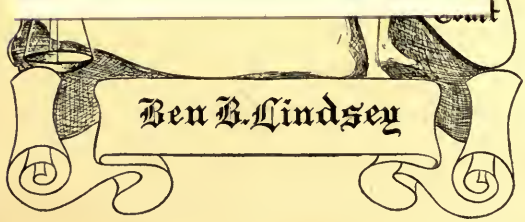
THE GANG OF SIX

DU BOSE



The Gang of Six

A Story of the Boy Life of To-Day

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Of boys men are made

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE "Gang of Six" is a story founded in experience. It is a composite narrative of actual demonstrations in social pedagogy and the work of reforming boy life. The *motif* of the writing is to present in available illustrations the most thoroughly attested conclusions and discoveries of specialists and teachers. It is hoped that the story may become an inspiration to many to take up the study of this problem; that it may even lead many to dedicate themselves to some of the lines of simple and unselfish effort suggested in it.

The philosophical conclusion, honored by universal acquiescence, that "the proper study of mankind is man," needs such an extension of its final term as will lay the stress of study upon the beginning stages of man's life. The proper study of statesman, teacher, divine, and economist is the boy. The literature on this subject is meager, for the reason that the inquiry has but fairly begun. Certain well-ascertained facts have, however, been set in order, and the science of social pedagogy may be said to be fairly established on its foundations. The main points in paidology, or this special branch of social reformation, may profitably be recounted here as an introduction to the story developed under the title above announced.

There are three periods in the life of "man in the making"—that is, the life of man that comes before majority. The first period is *infancy*. Many efforts have been made to fix the limits of this period in years. It varies according to birth conditions, training, and

native endowments. It ranges from birth to from six to nine years. The second period is *boyhood* (childhood). It includes the years from infancy to from thirteen to sixteen years. The third period is *adolescence* (youthhood), which includes the years from boyhood to maturity. During infancy the natural instincts are emerging and the faculties are forming; conscience also appears. The "play instinct" is preëminent in infancy, but the infant plays alone. A little later there is a disposition to join with other chidren, but the separate player is still for himself. The boy period can be said to have come only when the *team* or *gang* spirit is clearly manifested. Instinct then turns to habit; the communal spirit obtains, and conscience often sinks to a low ebb. "The corporation which has no conscience" is a survival in manhood years of what was a mimic play against ethics in the boy "gang" of the street or the barn loft.

The boy period is the one fraught with peril and hope. Whoever gets truly hold of the "man child" during this stage can shape him as he will, provided his wisdom and spirit be matched to his will. There is much in heredity, but far less than is generally claimed. There is much in the bent given the "suckling;" but wise and patient training begun with the earlier stages of boyhood will not only suffice to correct the misdirections and perversions of infancy, but will also neutralize, in the main, the currents of heredity. Such training becomes the channel of a redeeming and saving grace. Indeed, it is the ordained means of making the gospel of the restoration effective in childhood.

Experience suggests that in the effort to reach and save the boy respect must be had to that which is natural and universal in him. The "Gang of Six" seeks to traverse the fields of these inherent and character-marking instincts. The *settlement* idea has become a fixed and prominent one in modern evangelism. In a modified form it becomes indispensable in organized work with boys. You must *go to* the boy; you must get down on his level; you must enter into sympathy with his *likes,* his *necessities.* The hero of the "Gang of Six" saw this, and dedicated himself as *a man sent.* He found the boys he would help, he insinuated himself into their secrets, he joined their "gang," he made secrets for them, he slept and ate and talked with them, he won them; and so was able to lead them as he would.

The boy is an *exclusivist* on the line of sex. Between childhood and adolescence he practically rejects the companionship of any female except his mother, sisters, and other near female relatives. There is no more important fact in boy character than this, and it is one that must be respected by the teacher, leader, and reformer. Organization for his training must, as far as possible, proceed on the basis of an exclusive fellowship of boys. A mere suggestion in this direction is sufficient, for the wisdom of the accommodation is apparent.

The boy is by nature a *mystic;* he loves and affects mystical and secretive habits. The "gang" is founded half on this and half on the gregarious instinct. The infant, including the prenatal stage, repeats the physical evolution of the race; but the boy repeats the so-

cial stages and instincts of man in the earliest ages of his ethnic history. What is called the troglodyte, or savage, instinct in the boy is not evil, but of nature; it is the flowing in upon him of that past life of his race to which his own corresponds. He feels it, he knows not how or why; but it runs riot in his imaginations, puts a militant edge upon his every impulse, and turns the world into a fairyland full of the possibilities of quests and adventures. Now the gregarious feeling is strong; he quits his narrow-self life and seeks the larger life of the street and the "gang." "This instinct is legitimate and masterful and full of possibilities of danger or help," says Forbush. Left to itself, this "gang" instinct tends to hardness, cruelty, animalism. Laid hold upon and trained, it becomes courage, affection, loyalty, and the fruit of every human grace. Brotherly love, which is the test of perfectness, takes ready root in its soil. It is humanity, simply, and needs only the sanctifying touch to make its "members servants to righteousness."

The purpose of this story is to show the wisdom of *intensive* work, and that on small initial circles. The model is found in the fellowship of the twelve who gathered about the feet of the Son of Man. These the Master filled with himself and made them in turn vessels for the filling of others. There is here both precedent and encouragement. All great things begin in little. The law of the kingdom is multiplication, but the unit of quantity in its life is the mustard seed. "Fear not, *little flock;* for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

I.

A MAN SENT.

HARRY WILMOT was a man called and sent. At first he felt this as an indefinite impression; then he believed it mightily. At last the facts proved it.

It was a Sabbath afternoon in summer. The scene was a sumptuous home in the suburbs of a middle-sized modern city. At the end of one of the long verandas of the house, and deep in the shadows of elms that darkled over the roof, swung a hammock in which reclined a young man, a son of the home, not the eldest nor yet the youngest, but who had probably begun to be about seven and twenty years of age. His face was smooth and almost femininely tender, though a broad pigmentlike ground passing from either cheek under his chin showed where a manly beard was kept in constant repression by the edge of the razor. It was a pleasant face. With his left hand under his head, the owner of the face rested backward. His right hand held a small volume, into the pages of which was thrust the index finger, evidently to hold the paragraph upon which the reader had paused to meditate. The half-closed eyes indicated deep but not nervous or agitated thought. The face indeed expressed a perfect repose.

This was Harry Wilmot. In frame and spirit he was the offspring of his mother. The father had trained his eldest son to financial pursuits, and had destined the youngest to a special calling, to which

end his education was being carefully directed; but he had laid no special store of expectation by the second. Harry Wilmot, from being tied to his mother's apron strings in childhood, and from growing up under her shadow in that chivalrous loyalty which is the crown of boyish character, came to be hailed by his companions as the "girl-boy," and was accounted by all except his mother as a delicate child. Even the father referred to him as "my pretty lad," but his mother would have it that he was entitled to wear only the names of a real manliness. Harry accepted his mother's estimate of his parts, and secretly resented the commiserations heaped upon him by others. Smarting under these depreciations, he entered the boys' training school, and in the athletic lists outmatched at once every man of his year, and took prize after prize from the seasoned seniors. Folds of muscle accumulated upon his slender arms, and his chest expanded and grew broader and broader. In the class room also he pressed his competitors. Thus it was that he passed on to the college, finished his course, and returned to his home a specimen of rare physical development and a student of definite attainments. But the touches of his mother's grace had determined his character. Through the ordeals and excitements of his college years he had obeyed the influence of his mother's companionship; the light of faith had not failed from out his heart, nor had the words of reverence perished from his lips.

Entering upon life, Harry Wilmot chose the profession of law, in the practice of which he had the ordinary experience of those who go into the market

with their naked wits for assets. Success came slowly; but being reverent, generous, and of a sociable turn, he did not lack for friends, or even admirers. Of course he was the bright particular light of his mother's life, and even his father and elder brother came to regard him with that peculiar reverence which is always shown to a good man, whether young or old.

This was Harry Wilmot at the moment in which he reclined in the hammock on the veranda of his father's home on that summer Sabbath afternoon. For a long time his eyes remained half closed in meditation; then, opening the volume, he read again and again the words he had marked:

> He that can read aright the heart of a boy may read the Galilean mystery, and he that can lead the thought and love of a boy can shape the destiny of the years.

A sudden flush came over the placid young face and, springing up, Wilmot swung himself from the hammock to the floor. He hastily tightened the belt about his negligee, drew on his coat, and, picking up his hat and cane, strode down the steps of the veranda and passed into the wide avenue that led to the heart of the town. His step was quicker than usual, and his searching gaze took in both sides of the long thoroughfare. His countenance expressed the deep earnestness of his purpose. He had long yearned for something definite to do in the way of human help. He had asked for a foundation of his own upon which to build. That foundation had been shown him, and he already saw in vision something of the building to be reared thereupon.

Halfway up the street Wilmot heard a shout and a clamor of youthful voices. He immediately bent his course toward the sounds, and discovered that they were made by a group of half a dozen boys engaged in tossing ball and matching marbles. It was not the first time that Wilmot had seen this group, and he rightly calculated that he should find it at that moment in that particular place. He had long been a student of the habits and manners of boys. He had early noted the disposition of boys and youth of a certain age to fall into gangs or clans and to hold together, with little change, for an indefinite time. He had made a mental chart of his own town with reference to these boy groups and their places of meeting; he had also gone deeply into books seeking aid in his study, which at first was prompted only by a generous interest in sociological progress. But now a new light had fallen upon the path of his searchings. He saw the boy no more as an abstract sociological subject; but as the one present, solvent, overmastering truth of the world. He that would do the highest, best, and most enduring service to his generation must offer it to the boy that is nearest him, and must offer it with a might of earnestness and a passion of perseverance. These were Wilmot's reflections as he approached the noisy group. He was barely in earshot when he heard the largest boy, and by that token the leader, whistle shrilly, and say: "Hi, boys! here comes a guy that looks like one o' them Sunday school chaps up to the mission. I'll bet my jackknife against a copper that he's come to give us a spiel about playing ball and marbles on Sunday. Let's vamoose."

And Wilmot saw the ranks about to break before his eyes, but he succeeded in arresting the retreat by saying: "Hold on there a minute, boys; I'm shoving a sure-enough good thing this afternoon, and I want to give you a show at it."

"What's it?" sharply demanded the leader as he commanded his followers to stand.

"Why, I want to invite you boys to take a trolley ride with me away out into the country," answered the young man, jingling a handful of small coins in his trousers pocket as he spoke.

"You don't mean to take the *hull* six on us, does you, partner?" demanded the spokesman.

"Yes, I do; every kid of you," pleasantly returned Wilmot.

"Why, partner, that'll cost you more'n a dollar, nearly two on 'em fur the round trip," objected the other.

"That's all right," said Wilmot in a way that completely convinced every member of the group of his seriousness; "I want your company, and am willing to pay well to have it. It's my treat, and no limit;" and with that he began in a most friendly way to shake the hand of each boy, beginning with the leader.

"I say, boys!" cried that dignitary before Wilmot had finished the hand-shaking—"I say, we won't do a thing but go wid him, will we?"

A shout of approval broke as one voice from the mouths of the other five, several of whom attested their satisfaction with the arrangement by leaping, dervishlike, into the air and performing sundry wheeling gyrations on their feet and hands. These were

boys who had lived so much in the streets that no sense of restraint ever embarrassed them in the presence of strangers.

Within five minutes after the beginning of the interview the whole company was scrambling, with the aid of Wilmot, into a "Highland" electric car bound for the terminal near a range of densely wooded hills six miles from the center of the town.

On the way out Wilmot made an effort to become personally acquainted with, and learn the name of, each of his guests. In this he succeeded only in learning that the name of the leader was Parry Granger. Instantly thereafter he discovered that his energy would be taxed to the utmost to keep his company aboard or to prevent its ejection for misdemeanor. The sudden and simultaneous pressure of six electric buttons brought the motor to a stand with no passengers to alight; then the danger gong set up a banging, the windows rattled furiously, the passengers tittered and smiled, and the conductor raged.

"You are taking these young rogues to the House of Correction, I suppose?" the latter said sarcastically, addressing Wilmot.

"No, indeed," returned Wilmot; "there's nothing serious the matter with these boys; they are just *boys,* that's all."

"Well, thank heaven! here's the terminus," said the collector of fares; and with that he gave the bell cord a vigorous jerk.

Before Wilmot could rise from his seat, he saw the six boys roll in a confused mass from the rear platform amongst the grasses and flowering weeds grow-

ing beside the railway track. He followed as quickly as he could; and before the car had ceased moving, getting his followers together in something like order, he led the way to a strip of virgin forest which he knew as "Applegate Wood." This woodland climbed up the sides of romantic hills that broke into craggy points and ferny cliffs. It was a boys' paradise, and one in which Wilmot had spent many a holiday in his own boyhood. Stopping in a once well-known and favorite spot, he seated himself at the root of a great tree, saying: "This will do, boys. We'll sit here awhile, and get better acquainted."

The six boys dropped at once in a circle about his feet. The posture assumed by each was characteristic. Some settled on their "hunkers," one or two sat Turk fashion on the grass, while several clutched their great toes as they lay half reclining on their elbows. All of them, including Granger, the leader, looked inquisitively into Wilmot's face.

"Now, Granger," said Wilmot after all was quiet, "I want you to introduce each of your friends to me. We're going to be boys together this afternoon, and we want to know one another's names, you know. My name is Mr. Wilmot, Harry Wilmot; but you may call me 'Partner,' or anything you wish, until we get well acquainted."

"I ain't much of an *introducer,* Mr. Wilmot," said Granger; "but I'll jest call off each feller's name as they sits, an' I reckon that'll do, won't it?"

"O yes," assented Wilmot; "but the boys wouldn't mind your telling me as you go along how old each one is and something about his parents, would they?"

"You bet we wouldn't," quickly and confidently returned Granger; "we fellers ain't ashamed o' nothing about us, 'ceptin it might be little Kinky over there [pointing toward a small curly-haired elf], who's runned away from somewhere. Some on us, too, is maybe runned away from home sence dinner, so's to meet the gang, an' maybe there's a lickin' waitin' for some on us, but that ain't nothin'; every kid on us has had that, an' more'n once, too."

"Well, I'm glad it's no worse than that," said Wilmot. "It will be better, much better, after a while; so let's get introduced right off."

"Sure," spoke up Granger, and began circumstantially as follows: "That kid over there on your left han' is Jimmy Glenn; he's nine years old"—

"Pshaw!" broke in Jimmy. "I'm a-goin on ten," and his tone showed that he was indignant at his leader's failure to do him full justice before a stranger.

"You needn't mind Jimmy, partner; he ain't but nine years an' a month old. Jimmy runs fur a grocer in Fifth Street. He wants to be tough, but he ain't learned how yit; but he ain't bin in town but a year. His mother's the Widder Glenn an' lives on Fountain Road."

Jimmy looked as if he would like to dispute other items in Granger's inventory (he was sure that he was beginning to be tough), but he only smiled an embarrassed kind of smile and tugged desperately at his great toe. Notwithstanding his own and Granger's doubtful estimate, Jimmy was an honest-looking lad with a suit of thin sandy hair, a long, rather pointed nose, and a wart under his chin.

"The feller next to Jimmy," continued Granger—"that's Mack Pooley. His folks, an' him too, works up to the Cotton Mill—that is, him an' his mother an' two sisters does—but his daddy mostly don't work none, but sets up to the grocery store, chaws terbacker, whittles on a stick, and talks about what a hard time he has s'portin' his family. But my! he's a yarn spinner from away back; an' he puts plenty o' cuss words in 'em, too; an' that's what the fellers all likes up there."

