon.

“Ah, Mrs Rampy,” said her visitor, pouring out a cup of tea with a liberal allowance of sugar, “if you’d only give up that—”

“Now, old Liz,” interrupted her friend impressively, “don’t you go for to preach me a sermon on drink. It’s all very well to preach religion. That’s nat’ral like, an’ don’t much signify. You’re welcome. But, wotiver you do, old Liz, keep off the drink.”

“Well, that’s just what I do,” replied Liz promptly, as she handed her friend a cup of hot tea, “and that’s just what I was goin’ to advise you to do. Keep off the drink.”

Feeling that she had slightly committed herself, Mrs Rampy gave a short laugh and proceeded to drink with much gusto, and with a preliminary “Here’s luck!” from the force of habit.

“But what’s the matter with you to-day, Liz?” she asked, setting her cup down empty and looking, if not asking, for more; “you looks dull.”

“Do I? I shouldn’t ought to, I’m sure, for there’s more blessin’s than sorrows in my cup,” said Liz.

“Just you put another lump o’ sugar in my cup, anyhow,” returned her friend. “I likes it sweet, Liz. Thank ’ee. But what ’as ’appened to you?”

Old Liz explained her circumstances in a pitiful tone, yet without making very much phrase about it, though she could not refrain from expressing wonder that her railway dividends had dwindled down to nothing.

“Now look ’ee here, chimley-pot Liz,” cried Mrs Rampy in a fierce voice, and bringing her clenched fist down on the table with a crash that made the tea-cups dance. “You ain’t the only ’ooman as ’as got a tea-pot.”

She rose, took a masculine stride towards a cupboard, and returned with a tea-pot of her own, which, though of the same quality as that of her friend, and with a similarly broken spout, was much larger. Taking off the lid she emptied its contents in a heap—silver and copper with one or two gold pieces intermixed—on the table.

“There! Them’s my savin’s, an’ you’re welcome to what you need, Liz. For as sure as you’re alive and kickin’, if you’ve got into the ’ands of Skinflint Lockhart, ’e’ll sell you up, garding an’ all! I know ’im! Ah—I know ’im. So ’elp yourself, Liz.”

Tears rose to the eyes of old Liz, and her heart swelled with joy, for was there not given to her here unquestionable evidence of her success in the application of loving-kindness? Assuredly it was no small triumph to have brought drunken, riotous, close-fisted, miserly, fierce Mrs Rampy to pour her hard-won savings at her feet, for which on her knees she thanked God that night fervently. Meanwhile, however, she said, with a grave shake of her head—

“Now, Mrs Rampy, that is uncommon good of you, an’ I would accept it at once, but I really won’t require it, for now that Susy’s father ’as returned, I can borrow it from him, an’ sure he’s better able to lend it than you are. Now, don’t be angry, Mrs Rampy, but—’ave some more tea?”

While she was speaking her friend shovelled the money back into the teapot with violence, and replaced it in her cupboard with a bang.

“You won’t git the hoffer twice,” she said, sitting down again. “Now, Liz, let’s ’ave another cup, an’ don’t spare the sugar.”

“That I won’t” said Liz, with a laugh, as she poured out her cheering but not inebriating beverage.

On the second day after the tea-party just described, John Lockhart, Esquire, and Mr Spivin met in a low public-house not far from Cherub Court. They drank sparingly and spoke in whispers. It may seem strange that two such men should choose a low tavern in such a neighbourhood for confidential intercourse, but when we explain that both were landlords of numerous half-decayed tenements there, the choice will not seem so peculiar. Lockhart frowned darkly at his companion.

“From what you have told me of his inquiries about me,” he said, “this man’s suspicions had certainly been roused, and he would not have rested until he had made undesirable discoveries. It is lucky that you managed to get the job so well done.”

They put their heads together and whispered lower. From time to time Lockhart gave vent to a grim laugh, and Spivin displayed his feelings in a too-amiable smile.

Chapter Nine.
The Plot Thickens.

In his remarkably eager and somewhat eccentric pursuit of pleasure—that pursuit which is so universal yet so diverse among men, to say nothing about boys—Tommy Splint used to go about town like a jovial lion-cub seeking whom he might terrify!

To do him justice, Tommy never had any settled intention of being wicked. His training at the hands of chimney-pot Liz and the gentle Susy had so far affected his arab spirit that he had learned, on the whole, to prefer what he styled upright to dishonourable mischief. For instance, he would not steal, but he had no objection to screen a thief or laugh at his deeds. His natural tenderness of heart prevented his being cruel to dogs or cats, but it did not prevent his ruffling some of the former into furious rage, and terrifying many of the latter into cataleptic fits.

One afternoon, having roved about for some time without aim, sometimes howling in at open doors and bolting, frequently heaping banter upon good-natured policemen, occasionally asking of mild old ladies the way to places he had never heard of, or demanding what o'clock it was of people who did not possess watches, and whistling most of the time with irritating intensity—our little hero at last came to the conclusion that felicity was not to be obtained by such courses—not at least, at that time. He was out of sorts, somehow, so he would return to the garden and comfort Susy and the old woman, i.e. find comfort to himself in their society. He went whistling along, therefore, until his steps were suddenly and violently arrested.

To account for this we must tell how, about this time, it chanced that a very drunk man of the very lowest London type, as far as appearance went, awoke from a heavy slumber which he had been enjoying under the seat of a compartment in a certain low gin-palace. He was about to stretch himself and give vent to a noisy yawn when the word "Laidlaw" smote his ear. Pale, worn-out, cadaverous, threadbare, inexpressibly mean, the man gently raised his dissolute form on one elbow and listened to two men in a box beside him. Their heads met almost over the spot where his own head rested. The men were Lockhart and Spivin, and the occasion was that on which we have already described them as engaged in plotting, or referring to, the downfall of the man from Scotland.

Trumps (for he was the listener), though well practised in the art of eavesdropping, could not gather the gist of the plotters' discourse. Only this he made out, that, in some way or other, they meant to do, or had done, mischief to the man who had spared and helped, and, above all, had trusted him! It was tantalising to hear so little, though so near, for, from his position under the seat, he could have grasped Mr Lockhart's ankles. But the plotters were much too knowing to speak in tones that could be easily overheard. Besides, other noisy people were arguing in the neighbouring and opposite compartments, so that the confusion of tongues rendered them, they thought, safe. Even the man under the seat although so very near, would have failed to catch the drift of a single sentence had not the name of Laidlaw sharpened his ears and faculties. One that he did catch, however, was suggestive, viz., “put the 50 pound note in his bag,” or something to that effect.

When the two friends rose to depart, Trumps sank noiselessly on the ground like a filthy shadow, but the quick eye of the lawyer caught sight of his leg.

Lockhart started, turned aside, and gave Trumps a kick in the ribs. It was a sharp painful kick, but drew from him only a heavy snore. To make quite sure the man of law administered another kick. This caused the recumbent man to growl forth a savage oath which terminated in a snore so very natural that the lawyer fell into the trap, and went off with the contemptuous remark—“Dead drunk!”

Trumps, however, was very much the reverse. He was indeed all alive and greatly sobered by his nap as well as by what he had heard. He rose and followed the plotters, but missed them in the crowd outside. In his anxiety to overtake them he ran somewhat violently against Tommy Splint, and thus arrested him, as we have said, in the pursuit of pleasure.

“Hallo, Thunderbolt!” exclaimed the boy sternly, as he started back and doubled his fists, “who let you out o’ Noogate?”

The thief was about to pass without deigning a reply, when, glancing at the small questioner, he suddenly stopped and held out his hand.

“I say, Splint, is it you I’ve run into?”

“Well, it’s uncommon like me. Any’ow, not a twin brother, I s’pose it must be myself. But I hain’t got the pleasure o’ your acquaintance as I knows on.”

“What! Don’t you remember Trumps?”

“No, I don’t remember Trumps, an’, wot’s more, I don’t b’lieve from the look of ’im that any of Trumps’s family or friends wants to remember ’im.”

The possibility that the boy might remember Trumps was not so unlikely after all, for, being of a highly social disposition, Tommy was pretty well acquainted with, and known to, nearly all the thieves and pickpockets of the locality. Indeed he would certainly have been one of themselves but for garret-garden influences.

“Well, Tommy,” said the thief confidentially, “I remember you, an’ I wants a little conversation with you.”

“No, you don’t” returned the boy, retreating; “you wants my wipe, or puss, or ticker, you do—or suthin’ o’ that sort—but you’ve come to the wrong shop, you have.”

“But really, Tommy, I’ve got summat to say to ’ee about your noo friend from Scotland, David Laidlaw.”

“How d’ee know he’s my friend?” asked Tommy, becoming suddenly interested.

“’Cause I’ve seen you jawin’ with ’im; an’ I’ve seen you go up together to visit chimney-pot Liz an’ Susy; an’—”

“Oh! you knows chimley-pot Liz an’ Susy, do ye? But of course you does. Everybody as knows anythink knows them.”

“Ay, lad, an’ I knows lawyer Lockhart too,” said Trumps, with a peculiar look; “him that owns the ’ouses ’ereabouts, an’ draws the rents—”

“Draws the rents!” interrupted the boy, with a look of scorn; “screws the rents, you mean.”

“Jus’ so, boy—screws ’em. Ah, ’e is a thief, is lawyer Lockhart.”

“Come, if that’s so, you’ve no occasion to be ’ard on ’im, Trumps, for you’re in the same boat, you know.”

“No, I ain’t,” replied Trumps, with virtuous indignation, “for ’e’s a mean thief!”