"But what about Mack?" quietly interrupted Wilmot, seeing that Granger was both wandering and distressing Mack by a too free account of the weaknesses of his paternal ancestor.

"Mack? Why, he's all right," exclaimed Granger. "Mack's ten years old, but he earns two dollars and a half a week workin' at the mill."

Mack, who was a dwarfish-looking child, but not ill-featured, seemed, at first, to desire to make some sort of rejoinder to Granger's portrayal of his father's indolent habits, but the reference to his own industry apparently appeased him, and he offered no protest, except to say: "My pa had the measles onct."

"Yes, an' mine had the smallpox down to New Orleans last year," derisively piped out another little fellow who had not yet been introduced.

"That ain't nothin'," chimed in Kinky; "I had the mumpst all by myself one time."

"He had to have 'em by hisself," broke in another boy, "'cause he didn't have no daddy to have 'em fer him."

All the boys laughed at this sally except Kinky

himself, who turned his big brown eyes up into Wilmot's face and regarded him with a pathos and wonder that went to the young man's heart. Poor little waif! there was a mystery about his life that Wilmot could only guess; but that one confiding look of the homeless, parentless child was itself a justification of the large plan upon which he was entering.

By this time the ceremony of introduction had been so thoroughly sidetracked that Wilmot had to cite the master to his unfinished office.

"That third chap," Granger resumed nonchalantly enough, "is Tommy Biles—that ain't much fer a name, partner, but Tommy's the real thing. His father and mother keeps the bakery with the red sign near to the car shed. Tommy's nearly 'leven years old, an' goes to school week days, 'ceptin' when he's a-playin' hooky."

"You're another," growled Tommy, indignant at what was meant to be a sly jest, but which stood some remote chance of being a slander. But Granger not appearing to hear the disclaimer, and Tommy being good-natured, through being well-fed from the bakery bins, subsided and permitted the introductions to proceed.

"That little feller there by you is Kinky, as I said before," observed Granger, going on with the presentation. "He ain't got no name but 'Kinky,' so fur as I know, an' so fur as he knows, too. He jest happened along here from some place, he don't know where. He don't know how ol' he is, an' nobody else don't know. Kinky sells papers an' lives most anywheres; right now he stays o' nights at the Newsboys'

Barracks. That's all anybody knows about Kinky, an' that's all Kinky knows hisself."

Wilmot looked tenderly and yearningly again at the ill-clad, barefoot, curly-pated little nondescript, and could not refrain from taking a second time the hand of the nameless child. Not only did he take it, but he drew its owner close under his arm, and said: "Sit down beside me, 'Kinky.' We're going to be partners all the time." And with that he seated the frowzy newsboy on the tree root beside himself. The other boys did not see that at the same time he thrust a big bright silver coin into the pocket of Kinky's ragged jacket. While doing this he was saying: "There's one other boy, Granger; tell me about him."

"That's the feller here by me," responded Granger. "He's the big bug of us all. You see he's got on good clothes an' polished shoes. He's next to me, the oldest boy in the crowd; he's twelve, an' I'm thirteen. His name is Sim Phillips, an' his father keeps a grocery store down by the Viaduct. Sim's sometimes got money enough to set 'em all up to us, an' he's the stuff to do it. Me and Sim sorter leads the boys. My father runs a dye shop, an' I'm tryin' to learn to be a printer; but they says up to the office that I needs grammar, an' I reckon that's so, for I ain't got to be nothin' but a devil yet; but I'm afeard that grammar book is a little more'n I wanter tackle."

"Couldn't you try it at night school?" suggested Wilmot.

"Well, I sorter thought o' that, partner, but I never has the sponds; an' ef I did, I'm too sleepy-headed to read by a light."

"Suppose somebody gave you your tuition. Would you try it then?" asked Wilmot.

"Well, I mought, an' then ag'in I moughtn't," was the doubtful reply. Granger was not dull by nature; on the contrary, he was shrewd almost to cunning and had the latent element of the initiative, but his training had been so woefully neglected that scarcely a spark of intelligent ambition had ever been kindled in him.

Wilmot made a mental note concerning Granger and the possibilities of his case, and was about to arise from his seat when Sim Phillips, the only boy who had taken no part in the conversation, shook off what seemed to be a restraint and said: "Now, Mister, since the introducin' is over, what's to be the racket? for the boys are lookin' for a good time."

Wilmot was taken a little aback by the abrupt turn given the interview by the grocer's son; but continuing to arise, he said: "The racket is, boys, that you are to have the freedom of this wood for an hour. Do what you like: play hare and hound; climb trees; wade in the brook—in a word, take everything in sight."

"An' you don't call that Sunday-breakin', do you, Mister?" asked Sim, involuntarily superseding Granger as spokesman.

"That's all right," answered Wilmot without accepting the issue. "Take your fill of fun; and after the hour is out, we'll come back for a little chat. I will then tell you of a fine scheme I have for us to work out together."

"An' you pay the freight?" asked Sim.

"That's what I mean," quietly replied Wilmot.

"Three cheers and a tiger for Mr. Wil—Wil—what is it?" stammered Sim.

"Wilmot!" shouted half the other boys.

"For Mr. Wilmot," concluded Sim.

The cheers were given, disorderly enough, but with no lack of enthusiasm, and the boys broke in a tumult of sport through the trees, over the brook, and up the ferny slopes of the hills. It was the uncorking of pent-up hilarity, good humor, and boyish zest.

II.

THE GANG.

EXCITED from their romp and with lungs filled with healthful and exhilarating air, the six boys at the end of an hour flung themselves down in a circle at Wilmot's feet, where he had seated himself in much the same position as before. A change had come over the spirit of each boy. From being diffident and betraying more or less doubt as to the purpose of their new-made acquaintance, each showed in his glowing face and in the little comments and ejaculations which he indulged that confidence and trustfulness which all boys manifest toward an elder brother. Wilmot saw at once how wisely he had adopted at the very beginning the means by which he hoped to reach his end. He greeted each boy with a pleasant smile or a brief speech in praise of his swift-footedness, his good wind, his jumping or climbing, or the distance to which he could throw a stone, or the number of steps he could make walking on his hands.

At last, when everything was again quiet, Granger, looking around the circle as though to make sure that everything was right, said: "Well, partner, we are all ready now; it's your spiel."

"If I should offer to tell you a story, what would you boys rather it should be about?" asked Wilmot, looking thoughtfully up to the dark tree branches above, through which the afternoon sun was falling like a fine mist of gold.

"I want to hear 'bout bears an' things," piped up

Kinky, seated, as before, close up to Wilmot and on the right side. And the eyes of the little Arab sparkled as they surveyed the reasurring face of Wilmot.

"No, we'd ruther hear about Indians and cowboys," almost shouted Sim Phillips, and several other boys joined in the request; but Granger, in a rather judicial tone, entered a demurrer to both, saying: "These kids is green, partner, an' don't know nuthin' 'bout the r'al thing when it comes to a story. I think we'd oughter hear about detectives an' burglars, er about them fellers what you call piroots, er about 'Curly Bill,' the stage robber, er some other crook what gits a pile o' swag. We don't wanter hear none o' them mission Sunday school stories about bears eatin' up kids that don't say their prayers. No, sir, what we wants is the r'al thing."

This brief interview revealed to Wilmot, as nothing before had ever done, the law of cohesion in boys' compacts. The gregarious habit is of instinct. Lambkins, calves, and chicks in the barnyards answer the same instinct. But the boy answers a higher, if often a hurtful, influence. The bare fact of *flocking* is one thing; the character of *association* is another. Usually one boy, older than the others, draws around him a group and holds it together for a longer or shorter time. He is the strongest character, but is seldom either the most intelligent or the most moral of the group. His quality and appeal of leadership come from the opposite traits. This is the heart of the boy problem. It is deplorable, but it is of nature, or at least of heredity, which is probably only another way of saying the same thing. Boys at this age (say from

eight to thirteen) begin to develop the savage impulse. All the predatory, venatorial, and troglodyte instincts of the race recur in the boy at this period. The barbarian rises up in him, varying in intensity according to conditions. He seeks a leader, and a savage one at that. The leader must be bold of speech, and must be able to make a manifest of both muscle and courage—in a word, he must be a Sea King, a Khan, or at least a Robin Hood. This ideal of leadership is not necessarily a fruit of depravity. It is rather a matter of atavism, the recurrence for a little while in the boy of the spirit of the far-off race father. Turned in the right direction, this spirit is a man maker, for it is easily humanized.

Wilmot saw, in the brief moments in which he indulged his reflections, such a leader in Granger, who had organized this group and made it, though probably without the least foresight, into a complete individuality. He was taller by two inches than the tallest (a king-making accident); he had the speech and the leader spirit. The other boys answered their nature bent and followed.

These reflections occupied Wilmot for but a moment, and he was almost instantly ready with an answer to the varying requests concerning the kind of a story to be told. So he said: "Kinky is the youngest, and was the first to speak. I think we will tell a bear story. There will be something in it about Indians, too; and I am sure it will please Granger." A clap of hands all around indicated that the decision gave complete satisfaction. Thereupon Wilmot began and told the story of

The Great Black Bear.

Far away in the land of the North there is a range of tall, dim mountains in whose passes it is always winter, and where the snow lies in drifts and heaps through all the year. These mountains stretch from one sea to the other, but there is a trail or path which winds across them from valley to valley. Those who would journey from one valley to another must needs take this path, though it is beset with the greatest danger, both from the fierce cold of the endless winter and from the huge beasts—the black bears and the gray wolves—that infest the mountains about.

There was once known to live in a dark cave near the path where it crossed the very summit of these mountains a great black bear which was the terror of travelers who went that way. When the great black bear, who looked himself like a dark hill rising above the snow, saw that a traveler was in the path, he came out of his cave and growled so fiercely that all the rocks shook; or if he walked between the sun and the path, he made such a shadow on the snow that the wayfarer thought a cloud had come over the sky. Thus he terrified travelers; and when they were still in their fright, he seized such as he would and dragged them off to his cave, where he devoured them and left their bones scattered about the floor of his house. This went on a great many years, and everybody in the land heard of the great black bear and of his horrid cave in the winter mountains. Sometimes the men who had to journey over these mountains went in companies, and some of them carried arms so as to protect the rest; but the black bear was sure to catch

one of the company apart from the others, and giving a sudden growl he so terrified him that he could not think what to do. Before he could recover from his fright, the black bear had him, weapon and all, and was on the way to his cave.

The Indians that dwelt in the valleys on each side of these mountains had long known of this bear, and did not less fear him than did the white men. They often shot their arrows at him, and had thrown their spears against his shaggy sides, but they could make no wound through his thick coat. They came at last to believe that he was something more than a wild beast, and so they called him the Evil Spirit. They said also that when he growled his voice was like that of a man, only so much louder as the thunder is louder than the wind. From their chief down to their young men, they all said that if the great black bear was ever slain it would be by the hand of a white man.

In the course of time it happened that the valleys on both sides of the mountains were settled by white men. Before these valleys had belonged only to the Indians; and when they saw white men coming into their lands, they became very angry, and often slew the people and burned their houses with fire. But the white men came on in greater numbers, and there were pretty farmhouses and also villages that spread from the base of the mountains out into the valleys, for the climate in the valleys was mild and the soil was rich and easily tilled. In the northern valley there was a village that spread under the shelter of a tall rock that stood at the very place where the path started up the mountain leading to the valley on the

south. One winter evening when the villagers, who were no more than a dozen men, their wives and children, and a few aged people, the grandsires and grandmothers of the village, were taking their evening meal they heard a cry of savage Indians coming up from the valley. There was a great company of them, and they soon surrounded the place. The men of the village then took their wives and little ones and the very aged men and women and, with their rifles in hand, gathered in the largest and strongest house in the village and prepared to keep the savages at bay until they should secure help from other villages.

There was not a man who could be spared from the defense, because the savages were so many. But they must have a messenger. There was nobody to go except a little lad of twelve years, Albert Knudson. Albert was brave, and had been taught that it was noble to face dangers and even die for others. He knew all the valleys about and every path in the mountain. So he agreed to go for help. It was impossible to go down to the valley, for the savages had cut the village off from the valley on every side. The only way open was the one across the mountains to some village in the valley beyond. The men thought it best to send Albert over this path, and he readily agreed to go. He was too small to carry a rifle, if one could have been spared from the defense against the savages; so he took only a hunting knife in a belt which he buckled over his hunting shirt. He wore thick leather breeches and high boots. With a pouch of food, Albert started on his long and dangerous journey. He knew about the wolves, and especially about the great

black bear, and was on the lookout for him. He knew also about the bear's terrible voice, and was determined not to be terrified by it. But he listened, listened for growlings and voices louder than the winds.

It was at the deep middle of the night, and a fierce north wind was blowing on his back when he came near to the highest summit of the mountain. He could see the way before him, for a few cold stars were shining through rifts in the clouds, and the snow-covered mountains were white with ghostly light. Suddenly, about this time, the lad heard a loud, long growl, after which the rocks seemed to shake, and he knew it was the voice of the great black bear. He refused to be terrified, and said: "I am going to save people alive; I do not think the bear will be able to devour me; I will run very fast and will not be afraid." But in the next instant the shadow of the bear shut out the stars, and Albert found himself in the creature's jaws and being borne swiftly away, as he knew, to the horrid black cave. Now he thought: "My courage was vain, and I thought to do good to others in vain; but I can die and not be afraid." The bear, he knew, would soon devour him. But he noticed now that the creature's teeth did not seem to pierce his leather jacket. From this he took a little hope, and, feeling for his hunting knife, he drew it forth from its belt and held it in his hand.

When the bear had gone up and down many steep places and dragged his victim through many deep snowdrifts, he came to the mouth of his cave. There he stopped and, smelling the boy over from head to foot, carried him in and laid him down upon the floor

very much as a cat does a mouse. Albert lay very still for a moment. There was a horrid smell in the cave, and the darkness was seven times blacker than night. A shudder swept over his frame, but he sat up a little; then he stood on his feet and, grasping the hilt of his knife very tightly, set his back against the wall of the cave. He could not see the bear, but he could hear him sniffling about and coming always nearer. The boy held his knife ready to strike. Presently he felt the frosty tip ot the bear's nose touch his outstretched left hand; then with all his might he fell upon the haft of his knife and, striking out into the darkness, drove it through the bear's neck into his heart. With a growl that shook the whole cave the monster fell over and died. Albert then felt of himself from head to foot, but found neither wound nor scratch upon his body. At this he rejoiced, and at once fell to work with his knife to take the skin off the bear he had slain. It did not take long to do this; for, though he was so young a lad, he had skinned many an ox and not a few bears before. Having taken the skin off, he dragged it after him, following as best he could the tracks made by the bear. It was a great task, and by the time he had reached the high path again there was a gray light of dawn on the mountains. When he realized perfectly his own deliverance, he began to grieve for his friends in the village, for he felt that by this time they must either have been slain or carried away as captives. He was in the midst of these sad thoughts when he heard savage shouts coming up the mountain path. When the shouters came nearer to him, he saw that they were

Indians upon ponies; that some of them carried rifles and that they had prisoners bound on ponies which they drove before them. He understood that they had captured the villagers and were carrying them across the mountains to the home of their tribe in another valley.

It did not take Albert long to resolve what to do. Throwing the bearskin over his body, he began to growl as loudly as he could. He knew some Indian words, and these he repeated in a terrible roll and roar of voice. The Indians were sure they had met the Evil Spirit, so they shot no arrow nor threw any spear; but the foremost fled in terror, leaving their captives still tied to the ponies. When Albert could get near enough to the first captive, he cut the thongs with which he was bound, then another. These two seized the rifles which the fleeing Indians had abandoned and began to rain bullets amongst the other savages. Soon the captive men, women, and children were all released, and with such ponies as they could gather together they made their way safely back to the village. Albert carried back with him the skin of the great black bear, which he nailed to the wall of the strong house; and for many days thereafter he showed it to strangers, telling them of his night adventure in the winter mountains. Also the governor of the province sent him a purse full of gold coins and gave him the title of "The Little Scout."

During the recital of this story the boys, from Granger to Kinky, were all attention, their enthusiasm growing at each stage. An indefinable quietness reigned for half a minute after the story was ended.

Wilmot perceived thereby that the veiled moral had not been lost.

Granger was the first to break the silence. "Partner," he exclaimed, "that there wa'n't no yaller kid, that bear killer, wus he?"

"No, I think he was not," replied Wilmot; "he was a real hero. But maybe it was because Albert was risking his life to help others that he had such good luck and did what others could not do—killed the great black bear."

"I'll bet a plunker that's jest why it wus," declared Granger, with enthusiasm.

"I am sure it was—in fact, I know it was," replied Wilmot.

"But I'd like to know what become of that little feller after he was growed up," put in Tommy Biles.

"I'll bet you anything he fought Indians all the time," suggested Sim Phillips, his thoughts centering in the title which the little hero had won.

"Maybe he growed up an' wrote stories for little boys," ventured Kinky, his familiarity with the outside of newspapers suggesting a great possibility.

"Suppose he became governor of the province?" said Wilmot, by way of testing the sentiment of his hearers. "Suppose he became governor and lived in peace in a great white house—wouldn't that be better?"

All the boys except Sim accepted this view and approved of Wilmot's idea in general.

"Don't you agree with the other boys, Sim?" he asked of the dissident.

"Well, I reckon so," he answered slowly. "Bein'

governor is pretty good, but fightin' Indians is just bully."

Perceiving that he now had the unreserved confidence of all the boys, Wilmot resolved to venture a step farther. Addressing Granger, he asked: "Why do you six boys always go together? I have seen you often on the street, and there are always just six of you. Why is this?"

"Why, hit's our *gang,* partner," answered Granger without reserve. "We six belongs to the gang. The gang wus started first by me an' Sim, an' we've added one after another until we tuck in little Kinky, an' he makes six."

"What does your gang do?" cautiously inquired Wilmot.

"Well," answered the leader, showing himself a slight caution, "we plays together on Sundays an' holidays, an' don't let no other boys know what we knows; an' we fights for one another if other boys imposes on us."

"Do you have a meeting place?" diplomatically continued Wilmot.

"No, not edzactly," replied Granger; "we've been thinkin' about gittin' one like some o' the other gangs has, but we ain't got none yit."

"What sort of places have the other gangs?" asked Wilmot, showing his lawyer instinct.

"O, one on 'em meets under the stone arch of the viaduct, an' one meets in the loft of the ol' Giles terbacker house, an' that's where most on 'em learned to smoke, there bein' lots of terbacker leaves wasted on the floor. I belonged that gang before me an' Sim

made up this un. Most all the gangs is got a hole some'eres;" and Granger ended his disclosure with a sort of squint of his left eye.

"I've just been thinking about getting your gang a regular meeting place," said Wilmot. "You boys find one to suit you, and I'll get it for you, if I have to buy it."

"But I say, partner," exclaimed Granger, "that talk o' yourn is stunnin';" and he surveyed the other boys, who plainly shared his surprise.

"I mean it, though," added Wilmot, thinking it worth while to be insistent.

"I reckon we'll jest take yer offer, partner," said Granger.

"Only we'll have to look about a bit for a place," sagely interposed Granger's lieutenant, Sim Phillips.

"That will be all right," returned Wilmot; "but I want to offer you this grove for next Sunday afternoon and the next and the next until you find a place. It's yours as long as you want it."

"But, partner, we kids can't walk out here fer our meetin's. Hit's six miles, an' we ain't got the sponds to pay the puncher," objected Granger.

"Don't let that trouble you," said Wilmot; "I'll pay the freight."

"You will?" cried Granger, and the other boys joined in the shout.

"I will on one condition," explained Wilmot, "and that is that I may come with you."

The gang went wild at this announcement, and, marching around after Granger, each shook the hand of Wilmot as a sign of agreement.

"I am going to ask something else," added Wilmot when the circle had been remade. "I want to join your gang and be a member with you."

The boys looked at Granger and then at one another. That was an unexpected request; it had to be considered, so the gang withdrew a short distance and held a conversation in low tones. Presently they returned, and Granger informed the applicant that they must vote on his request.

"Very well," he said. "I want to come in just as the other boys did."

Thereupon the gang withdrew again, and Granger, solemnly laying down his hat, ordered each boy to deposit in it a glass or a stone marble according to his vote, glass being for, stone against. After a due and legal count, Granger reported that six glass marbles had gone into the hat and that, therefore, the new applicant had been elected a member of the gang. There was another round of handshaking and the boys resumed their places for the continuance of the powwow.

"Next Sunday afternoon at four o'clock," said Wilmot, "we will meet at Fountain Square, take the Highland car again, and come to this same spot. After we have held our meeting, we will select a place where the gang can meet in secret. We must also have a watchword and some way by which we may know one another and to keep other boys from getting into our meetings."

"O, we fellers has got 'em," cried Granger.

"But you didn't give them to me," returned Wilmot, feigning to be surprised.

"But they're jest boys' doin's," deprecatingly explained the leader.

"But I am a boy with you," insisted Wilmot—"a member of the gang, and I am entitled to know every secret of the gang."

"That's so, partner," declared Granger as he looked again around the circle as though asking approval of what he was about to do. The approval of silence reassured him. "But you'll have to hol' up yer han' an' say it like the rest on us," he continued.

Wilmot answered by promptly putting up his right hand, now assured that he was about to be put in possession of the most awful secret of the gang. Granger then rattled off the "oath," which Wilmot repeated after him as follows:

> By the horns and the beard of the Billy Goat:
> I'll lay a knife against my throat;
> Seven times I'll hang; seven times I'll drown,
> And rot to dust with old John Brown,
> Before I'll tell or break my oath.

Wilmot could not repress an inward smile during this "ordeal," but the five boys looking on preserved a demeanor of solemn and respectful silence.

"That's a great 'oath,' Granger," said Wilmot. "Where did you get it?"

"Me an' a feller up to the printin' office got it out of a book. There was more'n that to it; but I couldn't pack hit 'round in my noggin," frankly confessed the mogul of the gang.

"You haven't yet given me the signs," said Wilmot after having got his fellow-gangsmen completely off their guard.

"There ain't but two on 'em," explained Granger; "an' the first one is this: You lays yer finger over yer mouth, like this, an' that means: 'Don't talk about the gang.' The other one is this: Yer locks yer han's behind yer head, like this, an' that means: 'The fellers what's aroun' is all frien's.' An' now that's all."

"And so I am now a member of the gang and you boys will tell me everything and let me attend all your meetings, will you?" asked Wilmot.

"That's the size on it, partner; yer have done rode the goat," declared Granger.

The afternoon sun was now sunken low behind the groves and hills of Applegate Wood, so the meeting was dissolved; and the gang, under the direction and patronage of its newest member, was again loaded on the trolley and was in due time delivered back at its starting point in Fountain Square.

III.

THE MEETING PLACE.

THERE was an unrecorded history-making in the lives of six boys during the week which succeeded the visit of Wilmot and his confederates to the Applegate Wood. Each boy was thinking a good deal quietly within himself, and the action of each was being influenced by that thinking. Wilmot had not only penetrated the mystery of a typical boys' gang, but he had succeeded in overlaying that mystery with a greater. First of all, his motive was mysterious, for no boy understands exactly why a young man of Wilmot's good manners and appearance wants to spend four or five shillings every Sunday on a group of street gamins. Besides, Wilmot had hinted at various pleasant and occult things, and these hints had set all the boys guessing and wondering. Granger and Sim had repeatedly seen each boy to be sure of his state of mind, and also to ascertain if the way was certainly open to each to be at Fountain Square at the hour fixed the next Sabbath afternoon. Also Granger, by request of Wilmot, had called at the latter's office once or twice to report.

"You are sure that all the boys will be there, are you, Granger?" Wilmot asked at the conclusion of the second interview on Saturday afternoon.

"You bet your boots they'll be there, partner; I've done been around and read each feller's mark. They'll be there," was Granger's reply.

"What do you mean by each one's mark?" asked Wilmot a little mystified.

"Why, each one of the gang's got a mark what he makes for the other fellers when he can't see 'em," explained the boy.

"But you didn't tell me about that when I joined," said Wilmot.

"Well, now, fer a fact; that's so," answered Granger, a little confused. "But I'll do it right now;" and with that he drew two bits of chalk from his pocket—one white, the other red. "You see, partner," he began to explain, "the gang has got certain places (we'll show 'em to you after a while) where we makes marks when we can't go to the meetin' places er when anything happens. If you can't come to the place what's fixed fer the gang, why, you takes that white chalk and makes a cross on the gatepost or the wall close to where you stays. That means 'King's ex—I can't come;' then with the red chalk you writes your letter (that's the first letter of your name) under it. If you can sure come, you makes a bull's eye with the white chalk and then puts your letter under it in red. All the boys knows what that means. If you'll jest look on the gatepost of the baseball park as you comes down the avenoo Sunday afternoon, you kin tell edzactly how many of the boys will be waitin' fer you at the Fountain."

"That chalk business isn't a bad idea, Granger," said Wilmot. "I'll use the chalk myself."

"You musn't let no feller belongin' to another gang see you doin' it; we don't want 'em to git onto us," cautioned Granger.

Wilmot promised to observe due caution, and so the last detail for the meeting was settled.

The eventful Sunday afternoon had come, and Wilmot was again sauntering up the long avenue. Opposite the baseball park he halted a moment, selected a time when no passers-by were in sight, then walked across the way, and stood before the undressed, unpainted posts of the park gate. There, sure enough, were six tiny white chalk circles with a dot in the center of each, and underneath each a red chalk letter.

Every boy had registered his sign manual and had gone to the tryst. Quickly making a circle for himself and writing under it the letter "W," Wilmot pushed on to the Square, when a pleasing sight met his view. There were his fellow-gangsmen—all of them—seated together on the steps of the Fountain, and each one a picture of gentility. There was not a bat, a ball, nor a marble in sight. Every face had been washed and every head carefully combed. There was a transformation also in the dress of the party. There was not a bare foot in the group—even Kinky's feet were shod in a pair of shoes which, though old, had been carefully polished. Each boy was dressed in a clean shirt; and, although some of the coats were worn and faded, they had been brushed clean of every vestige of dust.

With a shout the group greeted Wilmot and, rising as with one impulse, gathered about him for the handshake of fellowship.

The trolley ride outward was in striking contrast with the one of the Sabbath before. Some of the boys were nervous, but for the most part they sat quietly

while Wilmot pointed out the places of interest in the countryside as their car spun musically on toward the hills.

Applegate Wood was aglow with a glory of summer when the seven entered into its quietness.

"Will you boys now do as you did last Sunday—take an hour to romp and play?" asked Wilmot.

"No," said Sim, speaking for the others. "We want you to go with us for a long walk. It seems that you can see the leaves better, and the woods look prettier when you walk."

This seemed to meet the unanimous wish of the party. So Wilmot, with Kinky at his side, put himself at the head of the party and led off into a path that wound in and out of the leafy wonderland. Many a time Wilmot had when a boy strolled and loitered in this same wood. He knew every rod of it, and did not lead aimlessly. Up and up the wooded slopes he climbed, sometimes lifting Kinky off his feet to make the ascent easier for him, the other boys trudging and laughing behind. At last, under the brow of a tall cliff that shook its ferns and reeds above, as a giant might his shock of shaggy hair, they halted before the mouth of a cave, a wide chamber under a ledge of slaty rock. The floor of it was dry and smooth, only there were scattered about a few broken bowlders that made fair seats for the party when they had entered in. The light came in in sufficient fullness to make it seem much like a home chamber. The interior was cool and refreshing, and an air of mystery and suggestion clung about it from roof to floor.

"We will first explore the cave," said Wilmot, "and

then we'll sit down and have a good chat together." The suggestion set the boys wild. The cavern was not large, but had several dark nooks and chambers which by means of a bit of candle which Wilmot had thoughtfully provided were fully illuminated and studied. In one they found a few charred sticks where there had once been kindled a fire.

"I'll bet robbers did it," cried Granger.

"I'll bet," chimed in several others.

"Like as not," assented Wilmot, which made half a dozen eyes start out in the semidarkness like stars from the twilight. The situation was tense with interest. The place suited the troglodyte instinct of the gangsmen.

"O, Mr. Wilmot," cried Sim, "this is the place for our gang to meet." Like fire in stubble the suggestion caught into a conflagration, and the shouts from the other boys made the stony roof ring.

"That's just what it is to be," said Wilmot. "I have secured it for our use as long as we want it. We will have it fixed up to suit our taste. It is our very own—our castle to be kept against all comers."

Again and louder than before the hurrahs broke forth.

It was some time before the enthusiasm of the company had sufficiently subsided to permit of a quiet sitting. When all were seated, Wilmot said: "I suppose the next thing is a good story, is it?"

"That's what we fellers is expectin'," replied Granger for the gang.

"All right," returned Wilmot. "What shall it be about?"

"About soldiers," confidently ordered Sim; and to this there was no dissent.

"Very well," said Wilmot; "our story shall be about soldiers—good soldiers—who long ago served a good King. The King's name was Arthur, and the soldiers were called knights. These knights were brave men who had sworn to fight for the King in all his wars, to be obedient to the King's command, to be pure in life and thought, to reverence the Holy Christ, and to give their swords to right the wrongs of the world. When each took his oath, he kneeled before the King, who, taking his sword, a thing of wondrous beauty with jewels in its hilt, smote with the flat of it him that would be a knight and said: 'Arise, Sir Knight!' And after that he was a knight and ate at the King's table and fought in the King's wars. Once upon a time," continued Wilmot, "there came to the King a shepherd boy who desired to be made a knight, that he might serve the King in arms. Said the King to him: 'Do you know what it is to be made a knight?' 'I do, my lord King,' answered the shepherd lad; 'for she who told me I must be a knight and must come and kneel before the King taught me concerning all the noble things which the King's knights are doing and must do?' 'And who was it,' asked the King, 'who taught you so?' 'It was one whom I did not see,' frankly confessed the boy, 'and whether she were fairy or spirit I cannot say; but that she is fair I do not doubt, and her voice was like music while she talked to me. She said, moreover, that she was the daughter of a great lord, that her sisters were called Purity and Faith; but her own name she could not

then tell, but that I might learn it later.' 'How happened it that you should hear so much and yet not see her who had spoken to you?' asked the King. 'It was when I had led the sheep to a pleasant walk and was resting under a hawthorn white with the bloom, and the voice seemed to come from the midst of the branches that exhaled a most pleasant breath. Thereupon, my lord King, I arose and came, and will no more return to keep sheep; but would fain ride with the knights, for the sister of Purity and Faith hath assured me that I shall prosper doing the King's pleasure.' But the King said: 'Thou art well-favored and willing, but too young and tender by far to wear armor or endure the fatigues and onset of battle; but since thy heart is filled with cravings thou shalt vow a vow and ride as a squire with a noble knight. A year and a day thou shalt ride, and then if thou art proven in obedience thou mayest be made a knight.' Right glad was the shepherd lad for so much favor from the King, and he vowed a vow to obey in all things, and so rode a year and a day to be squire to a noble knight who went in bright armor and carried a sword and lance. And the name of the knight was Sir Christopher, which is *Christ helper;* and to his squire he gave the name of Hermas, which is 'Swift to do,' though his name before had been but Yarkin. Now, while Sir Christopher and his squire waited at the King's gate, the latter fresh from his vow-taking, there came a cry that three caitiff knights had set upon the castle of one of the King's high lords, and had shut the master, his yeomen, and his two fair daughters up in the castle and were besieging it. It was

then that Sir Christopher obtained leave of the King and rode away to the relief of his fellow-knight, and his new-made squire rode with him. As they passed down the King's highway and fell into a strange and little-frequented path, the knight began to say to his squire that they were drawing near to the castle besieged, and must look well for the caitiff knights, who, though they were but three, were yet counted bold and watchful as they were strong and cruel. He also taught the squire that because his new name meant 'Swift to do' he must on no account fail to execute every charge given him, to the uttermost of every command. This the squire promised to do, and thereupon they were passing abreast of the forge of a smith. 'We dismount here,' said the knight, 'for the approach to the castle is steep and stony, and our horses will have much to do to keep their feet. This smith shall make their shoes secure upon their hoofs.' While the smith was making the shoes fast upon the feet of the two palfreys, the knight asked concerning the castle and the caitiff knights; but the smith, a surly man with beard as black and taggy as the soot on the smithy rafter, said:

> 'I know nor friends nor foes,
> Nor yet beyond this forge my asking goes.'