“Oh, an’ you’re a ’ighminded one, I s’pose,” returned the boy, with a hearty chuckle; “but come along, young man. If you’ve suthin’ to tell me about Da-a-a-vid Laidlaw I’m your man. This way.”

He led the man down the alley, across the court, round the corner, and up the stair to the landing.

“There you are,” he said, “this is my snuggery—my boodwar, so to speak. Sot down, an’ out with it.”

Seated there, the thief, in low confidential and solemn tones, related what he had seen and heard in the public-house, and told of his own acquaintance with and interest in Laidlaw.

“The willains!” exclaimed Tommy. “An’ wot d’ee think they’re agoin’ to do?”

“Screw ’im some’ow, an’ git ’im out o’ the way.”

“But w’y?”

“That’s wot I wants to ask you, lad. I knows nothing more than I’ve told ’ee.”

“We must save Da-a-a-vid!” exclaimed Tommy in a tragic manner, clutching his hair and glaring.

Tommy’s sense of the ludicrous was too strong for him, even in the most anxious times, and the notion of him and Trumps saving anybody overwhelmed him for a moment; nevertheless, he really was excited by what he had heard.

“Come—come with me,” he cried, suddenly seizing Trumps by the sleeve of his shabby coat and half dragging him up to the garret, where he found old Liz and Susy in the garden on the roof.

“Allow me to introdooce a friend, granny. ’E ain’t much to look at, but never mind, ’e’s a good ’un to go.”

Old Liz and Susy had become too much accustomed to low life in its worst phases to be much troubled by the appearance of their visitor, and when he had explained the object of his visit they became deeply interested.

“You think, then,” said Liz, after listening to the whole story, “that lawyer Lockhart intends to hide a 50 pound note in Mr Laidlaw’s travelling bag, and say he stole it?”

“Yes, ma’am; that’s what I think.”

“And for what purpose?” asked Susy with some anxiety.

“To git him convicted an’ sent to prison, miss,” replied Trumps promptly. “I know lawyer Lockhart—we call ’im liar Lockhart in the—well, ahem! an’ as I was sayin’, ’e’s a villain as’ll stick at nothing. If ’e sets ’is ’art on gittin’ Mr Laidlaw into prison ’e’ll git ’im in; for what purpus, of course, I don’t know.”

After further discussion of the subject it was finally arranged that Tommy Splint should go straight to the house of Mr Spivin, where the Scotsman lodged, and reconnoitre.

“And be sure, Tommy,” whispered Susan at the head of the stair when he was about to leave, “that you find out all about this horrid plot. We must save him. He saved me, you know,” she added, with a blush.

“Yes, we must save ’im,” said the boy in a tone of determination that inspired confidence in the girl, even though it made her laugh.

Trumps accompanied Tommy part of the way, and told him that he knew some ugly things about lawyer Lockhart that might get that gentleman into difficulties if he could only prove them, but he couldn't quite see his way to that, not being learned enough in the law.

"You see, Tommy—"

"Thomas, if you please," interrupted the urchin with dignity. "My hintimates calls me Tommy, but you ain't one o' them yet, Mr Trumps. You ain't even on my wisitin' list. P'r'aps I may promote yer to that some day, but—it depends. Now, look 'ere, slimey-coat—if any one larned in the law was inclined to pump you, could you be pumped?"

With a remarkably sly look Trumps replied, "Yes—for a consideration!"

"All right, young man. Give me your card; or, if you hain't got one, let me know w'ere you 'ang hout."

Having been satisfied on this point, Tommy told the thief that he had no further use for him, and as he wished to cross London Bridge alone, he (Trumps) was free to make himself scarce.

Chapter Ten.
Detective Doings.

For a considerable time the boy prowled about the house of Mr Spivin in the hope of seeing David Laidlaw go out or in; but our Scot did not appear. At last a servant-girl came to the open door with a broom in her hand to survey the aspect of things in general. Tommy walked smartly up to her, despite the stern gaze of a suspicious policeman on the opposite side of the street.

"My sweet gal," he said affably touching his cap, "is Capting Laidlaw within?"

"There's no Captain Laidlaw here," answered the girl sharply; "there was a Daivid Laidlaw, but—"

"Da-a-a-vid, my dear, not Daivid. The gen'l'm'n hisself told me, and surely 'e knows 'ow to prenounce 'is own name best."

"You've a deal of cheek, boy—anyway, Laidlaw 'as bin took up, an' 'e's now in prison."

The sudden look of consternation on the boy's face caused the girl to laugh.

"D'ee know w'ere they've took 'im to?"

“No, I don’t.”

“But surely you don’t b’lieve ’e’s guilty?” said the boy, forgetting even his humorous tendencies in his anxiety about his friend.

“No, I don’t” said the girl, becoming suddenly earnest, “for Mary an’ me saw —”

“Martha-a-a!” shouted a female voice from the interior of the house at that moment.

The girl ran in. At the same time the suspicious policeman came up with, “Now then, youngster, move on.”

“Move off you mean, bobby. Hain’t you been to school yet, stoopid?” cried the boy, applying his thumb to his nose and moving his fingers in what he styled a thumbetrical manner as he ran away.

But poor Tommy Splint was in no jesting mood. He had been impressed with the idea from infancy—rightly or wrongly—that once in the clutches of the law it was no easy matter to escape from them; and he was now utterly incapable of deciding what his next step should be. In this difficulty he was about to return disconsolate to Cherub Court when it occurred to him that it might be worth while to pay a visit to the good ship Seacow, and obtain the opinion of Sam Blake.

Although it was broad day and the sun was glowing gloriously in an unclouded sky, he found Sam down in a dark hole, which he styled his bunk, fast asleep.

Sam did not move when Tommy shook and woke him. He merely opened his eyes quietly and said, “All right, my lad; what’s up?” After hearing the boy’s story to the end he merely said, “Mind your helm—clear out!” flung off his blankets, and bounded to the floor like an acrobat.

Being already in his shirt, short drawers, and stockings, it did not take quite a minute to don trousers, vest and coat. Another minute sufficed for the drawing on of boots, fastening a necktie, running a broken comb through his front locks, and throwing on a glazed hat. Two minutes all told! Men whose lives often depend on speed acquire a wonderful power of calmly-rapid action.

“What d’ee say to it, Sam?” asked Tommy as they hurried along the streets.

“Hold on! avast! belay! I’m thinkin’!” said Sam. The boy accordingly held on, avasted, and belayed until his companion had thought it out.

"Yes, that's it," said the sailor at last. "I'll go an' see Colonel—Colonel—what's 'is name? old Liz's friend—Burntwood, is it, or—"

"Brentwood," said Tommy.

"That's it—Brentwood. You don't know his address, do you? No? Never mind; we'll go to Cherub Court an' get it, and then make sail for the Colonel's. I've no more notion which way to steer, lad, than the man in the moon; but the Colonel will be sure to know how to lay our course, an' he'll be willin', I've no doubt first for his own sake, seein' that this Lockhart is his own lawyer; second, for old Liz's sake, seein' that her affairs are involved in it; and third, for the sake of his country, if he's a good and true man."

The sailor was not disappointed. Colonel Brentwood did not indeed himself know exactly how to act but he knew that the best thing to do in the circumstances was to seek aid from those who did know. He therefore went straight to Scotland Yard—that celebrated centre of the London Police Force—and put the matter before the authorities there. A detective, named Dean, was appointed to take the job in hand.

"John," observed Mrs Brentwood to her husband, prophetically, after an interview with the detective at their own house, "you may depend upon it that Mr Dean will discover that more things are amiss than this affair of the Scotsman and dear old nurse."

"Possibly—indeed probably," returned the Colonel; "but what makes you think so?"

"The fact that no thorough scoundrel ever yet confined himself to one or two pieces of villainy."

"But Lockhart is not yet proved to be a thorough scoundrel. You have condemned the poor man, my dear, without trial, and on insufficient evidence."

"Insufficient evidence!" echoed Dora indignantly. "What more do you want? Has he not systematically robbed dear old Liz? Are not the Railway Share Lists and Reports open to inspection?"

"True, Dora, true. Be not indignant. I have admitted that you may be right. Our detective will soon find out. He has the calm, self-confident, penetrating look of a man who could, if possible, screw something out of nothing."

Whether or not Mr Dean possessed the power ascribed to him is yet to be seen. We have not space to follow him through the whole of the serpentine sinuosities of his investigations, but we will watch him at one or two salient points of his course.

First of all he visited Tommy Splint, who, in the privacy of his “boodwar” revealed to him, as he thought, every scrap of information about the affair that he possessed. To all of this Mr Dean listened in perfect silence, patiently, and with a smile of universal benevolence. He not only appreciated all the boy’s commentaries and jests and prophecies on the situation, but encouraged the full development of his communicative disposition. Tommy was charmed. Never before had he met with such an audience—except, perhaps, in Susy.

When the boy had fairly run himself out Mr Dean proceeded to pump and squeeze, and the amount of relevant matter that he pumped and squeezed out of him, in cross-questioning, was so great, that Tommy was lost in a mixture of admiration and humility. You see, up to that time he had thought himself rather a knowing fellow; but Mr Dean managed to remove the scales from his eyes.

“Now, my boy,” said the detective, after having squeezed him quite flat, and screwed the very last drop out of him, “you are quite sure, I suppose, as to Mr Trumps’s words—namely, that he knew Mrs Morley—chimney-pot Liz, as you call her—”

“Parding. I never called her that—chimley-pot is her name.”

“Well, chimley-pot be it—and that he had formerly known Mr Lockhart but did not say when or where he had first become acquainted with either; yet Trumps’s peculiar look and manner when speaking of the lawyer led you to think he knew more about him than he chose to tell?”