The knight made no reply to these surly words, but the squire said within himself: 'Here also is a caitiff; and when I am a knight, he shall answer to me for this insolent speech.' The squire noticed with secret delight that on the walls of the smithy were hung various pieces of armor, and some weapons also. He

thought how easily, if necessity pressed, a squire might be made into a knight in that same smithy; and while he pondered the thought his master mounted his steed, and, he following, the two rode silently away. After traversing a path that wound up steep and rugged hills, the two came in sight of the besieged castle. Three huge tents were spread before the castle gate. Two of the caitiff knights slept each in his tent, and the third, a very giant, was on watch. When Sir Christopher and his squire came near to the castle wall, the knight blew a long blast on his horn and shouted aloud. Instantly the single watchman on the wall answered, and thereupon the lord of the castle and his besieged yeomen rushed down to the gate and, opening it, issued forth, so that the caitiff knight who was on guard while his brothers slept was caught before and behind and was slain by Sir Christopher at the first onset. The caitiffs, awaking suddenly out of sleep and seeing their brother dead, fled without their armor or weapons. So there was joy in the castle, and the lord of the castle and his two fair daughters that were shut up with him came down to greet Sir Christopher and his squire; and then it was that the squire learned that the two daughters were named Purity and Faith. Thereupon he said: 'There is yet a third sister, daughter of my lord of this castle.' And they answered: 'There is, and she is the youngest, but is away.' But they told not her name, and the squire, perceiving that her name must not be told, asked no more, but kept his thoughts in his own bosom. After this Sir Christopher and the lord of the castle rode swiftly on to overtake the two

caitiff knights who had escaped, and left Hermas, the squire, with the yeomen to guard the castle; but the armor of the three caitiff knights they cast into the moat, for these three brothers were so huge in size that no knight in Arthur's court might make shift to fight in it withal. The two knights were scarcely more than gone when the squire, sighing within himself, said: 'Why was I so dull as not to see before what I now see so plainly? The caitiff knights have gone to the smithy, and there await the making of new armor. My lord of the castle and Sir Christopher pursue toward the sunrise while these are gone toward the sunset. O that I were not bound by a vow to obey the letter of my master's words, I should take a yeoman with me and have these caitiffs in chains before my master's return!' So for his vow's sake he restrained his desire. At sunsetting the knights returned empty-handed. Then it was that Hermas begged the leave of his master to have his sword and ride with a retainer to the house of the smith. 'For,' said he, 'I remembered me something to-day of what I noticed in the forge, and a question concerning it may be of service to me many days hence.' And because he was importunate the knight consented, and the lord of the castle dispatched a yeoman to bear him company. Very soon thereafter, but after the darkness was deep fallen, the squire and the yeoman arrived at the forge, whereon roared the bellows, and the smith made great haste of the work he was about. Peering through the open door, the squire made out to see that the two caitiff knights were cowering in a corner of the smithy and that the smith was making great lengths of armor

for their limbs. At a word the yeoman followed the squire into the smithy, and with drawn swords they set upon the caitiffs, took them, and compelled the smith to forge chains for their limbs. This being done, the squire paid the smith's charges, saying: 'Since friend and foe are alike to thee, this will cause you no grief.' The smith smiled grimly, but took the coin, and was turning about to go. 'Hold!' cried the squire; 'you shall take a new order for the armor which to fit upon these caitiffs you have been at so great pains. You shall fit to my own limbs, allowing the growth of a year, and at that time, less one day, I will come to pay the costs and take mine own.' At this the smith smiled grimly again, and the squire and yeoman rode away with their prisoners. At the castle there was great wonder, as great joy also, when the youthful squire and the yeoman returned. The two fair sisters of the castle came and made a cheerful evening for their deliverers; the lord of the castle blessed both the knight and his squire and gave them appropriate gifts. Sir Christopher left the caitiffs with his brother knight to be punished as he deemed right, and on the morrow he and his squire rode on to join the King and his other knights in war. So it was that Hermas the Shepherd rode a year and a day as the squire of Sir Christopher, and learned obedience. At the end of that war, when the King returned from victory, he made the squire a knight, and on the self-same day the new-made knight rode to the forge of the smith and clothed himself with the armor which had been designed for the greater of the giants. It also happened that he found the smith a changed man,

for he had heard the story of the shepherd squire, and had gone about himself to learn obedience and to be loyal to the King and his blameless knights. Being now a knight in armor, and hailed as Sir Hermas, he that had been Yarkin the Shepherd rode again to the castle where dwelt the fair sisters, if haply the youngest of the house might be returned; for he knew the same must be fairer than all women besides, and he had long had a purpose to woo her. But when he was come and made inquiry like a noble knight, a noble and truthful answer was given him, and the elder sister, speaking, said: 'Sir Knight, there are indeed but two daughters of our house, and this third of which you heard was only such as *seemed* a sister to us and whom we cherished as such, for how should Purity and Faith be without *Obedience?*' This, then, was the secret of the third sister. The shepherd lad had heard the voice of obedience calling him, and it was this obedience whom the squire had worthily loved and whom the knight had sought to woo. He could not be sad, therefore, because he had lost an unseen bride, but rejoiced because he had gained forever the favor of one whom he knew."

IV.

THE SQUIRE'S DEGREE.

When the story of the shepherd squire had been told, the boys indulged in no noisy demonstrations, but sat thoughtfully looking at Wilmot. The moral of the story had appealed to them, and that without the usual exhortation. Something had opened their ears to hear. It was evident, too, that each boy had interpreted the story in a way peculiar to his own moral and intellectual sense. Divining this, Wilmot quickly utilized the moment's opportunity by saying: "Each boy in the gang will now tell me what he thinks of the shepherd squire."

"I wonder if that little shepherd feller didn't have no ma nor pa to work for," suggested Mack Pooley, the boy who seldom had a word to say, but who by this speech betrayed the best that was in him.

"Don't you think, though," replied Wilmot, "that his father and mother would have been pleased to give him to the King to become a noble knight, even if they had to work the harder for his going?"

"I s'pose they would," was as emphatic a reply as Mack could make, his horizon being bounded as it was by the selfishness of a father who indulged himself in indolence while for a wage he sold his children to the slavery of the cotton mills.

A gleam of dreamy light kindled in the eye of Kinky as he said: "I just *wished,* Mr. Wilmot, that I could be a shepherd boy and hear a voice too."

Wilmot could make no reply at the moment to this not surprising sentiment of his little favorite. He only laid his hand on the curly head and waited to hear from the other boys.

Sim Phillips and Tommy Biles had almost identical notions about the young squire, and centered their enthusiasm on his courage and his bold capture of the caitiff knights. Jimmy Glenn, the widow's son, was desirous to know how big the squire "was after he had growed a year an' a day." But Granger, the last to speak, had his own view of the case, and bluntly expressed his contempt for "them two easy marks, the giant fellers that let a sheep-smellin' kid an' a nigger sop 'em up like that."

Wilmot could not repress a smile at the quaint criticism of the gang's leader, but he said: "Well, Granger, there is something in what you say. The caitiff knights, though huge in body, were really cowards, and never fought except when they could set upon weaker knights or could find a castle undefended. In that they were like the evil thoughts and bad habits that often come to boys and to weak men. They cannot fight with the strong, but they seek out young and weak people that they may destroy them. Sim and Tommy are right in admiring the courage of the squire; for if he had not been brave and quick to act, the giants would have got them new armor and swords. They could then have set upon the castle, killed the guards, and murdered those within the castle while they slept. You remember that the squire loved the unseen sister of Faith and Purity, whose name he afterwards knew was *Obedience*. You remember, too,

that Sir Christopher, 'the Christ helper,' had called his squire 'Swift to do,' so he could not fail to obey every command given him, nor wait to act when he knew where his duty was. I am glad that Jimmy thought to ask how much the squire had grown during his year and a day; for when we go about to do great things, we should all the time grow stronger and come quickly to manhood in the doing of them. Kinky is right, too," continued Wilmot after a pause, "in desiring to hear a voice like the one which spoke to the little shepherd; but one does not need to become a shepherd to hear that voice. You may hear *Obedience* speaking anywhere—in town or in country. We can all hear it *at this very moment* and in this cave. Many, very many people have heard it."

"What does it sound like, Mr. Wilmot?" asked Tommy Biles, very plainly showing doubt in both face and voice.

"O, it sounds very differently to different people; but when you hear it you nearly always know what it is," replied Wilmot.

A silence followed this, and a look of soulful interest settled upon six boyish faces. In the silence Wilmot drew from his pocket a small leather-bound, well-thumbed volume, with every page of which he was familiar, and said: "If you will move over into the light nearer the mouth of the cave, I will read you the story of a boy who once heard this voice."

Quickly but quietly the company moved to new seats; and when all were again settled down, Wilmot, without saying what book he read from, turned the pages and, turning to a place previously marked, read

these words: "And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. . . . And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Each of the boys had, in one way or another, heard inattentively the stories of the Bible; but no shorn and fasting catechumen ever listened more attentively to instructions, read or oral, than did that once motley gang of street gamins to the reading of their self-appointed teacher.

When the reading was over, Wilmot closed the

Book, and said: "Shall we not now listen together and see if we may not hear the voice?"

"Sure," returned Granger, without the slightest show of hesitation; and the other boys consented, for the whole company was under the spell of the reading. By the space of at least two minutes there was silence. No sound could be heard except the dripping of water drops from the brow of the cliff down past the mouth of the cave. Now and then the cry of a locust came from the grove without; otherwise the silence was complete. Seriousness deepened upon the face of each boy. Kinky, nestling close up under Wilmot's arm, said: "I heard it, Mr. Wilmot." "So did I," added two or three others. "I ain't dead sure, but I think I must 'a' heard it, too," came in Granger. "I heard somethin', I don't know what," said Tommy, being the last and true to the character of that disciple for whom he was named.

"What did the voice sound like, Kinky?" asked Wilmot.

"O, it didn't sound like nothin', sir; it was inside o' me, an' I couldn't hear what it was like," said Kinky.

Some of the boys were doubtful as to where the voice was, but were sure that it was inside the cave, and that it was so "weensy you couldn't hardly hear it."

"How did it sound to you, Granger?" asked Wilmot of the leader.

"It was like when I sleeps by myself in the big room on the third floor of the printin' office and wakes up at night and hears the clock a-strikin' midnight," said Granger.

It was unbelievable to Wilmot himself that he should have attained in so short a time such mastery over unpromising disciples. He had meant to reach their confidence by a circuitous route, but the one on which he had fallen had proved a direct one. He had hoped to secure response by adopting methods suited to each boy, but had invested the camp at one stride. Such is the boy nature that it must be taken unawares. The frontal attack is at once suspected, and is generally resisted. It is the flanking movement that succeeds, though it were led by a piper or a harlequin. Once within the works, you may, with only a show of caution, lead in what terms you will. Perceiving that his plans were unexpectedly advanced, Wilmot said, addressing the boys: "I have now a great secret to tell you; I was sent to you with it. Would you like to hear it?"

The response left no doubt as to what the gang wished, nor any doubt as to the ripeness of the time for telling it.

"The secret is this," continued Wilmot; "there is a great King who wants noble knights to serve him; knights who reverence the holy Christ, who have clean hands, and who think pure thoughts, speaking only pure words. These knights the King wants to help him right the wrongs of the world. But every one who would become such a knight must first become a squire like Hermas, and thus learn obedience. How many of you would like to become such a squire?"

There was instantly a show of six hands in the light that sifted through the ferns and beech branches shadowing the high cliff side in the Applegate Wood. Wil-

mot then took from his pocket a pencil and wrote upon a note leaf in his Bible these words: "This is my vow: I will live a faithful squire to every true knight and helper of my Lord and King the Christ. I will be obedient to the word of the King, and serve in little things until he shall call me to serve in greater things."

When Wilmot had finished the writing, he took six shilling pieces from his purse and said: "Long ago, when a knight would make a squire, he put a piece of money into his hand as a pledge; the squire then took his vow and the two rode away together." Wilmot thereupon laid a shilling into each boy's hand, saying: "It is a pledge to obedience, and it is to be kept by each boy until he becomes a knight, when he may give it into the hand of his own squire." After this, beginning at Granger, each boy took the vow which Wilmot had written.

When they were again seated in a circle as before, Wilmot said: "Every squire who rides with a knight wears a sash to show that he is not a clown. When we return next Sabbath, I will have for each boy a sash of blue silk, with the outline of a book worked in white upon it. This book will stand for the commandment which we have all promised as squires to obey."

When the boys heard of this sash, they were more than ever pleased, and asked many questions as to what it was and what it meant. What Wilmot told them only increased their desire to see the next Sabbath afternoon.

"But ain't we going to have some swords and a

flag?" asked Sim, who had a more correct idea of knight-errantry than any of the others.

"We shall when we get to be knights," answered Wilmot.

"An' when'll that be, partner?" queried Granger.

"I trust very soon," returned the other; "maybe in a month; and that leads me," he continued, "to say that since we are to make a castle of our cave we should give it a name. What shall we call it?"

"You name it," shouted the boys almost in chorus.

"We'll call it the Castle of Arms," said Wilmot; "for when we are made knights together, we shall make it a place to keep our swords, our banner, and all the other things that may belong to us." And so it was then, and ever thereafter, the "Castle of Arms."

"Now also," continued Wilmot, "we must have a warder of the castle."

"What's a warder?" asked several at once.

"A warder of the castle," explained Wilmot, "is the one who keeps the gate to prevent anybody, knight or squire, from coming in without the password. He also takes care of the banner, the swords, and other things. Who shall be our warder?"

"Let's vote," called out Sim; and, that being agreeable, they were about to proceed to a ballot, when it was discovered that there was not a marble in the company. The formal course of voting being off, the boys began to shout, "Granger, Granger!" and on a show of hands it was discovered that there were five votes for the gang's leader. This being settled, Wilmot said: "The watchword of the castle will be 'Obedi-

ence.' Nobody must pass in or out without giving this word to the warder."

After this the boys went out, and, with Wilmot acting as warder, each boy took his turn at entering, to see if he knew the password and how to use it. By the time the last one had returned the sun was sinking low, and Wilmot said: "We must soon be going homeward, but before we leave our castle we should decide what we are to call ourselves. The noble knights that used to fight for their king, when they banded together, called themselves a *league*. Shall we not call ourselves by the same name?"

"Partner," called out Granger, "this here used to be a *gang;* but we're a-gwine to call her jest what you want it called. Me an' Sim has been the bosses, an' hit's all right with the other boys. If you says she's a league, that's the way she goes—she's a *league*."

And it was that way, and the gang of street Arabs was transformed into the "Squires' League," every member of which meant some day to become a knight. Twilight was falling in the cave long before its time, for through the parted tree branches and far down the ferny hillsides one might see broad spaces of fading sunshine and on the distant fields a suggestion of afterglow. Standing up a moment in this temple light of the cave, Wilmot said: "Now we are going down from our meeting place with our own secret in our hearts. We are to live true squires of obedience all this week. The true squire speaks gently, like the knight he would be. He speaks only pure words, and always only the truth. He is not quick to be angry. He is honest. He is courteous to the old and to the weak. He stud-

ies every day to know the command of the King, that he may keep it. He is cheerful and happy because of his secret, and his secret no man knows. Shall we not before we leave our castle ask the King who sees us all the time to help us keep our vows to be squires of obedience?"

A silence which meant the full consent of six young hearts followed Wilmot's suggestion. A Presence unseen but felt filled the cave, and the leader was assured that it was the King himself.

Down in the shadowy place knelt the seven. It was almost the first time that Wilmot had ever heard his own voice in prayer. It was an effort to do this; but his ideal had led and driven him on. The sense of a new dedication came upon him as he continued in petition. He arose transfigured, and he and the six who had been his companions descended from their cave as those who had been apart in the hearing of things unlawful to be uttered.

V.

LITTLE KINKY.

The ride of the gang from Applegate Wood to Fountain Square was marked by conduct the most decorous and genteel. The boys sat two in a seat, and watched the changing scenery as the flying trolley sped past the pleasant woodsides and the pretty cottages in the country.

"It's the first time I ever seen the worl' look like Sunday," remarked Granger to Sim as they surveyed together the open fields and the grassy meadows above which could be seen, a mile or so distant, the spires of half a dozen churches.

"It makes a fellow feel like lookin' and lookin' and sayin' nothin'," was Sim's significant response.

The two boys then lapsed into silence. The infinite, the immeasurable had swallowed them up. The troglodyte in them was giving place to the children of that sentiment from without and above which humanizes and redeems from sense. The fern cave with its doubtful inner voice was being superseded by the sky vault with its light and its silences of sunset more voiceful of the spirit of life than any sound or echo that had ever visited their ears.

Glancing backward at his confederates, Wilmot detected Kinky with his chin in his hands and his elbows resting on the base of the car windows gazing rapturously toward the sunset that glowed like the flame of a consuming city. As he regarded the profile of the

infantlike face the story of Raphael's cherubs came to his mind. When the great master was painting his picture of the Christ-child, he left the unfinished canvas upon the easel and went out for a stroll in the park. Returning, he found that two Florentine street urchins had climbed to the wide window of his studio and, with chins in their hands and elbows rested upon the window sill, were gazing upon the picture of the Christ-child. Instantly seizing his pencil, the painter set the faces of the gamins as cherubs among the clouds that made a glory about the Christ-child. And this is the token of Raphael's pencil—even the faces of the immortal cherubs. As the story related itself to the scene before him, Wilmot exclaimed: "Would that I had skill, then would I put on canvas the glory of God in the sunset, and in that glory I would set the worshipful face of this child of the street and the garret!"

In spiritual things Wilmot was himself little more than a child. Half an hour before this moment he had uttered his first audible prayer. In the illumination coming with that petition he had seen for the first time the possibilities of maturity in experience and service. His bodily being had trembled in answer to his own spirit, as a well-strung viol answers to the master of its melodies. So is it ordained that the clamor of one's own voice should arouse one's soul. Wilmot was sitting amid mysteries which his own voice had awakened. Before this his religion had been little more than a reverence for divine things. This reverence took at last the more definite shape of a desire to serve. But now a something indefinable, unutter-

able rose up within him. Beatitude was nigh. As he gazed steadily at the parentless, homeless child with face upturned toward the dying light, a hot, glad tear distilled in each of his eyes, and then it was shown him what the deep and sudden rising in him was—in that moment he loved the little waif with a love which he felt must be akin to that which brought the Christ-child to earth. The beatitude was come.

In the homeward-speeding car, the interior of which grew every moment more shadowy with twilight, there were fulfilling visions of which the crowd of boisterous Sabbath revelers seated there could know nothing. From his soulful abstractions Wilmot was awakened by the click of an electric button which turned upon the passengers a sudden blaze of light from the cluster of incandescents above. He had scarcely recovered his normal thought when the guard called: "All out for Fountain Square!" And immediately forty or fifty passengers struggled and crowded out through the narrow trolley door into the brighter light shed from a great arc lamp above the Fountain.

Once more before separating Wilmot got the members of the newly formed League of Squires together. A quiet nook at the base of the Fountain afforded the necessary secrecy. There the leader put into the hand of each boy a small white card on which was printed in neat types the line *"My Secret."* Below this were two Scripture texts, as follows:

> Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.
> Thy word have I hid in my heart.

On the reverse side of each card Wilmot had traced with his fountain pen a small circle with the sig-

nificant black dot in the center. Below the circle appeared in red the initial "W." These cards Wilmot had prepared during the previous week to serve an end which he had not dared to hope might be so soon realized. What wonder, then, that he counted himself as one who had walked by inspiration! He offered no explanation of the card, but left each boy to interpret its message for himself. He relied, however, upon the mystic circle and red monogram to do their work.

When the boys had separated, going singly and in different directions, Wilmot followed Kinky, overtaking him in the shadow of a tall building very near the Fountain. "Kinky," he said, "I want you to dine with me to-night." The little Arab looked up at his friend, then at his little faded jacket, the sleeves of which had shrunken until too short for even his undeveloped arms. He was in a strait between desire and a sense of unfitness. In his confusion his childish lips were dumb.

"That's all right, Kinky," said the young man; "we'll go to the Little Pearl Café and order a booth all to ourselves. I want to have a nice long chat with you; and friends, you know, can always get closer together when their legs are under the same table Come, Kinky; we'll have some roast turkey, some salad, a plum pudding, and some chocolate ice and cake."

Kinky's face lighted perceptibly at the suggestion of the café and its menu, especially the plum pudding; and, giving his hand to Wilmot, he permitted himself to be led away toward the Little Pearl. Many and many a time in his eventful little life Kinky had

looked longingly through the high plate-glass windows of the Little Pearl at the tempting stores of dressed fowl, fish, fruits, and other delicacies to be served upon its tables. At such a time he had wondered how great a fortune it would require to buy a single dinner there. He had never dared to venture inside that dazzling place, but had often stood near the door selling newspapers to the merchants and other business men who went in and out in the evenings. Sometimes he had got a whiff of the savory dishes, and had involuntarily thrust his hands into his pockets, intending to take every copper in them and offer the whole to the cashier, whose register was near the door, for one slice of roast fowl and a dish of plum pudding. But his courage was not equal to such an adventure, and he went away to order a sausage, an onion, and a slice of bread from the counter of Dago Toney around the corner. Now he was to go into the Little Pearl like a banker or a railroad president and have his dinner brought to him by a waiter who should bow and say: "Your order, sir." He could not, however, help thrusting his hand into his pocket to count what he had. It was his habit in going to the lunch counter. There was the shilling which Wilmot had given him in the cave, but that was a keepsake. There also were two silver dimes left from the half dollar which Wilmot had slipped into his jacket pocket the Sunday before. He rubbed them between his fingers and thought how but for that big, bright piece of silver he would have been several times during the past week without even his sausage and onion for lunch.

But now they were in the Little Pearl, and the head

waiter was bowing and showing them a booth all bright with mirrors and hung with the daintiest bits of lace curtains. An electric lamp glowed under a pink shade at the center of the table. Pretty salt and pepper stands, shell-like china, and dainty pearl-handled knives, and silver on snowy white cloths made the table look as if it had been dressed by the genii. There were two chairs at the table. One of these the waiter drew out for Mr. Wilmot, and then seated Kinky in the other. When he had spread a white napkin over the whole front of the faded jacket, the little heart under the jacket beat more quietly. By the time dinner came on Kinky was feeling much at home, and answered freely all the questions asked by his good, new friend. The dinner only helped this freedom. After soup came wide slices of turkey laid between toasts of bread, with tarts of cranberries, buttered parsnips, and peas. Plum pudding followed, great sugar-loaf heaps of it with sauce to be approved by the heart of any boy that ever lived in hovel or palace. The feast was leisurely finished with the promised chocolate ice and cake. After the waiter had shown Kinky how to dip his fingers in the water bowl and had brushed the crumbs from his lap, Wilmot looked at his watch. It was nine o'clock! Where had the time gone? As he meditatively closed his watch he said: "Kinky, I want to go home with you."

Kinky was now so much at ease that he could answer without hesitation. His speech in answer to the proposal of Wilmot was like that of a true gentleman. "O, Mr. Wilmot," he said, "I ain't got no home, sir, but a little cubby in the ole Blue Front

House. I uster stay up at the Newsboys' Barracks, but they put a whole dozen of us boys in one big hall; an' as I allus likes a place to myself, I went up to the Blue Front; but 'tain't no place fer a gentleman like you, Mr. Wilmot."

"Well," objected Wilmot, "we belong to the same gang, you know; and as we are boys together, you don't mind, do you?"

"No, sir," frankly answered the waif; and thereupon the two passed out of the Little Pearl into the open street.

The old Blue Front was an ancient landmark of the town. In the "forties" it had been a famous hostelry. Local tradition told that under its roof had lodged Andrew Jackson and at least one other President of the United States. But that was when the town was little more than a village. Now the Blue Front was a rookery—a nest of squalor, poverty, and crooked ways. It was pervaded from roof to cellar by mingled smells of mold, gasoline, and cheap tobacco smoke. Up, up a rickety stair to the third story of the Blue Front Wilmot followed Kinky. Truly the chamber they entered was no fit place for any human being. A mere closet it was, dark, and ventilated by but one small window, and that too high up to be reached except by an adult. The floor was bare and smeared with grease and dirt. A low, hard couch, with scant and soiled covering, served the child lodger for a bed. There were on a rough, pine shelf, low enough for Kinky's use, a small tin water pitcher and a tin hand basin of the size of a cake pan. There were one rickety chair and a small empty box, also meant for a seat,

and besides these the room was bare. A few tattered pieces of childish apparel depended from rusty nails over the couch.

As the two entered the room Kinky struck a match and lit a piece of candle in a battered tin stick and set it upon the pine shelf by the tin basin. He then set the chair out for Wilmot, and himself sat upon the empty box.

"Why did you leave the Barracks?" asked Wilmot when they were seated. There was something in the young man's voice which the newsboy interpreted to mean that the reason given was not wholly satisfactory.

"Cause—cause," said the boy, "there was too many on us, sir, and the other boys teased me cause I was little, an' I jest had ter leave er fight, sir."

"You don't like to fight, then?" asked Wilmot.

"No, sir, I don't," was the quick, frank answer; "but I don't let a bigger feller'n me impose on me cause I'm little. So I thought I'd jest better get away, an' that's the reason I come down here, sir."

"But it costs you more here," suggested Wilmot.

"Jest a little more, sir," returned the boy. "I had to pay twenty-five cents (an' that's what you calls a shillin') every week up to the Barracks, an' down here I pays thirty cents fer this cubby. But th' ain't nobody down here to fight, an' sometimes too I brings my supper here an' eats it in peace."

"I see," said Wilmot, looking tenderly and longingly at the child. "How much money do you make each week?" he then asked.

"O, sometimes I makes a dollar and sometimes two. Onst when the Fair was here I made five dollars, and

put three dollars in the Savin's Bank, an' it's there now;" and he proudly exhibited his book, soiled and worn, and showing its single entry.

"Have you never been out of money since then?" asked Wilmot, deeply interested in the embryo financier.

"Yes, sir," answered the boy; "but then I don't take no sandwich, 'cause I can't spend my money in the bank; that's my capital, an' it's drawin' more money all the time. Some day maybe it'll be enough to start a news stand with."

Wilmot now looked with a still newer interest at the child that had from the first drawn out his sympathy and tender commiseration. What manner of life was this that confronted him? Whence was this child sprung? Of what blood was he? What future was he to fulfill?

"Do you say your prayers every night, Kinky?" Wilmot finally asked.

"Does you mean the same you was sayin' in the cave this afternoon?" queried Kinky.

"Yes, that's what I mean, my little boy," said the other tenderly.

"I never has done so," returned Kinky; "but I *thought* prayers when I was lookin' out of the window on the car as we was comin' from the cave, an' I was 'lowin I would try my han' to-night; but I don't know how to say it out, Mr. Wilmot."

"Do you know about Jesus?" asked Wilmot, concentrating the whole light of his soul on his unquestioning little host.

"Onst," returned the child, "I heard a lady up to

the Mission Sunday School tellin' the kids about him; an' then I heard a fellow on the street a-preachin' about him a-dyin' for a lot o' folks. But ole Simon, the peddler, says there ain't no Jesus nor no Christ nor nothin', but jest one God a-livin' by hisself, an' that he's so fer off an' so busy that he don't take no trouble 'bout folks down here. But, Mr. Wilmot, when I heard you a-talkin' this afternoon in the cave about Jesus the King, an' when you made all us kids squires for him, I believed it all in spite of ole Simon; an' I'm jest as sure as I'm settin' on this box here that I heard the King say to me in the cave, 'That's right, Kinky;' but it was inside o' me, an' I couldn't tell nobody about it. But I meant to tell the King to-night afore I went to sleep; for I'm sure he can understand me, even if I don't have no good words to say."

At this confession Wilmot was beyond the power of utterance in his own words, but he said in the words of the Book: "Surely 'the wind bloweth where it listeth;' 'Except ye be converted and become as a little child.'" At length, feeling that he might venture on his own words, Wilmot asked: "Kinky, what were you going to say to the King? What would you like to say to him?"

"I don't know, sir; but I s'posed I might do as I did at the car window in the sunset—*jest think it out to myself.* I couldn't think o' no other way. But, Mr. Wilmot, there's one thing I must tell the King about, an' I must say that out in words, cause I want him to know it true."

"And what is that, Kinky?" asked Wilmot, whelmed in a deeper wonder than before.

"Onst I told a lie, Mr. Wilmot, an' more'n onst, an' done a lot o' things," confessed Kinky in unaffected sincerity; "an' that's what I want to tell the King about, an' I want to promise never, never to tell another lie an' never to do no bad things, cause a squire oughtn't to, ought he, Mr. Wilmot?"

"O, Kinky, my little partner!" cried Wilmot as he drew the frowzy head against his breast, "the King has heard you already, thou greatest in the kingdom of God!"

For an hour and more afterwards, and until Kinky's candle burned into the socket of the battered tin candlestick, two heads remained close together in its light; and Wilmot, from the small black-bound volume which he had used in the cave, read and reread in the story of the Christ-child and the King until at the end Kinky said: "I think now, Mr. Wilmot, I can talk to the King."