“Right you air, sir. That’s ’ow it stands.”

“Good; and in reference to the servant-girl—you are sure that she became suddenly very earnest when she said she believed Laidlaw was not guilty, and that she and some one named Mary had ‘seen something,’ but you don’t know what, owing to a sudden interruption?”

“Right again, sir.”

“Now, then,” said Mr Dean, rising, “we will go up and see Mrs Morley.”

They found the old woman alone, knitting in her rustic chair in her floral bower on the roof. Mr Dean sat down to have a chat and Tommy seated himself on a stool to gaze and listen, for he was fascinated, somehow, by the detective.

It was really interesting to observe the tact with which the man approached his subject and the extreme patience with which he listened to the somewhat garrulous old woman.

Being a Briton he began, of course, with the weather, but slid quickly and naturally from that prolific subject to the garden, in connection with which he displayed a considerable knowledge of horticulture—but this rather in the way of question than of comment. To slide from the garden to the gardener was very easy as well as natural; and here Mr Dean quite won the old woman's heart by his indirect praise of Susy's manipulation of plants and soils. To speak of Susy, without referring to Susy's early history, would have been to show want of interest in a very interesting subject. Mr Dean did not err in this respect. From Susy's mother he naturally referred to the family in which she and old Liz had been in service, and to the return of the only surviving member of it to England.

All this was very interesting, no doubt, but it did not throw much light into the mind of Mr Dean, until old Liz mentioned the fact that Mr Lockhart, besides being solicitor to the Brentwoods, was also solicitor to old Mr Weston, who had left his property to Colonel Brentwood. She also said that she feared, from what Mrs Brentwood had recently said to her, there was some difficulty about the will, which was a pity, as the only people she knew besides Mr Lockhart who knew anything about it were a footman named Rogers and a butler named Sutherland, both of whom had been witnesses to the will; but the footman had gone to the bad, and the butler had gone she knew not where.

Then Mr Dean began to smell another rat, besides that which he was just then in pursuit of, for the Colonel had incidentally mentioned to him the circumstance of the estate passing away from him, owing to a new will having been recently discovered. Although the matter was not the detective's present business, he made a mental note of it.

After quitting the garden, and promising soon to return, the detective had an interview with Mr Trumps in the parlour of the thieves' missionary. Many a fallen and apparently lost man and woman had been brought to the Saviour in that parlour by that missionary—the same whom we have introduced to the reader in the thieves' den. Through the medium of Tommy Splint the interview was brought about, and no sooner did Trumps ascertain the object that Dean had in view than he became suddenly confidential.

"Now, look here," he said, when he found himself alone with Mr Dean, "I knows more about them Brentwoods and Westons than you think for."

"No doubt you do; and I suppose you wish to sell your knowledge at the highest possible figure,” said Dean, with a very slight smile.

“You’re wrong for once,” returned Trumps. “If you’d said that to me two days ago, I’d ’ave said ‘yes;’ but I’ve ’eard things in this blessed room w’ich ’as made me change my mind. You’re welcome to all I knows for nothing.”

Mr Dean did not believe in sudden conversion, nevertheless he expressed gratification. Being what the Yankees call ’cute, he avoided anything like eagerness in gaining information.

“My business here, however,” he said, “is to get information about that Scotsman, you know, and the charge of theft by Mr Lockhart. We believe Laidlaw to be innocent and, understanding that you think as we do, and that you know something about him, we hope you may be able to help us.”

From this point Mr Dean began to pump and squeeze, and Trumps proved worthy of his name in the way he submitted to both processes. At last, when nothing more was to be got Mr Dean said, in a somewhat careless way, “You are acquainted, I believe, with old Mrs Morley—chimney-pot Liz, they call her—are you not?”

“Yes, I am. I’ve known her long. Knew her when I was footman in a family connected with the Brentwoods.”

“Oho!” thought Mr Dean with sudden surprise, for he began to smell more of his second rat, but he looked stolid; said nothing; did not move a muscle; merely nodded his head gently as if to say, go on.

“Now I know what you’re driving at,” continued Trumps, with a very knowing wink, “an’ I’ll help you. First place, my name ain’t Trumps.”

“I know that—it’s Rodgers,” said the detective.

“Whew! how d’ee know that?” exclaimed the thief in extreme surprise.

“We detectives know everything,” said Dean.

“Oh! then there’s no need for me to tell you anything more,” returned Trumps, alias Rodgers, with a grin.

“Well, I don’t know exactly everything,” returned Dean; “but I do know—at least I guess—that you were a footman in the service of Richard Weston, Esquire, of Weston Hall, in Kent; that the butler’s name was Sutherland, and that you and he were witnesses to Mr Weston’s will.”

“Just so. You’re right.”

“Now, are you aware,” said Mr Dean, “that Colonel Brentwood has lost, or is going to lose, his estate because a new will by Richard Weston has been found, leaving it to another man?”

“No, I did not know that, but that clears up to me the mystery of the will that I witnessed. You must know that when we were witnessing the will, Sutherland and me both noticed that it was eight pages of big paper, and that it seemed to have two beginnings—one bein’ in the middle. Master couldn’t see well, an’ was very weak at the time—so weak that when he came to the last page the pen fell out of his hand and only half of the last name was signed. Mr Lockhart said that would do, however, an’ we witnessed it. Master never completed the signature, for he took to his bed that very day, and no one ever saw him put pen to paper again. Sutherland often spoke to me about that, and wondered if a will with an imperfect signature would pass. Hows’ever, it was none of our business, so we forgot about it, and soon after Sutherland went to stay with a family in Pimlico as butler, where I think he is now. As for me—”

“Yes, I know,” said Dean significantly; “you need not recall that just now. Can you give me the name and address of the family in Pimlico?”

“Good; now then,” said Mr Dean after booking his information, “I’ll want to see you again, so don’t get yourself into scrapes, and keep your tongue quiet. Your missionary will help you, I have no doubt. Meanwhile, I will go and pay a visit to a certain Martha who lives on the other side of the river.”

Chapter Eleven.
Pumping and Squeezing—The Garret Class, Etcetera.

When Mr Dean succeeded, with some difficulty, in obtaining a private interview with Mr Spivin’s servant Martha, he proceeded with much politeness and subtlety to pump and squeeze her.

And it may be remarked here that Mr Dean had what Martha afterwards styled “a way with him” that was quite irresistible, insomuch that she was led, somehow, to speak of things she never meant to mention, and to reveal things she never intended to confess.

“You see, sir,” she said, “it’s the dooty of me an’ Mary to do the bedrooms w’en the family’s at breakfast. Well, that morning we went as usual to Mr Laidlaw’s room first, because ’e’s quick with ’is meals an’ wants ’is boots put in ’is room so as he may get out immediately. Mr Laidlaw ’as no luggage, sir, only a shoulder-bag, an’ it was lyin’ open on the table, so me an’ Mary looked into it just to—to—”

“To see that nothing had tumbled out,” suggested Mr Dean. “I understand.”

“Just so, sir,” assented Martha; “and there was nothink in it but a spare shirt rolled up, and a pair of socks, and a small Bible—no money or watch or anythink that would break even if it did tumble out,—’is shavin’ things and all that being on the dressin’-table—so—”

“So your mind was relieved, Martha—well, go on.”

“But as we was agoin’ to close the bag,” continued the girl, “we observed an inner pocket, an’ Mary says, p’raps there was a love-letter in it! I laughed an’ said, ‘Let’s look an’ see.’ So we looked an’ saw nothink.”

“You both looked and were quite sure of that?” asked Mr Dean.

“Yes, quite sure, for we both felt the pocket all round as well as looked into it.”

“Well, go on.”

“Then we shut the bag, and after we had finished the room, we was just goin’ out, when master he ran up-stairs as if he was in a hurry. He came into the room with a bit of paper in ’is ’and, somethink like a bank note, but he started on seein’ us, an’ crumpled up the paper an’ stuffed it in ’is pocket. At the same time ’e got very angry, scolded us for being so slow, and ordered us off to the other rooms. Not ten minutes after that in comes Mr Lockhart, the lawyer, with two policemen, an’ seizes Mr Laidlaw, who was still at ’is breakfast. At first he got very angry an’ shoved one policemen over the sofa and the other into the coal-scuttle, at the same time sayin’ in a growly voice, ‘I think —’ee’ve—aw—geen—mad—thee—gither’—oh, I can’t speak Scotch!” exclaimed Martha, bursting into a laugh.

“Better not try, my dear,” said Dean, with a peculiar smile.

“Well, then,” continued Martha, on recovering herself, “when the policemen got up again Mr Laidlaw said he had no intention of running away (only ’e said rinnin’ awa’), and that he would go with them quietly if they’d only be civil (’e called it seevil!), and assured them they had made a mistake. They was more civil after that, for Mr Laidlaw ’ad doubled ’is fists an’ looked, oh my! like a Bengal tiger robbed of its young ones. So they all went straight to the bedroom, and me an’ Mary followed with master and missis and the waiters, an’ they searched all round the room, coming to the bag last though it was the only thing on the table, and right under their noses, an sure enough they found a 50 pound note there in the little pocket!”

“And what said the Scotsman to that?” asked Mr Dean, with a slight grin.