Down on their knees by the low, soiled couch the two kneeled; and after Wilmot had led the way, Kinky said: "O Jesus, I won't believe ole Simon any more; but I believe like Mr. Wilmot—I believe in the King. O Jesus, don't let me tell a lie again, nor fight, nor do nothin' wrong. I'm sorry I did so onst. But now I want to be a true squire and obey, an' so's I can be like the King. An' it's little Kinky, Lord, for Jesus's sake. Amen."

The candle was now burned to the last fiber of its wick, and was about to expire when Kinky said: "When I opens the window, the big 'lectric light at the corner makes it nearly's bright as day in here."

"I'll open it for you," said Wilmot, rising; and sure

enough through the small square space the big arc blaze looked in with a cheerful brightness. A long time the two sat in the white glare that turned the dingy floor and the smeared walls into dancing diamond dust.

Wilmot looked at his watch. It was far past midnight! The strong young man of the law had been lost in an ecstasy of self-effacement. He had condescended to the lowly; and he was now suddenly settled in a purpose to complete that condescension. His heart encompassed the child which he had followed into this nest of squalor and sin. What marvel that Kinky was not a little mass of moral putridity! He was not wholly uncontaminated, but there were left moral health and hope and beauty—strange, fascinating beauty. Wilmot vowed in his heart that the child should never pass another night alone in that Blue Front Sodom. Turning about, he said: "Kinky, I'm going to spend the night with you, if you'll invite me."

Kinky stammered again, hesitated, and, looking toward the dirty couch, said: "It ain't no nice bed much, Mr. Wilmot; but you sleep in it, an' I'll put my jacket under my head an' sleep on the floor."

"O no," objected Wilmot; "your bed will do for us both, Kinky. We're boys together, you know. I'm going to spend the night with you to-night, and you'll spend to-morrow night with me. You see we fellows must mix up if we are going to ride together for the King."

Smilingly Kinky submitted to Wilmot's plan, and, laying off his jacket and slipping out of his shoes, he

rolled over to the back of his hard and comfortless bed. Little did he dream that he should never again after this night feel its hardness or dream again in the ill-smelling little chamber. Wilmot, moving more leisurely, wound his watch, laid off his coat, and, removing his shoes, laid himself down beside his little host. In the briefest time Kinky was asleep. A Sabbath night's stillness was on the city. Wilmot heard the low throbbing of the electric power house engine a block away and occasionally the "hitch," "hitch" of the carbon points in the arc lamp at the corner. There was peace in his heart, and soon, with his cheek resting upon his palm and thinking of Him who, though he was rich in kingly glory, yet for love of us pillowed his head in poverty, the dark-haired, handsome young man slept the sleep of boyhood.

When the shadows of the next night fell, Wilmot and Kinky sat together again in the glow of the same light, but their surroundings were far different. The scene was Wilmot's large and comfortably furnished apartment on the second floor of his father's spacious suburban home. Kinky wore a neat blue sailor suit. The rolling collar of his sailor shirt was secured at the throat by a soft blue necktie, with a white silk anchor worked at each end. His dark curls were brushed back from his forehead, and Kinky looked happy. He was turning the pages of a big picture book for boys and reading as best he could the stories therein. Sometimes he turned to ask a question of Wilmot, who was otherwise deeply absorbed in the contents of a book whose leaves appeared to be but freshly cut.

In an alcove of the large chamber was Wilmot's bed and dressing room, beyond which was his bath. In another corner, cut off by pretty Japanese screens, was a low white couch, soft and inviting, which had been only that day put in. It was to be Kinky's very own, and for all time, for the big Wilmot mansion was now become Kinky's home instead of the ill-smelling little chamber in the old Blue Front rookery.

While the two sat reading by the bright table lamp Harry Wilmot's mother came in and kissed him tenderly to say good night. Stooping low, she kissed Kinky also, saying: "I must kiss my boy's partner; some day I hope to be proud of him. Bless the dear curly head!" And this was how Kinky found a home.

The next day when Wilmot's office on the third floor of the tall Applegate Building was opened Kinky was installed in the front chamber as the silent junior partner. His present duty was to keep the office right, announce callers, and go on errands. And who could better do this last than Kinky, the ex-newsboy, who knew the town as he knew the inside of his own hat? When not on one of these duties, Kinky sat on a high chair before a high desk and studied a lesson which Mr. Wilmot had given him. In this manner he spent his first week as a squire.

It was one evening of this week and late—as late as ten o'clock—that Wilmot sat at a small table in front of old Simon, the peddler, in his little tunnel-like shop under the viaduct, and where were piled up heaps of shoddy clothing, crates of cheap hats, haberdashery, and notions, and from which place the peddler radiated over the city. The conversation, which had been

a searching one on Wilmot's part, lulled a little. A determined look was on the young man's face, seeing which old Simon said: "I dond't thingk thadt you haf right to make Gristian of thadt boy, Meester Weelmot; hees fadder vass a Chew."

"But tell me who his father was," insisted Wilmot.

"Vell, I dond't thingk thadt I tell. He vass a Chew all righdt," defiantly persisted Simon.

"And was his mother a Jewess?" asked the other.

"No, I thingk thadt I tell you she vass not Jewess. She vass Gristian. Vat you callt dem Dago beeples?" queried Simon.

"Italians," suggested Wilmot.

"Ya, Eetallyans—thadt vass de vort; but she vass not some of dem Dago beeples. Her fadder vass bainter; he baints dem golors on vat you call de ganvas. An ar*teest,* you know."

"So," said Wilmot meditatively, a vision of sunset and of canvases with the Christ-child and cherubs upon them coming to him. "What was his mother's name?" insisted Wilmot after another pause.

"Vell," returned Simon with a shrug characteristic of the manner of his race, "I dond't know—I dond't thingk I tell. Her fadder vass great bainter, but he vass diedt early of hees daughter's life—I dond't know."

Seeing that it was vain to pursue the matter farther, Wilmot arose, saying: "Well, at least the child's mother was a Christian, and so is Kinky, and shall remain so;" and with that he left old Simon to his reflections.

VI.

A YEAR AND A DAY.

SUNDAY afternoon had come again, and in its mild glow the League of Squires, with its leader, entered the inviting shadows of Applegate Wood. Wilmot, with Kinky by his side, as usual, led the way in the upward path toward the Castle of Arms. Kinky's new sailor suit and cap, with his new tan shoes, brought him up to a favorable comparison with Sim Phillips, the chevalier of the former gang. There was no remark made by any of the boys on Kinky's changed fortune, except of congratulation to him and of admiration for Wilmot. As for Kinky, he was the same trustful but shrinking child. His life hitherto had grown too thoroughly in the shadows of adversity to know anything of human vanity and pride.

When the Squires arrived in sight of their Castle of Arms, they perceived that notable changes had taken place there during the previous week. Four stout cedar posts carried a strong wire fence to the entire height of the cave's mouth, while in the center of the fence was set an iron gate secured by a steel lock which gave a most mysterious look to the place. A short stair of oaken boards led up to the gate. The boys paused a moment, mystified and dumb, as they read the sign above the gate: "Castle of Arms—Private."

"It's our very own," said Wilmot; "it's our castle to defend against all comers. Nobody except a member

of the League can ever see inside it without our invitation."

The old gang shout broke from the lips of the six boys as they realized what their leader had done to fulfill his pledge to provide them a meeting place.

"Partner, you're a good un," declared Granger in tones unusually enthusiastic; and again the boys renewed their demonstration.

Taking from his pocket the large brass key to the Castle, Wilmot said: "The other Squires will remain here until Granger and I go into the Castle and make ready to receive you. When you hear Granger give a blast upon the warder's bugle, you shall come up, one behind the other, Sim leading the way. At the gate you must each give the Squire's password."

With that the five boys designated dropped into their favorite positions on the hillside, and Wilmot and Granger proceeded up the way into the mighty hold of the Castle of Arms. Putting the key into the lock, Wilmot showed Granger how to turn it and push back the steel bolt. The gate was then opened and the two entered. On the inside, Wilmot handed the key to Granger, saying: "Worthy Squire and brave warder of the Castle of Arms, I commit to you the key to this our strong Castle, whose gate is never to open except to worthy Squires of the League and such noble Knights as they may hereafter become or such as they may invite to come within." After saying this, he stepped into the cave; and bringing out a small silver bugle, or hunter's horn, he handed it also to Granger, saying: "This, brave warder, is the tongue of our Castle. It will call the Squires to duty and to

fellowship. Every Squire shall be instructed to repair without delay to the Castle gate at the call of this trumpet. Who will not answer this tongue of the Castle shall not ride with us on the King's business. Summon the Squires, brave warder of the Castle."

Granger smiled triumphantly as he put the bugle to his mouth and blew a few discordant but echo-making notes. The silvery discords rang through the trees and down the slopes. The answer was the measured tramp of five pairs of feet up the narrow oaken stair. One by one, beginning with Sim, the boys entered, each one whispering the password to the warder. After that the gate was locked, the bugle slung by its long red cord over Granger's shoulder, and the key left to dangle at his girdle. As the Squires entered the cave, led by Wilmot, a sight as pleasing and more mysterious, if possible, met their eyes. The interior had been transformed in a simple but effective way. A long and somewhat narrow table of well-planed boards had been set up in the very midst of the cave, and about it had been set a number of movable seats made of the branches of willows and young oaks. On the table, in brass sticks high and mysterious-looking, burned three or four candles to help the uncertain light of the cave. Against the wall near by was a wide, rough board closet, itself provided with a lock, and all over it written mystery and surprise. It was not easy for the boys to curb their enthusiasm amid these surroundings; but after carefully surveying the whole and asking many questions, they became quiet enough to be directed by Wilmot to stand in line and await the first ceremonial of the Squires' meeting.

This done, Wilmot took a small key from his pocket and unlocked the mysterious closet. What a stirring sight the boys saw inside that closet! Against the back wall of it on two iron hooks rested a real sword in a brass-tipped scabbard. Across the sword passed the staff of a pretty blue banner on which was wrought a white Maltese cross. At each side were hung blue silk sashes on each of which was wrought in white silk the outlines of an open book. Taking down six of these sashes, Wilmot hung one athwart the shoulder of each boy, saying as he did so: "This is the badge of a Squire of the League. The open book upon the badge is the Bible, the Word of the King which every Squire has taken a vow to obey. This badge you will wear when in our Castle of Arms; but outside in the world, as everywhere else, you must wear the unseen badge of a Squire in your heart."

Wilmot then took down the sword and the banner. The sword he laid upon the table where the candles were burning, but the banner he gave to Sim Phillips and showed him how to set its staff up by the table so that it might droop above the heads of the Squires when they sat down. This having been done, Wilmot caused the Squires to sit on one side and at each end of the table, Granger at the right end and Sim at the left, but himself sat at the opposite side, so as to face the company. When they were all seated, he said: "We shall always sit this way when the League meets to talk, to read, and to hear stories of knights and noble deeds. This is our 'Round Table,' just as the great King Arthur and his knights had theirs in the palace of the King at Camelot. Some day too we

shall talk about the table of *our* Great King and of those who sit with him about it; but now we go about to learn obedience."

As Wilmot finished this speech he cast his eyes along the rank of his youthful Squires. The sight was thrilling to his quiet, eager soul. The pretty blue sashes, the bright young faces, the drooping banner above, and the boyish earnestness with which all was accepted seemed a voice speaking approval of his zealous wish. He could not realize that this was the lawless gang of gamins that he had encountered on the public street only three Sabbaths before. But such is the open and easy way into the heart of boyhood that its affection and loyalty may be won by the wise and gentle teacher in a day. If one should write the most impossible "Pilgrim's Progress" and compass the journey to the Delectable Mountains in a single day, it would at once become believable if only the pilgrim of the way were found to be a child. Does there not appear in this the meaning of that too little believed injunction of lips divine: "Except ye be converted and become as a little child?" But access to the full blessedness and perfection of the kingdom is not of art even with the young and the innocent. "A year and a day"—a lifetime, indeed—must faith ride toward the goal of a perfect obedience. For the youthful Squires who sat about the rustic table in the Castle of Arms the way of obedience was to be opened stage by stage, and that in a fellowship which appealed to every better impulse and which entered through every avenue of the boyish heart.

"At the Round Table," began Wilmot after they

had had some moments of silence, "each one may speak or ask a question of the others, but only one may speak at a time. First, however, we should either read or have told a short story, about which we may then talk or ask questions. Shall we read or have a story?"

"Read!" cried several of the boys in concert, remembering the story of the boy Samuel which they had had on the previous Sabbath.

"Since we are to read," said Wilmot, "I will select an old true story showing how happiness and honor come through obedience and how dishonor and death come through disobedience."

He then took the Book from his pocket and read as follows: "'Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish. . . . And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. And he passed through Mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not. . . . And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.

. . . Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel. . . . Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? . . . And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart. . . . And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. . . . And . . . Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together. . . . And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king; . . . and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.'"

"This," said Wilmot slowly when he had finished the reading, "is the good story of Saul when he obeyed the commandment of God his King; but there is a sad and evil story of him when he was disobedient. This story you will now hear: 'And when Saul saw the hosts of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not. . . . Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is

a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. . . . Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice. . . . And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up. . . . And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. . . . Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord hath departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? . . . Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, . . . the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me. . . . Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. . . . And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. . . . Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. . . . So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.' "

When all the reading was over and there was another short silence, Sim, rising at the left, said: "Mr.

Wilmot, I've tried powerful to be a good Squire all the week, but I've had poor luck doin' it."

"What has been the trouble, Sim?" asked Wilmot kindly.

"Well, mostly, sir, it's been the temptation to say bad and ugly words; an' one day a boy put a chip on his shoulder an' dared me to knock it off, an' 'fore I thought I was into him an' give him a lickin'. He'd oughter been licked too, but I think a Squire hadn't oughter fight only the King's enemies an' not other boys, don't you, Mr. Wilmot?"

"I'm sure that's right, Sim," answered Wilmot; "and if you will try again and ask the King to help you, you will come out far better the next time."

"I mean to do it," returned Sim earnestly.

The next response came from an unexpected quarter. It was Jimmy Glenn, the widow's son, who spoke. "I think I could 'a' done pretty well bein' a Squire, Mr. Wilmot, but I've been a-tellin' my mother a long time what ain't true, sir, an' I couldn't quite keep from doin' it again; but I told mother about my bein' made a Squire an' about havin' a secret, an' now mother an' me is askin' the King together to help me to keep from tellin' lies, an' mother says he will do it."

There was a deepened sense of interest and seriousness in the faces of the boys as the sallow-faced lad told his story. A choking came into Wilmot's throat, but he said comfortingly: "You are a brave lad, Jimmy. The boy that trusts his mother and prays with her will not often go wrong. The King will help you, I know."

"I wasn't awfully sure about the voice I heard last

Sunday in the cave, Mr. Wilmot," said Tommy Biles, the next to speak; "but I've been a-hearin' it almost ever since. It wouldn't let me have no rest for a long time."

"What did the voice seem to say, Tommy?" asked the leader with unconcealed interest.

"Why, it kept a-tellin' me, or seemed to be, that I must quit *suckin'* cigarettes. An' I couldn't get no rest till I promised to quit; an' then I didn't quit, an' it kept on comin' back; then I quit sure enough. I quit last Thursday, an' I don't never 'spect to suck another, cause I think a Squire hadn't oughter."

"That is a noble resolve, Tommy," said Wilmot; "for it not only means obedience to your vow as a Squire, but it means salvation to your body. No boy who smokes cigarettes can, if he continues, be either a healthy, a wise, or a clean man. Cigarettes destroy thousands and thousands of boys every year. I wonder if any of the other Squires ever learned to smoke cigarettes?"

To Wilmot's no great astonishment every hand about the table went up. Remembering that in his boyhood he had had the same struggle described by Tommy Biles, Wilmot raised his hand also, and said: "A long while ago I was also led astray by cigarettes; but I quit, and will never go that evil way again."

"That's me," cried Granger. "I'm quittin' right now, en' fer good;" and the ex-gang leader stood up in a determined way.

"So'm I," chirped out Mack Pooley earnestly, but in his usually diffident tones.

"An' so'm I," "An' so'm I," spoke up Sim Phillips

and Jimmy Glenn in quick succession; and so all the boys except Kinky were committed.

With an inquisitive look, Wilmot fixed his eye on the face of his favorite and said: "And what about Kinky?"

"O," answered the child, "I told the King about it the night we was in the ol' Blue Front. *I quit then.*"

Triumphant Kinky! His first vision of the King made him a child of the kingdom. He had purified both his lips and heart in believing.

"It is good to make a noble resolve," said Wilmot, looking slowly around the circle at the table; "it is more than noble to keep it. Our League, our vow, our Castle, and our Round Table are meant to help us to do noble things. We are to help one another. It is good to take a pledge together. Let us keep our pledge. But to do it we must watch. The tempter will come every day. In Arthur's palace there were statues that showed beasts overcoming men; there were also statues showing men overcoming beasts; then there were statues showing men in armor with swords in their hands; and, above all, there were statues showing men with wings starting from their shoulders and with flames of fire on their brows. These were to show how men must fight to overcome evil, and after overcoming how they must continue to use the sword of truth to win the highest glory. I shall read you now one more story, and it shall be about a mighty man who did valiantly and overcame." Saying which, Wilmot opened the Book and read: "'And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts,

he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow.' This is the story of the mighty man," continued Wilmot. "The lionlike men and the lion are the evil thoughts, the evil companionships, and the temptations that lead us astray. If the Squires will all be valiant, they can slay all the lions they meet in the way; they can even go down into the pit and meet the lion there. The true Squire can overcome in everything. The King will help him."

The candles had burned within an inch of the sockets of their high metal sticks and the shadows were falling long and dim on the hillside without when the little company about the table arose and, following Wilmot sentence by sentence, said together "Our Father which art in heaven" to the end. At the gate Granger blew again the hunter's bugle, and the Squires, led by Wilmot, filed out. Granger then hung the bugle up in its place, locked the closet containing the sword, banner, and sashes, and put the key in a secret place. He then locked the Castle gate and dropped the big brass key, with its brass chain, into his trousers pocket. Thereupon the Squires and leader left their Castle of Arms to the goodly silence of the hills.

There was no little quiet animation and confidential talk amongst the "cavemen," as they now began to call themselves, during the trolley ride back to Fountain Square. Once alighted at the Square, Wilmot treated the boys to another surprise. It was only three days from that Sabbath afternoon until the "Fourth." This holiday was the occasion for one of Wilmot's plans for tying his Squires on more completely to his leadership.

Into the hand of each boy, including Kinky, who knew no more of the "plan" than the others, he thrust a card on one side of which were beautifully printed with a fountain pen the following words:

From five to nine P.M.
Wednesday, July 4, on
The Wilmot Lawn, 1400 Grand Avenue,
A SQUIRES' RECEPTION.
Open-air gymnasium, luncheon,
magic lantern, and fireworks.
YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED—PRESENT THIS CARD.

On the reverse side of the card was the mystic "bull's eye" traced in black, and underneath in red the cabalistic "W." Instead of the "tiger" with which the boys a fortnight before would have hailed this invitation, led by Sim, they plucked off their caps and shook Wilmot's hand most cordially in acceptance of his invitation. There is a gentleman to be found in every boy, if only he be taken before his finer substance is transmuted into the ignoble.

The Wilmot lawn, with its protecting wall, its thick, dark elms and oaks, and its smooth, fragrant sod, became by the space of four hours on that high holiday a paradise to six boys, and not less so to one dark-haired, handsome-faced young man. From the balcony of the great house which overlooked it other and older eyes watched the scene. A flying trapeze, a punch bag, swings, and hurdle stakes completed the outdoor gymnasium; while a table of generous length and width, over which hung numerous paper lanterns, red, white, and blue, showed where the luncheon was to appear later. In a dark corner at one end of the

long veranda—the very corner in which Harry Wilmot had heard his call—was stretched a square of white canvas, on which the magic lantern was to cast its weird and amusing lights. For two hours the shouts and calls of rollicking boyhood echoed under the trees and about the wide grounds. When the shadows began to deepen, two white-aproned waiters came and laid a cloth upon the table, lit the lanterns, and began to spread the luncheon. Ruddy and hungry from their vaulting, swinging, and bag-punching, the boys, each with a napkin across his bosom, fell to the feast; and what with salads and fruits and ices and sweets to please a boy's palate, the assault was worthy the zest of the League of Squires. When the repast was over, a long time they sat, like true knights, at board while they and their leader exchanged such speech as became their order.

"That boy is a profound mystery to me," said Colonel Wilmot as he and his wife surveyed from the veranda the table scene beneath the softly glowing lamps. "He is lost in unselfishness. He could go to Congress if he would, but he chooses this instead. There must be something, even much, in it; but I don't understand it."

But the mother said: "Father, our boy but walks in the way in which the Master walked. We shall see one day how wise he is."

"I believe in our boy, mother," was the only reply which the successful rich man of the world could make; for he was beginning to see how much he had lived for himself and how seldom he had thought of others, especially of the little ones of the kingdom.

That night his eyes saw a vision; that night also he laid himself down to dream in a new purpose of life.

While the branches and crowns of the great trees flashed to the explosion of rockets and mimic cannon, Wilmot heard the louder roar and rabblement of the street, and silently gave thanks that those whom he had made his own were safe from the temptations that beset the unbridled freedom without. In an impromptu chorus he and his Squires sang, "My country, 'tis of thee," and at nine o'clock five boys were seen aboard the big avenue trolley car in front of the Wilmot mansion and started homeward, with Wilmot and Kinky waving a good night.

. . . . . .

Sabbath after Sabbath the afternoon bugle blew at the gate of the Castle of Arms, and the Squires filed in to sit at their Round Table and hear and talk with their leader. Many a confession of fault and failure and many a pledge and taste of higher things marked their communion together as they sat under their Maltese banner clothed with the insignia of Squires. Many, too, were the holy and the brave words which were read and spoken to them by their leader, and ever more and more he drew their hearts toward him in loyalty and love.

Autumn came and lifted its red banners a little while over the hill slopes in Applegate Wood, and to the dropping of nuts the Squires kept their fellowship and had their converse; but when winter grew frosty and made the winds too chill to be braved, they met in a little chamber behind Wilmot's offices in the Applegate Building, where there was the cheer of a red-hot

stove and the glow of two big gas jets. Strange things were happening in the lives of the other Squires besides Kinky, who was now regularly at school. Granger was industriously taking the course at the night school, and was slowly conquering the intricacies of English grammar. Jimmy Glenn's mother had been visited by Wilmot, and Jimmy also had been provided for in the night school, his employer having been persuaded to agree to his detention only up to the lawful hour of six o'clock in the evening. Perhaps Wilmot's greater service in the interest of his Squirehood was to secure from the State Assembly a statute on child labor, which benefited thousands of children in the State, and which particularly put Mac Pooley, the overworked child of the cotton mill, into the public school and his father into the sizing room and finally into a foremanship, where he easily earned a decent support for his family. As for Sim Phillips and Tommy Biles, the notable changes in their cases were better work at school, growing gentlemanly habits, and an improved life at home. This resulted in visits from the parents of each to the young attorney at his office to express gratitude for something—a secret undiscoverable—in the lives of their sons which was not only transforming them but was reacting upon the homes of which they had before been the chief concern.

Steadily and quietly Wilmot kept his course, working always toward his ideal which was most definitely set before him. So the months passed, and it was summer again. The fields under the nodding groves of Applegate Wood were ripening, and the growing

city was thrusting its ever-extending hands a little nearer toward the ferny hill slopes. *A year and a day had passed,* and the bugle was blowing at the gate of the Castle of Arms, and the Squires were passing in to take their vows and be made Knights of the King.

VII.

THE KNIGHT'S DEGREE.

It was an afternoon in June, not an afternoon of the Sabbath, but of a day in midweek. The full leafage of summer was swinging its shadows across the gateway of the Castle of Arms in the most romantic Applegate Wood. Five members of the League of Squires were making a huge heap of dry tree branches in an open space a rod away from the Castle gate. They were also improvising several rustic seats about in which they might sit and watch the bonfire when the dry mass should be given to the flame. They were already fancying to themselves what an illumination they should see there amongst the trees and cliffs when the darkness was deep and still.

"She'll be a glory when the flames shoot up," suggested Sim Phillips as he sat fanning himself after the exertion of helping to create the wooden pyramid.

"That's what," returned Tommy Biles, measuring the heap with his eyes.

"It'll be like a house a-fire," ventured Jimmy Glenn, his fancy becoming active with the rest.

"Let's put a dry chestnut log on top," eagerly proposed Mac Pooley; "it'll pop like a thousand muskets when the fire reaches it."

"Agreed!" cried the other four boys, including Kinky; and together they set off to inspect the fallen trees of the adjacent wood. They had not been out long when they came upon the thing they sought, a

chestnut butt, hard as flint and hoary from having long suffered the rain and the sun. It proved a load to move, but by dint of effort they at last had it at the heap and then squarely upon the top.

"It'll take Mr. Wilmot and Granger by surprise when it begins to bombard," said Sim in elation.

"Won't it, though?" answered Mac, pleased at the thought of his own ingenuity in suggesting the plan.

The other boys chuckled with satisfaction at what they fancied would take place when the bonfire was on. They would have cheered a little, but they remembered that Wilmot and Granger were inside the Castle making ready for a high ceremonial that was soon to take place there. This ceremonial was only half a secret to the boys without; but, although they so nearly knew what was on hand, they yet looked forward with keenest interest to the developments of the evening. For six months they had not been once inside the Castle. Its gate had been locked, and silence had kept both it and the woods and cliffs about. But, although they had been so long absent from it, it had lost nothing of its meaning to the members of the League of Squires. It was always to them the high place of mystery and sanctity, and it was now to become additionally mysterious and sacred. Lingering about their wood and in their Castle until the twilight deepened into night, the League of Squires, with a ceremony befitting, were to become the League of Knights. Departing their Castle thereafter, they were to light their watch fire, and in the deep wood were to hold their last council before going forth to fight in the King's wars.

The city quarters of the Squires had been made a high place too. The two chambers behind Wilmot's office had been fitted up with reference to their needs. The rear room was devoted to their secret meetings. There was a rug on the floor, some pictures on the walls, the needed number of chairs, a long table—just as in the cave—and also the closet against the wall. To this closet had been transported, in a most secret way, the contents of the closet in the cave; but to-night, and in an equally mysterious way, these contents were back in their old place in the Castle of Arms. The front chamber boasted a rug also, pictures, a settle, some easy-chairs, a fair-sized bookcase full of books for boys (new books and the best to be had), and a table loaded with pictures and boys' magazines and papers. It was a boy's literary paradise, and yet each time the Squires had met there they thought of the wood and the cave. They sniffed in fancy the woodland airs, and thought of how they had kept their secrets in the place where the robbers used to hide. It was a boy's fondness, and natural, this love of wild places and the interior of caves and dark haunts. They were again to see the inside of their mighty hold; were again to sit about the "round table" where they had been made Squires of the King and where awaited them that else which they did not altogether comprehend. They did not have long to wait; for scarcely had they dropped into the rustic seats, their faces aglow from the effort of heaving up the chestnut butt, than they heard the Castle's "tongue" calling them to the gate.

Granger had become expert in blowing the ward-

er's horn. He had largely divided his time between that instrument and the study of grammar, and had made a nearly equal progress in both directions. In fact, it began to be plain that Granger had parts, for he found the flute as easy a conquest as the horn. By reason of this last accomplishment he was becoming the minstrel of the League, and many an evening of the former "gang" was passed in listening to the soft notes which he blew from the hollow of his flute. Now he put the horn to his lips, and the leafy silence of Applegate Wood and the cliffs about, dusky in deepening twilight, answered in rhythmic, dulcet echoes, "dying, dying, dying."

Up the rude stair with dignified and measured steps went the five Squires who a few moments before had been but rollicking boys. What they saw as they entered the hall of their Castle did not astonish, but it pleased them none the less. The cave had become a banquet chamber, graced with such a feast as became the time and place. The state table had been covered with a bright damask cloth, candles burned brightly in high brass sticks, and in old pewter stands were displayed the fruits of June. On a platter of the same metal were plentiful slices of cold meats, while a wooden trencher was piled high with loaves of brown bread thinly sliced to the clinging crust which held them in apparent wholeness. A flavor of cut limes pervaded the place, and a glance at the center of the table showed a huge bowl filled with frappé on the surface of which floated thin and tempting slices of the aforesaid limes. The banquet was no more in kind than a cottager might spread upon his board; but under this

roof of nature, amid the glow of these mysterious lights and with these feudal-day surroundings, it seemed the spread of some grim baron to his retainers. Whence had it come? Not even Granger had seen it placed, for when he and Wilmot entered the board was already spread and the candles burning. When this became known to the other Squires, there was wonder with many quiet conjectures. Wilmot had gone out with the "gang." He could not therefore have done it, reasoned the boys. Did the cave really have its genii, and were they under the control of this lover of boys? Did he have power to call back old days and command feasts like this from unseen hands? Something like this—perhaps something even more vague—the boys asked themselves, but waited for a further answer.

When the Squires were all gathered about the table in the manner before described—that is, with Granger at the end on the right, Sim at the opposite end, and the other four at the side fronting him—Wilmot, still standing, said: "Worthy Squires, it is now a year and a a day since we first sat together about this 'round table.' It was then that you became Squires of the King, vowing the vow of obedience. In seeking to learn the King's will you have met many temptations, and have not always overcome. But the King is kind, and will make you strong if you earnestly try to keep his words. To-night in our good Castle of Arms you are to be made Knights of the King." With that he turned, opened the closet door, and displayed to the gaze of the Squires a sight that moved them to quiet applause. There hung their six blue silk sashes with

the open book in white silk wrought upon each, the sign of a Squire; but above the book now appeared, also in white silk, the outline of a sword, the sign of a Knight. These sashes Wilmot took down in the old order and, beginning with Granger and Sim, placed one over the shoulder of each boy, saying: "To the sign of a Squire you have added the sign of a Knight. I greet you as a Knight of the King. And now let us take meat, for we are to ride a long journey in the service of the King."

The Squires being all seated, Wilmot rapped loudly upon the table, when out of the darkness of the farther cave came two dusky figures, white-aproned and armed with platters. Their white serving suits gave them for a moment a ghostly aspect; but they were quickly recognized as domestics of the Wilmot home, and so the mystery of the troglodyte feast was explained. These domestics had been sent to the Castle by Wilmot in the earlier hours of the afternoon. They carried each a capacious hamper from the depths of which the service and the viands had been produced. In perfect silence they served the new-made Knights, thus deepening the mystery of the hour. Wilmot led and directed the discourse, but it was confined to simple narratives of hope and truth and duty. It especially turned upon the promises made to those who from orphanhood, poverty, or ignorance had climbed upward to seats of service and nobleness. The Squires listened long and gladly, the simple viands were partaken of heartily, the cup of blameless cheer was pledged, and so the high feast was ended. Then silently as before those dusky ministrants cleared the

board, and, putting service and fragments of the feast into the two hampers, they folded the cloths into the same and, passing out through the gate, which Granger opened, descended the oaken stairway and disappeared in the darkness.