“He said, turning to master, ‘It was you did that—’ee—blagyird!’” cried Martha, again bursting into laughter at her Scotch. “And then,” continued Martha, “one of the policemen said ’e ’ad seen Mr Laidlaw not long ago in company with a well-known thief, and the other one swore ’e ’ad seen ’im the same night in a thieves’ den, and that ’e was hevidently on a friendly footin’ wi’ them for ’e ’ad refused to quit the place, and was hinsolent. At this lawyer Lockhart shook ’is ’ead and said ’e thought it was a bad case, an’ the poor Scotsman seemed so took aback that ’e said nothink—only stared from one to another, and went off quietly to prison.”

After investigating the matter a little further, and obtaining, through Martha, a private interview with Mary, who corroborated all that her fellow-servant had said, Mr Dean went straight to Pimlico, and interviewed the butler who had been in the service of the Weston family. Thereafter he visited Colonel Brentwood, and, in the presence of his wife and daughter discussed the whole affair from beginning to end. We will spare the reader that discussion, and turn towards Newgate.

On the evening of that day poor David Laidlaw found himself in durance vile, with massive masonry around him, and a very Vesuvius of indignation within him. Fortunately, in the afternoon of the following day, which chanced to be Sunday, a safety valve—a sort of crater—was allowed to him in the shape of pen, ink, and paper. Using these materials, he employed his enforced leisure in writing to that receptacle of his early and later joys and woes—his mother.

“Whar d’ye think I’ve gotten t’ noo, mither?” the letter began. “I’m in Newgate! It’s an auld gate noo-a-days, an’ a bad gate onyway, for it’s a prison. Think o’ that! If onybody had said I wad be in jail maist as soon as I got to Bawbylon I wad have said he was leein’! But here I am, hard an’ fast, high and dry—uncom’on dry!—wi’ naething but stane aroond me—stane wa’s, stane ceilin’, stane floor; my very hairt seems turned to stane. Losh, woman, it bates a’!

“It’s no maner o’ use gaun into the hale story. A buik wad scarce ha’d it a’. The details’ll keep till you an’ I meet again on the braes o’ Yarrow—if we iver meet there, which is by no means sure, for thae Englishers’ll be the death o’ me afore I git hame, if they gang on as they’ve begood. Here’s the ootline:—

“I’ve been thick wi’ thieves, burglars, pickpockets, an’ the like. Veesitin’ at their dens, an’ gaun aboot the streets wi’ them, an’ I’ve stolen a fifty-pun’ note, an’ it’s been fund i’ the pouch inside my bag. That’s the warst o’t; but it seems that I’ve also resistet the poliss in the dischairge o’ their duty, which means that I flang ane ower a sofa an' stappit anither into a coal-scuttle—though I didna mean it, puir falla, for his breeks suffered in the way that ye've aften seen mine whan I was a wee laddie. But I was roused to that extent whan they first gruppit me that I couldna help it!

"I wadna mind it muckle if it wasna that I've no a freend to help me—

"I was interruptit to receive a veesiter—an' a rebuik at the same time, for he turned oot to be a freend, though a stranger, a Colonel Brentwud, wha's been cheetit by that blagyird lawyer that's tryin' to play the mischief wi' me. But he'll fin' that I'm teuch! The Colonel says they'll hae nae diffeeculty in clearin' me, so let that comfort ye, mither.—Yer ill-doin' son, David.

"P.S.—There's a wee laddie I've faw'n in wi' since I cam' to Bawbylon, they ca' him Tammy Splint. O woman, but he is a queer bairn. He's jist been to see me i' my cell, an' the moment he cam' in, though he was half greetin', he lookit roond an' said, 'Isn't this a sell!' Eh, but he is auld-farrant! wi' mair gumption than mony full-grown men, to say naething o' women."

But David Laidlaw had more friends in London than he was aware of. At the very time that he was penning the foregoing epistle to his mother, a number of disreputable-looking men were bewailing his fate and discussing his affairs in the thieves' den, and two equally disreputable women were quarrelling over the same subject in a wretched dwelling in the presence of a third woman, who presided over a teapot.

One of the women, whose visage exhibited marks of recent violence, struck her fist on the table and exclaimed, "No, Mrs Rampy, you are wrong, as usual. The story I 'eard about 'im was quite different an' I believes it too, for them Scotsmen are a rough lot—no better than they should be."

"Mrs Blathers," remarked Mrs Rampy, in a soft sarcastic tone which she was wont to assume when stung to the quick, and which her friend knew from experience was the prelude to a burst of passion, "I may be wrong as usual, but as you have never seen or conwersed with this Scotsman, an' don't know nothink about 'im, perhaps you will condescend to give me an' Liz the kreckt wershion."

"Now, Mrs Rampy," interposed old Liz, grasping her teapot, "don't be angry, for Mrs Blathers is right. Scotsmen are no better than they should be. Neither are English nor Irish nor Welshmen. In fact, there's none of us—men or women—nearly as good as we should be. Now, I am sure it won't be denied," continued Liz, in an argumentative tone, "that Mrs Blathers might be better—"

"Ha! I won't deny it," said Mrs Rampy, with emphasis.

“Nor,” continued Liz, hastening to equalise her illustration, “nor that Mrs Rampy might be better—”

“Right you are,” said Mrs Blathers, with sarcasm. “And I’m still surer,” said Liz hurriedly—a little put out at the ready reception of her propositions—“that I might be better—”

“Not at all,” interrupted both ladies at once; “you’re a trump, Liz, you’re a dear creetur!”

“Come, then,” cried old Liz, with a laugh that set the fang wobbling, “you are at all events agreed upon that point so—have another cup, Mrs Rampy.”

“Thankee, Liz, and plenty of sugar.”

“H’m! you need it!” muttered Mrs Blathers; “no sugar at all for me, Liz.”

“Well, now,” cried Liz, rendered bold by desperation, “I do wonder that two such strong, warm-hearted women as you should so often fall out. Each of you loves some one—don’t I know!—with powerful affection, so, why couldn’t you love each other?”

This tribute to their feelings so tickled the women that they set down their tea-cups and laughed prodigiously.

“Now, do,—there’s a couple of dears!—shake hands over your tea, an’ let’s have a pleasant talk,” said old Liz, following up her advantage.

The mollified women did not shake hands, but each raised her tea-cup to her lips and winked.

“Your ’ealth, Blathers.”

“Same to you, Rampy.”

“And now, Liz,” said the latter, as she pushed in her cup for more, “let’s ’ear all about it.”

“Yes,” said Mrs Blathers also pushing in her cup, “let’s ’ave your wersion, Liz.”

While Liz gives her version of Laidlaw’s misfortunes we will return to the garden, where, being Sunday afternoon, Susy Blake was busy with a small class of the most disreputable little ragged boys that the neighbourhood produced.

The boys were emphatically bad boys. They feared neither God nor man. The property of other people was their chief source of livelihood, and the streets, or the jails, were their homes. Nevertheless, when in the garden class, those boys were patterns of good behaviour, because each boy knew that if he did not behave and keep quiet he would infallibly be dismissed from the class, and this was a punishment which none of them could endure. Unlike many other teachers, Susy had not to go about enticing boys to her Sabbath class. Her chief difficulty was to prevent them coming in such numbers as would have overflowed the garden altogether.

And the secret of this was that Susy Blake possessed much of an unconscious influence called loving-kindness. No weapon of the spiritual armoury is equal to this. In the hands of a man it is tremendous. In those of a pretty girl it is irresistible. By means of it she brought the fiercest little arabs of the slums to listen to the story of Jesus and His love. She afterwards asked God, the Holy Spirit, to water the good seed sown, and the result was success.

But loving-kindness was not her only weapon. She had in addition quite a glittering little armoury in which were such weapons as play of fancy, lively imagination, fervent enthusiasm, resolute purpose, fund of anecdote, sparkling humour, intense earnestness, and the like, all of which she kept flashing around the heads of her devoted worshippers until they were almost beside themselves with astonishment, repentance, and good resolves. Of course, when away from her influence the astonishment was apt to diminish, the repentance to cease, and the good resolves to vanish away; but resolute purpose had kept Susy at them until in the course of time there was a perceptible improvement in the environment of Cherub Court, and a percentage of souls rescued from the ranks of the ragamuffins.

On this particular Sunday Tommy Splint, who was a regular attendant at the garden class, arrived late.

“Why, Tommy,” said the teacher, turning herself from a little boy on whom she had been trying specially to impress some grand eternal truth, “this is not like you. Has anything happened to detain you?”

“No, Susy,” answered the boy, slipping into his place—with a compound expression in which the spirit of fun, whom no one doubted, gave the lie to the spirit of penitence, in whom no one believed—“but I’ve bin to a sort o’ Sunday class a’ready.”

“Indeed, where have you been?”

“At Mrs Rampy’s, w’ere I see’d a most hedifyin’ spectacle—granny tryin’ to bring Mrs Rampy an’ Mrs Blathers to a ’eavenly state of mind over a cup of tea, an’ them both resistin’ of ’er like one o’clock!”

“Ah! my boy,” said Susy, shaking her head and a finger at the urchin, “you’ve been eavesdropping again!”

“No, indeed, Susy, I ha’n’t,” returned the boy quite earnestly, “not since the time you nabbed me with my ear to the key-’ole of quarrelsome Tim’s door. I was a-sittin’ at Mrs Rampy’s open door quite openly like—though not quite in sight, I dessay—an’ they was pitchin’ into each other quite openly too, an’ granny a-tryin’ to pour ile on the troubled waters! It was as good as a play. But w’en Mrs Rampy takes up her cup to drink the ’ealth of Mrs B an’ says, with sitch a look, ‘Your ’ealth, Blathers,’ I could ’old on no longer. I split and bolted! That’s wot brought me ’ere a little sooner than I might ’ave bin.”

There was a tendency to laugh at this explanation, which Susy did not check, but after a few moments she held up a finger, which produced instant silence, while she drew a letter from her pocket.

“I’m sorry to disappoint you to-day, Tommy,” she said, handing him the letter, “but I must send you with this to my father. Mr Brentwood called with it not half an hour since, saying it was of importance to have it delivered soon, as it was connected with the case of Mr Laidlaw. So be off with it as fast as you can. You know where to find father—on board the Seacow.”

Tommy Splint was indeed disappointed at having to leave the garden class thus abruptly. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that he was perhaps doing important service to his friend Da-a-a-vid Laidlaw. He further consoled himself, on reaching the court below, by uttering a shriek which sent a cat that chanced to be reposing there in rampant alarm into the depths of a convenient cellar. Thereafter he went into a contemplative frame of mind to the docks, and found Sam Blake as usual in his bunk.

“I say, Sam, d’ee spend all yer time—night and day—in yer bunk?”

“Not exactly, lad,” answered the seaman, with a smile, but without showing any intention to rise. “You see we sea-dogs have a hard time of it. What with bein’ liable to be routed out at all hours, an’ expected to work at any hour, we git into a way of making a grab at sleep when an where we gits the chance. I’m makin’ up lee-way just now. Bin to church in the forenoon though. I ain’t a heathen, Tommy.”

“You looks uncommon like one, anyhow—with your ’air an’ ’ead an’ beard an’ blankits mixed up together all of a mush. There’s a letter for ’ee, old man.”

Without a word the sailor took the epistle, read it slowly, while the boy watched him keenly, then thrust it under his pillow.

“You ain’t agoin’ to clear for action at once, then?” said the boy.

“No, not just yet.”

“Any message for me?” asked Tommy.

“None wotsomedever.”

Seeing that his friend did not intend to be communicative the boy wisely changed the subject.

“Now, Sam, about them pirits. W’ere was it they fust got ’old of you?”

“Down somewheres among the Philippine Islands,” replied Sam, drawing the blankets more comfortably round him, “but to tell you the truth, lad, after they’d taken our ship an’ made every man o’ the crew walk the plank except me an’ the skipper, they putt us in the hold, tied up hand an’ futt so as we could scarce move. Why they spared us was a puzzle to me at the time, but I afterwards found out it was because somehow they’d got it into their heads that the skipper an’ mate of our ship knew somethin’ about where some treasure that they were after had been buried. Hand me that there pipe, Tommy—not the noo one; the short black fellow wi’ the Turk’s head on the bowl. Thankee.”

“An’ did you know about the treasure?” asked Tommy, handing the pipe in question.

“Bless you, no,” returned the seaman, proceeding to render the confined air of the bunk still more unbearable; “we know’d of no treasure. If we had we’d have bin arter it ourselves, double quick. As it was, they burnt us wi’ hot irons an’ tortered us in various ways to make us confess, but we had nothin’ to confess, so had to grin an’ bear it—sometimes to yell an’ bear it! You see, lad, they mistook me for the mate, so that’s how I came to escape. He was a fine man was that mate,” continued the seaman in a lower tone, “a strong, handsome, kind young officer, an’ a great favourite. I’ve often wondered why he was taken an’ me spared.”

“P’raps it was for Susy’s sake!” suggested Tommy.

Sam looked at the boy—a quick half-surprised glance. “Not a bad notion that, my lad. I shouldn’t wonder if it was for Susy’s sake. I never thought o’ that before. Anyhow I comfort myself sometimes when I think o’ the poor mate that he was saved a deal o’ torterin’; which, let me tell you, ain’t easy to bear.”

"But go a'ead, Sam, with more about the pirits," said Tommy.

"No, lad, no—not just now. I wants to snooze. So—you clap on all sail an' you'll be in time yet for the tail end o' Susy's lesson."

Chapter Twelve.
Through Fire and Smoke to Felicity.

Free once more, David Laidlaw naturally directed his steps towards Cherub Court.

His freedom was the result of Mr Dean's labours, for with the information which he had ferreted out that sedate individual found no difficulty in proving the innocence of our Scotsman, and the guilt, in more matters than one, of Mr John Lockhart. The latter was, however, too wide-awake for our detective, for when a warrant was obtained for his apprehension, and Mr Dean went to effect the capture, it was found that the bird had flown with a considerable amount of clients' property under his wing!

Although Laidlaw's period of incarceration had been unusually brief, it had afforded ample time for meditation. David's powers of meditation were strong—his powers of action even stronger. While in his cell he had opened his little Bible—the only book allowed him—and turned to the passage which states that, "it is not good that man should be alone." Then he turned to that which asserts that, "a good wife is from the Lord," after which he sat on his bench a long time with his eyes closed—it might be in meditation, perhaps in prayer. The only words that escaped him, however, were in a murmur.

"Ay, mither, ye're right. Ye've been right iver since I kent ye. But ye'll be sair putt aboot, woman, whan ye hear that she's a waux doll! Doll, indeed! angel wad be mair like the truth. But haud ye there, David, ye've no gotten her yet."

With some such thoughts in his brain, and a fixed resolve in his heart, he presented himself in the garden on the roof, where he found old Liz, Susy, and Sam Blake assembled. They all seemed as if oppressed by some disappointment, but their looks changed instantly on the entrance of the visitor. Susy, especially, sprang up with a bright smile, but observing the readiness and the look with which Laidlaw advanced to meet her, she checked herself, blushed, and looked as well as felt confused.

"My poor little girl is greatly put about" said Sam Blake in explanation, "because she's just heard from Samson and Son that they've too many hands already, an' don't want her."

“Don’t want her?” exclaimed the Scot; “they’re born eediots!”

The emphasis with which this was said caused Susy to laugh, and to discover that her skirt had been caught by a nail in one of the flower-boxes. At the same time a vague suspicion for the first time entered the head of old Liz, causing her to wobble the fang with vigour and look at Laidlaw with some anxiety.

At this critical moment feet were heard clattering and stumbling up the stair as if in tremendous haste. Next moment Tommy burst upon their vision in a full suit of superfine blue with brass buttons!

“Tommy!” exclaimed Susy in amazement.

“No, madam—no. Tummas, if you please,” said the boy with dignity, though almost bursting with suppressed excitement. “I’m man-servant to Colonel John Brentwood, Esquire, M.P., F.R.Z.Q.T., Feller of the Royal Society—an’ good society, an’ every other society. Salary not yet fixed; lodgin’, washin’, an’ wittles found. Parkisites warious.”

“But why didn’t you tell us of this before?” asked Liz, patting the urchin’s head and smiling benignantly.

“’Cause I wanted to screw you up vith surprise, an’ I’ve done it too! But I’ve on’y jest entered on my dooties, and ’ave bin sent immedingtly with a message that you an Susy are expected to pay us a wisit, which is now doo, an’ Mr Da-a-a-vid Laidlaw is to go there right away—vithout delay—as we say in the poetical vest end.”

“And when are Susy and I expected?” asked Liz.

“To-morrer.”

“But what are you, Tommy? What are you engaged to do?” asked Susy.

“Play wi’ the knives, amoose myself wi’ the boots and shoes of a mornin’, entertain wisitors at the door with brief conversations, take occasional strolls with messages, be a sorter companion to Miss Rosa, wots to be married in a veek or two, and, ginerally, to enjoy myself. I’m a tiger, I is, but I don’t growl—oh no! I only purr. My name is Tummas, an’ my ’ome is marble ’alls!”

Our Scotsman went off without delay in response to the message, and was thus prevented from carrying out his “fixed resolve” just then. However, he wouldn’t give in, not he! he would soon find a more convenient opportunity.

Meanwhile Tommy Splint having particularly requested and obtained leave to spend the night—his last night before going to service—with his “granny,” he and Sam set to work in the garden to rig up temporary sleeping arrangements à la Robinson Crusoe, for it was arranged that they should have a grand supper in the garret in honour of the rescue of Laidlaw—the returned convict, alias ticket-of-leave man, as Tommy called him—and that the males of the party should thereafter sleep in the garden.

Need we say that the supper-party was jovial? We think not. The "ticket-of-leave man" and the "tiger" were inimitable in their own lines, and Sam came out so strong on the "pirits" of the Philippine Islands that the tiger even declared himself to be satiated with blood! As for Susy—she would have been an amply sufficient audience for each of the party, had all the others been away, and the fang of old Liz became riotously demonstrative, though she herself remained silent gazing from one face to another with her glittering black eyes.

Finally the ladies retired to rest in the garret, and the gentlemen went to sleep in the garden.

Ah! how very old, yet ever new, is the word that man "knows not what an hour may bring forth!" Forces unseen, unthought of, are ever at work around us, from the effects of which, it may be, human strength is powerless to deliver.

That night, late—or rather, about the early hours of morning—a spark, which earlier in the night had fallen from the pipe of a drunkard in the public-house below, began to work its deadly way through the boarding of the floor. For a long time there was little smoke and no flame. Gradually, however, the spark grew to a burning mass, which created the draught of air that fanned it.

It chanced that night that, under the influence of some irresistible impulse or antagonistic affinity like a musical discord, Mrs Rampy and Mrs Blathers were discussing their friends and neighbours in the abode of the former, without the softening influence of the teapot and old Liz.

"I smells a smell!" exclaimed Mrs Rampy, sniffing.

"Wery likely," remarked Mrs Blathers; "your 'ouse ain't over-clean."

But the insinuation was lost on Mrs Rampy, who was naturally keen of scent. She rose, ran to the window, opened it, thrust out her dishevelled head, and exclaimed "Fire!"

"No, it ain't," said her friend; "it's on'y smoke."

Unfortunately the two women wondered for a few precious minutes and ran out to the court, into which, from a back window of the public-house, smoke was slowly streaming. Just then a slight glimmer was seen in the same window.

“Fire! fire!” yelled Mrs Rampy, now thoroughly alarmed.

“Smoke! smo-o-o-oke!” shrieked Mrs Blathers. The two women were gifted with eminently persuasive lungs. All the surrounding courts and streets were roused in a few minutes, and poured into the lanes and alleys which led to Cherub Court.

That extremely vigilant body, the London Fire Brigade, had their nearest engines out in two minutes. Many of the more distant men were roused by telegraph. Though in bed, partially clad and asleep, at one moment, the next moment they were leaping into boots and pantaloons which stood agape for them. Brass-helmeted, and like comets with a stream of fire behind them, they were flying to the rescue five minutes after the yell and shriek of “Fi-i-ire!” and “Smo-o-o-oke!”

Owing to the great elevation of the garden, and its being surrounded by stacks of chimneys, it was some minutes before the sleepers there were aroused. Then, like giants refreshed, David and Sam leapt from their bunks, and, like Jack-in-the-box, Tommy Splint shot from his kennel. There was no occasion to dress. In the circumstances the three had turned in, as Sam expressed it, “all standing.”

They rushed at the door of the garret, but it was bolted on the inside. Susy, who had been awake, had heard the alarm and drawn the bolt so as to give time for hastily throwing on a few garments. The men thundered violently and tried to force the door, but the door was strong, and an instinctive feeling of delicacy restrained them for a few seconds from bursting it open.

“Susy! Susy!” roared the father; “open! Quick! Fire!”

“One moment, father. I’m dressing granny, and—”

A loud shriek terminated the sentence, for the flames, gathering headway with wild rapidity, had burst-up some part of the liquor den at the basement and went roaring up the staircase, sending dense clouds of smoke in advance.

This was enough. Laidlaw threw his heavy bulk against the door, burst lock and hinge, and sent it flat on the garret floor. Blinding smoke met and almost choked him as he fell, and Sam, tumbling over him, caught up the first person his hands touched and bore her out. It was old Liz—half dressed, and wrapped in a blanket! Susy, also half dressed, and with a shawl wrapped round her shoulders, was carried out by Laidlaw. Both were unhurt, though half stifled by smoke, and greatly alarmed.

“Ye ken the hoose, Tammy; hoo shall we gang?”

“There’s no way to escape!” cried the poor boy, with a distracted look.

One glance at the staircase convinced Laidlaw that escape in that direction was impossible. Plunging into the garret again he seized the door and jammed it into its place, thus stopping the gush of black smoke, and giving them a few minutes breathing space.

“Is there a rope in the garret?” asked Sam eagerly.

“No—nothink o’ the kind,” gasped Tommy.

“No sheets,—blankets?” asked the Scot.

“Only two or three,” replied Susan, who supported Liz in the rustic chair. “They’re much worn, and not enough to reach near the ground.”

It was no time for useless talk. The two men said no more, but sprang on the parapet outside the garden, to find, if possible, a way of escape by the roofs of the neighbouring houses. The sight they beheld was sufficiently appalling. The fire which raged below them cast a noonday glare over the wilderness of chimney-stacks around, revealing the awful nature of their position, and, in one direction, thousands of upturned faces. The men were observed as they ran along the parapet, and a deep hoarse cry from the sympathetic multitude rose for a few moments above the roaring of the flames.

On two sides the walls of the building went sheer down, sixty feet or more, without a break, into a yard which bristled with broken wood and old lumber. Evidently death faced them in that direction. The third side was the gable-end of the garret. On the fourth side there was a descent of twelve feet or so on to the roof of the next block, which happened to be lower—but that block was already in flames.

“There is our chief hope,” said the sailor, pointing to it.

“Nay,” responded Laidlaw in a low voice, pointing upwards—“oor main hope is there! I thocht they had fire-escapes here,” he added, turning to Tommy, who had joined them.

“So they ’ave, but no escape can be got down the yards ’ere. The halleys is too narrer.”

“Come, I’ll git a blankit to lower Susan and auld Liz,” said Laidlaw, hastening back to the garden, where the trembling women awaited the result of their inspection.

While the Scotsman removed the door and dashed once again into the smoke-filled garret, the sailor hurriedly explained to the women what they were going to attempt, and impressed upon them the necessity of submitting entirely to whatever was required of them, “which will be,” he said, “chiefly to shut your eyes an’ keep quiet.”

Laidlaw quickly returned with a couple of sheets and a blanket. Sam knotted the sheets together in sailor-like fashion, while his friend made a secure bundle of old Liz with the blanket. Sam was lowered first to the roof of the tenement which we have said was already on fire, and stood ready to receive Liz. She was safely let down and the sheet-rope was detached.

“We’ll no mak’ a bundle o’ you,” said David, turning to Susy; “jist putt it roond yer waist.”

When she was safely lowered, Tommy was grasped by an arm and let down till his feet rested on Sam’s head, whence he easily leaped to the roof, and then David let himself drop. To reach a place of temporary safety they had now to walk on the top of a partition of old brick, about eight inches wide, a fall from which, on one side, meant death, on the other side, broken bones at the least. They knew that a loose brick or a false step might be fatal, but there was no alternative.

Sam turned to his daughter: “Ye could never cross that, Susy?” he said.

Although no coward, the poor girl shrank from the giddy ledge, which was rendered more dangerous and terrible by being now surrounded by occasional puffs of smoke and clouds of steam from the water of a dozen hydrants which by that time were playing into the raging flames. To add to the horrors of the situation, beams and masses of masonry were heard occasionally crashing in the interior of the building.

Sam advanced to take Susy in his arms, but Laidlaw stepped between them.

“Leave her t’ me,” he said; “the auld woman’s lichter, an’ ye’re no sae strong as me.”

Saying which, he lifted the girl in his left arm as if she had been but a little child, and mounted the parapet keeping his right arm free to balance himself or cling to anything if need be. Sam, who was quite equal to the emergency, took old Liz into his arms and followed, but cast one glance back at Tommy.

“Never mind me, Sam,” cried the boy, who, having got over his first panic, rose heroically to the occasion.

The crowd below saw what they were attempting, and gave them a cheer of encouragement, yet with bated breath, as if they dreaded the issue.

A few seconds and they were past that danger, but still stood on the burning house at another part of the roof. Here, being suddenly drenched by spray from one of the engines, Sam and Tommy made for the shelter of a chimney-stack. As there was not room behind it for more, Laidlaw carried his light burden to another stack, and looked hastily round to see what next could be done. Just at that moment there was a wild cheer below, in the midst of which a stentorian voice came to them, as it were, on the wings of fire and smoke—“Stay where you are a minute—the escape is coming!”

“Thank God!” exclaimed Laidlaw, looking down at the fair head which rested on his shoulder. The cheeks were deadly white and the eyes closed, but the pressure of her arms showed that the girl clung to him for very life. A bright shower of sparks at the moment flew around them. “Heeven an’ pandemonium brought thegither!” he thought as he bent over to protect her. His face was very near to hers!

“My puir wee doo!” he muttered, and placed a timid kiss upon the pale cheek, which instantly coloured as if the fires around had suddenly kindled them.

“O lassie, forgi’e me! I didna mean to do tha—I railly—did—not,—but I couldna help it! I wad hae waited till ye gie’d me leave. But after a’—what for no? I thought t’ ask ye t’ gie me the right this very day. And O lassie! if I might only hope that—”

He stopped, and something induced him to do that again. At the same moment another mighty roar ascended from the crowd, and the head of the great fire-escape rose like a solemn spectre through smoke, fire, and steam, not ten yards from where he stood.

“Hooray!” shouted Tommy, for he felt that they were saved. Laidlaw said nothing, but sprang to the head of the ladder, got carefully upon it, and began steadily to descend with Susy. Sam was about to follow with old Liz, but glanced at Tommy.

“Go first, lad.”

“Arter you, mate,” said the boy, stepping politely back; “you see, tigers, like captings, are always last to leave a sinkin’ ship.”

It was neither the time nor place for ceremony. With something approaching almost to a laugh, the seaman got on the ladder as smartly as he would have taken to the shrouds of a ship, and Tommy followed.

Half-way down they met a swirl of smoke, with an occasional tongue of flame shooting through it from a shattered window. At the same moment they encountered a brass-helmeted fellow springing boldly up through the same to the rescue.

"Gang doon again, freen'," shouted Laidlaw, when his heel came in contact with the helmet. "We're a' safe here."

He paused just a moment to draw the shawl completely over Susy's head and arms, and to pull her dress well round her feet. Then, burying his face in the same shawl and shutting his eyes, he descended steadily but swiftly. For a moment or two the rounds of the ladder felt like heated iron bars, and there was a slight frizzling of his brown curly locks at the back. Then a fresh draught of air and a tremendous stream of water that nigh washed him off the ladder.

Next moment they were safe on the ground, in the midst of the wildly-cheering crowd, through which burst Mrs Rampy in a flood of joyful tears, and seized old Liz in her arms. Mrs Blathers followed close at her heels.

"My!" she exclaimed in sudden amazement, staring at old Liz's, "it's gone!"

"So it is," cried Mrs Rampy, for once agreeing.

And so it was! The last fang belonging to chimney-pot Liz had perished in that great conflagration!

Many were the offers that old Liz received of house accommodation that night, from the lowest of washerwomen to the highest of tradesmen, but Sam Blake, in her behalf, declined them all, and proceeded to the main street to hail a cab.

"She ain't 'urt, is she? You're not takin' 'er to a hospital?" cried one of the crowd. "You'll come back agin to stay with us, Liz—won't you?"

"No, we won't," cried a boy's voice. "We've come into our fortins, an' are a-goin' to live in the vest end for ever an' ever."

"Who's that blue spider?" asked a boy; "w'y—no—surely it ain't—yes—I do b'lieve it's Tommy Splint!"

"Don't believe Tommy, friends," said old Liz, as she was about to get into the cab. “I’ll soon be back again to see you. Trust me!”

This was received with a tremendous cheer, as they all got inside except Laidlaw, who mounted the box.

“Stop!” said the latter, as the coachman was about to drive off. He pointed to the burning house, where the raging fire had reached the roof-tree. The crowd seemed awed into silence as they gazed.

One swirl more of the flaming tongues and the Garret was consumed—another swirl, and the Garden was licked from the scene as effectually as though it had never been.

Chapter Thirteen.
The Last.

How that wonderful man Detective Dean managed it all is best known to himself and those myrmidons of the law who aided and abetted him in his investigations, but certain it is that he prepared as pretty a little thunderbolt for John Lockhart, Esquire, as any man could wish to see.

He not only ferreted out all the details of the matter involving the Washab and Roria railway and chimney-pot Liz, but he obtained proof, through a clerk in the solicitor’s office, and a stain in a sheet of paper, and a half-finished signature, that the will by which Mr Lockhart intended to despoil Colonel Brentwood was a curiously-contrived forgery. As men in search of the true and beautiful frequently stumble by accident on truths for which they did not search, and beauties of which they had formed no conception, so our detective unearthed a considerable number of smaller crimes of which the lawyer had been guilty—to the satisfaction of all concerned and the establishment of Mrs Brentwood’s character as a prophetess, so that “didn’t I tell you so, Jack?” became a familiar arrangement of household words in the ears of the poor Colonel for some time afterwards.

But the man of law did not await the discharge of the thunderbolt. As Mr Dean expressed it, he was too ’cute for that. By some occult means, known only to legal men, he discovered what was in the air, took time by the forelock, and retired into privacy—perhaps to the back settlements of Peru—with all the available cash that he could righteously, or otherwise, scrape together. By so doing, however, he delivered Colonel Brentwood from all hindrance to the enjoyment of his rightful property, and opened the eyes of chimney-pot Liz to the true value of shares in the Washab and Roria railway.

A few days after the culminating of these events—for things came rapidly to a head—Mrs Rampy of Cherub Court issued invitations for a small tea-party. This was the more surprising that Mrs Rampy was extremely poor, and had hitherto been economical to an extent which deprived her of a sufficiency of food even for herself. But the neighbours soon came to know that a line of telegraph had been recently set up between Cherub Court and the West End, through which flowed continuously a series of communications that were more or less astounding and agreeable to the inhabitants. The posts of this telegraph were invisible, the wires passed high overhead, very high, and the particular kind of electricity used was—sympathy.

It must be explained here that it was the northern side of the court which had been burned, so that Mrs Rampy, inhabiting the south side, still occupied her suite of apartments—a parlour and a coal-hole. The parlour, having once been a ware-room, was unusually large and well adapted for a tea-party. The coal-hole, having been a mere recess, was well adapted for puzzling the curious as to what had been the object of its architect in contriving it.

The party was not large, but it was select. It included a washerwoman with very red arms; a care-taker who had obviously failed to take care of herself; a couple of chimney-sweeps with partially washed faces; a charwoman with her friend the female greengrocer, who had been burned out of the opposite side of the court; two or three coster-mongers, a burglar, several thieves, a footman in resplendent livery, a few noted drunkards, and chimney-pot Liz with her teapot—not the original teapot of course—that had perished in the flames—but one indistinguishably like it, which had been presented to her by Colonel Brentwood. She had insisted on carrying it with her to Cherub Court on that occasion, on the ground that they would hardly recognise her without it, especially now that the fang was gone.

The resplendent footman had been the first guest to arrive, along with Liz, and was welcomed by the hostess and Mrs Blathers—who aided and abetted her friend on that occasion—with effusive demonstrations of goodwill and surprise. Thereafter the footman, who seemed to be eccentric, sat in a corner with his face buried in his hands, and did not move while the other guests were assembling. When the room was full and the tea poured out, Mrs Rampy looked at Liz with a sly awkward air which was quite foreign to her nature.

“Ah, Mrs Rampy,” said Liz, “don’t be ashamed.”

“Lord, bless us—an’ our wittles,” said Mrs Rampy, suddenly shutting her eyes as she opened her mouth, to the intense surprise of her guests. “Now then,” she added, in a tone of great relief, “go a-’ead w’en you’ve got the chance. There’s more w’ere that come from. ’And about the cake, Mrs Blathers, like a good creetur. An’ it ain’t much o’ this blow-hout you owes to me. I on’y supplied the sugar, ’cause that was in the ’ouse anyways.”

“It is a good deed, Mrs Rampy,” said old Liz, with a smile, “if you’ve supplied all the sweetness to the feast.”

“That’s a lie!” cried the hostess sharply. “It was you that supplied it. If it ’adn’t bin for you, Liz, I’d never ’ave—”

Mrs Rampy broke down at this point and threw her apron over her head to conceal her feelings. At the same moment the eccentric footman raised his head, and something like a pistol-shot was heard as the burglar brought his palm down on his thigh, exclaiming—

“I know’d it! Trumps—or his ghost!”

“’E’s too fat for a ghost,” remarked a humorous thief.

“No, mate, I ain’t Trumps,” said the resplendent man, rising before the admiring gaze of the party. “My name is Rodgers, footman to Colonel Brentwood of Weston ’All. I’m a noo man, houtside an’ in; an’ I’ve come ere a-purpuse to surprise you, not only wi’ the change in my costoom, but wi’ the noos that my master’s comin’ down ’ere to see arter you a bit, an’ try if ’e can’t ’elp us hout of our difficulties; an’ e’s agoin’ to keep a missionary, hout of ’is own pocket, to wisit in this district an’ they’re both comin’ ’ere this wery night to take tea with us. An’ ’e’s bringin’ a lord with ’im—a live lord—”

“Wot better is a live lord than any other man?” growled a thief with radical proclivities.

“Right you are, Jim Scroodger,” said Trumps, turning sharply on the speaker; “a live lord is no better than any other man unless ’e is better! Indeed, considerin’ ’is circumstances, ’e’s a good deal wuss if ’e’s no better; but a live lord is better than a dead thief, w’ich you’ll be soon, Jim, if you don’t mend yer ways.”

“Hear! hear!” and a laugh from the company.

“Moreover,” continued Trumps, “the lord that’s a-comin’ is better than most other men. He’s a trump—”

“Not a brother o’ yourn—eh?” murmured the burglar. “W’y, Trumps, I thought you was a detective!”

“Not in plain clo’es, surely,” remarked the humorous thief.

“’Ave another cup o’ tea, man, and shut up,” cried Mrs Blathers, growing restive.

“Well, ladies and gen’lemen all,” resumed Trumps, with a benignant smile, “you know this lord that’s a-comin’. Some o’ you made ’im a present of a barrow an’ a hass once—”

“I know ’im! Bless ’is ’eart,” cried a coster-monger through a mouthful of cake.

At that moment the expected guests arrived.

But reader, we must not dwell upon what followed. There is no need. It is matter of history.

While the inhabitants of the slums were thus enjoying a social evening together, David Laidlaw was busy with one of his numerous epistles to that repository of all confidences—his mother.

“The deed is done, mither,” he wrote, “an’ the waux doll is mine, for better or waur, till death us do pairt. Of course I dinna mean that we’re mairried yet. Na, na! That event must be celebrated on the Braes o’ Yarrow, wi’ your help an’ blessin’. But we’re engaged, an’ that’s happiness enough the now. If I was to describe my state o’ mind in ae word, I wud say—thankfu’. But losh, woman, that gies ye but a faint notion o’ the whirligigs that hae been gaun on i’ my heed an’ hairt since I came to Bawbylon. Truly, it’s a wonderfu’ place—wi’ its palaces and dens; its rich an’ its puir; its miles upon miles o’ hooses an’ shops; its thoosands on thoosands o’ respectable folk, an’ its hundred o’ thoosands o’ thieves an’ pickpockets an’ burglars—to say naething o’ its prisons an’ lawyers an’ waux dolls!

“But I’m haverin’. Ye’ll be gled t’ hear that Colonel Brentwood—him that befreended me—is a’ richt. His lawyer turned oot to be a leear an’ a swindler. The will that was to turn the Colonel oot o’ a’ his possessions is a forgery. His bonny bairn Rosa, is, like mysel’, gaun’ to be mairried; an’ as the Colonel has nae mair bairns, he’s gaun’ to devote himsel’—so his wife says—to ‘considerin’ the poor.’ Frae my personal observation o’ Lunnon, he’ll hae mair than enough to consider, honest man!

“In my last letter I gied ye a full accoont o’ the fire, but I didna tell ’e that it was amang the chimley-pots and bleezes that I was moved to what they ca’ ‘pop the question’ to my Susy. It was a daft-like thing to do, I confess, especially for a sedate kin’ o’ man like me; but, woman, a man’s no jist himsel’ at sik a time! After a’, it was a graund climax to my somewhat queer sort o’ coortin’. The only thing I’m feart o’ in Bawbylon is that the wee crater Tammy Splint should come to ken aboot it, for I wad niver hear the end o’t if he did.

Ye see, though he was there a’ the time, he didna ken what I was about. Speakin’ o’ that, the bairn has been made a flunkey by the Colonel—a teeger they ca’ him. What’s mair surprisin’ yet is, that he has ta’en the puir thief Trumps—alias Rodgers—into his hoosehold likewise, and made him a flunkey. Mrs Brentwood—Dory, as he ca’s her—didna quite like the notion at first; but the Colonel’s got a wonderfu’ wheedlin’ wey wi’ him, an’ whan he said, ‘If you an’ I have been redeemed an’ reinstated, why should not Rodgers?’ Dory, like a wise woman, gied in. The argement, ye ken, was unanswerable. Onywie, he’s in plush now, an white stockin’s.

“An’ that minds me that they’ve putt the wee laddie Splint into blue tights wi’ brass buttons. He just looks like an uncanny sort o’ speeder! It’s a daft-like dress for onything but a puggy, but the bairn’s as prood o’t as if it was quite reasonable. It maitters little what he putts on, hooiver, for he wad joke an’ cut capers, baith pheesical an’ intellectual, I verily believe, if he was gaun to be hanged!

“My faither-in-law to be, Sam Blake, says he’ll come to Scotland for the wadd’n, but he’ll no’ stop. He’s that fond o’ the sea that he canna leave ’t. It’s my opeenion that he’ll no’ rest till he gits a pirit’s knife in his breed-baskit. Mair’s the peety, for he’s a fine man. But the best news I’ve got to tell ’e, mither, is, that Colonel Brentwood an’ his wife an’ daughter an’ her guidman—a sensible sort o’ chiel, though he is English—are a’ comin’ doon to spend the autumn on the Braes o’ Yarrow.

“Noo, I’ll stop. Susy’s waitin’ for me, an’ sends her love.—Yer affectionate son, David Laidlaw.”

We must take the liberty now, good reader, of directing your attention to another time and place.

And, first, as regards time. One day, three weeks after the events which have just been narrated, Mrs Brentwood took Susan Blake through a stained glass door out upon a leaded roof and bade her look about her. The roof was not high up, however. It only covered the kitchen, which was a projection at the back of the Colonel’s mansion.

Susan, somewhat surprised, looked inquiringly in the lady’s face.

“A fine view, is it not?” asked Mrs Brentwood.

“Very fine indeed,” said Susy, and she was strictly correct, for the back of the house commanded an extensive view of one of the most beautiful parts of Hampstead Heath.

“Does it not remind you, Susan, a little, a very little, of the views from the garret-garden?” asked the lady, with a curious expression in her handsome eyes.

“Well, hardly!” replied Susan, scarce able to repress a smile. “You see, there is no river or shipping, and one misses the chimney-pots!”

“Chimney-pots!” exclaimed Mrs Brentwood, “why, what do you call these?” pointing to a row of one-storey stables not far off, the roofs of which were variously ornamented with red pots and iron zigzag pipes. “As to the river, don’t you see the glimmer of that sheet of water through the trees in the distance, a pond or canal it is, I’m not sure which, but I’m quite sure that the flag-staff of our eccentric naval neighbour is sufficiently suggestive of shipping, is it not?”

“Well, madam, if one tries to make believe very much—”

“Ah, Susan, I see you have not a powerful imagination! Perhaps it is as well! Now, I have brought you here to help me with a plot which is to be a great secret. You know it is arranged that dear old nurse is to spend the summer on the Braes of Yarrow with the Laidlaws, and the winter in London with me. So I want you to fit up this roof of the kitchen exactly in the way you arranged the garden on the roof at Cherub Court. I will send a carpenter to measure the place for flower-boxes, and our gardener will furnish you with whatever seeds you may require. Now, remember, exactly the same, even to the rustic chair if you can remember it.”

You may be very sure that Susy entered with right goodwill into this little plot. She had been temporarily engaged by Mrs Brentwood as lady’s-maid, so that she might have present employment and a home before her marriage, and then travel free of expense with the family to Scotland, where she should be handed over to her rightful owner. The office of lady’s-maid was, however, a mere sinecure, so the bride had plenty of time to devote to the garden. Old Liz, meanwhile, was carefully confined to another part of the house so that she might not discover the plot, and the tiger, from whom no secrets could by any possibility be kept, was forbidden to “blab” on pain of instant death and dismissal.

“Now, Da-a-a-vid,” remarked that Blue Spider, when he communicated the secret to him, “mum’s the word. If you mentions it, the kernel’s family will bu’st up. I will return to the streets from vich I came. Trumps, alias Rodgers, to the den hout of vich ’e was ’auled. Susan will take the wail and retire to a loonatic asylum, an’ Da-a-a-vid Laidlaw will be laid low for the rest of ’is mortial career.”

“Ne’er fash yer heed about me, Tammy, my man, I’m as close as an eyster.”

We pass now from the far south to the other side of the Borderland.

Great Bawbylon is far behind us. The breezy uplands around tell that we have reached the Braes of Yarrow. A huge travelling carriage is slowly toiling up the side of a hill. Inside are Colonel and Mrs Brentwood, Rosa and chimney-pot Liz. Beside the driver sits Trumps in travelling costume. In the rumble are Susan Blake and Tommy Splint. Rosa’s husband and Sam Blake are to follow in a few days.

“Oh, what a lovely scene!” exclaimed Susy, as the carriage gained the summit of an eminence, and pulled up to breathe the horses.

“Yaas. Not so bad—for Scotland,” said the tiger languidly.

“And what a pretty cottage!” added Susan, pointing to an eminence just beyond that on which they had halted, where a long low whitewashed dwelling lay bathed in sunshine.

“Yaas. And, I say, Susy, yonder is a native,” said Tommy, becoming suddenly animated, “and—well—I do believe, without a kilt! But he’s got the reg’lar orthodox shepherd’s—whew!”

A prolonged whistle ended the boy’s sentence, as he glanced quickly in Susan’s face. The flushed cheeks told eloquently that she also had made a discovery; and the rapid strides of the “native” showed that he was likewise affected in a similar way.

The Colonel’s head,—thrust out at the carriage window, and exclaiming, “Why, Dora, we’ve arrived! Here is Mr Laidlaw himself!”—completed, as it were, the tableau vivant.

Another moment and hands were being heartily shaken with the insides. But David did not linger. Nodding pleasantly to the tiger, he held up both hands. Being so tall, he just managed to reach those of Susan, as she stood up in the rumble.

“Jump!” he said; “ye needna fear, my lassie.”

Susan jumped, and was made to alight on Scottish soil like a feather of eider-down. Laidlaw stooped, apparently to whisper something in the girl’s ear, but, to the unspeakable delight of the observant tiger, he failed to get past the mouth, and whispered it there!

“Go it, Da-a-a-vid!” exclaimed the urchin, with a patronising wink and a broad smile.

“Look there, Susy,” said Laidlaw, pointing to the sun-bathed cottage.

“Home?” asked the maiden, with an inquiring glance.

“Hame!” responded David. “Mither is waiting for ’e there. Do ye see the track across the field where the burn rins? It’s a short cut. The coach’ll have to gang roond by the brig. Rin, lassie!”

He released Susy, who sprang down the bank, crossed the streamlet by a plank bridge, and ran into the cottage, where she found Mrs Laidlaw in the passage, with eager eyes, but labouring under powerful self-restraint.

“Mother!” exclaimed Susy, flinging her arms round the stout old woman’s neck.

“Eh!—my bonnie wee doo!” said Mrs Laidlaw, as she looked kindly down on the little head and stroked the fair hair with her toil-worn hands, while a venerable old man stood beside her, looking somewhat imbecile, and blowing his nose.

Just then the carriage rolled up to the door, and Mrs Laidlaw, leaving her “auld man” for a few minutes to do the honours of the house, retired to her chamber, and there on her knees confessed, thankfully, that she, like her son, had been effectually conquered by a “waux doll!”

Reader, what more can we say? Is it necessary to add that, the two principals in the business being well pleased, everybody else was satisfied? We think not.

But it may not be uninteresting to state that, from that auspicious day, a regular system of annual visitation was established between Bawbylon and the Braes of Yarrow, which held good for many a year; one peculiarity of the visitation being that the Bawbylonians and their progeny revelled on the braes chiefly in summer, while the Yarrowites, with their bairns, always took their southern flight in winter.

Thus our two old women, Mrs Laidlaw and chimney-pot Liz—who fought rather shy of each other at first, but became mutual admirers at last—led, as it were, a triple life; now on the sunny slopes and amid the sweet influences of the braes, anon in the smoke and the unsavoury odours of the slums, and sometimes amid the refinements and luxury of the “West End,” in all of which situations they were fain to confess that “the ways of God are wonderful and past finding out.”

Of course David Laidlaw did not fail to redeem his promise to revisit the thieves' den, and many a man and youth was he the means of plucking from the jaws of spiritual death during his occasional and frequent visits to London—in which work he was ably seconded by Tommy Splint, when that volatile spirit grew up to manhood.

And among their coadjutors none were more helpful in the work of bringing souls to Christ than Mrs Rampy and her bosom-friend Mrs Blathers.

Strange to say, Liz came to her end in a garret after all. On a raw November day she went, under the care of Susy, to visit an old friend near Cherub Court, in a garret not very unlike her old home. While there she was struck down.

There was no pain—apparently no disease; simply a sudden sinking of the vital powers. They laid the dear old woman on her friend's bed, and in half-an-hour she had passed away, while the faithful Susy held her hand and whispered words from the Master in her ear. Thus old Liz, having finished her grand work on earth, was transplanted from the Garret in the slums to the Garden of the Lord.