When order again obtained in the Castle and Granger had returned to his seat at the table, Wilmot arose and, opening the other section of the closet against the wall, the newly made Knights saw what was more than ever pleasing to them. In the closet they not only beheld their Maltese banner and the heavy sword which they had been accustomed to see on the table before them at their councils, but they saw beside them six small swords—light and slender ones, but real blades of steel. The banner Wilmot gave to Granger to fix as usual over the board, the great sword he laid in its accustomed place on the table, but the lighter swords he girded one upon each of the new-made Knights, saying to each as he did so: "Sir Knight, arise, and in the name of the King do valiantly." Then a long time he showed the young Knights how to use their swords, how to fence and parry the blows of their opponents, and how to be merciful to an enemy when he was fallen. It was a great time for the boys, and each one felt himself a true Knight and set to be a "Christ helper" and a righter of the wrongs of the world. The dusky cave roof echoed to the clinking sounds of their slender blades and to their footfalls as they marched round and round in their Castle of Arms.

"Now," said Wilmot when their lights were again burning low and they were seated at the "round table"

for a last talk together, "we will now hear the high words which tell us what Knights of the King should be." Thus saying, he read slowly and impressively these lines:

> My Knights are sworn to vows
> Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
> And loving, utter faithfulness in love,
> And uttermost obedience to the King.

"So were pledged the Knights who served and fought for an earthly king," said Wilmot, "and this is read from a book which is but an earthly song. But for the true word to guide us in the service of the great King Christ we must search the King's own Book."

There was reverent attention as Wilmot turned the pages of his Bible and, finding the place he had previously marked, read as follows: "'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light;' 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the putting down of strongholds;' 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;' 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.'"

Having finished the reading, Wilmot placed the

Book open upon the table and, laying the sword across the Book, said: "Here are now two swords—one the sword of man, the other the sword of God's Spirit. These two you have wrought on your sashes. The sword of steel is given you to remind you of the spiritual sword. When you were Squires only, you had no sword of steel, you were then learning to obey the King; now that you have learned what it is to obey, you have the sword to show you that you must fight against evil. When you have temptations, you must use your sword on the tempter. If you are tempted to evil thoughts, remember what the King's *word* is: 'Let the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight.' If the temptation is to indulge evil and sinful words, give the tempter this edge of the Sword: 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. . . . Neither filthiness nor foolish talking.' And how many edges has that sword and how always ready it is to our use!" concluded Wilmot as he earnestly regarded the young Knights before him. After a little space of silence, he said: "It is now only for us to say a last word. Are all the Knights ready to take the Knight's vow?" At that all the boys arose and lifted their hands in token, whereupon Wilmot said, and they repeated after him, these words: "I vow to be a true Knight and soldier of my Lord and King the Christ. I will be obedient, by his help, to keep his word, will serve and help in his cause, and will seek always to think only his thoughts and speak as will please him. I ask for a pure heart and for clean hands and lips."

For no little while the whole company stood silently

and thought on their vow, then at a word they were all seated and Wilmot said: "We have now come to the place where we must begin to help others. A year and more we have lived together as Squires and brothers; now we are Knights and must be 'Christ helpers.' Each Knight of you must now choose from amongst his friends a boy to become his Squire—that is, a Squire in his place—for every Knight must have a Squire whom he can teach and train in noble thoughts and words that he also may become a Knight. There will then be twelve of you—six Knights and six Squires—and that is the perfect number. There were twelve disciples of the Christ who is our King, and King Arthur had twelve great Knights and fought twelve great battles. Does it please our Knights to choose them each a Squire to take part with us in the League?"

The response to this proposition was most enthusiastic, a hearty roll of "aye, ayes" echoing through the cave.

"We will make new Squires at our Sunday afternoon meeting in our Chapter room in the city," said Wilmot, amid the exuberant demonstration of his Knights.

"And I know already who'll be my Squire," spoke up Granger in earnest tones.

"And I," "And I," said another and another; and so they all said and rejoiced with inward satisfaction at the prospect of bringing others into their fellowship. In the spirit of this joy they took leave of their Castle of Arms and descended to the fragrant groves below, where, kindling their camp fire, they saw the giant

trees and the towering cliffs stand out in the resplendence of its glow. While Granger blew the flute to familiar airs they sang, following the lead of Wilmot, the songs which they had learned in the year and a day of their close and faithful association. The forest reaches and the hollow cliffs answered the notes, and the stars far off in the blue seemed to twinkle in a concert of praise. With a roar of flame and emitting huge columns of upward-flying sparks, the wooden pyramid sank in its own ashes, carrying downward the cap log of chestnut. As the fresh flames took hold upon it the expected bombardment began, and to the salvos of the exploding trunk the Knights and their leader wended their way downward through the woodland, whose shadows still answered to the risings and fallings of the expiring watch fire.

VIII.

THE PERFECT NUMBER.

The day following the Knight-making and the bonfire-kindling at the Castle of Arms brought to Wilmot two interesting communications, one of them bristling with mystery. The first came to hand at the breakfast table, at which, being late, he found under his plate a check for two hundred dollars signed by his father and accompanied by a brief note which read: "This is for your boys. God bless you." That was Colonel Wilmot's way. He was not easily moved; but when moved, he evidenced it in no doubtful manner. This was not the first check Harry had had from his father during his "year and a day" of "making men," but it was the largest, many times over. In some way the elder Wilmot had got into the secret of the previous night's doings and of the proposal to double the number of the former clan. He had also occasionally peeped into the Chapter rooms of the League of Squires behind his son's offices in the tall Applegate Building. Like the human thermometer he was, his interest had risen, degree after degree, as he in proportion became inclosed by the argument of what he saw and felt. He was a watchful, business-like old gentleman, one who carefully studied things and then determined their value. He had followed Harry's work with "his boys," but had felt at the beginning that it was wholly chimerical—such, in fact, as only a dreamer like Harry Wilmot would under-

take. When Kinky had been brought into the home, he only half consented, and that through the influence of Harry's mother; but by the end of a week he had been taken by Kinky, to whom at last his heart turned in a constant stream of doting and affection. When he came to know about the transitions equally marked in the lives of the other boys, he gave his first financial token of committal to the idea. In time this token was repeated advertently but quietly. Even now he allowed his real interest in the matter to be fully penerated by nobody, not even his wife. But could one have read his thoughts in connection therewith, the revelation had been one to please and instruct exceedingly. They went this way as he walked briskly that morning from the breakfast table toward his office, "I might easily now set aside a hundred thousand without injury to my business—yes, even a hundred and fifty thousand! That would start the scheme well; it would buy the farm and the wood, and erect such a building for school purposes as would be at first needed. Then in my final will I could provide for the remainder. I can at best count on no more than ten years remaining to me of my life. Such a boys' school as I have a vision of has not been heard of before. It would make men—true men, honorable and successful —out of what is now the merest waste and leakage of society, the boys that grow up only to make drones and criminals. I'll do it! but I must wait to see a little further into what Harry is doing. I believe in Harry. Blessed boy! you don't know what you have done to save your old father's heart from utter selfishness;" and, wiping a glad tear or two from his eyes,

the gray-haired capitalist walked on down the wide avenue toward the city.

Colonel Wilmot was a great walker. He boasted that he had kept himself young and healthy through this form of exercise. He scouted cabs and trolley cars, except in weather too foul for walking. Once or twice in his walk cityward this morning he paused and looked far away, regarding the prospect of the hills. He was thinking of Applegate Wood and of wide fields and rolling grass meadows in the foreground; and as he thought fancy was building tall, gray stone dormitories and a high and castellated hall between in the lap of the wood where the sod was green under the shadows of great oaks and elms. Prophecy and History were walking or standing arm in arm with the man of doubloons, abetting in that bright June morning his dream of nobleness and urging him to a decision.

Meantime Harry Wilmot, having hastily finished his breakfast and finding himself late beyond his wont, boarded a trolley which chanced to be passing just as he emerged from the lawn gate. Two-thirds of the way to the city the trolley passed the elder Wilmot pursuing his thoughtful journey. The son waved a token and kissed his hand to the sire, who returned the greeting affectionately and smiled with satisfaction.

Ten minutes later Harry Wilmot sat at his office table reading the morning mail. Coming across a foreign-looking envelope addressed in a pronouncedly foreign hand, he held it up, exclaiming, "Umph! What can this mean? It's a woman's hand too, as I believe. It's from a distance off also—'Pittsburg

—Pittsburg,'" he read, closely scrutinizing the postmark. "'Pittsburg!' I've no client there, I'm sure." Tearing open the seal, he read:

Mr. Attorney Wilmot: I learn that you have adopted an orphan boy who was recently at large upon the streets of your city and who was known by the name of "Kinky." I take it that you would like to know something of the parentage of this child, and that you would especially like to learn of a *valuable* secret in connection with his orphanhood. I assume that the word "valuable" can have but one meaning to both you and me. If you are willing to engage and bind yourself legally to pay liberally for information leading to the discovery of this secret, you may address me at the above-named city through the general delivery.

Respectfully, HILDA JABLONSKI.

P. S.—Correspondence is useless except on the basis of a contract. H. J.

"So!" exclaimed Wilmot to himself as he laid the letter down upon the table. "Here's another evidence that there is a deep mystery connected with Kinky. I have long suspected that; so have others hereabouts; but this letter is some sort of a fraud; it would not surprise me to discover that it was written in this very building. There is a fine *Levitic* hand in the chambers immediately below these that might well have done it. There are two indications that a woman *might* have done it—the writing is in a femininelike hand, and it carries a postscript. But there is one convincing evidence that a woman did *not* write it, and that is that *it was written by a man.* It is a clever piece of blackmail; but I shall have a use for it later. I shall have another interview with old Simon one of these days;" and with that he laid the letter away in a secret place.

The Sunday afternoon meeting of the League of Knights was a great occasion. In the front, or reading, room of their Chapter Wilmot greeted twelve boys—his six Knights and the six others whom they had selected to be their respective Squires. Wilmot was not wholly unacquainted with these proposed new members of the League; but a regular introduction was planned, and an inquiry was instituted into the case of each boy as a preliminary of his reception into membership. When they were all seated, Wilmot said: "When I first became acquainted with the members of this League, it was in the street, and you were all introduced by Granger; now we have these beautiful chambers to which to welcome new members, and besides we have our strong Castle of Arms, of which they may learn later. Instead of having Granger introduce those who are now to become members with us, I shall ask each Knight to present his own Squire, and let us begin with Granger and go down according to the age of each Knight!"

If one doubts the probability of the advance and improvement credited to the members of this former "gang" as the result of "a year and a day" of training and leadership by a consecrated man, let him try kindness, industry, and the Galilean spirit on a company of susceptible boys, and his skepticism will completely disappear. In all this company none had better illustrated Wilmot's ideas of the possible than Granger, the awkward, ignorant, half-ruffian leader of "The Gang of Six." The evangel of gentleness and persuasion had come to him at the opportune moment; a year—even a six month—later had likely been too

late. Mercy is a great keeper of time. When Wilmot had called for the introduction of candidates, Granger arose at one side of the room and stood for a moment. He had grown full two inches in stature during the year, and was now considerably past fourteen. The latent gentleman in him had come out marvelously. His speech had changed from the vernacular of the street to that of the thoughtful, studious youthhood of the better classes. The night school and the Castle of Arms had wrought magically. He was neatly, if plainly, dressed, and stood erect like a soldier. Taking by the arm a pleasant-faced, blue-eyed lad of twelve years, one evidently, like himself, from the lower walks, he approached to where his benefactor sat, and said: "Mr. Wilmot, this is my friend, Willie Wages, who works with me at the printing office. His father is a foreman in the bindery. Willie wants to be a Squire. He knows about the King, and says his prayers every night. He will promise to obey in all things, and will keep the King's commandment."

Wilmot arose and took the lad by the hand. It is written in the Book concerning the King that when he was in the world he saw a young man and loved him; but that one loved not the King's Word as he should. When Wilmot had looked into the open face and clear eyes of the child presented to him, a strong impulse moved him to lay his hand on the bright young head with words of a special benediction. "Here," he thought, "is a choice one indeed; here is one sent us specially of the King." But who can forecast the years and make hope and prayer a defense against chance of evil and of fate? The gem of rarest promise turns

to dust or breaks into fragments on the wheel of the lapidary; the seed sown in the most propitious moon and watched with most constant care often suffers blight and mildew and comes to naught before the eyes of the husbandmen. It is not given to mortals to know.

Holding still the hand of the first boy presented, Wilmot received the others in a group, each Knight presenting the Squire for whom he was sponsor.

"This is my cousin, Freddie Holmes," said Sim Phillips as he presented a boy near his own age and much of his favor. "He wants to be a Squire, and will obey the King," added Sim.

"And this is my neighbor, Robert Mooney; he wants to be a Squire," said Tommy Biles as he introduced a boy of nine, whose ruddy face and broad tones told that he was of Irish parentage. "His folks *goes* to the Catholic Church," explained Tommy; "but they don't object to him being a member of our League, and Robert he wants the worst sort to be a Squire."

"We welcome you, Robert," said Wilmot in greeting, and then stood the abashed and trembling lad in the circle of the other applicants.

In his usually timid way Jimmy Glenn, the widow's son, brought forward the boy for whom he was to be sponsor, a thin-faced child, with light, scant hair, like himself. "His name's Pete," said Jimmy in introduction—"Pete Singler; he's just come from the country, where I used to live. I want him to be a Squire so he won't be tempted to do wrong as I was when I first *come* to the city."

Wilmot cast a most approving look on the most

timid of his Knights in recognition of this speech, and received cordially the Squire to be. And now came Mack Pooley, the boy to whom, next to Kinky, the League had perhaps been the greatest blessing, having saved him from the slavery and martyrdom of the cotton mill and put him in the way of education and training for life.

"This is Joseph Pontos, who used to work with me in the mill," said Mack as he presented a distinct type of Greek boy and one very near his own age. "Joe's folks used to go to the Greek Church in New York, so he says; but they don't have any Church here, and Joe wants to be my Squire, so they let him come."

" 'Every kindred and tongue and people,' " repeated Wilmot as he received the Greek boy into the circle of the others. "May this prove to be another Timothy!" he added as he laid his hand on the child's head.

The last of the Knights to appear was Kinky. His choice of Squires had certainly been no secret to Wilmot. Together they had talked it over, and for many reasons the choice was approved by Wilmot. That choice was none other than the nine-year-old son of old Simon, the peddler. In his newsboy days Kinky and little Moses Simon had been playmates as, with unsold papers or shoe brush lacking a customer, the orphan loitered before old Simon's door. There was a whisper too about the streets that Kinky, when little more than an infant, had been thrust, like a callow bird, out of old Simon's nest behind his shop and left to shift for himself. This whisper had led Wilmot to seek the interview with old Simon which was recorded in a former chapter. Kinky himself felt some unde-

fined affinity for the Simon nest; and this, with his fondness for little Moses, determined him in the selection of a Squire.

Arrayed in their blue sashes and with their swords girded, Knight fashion, upon them, the six Knights received their Squires in the secret Chapter room; and there the Squires took the vow of obedience, receiving each also the blue sash with the token of a Squire wrought upon it. Sitting down then with the twelve about the "round table," Wilmot told again the story of the "Shepherd Squire" and read from the King's Book as before. A golden sunset was sifting through the windows when the circle about the table had finished its talk and council together. "We are now the perfect number of twelve," said Wilmot when they arose; "we must strive not only to be Knights and Squires, but in all things we must aim also to be disciples of the King. That is the best degree and the highest." Saying which, he took from the table twelve prettily bound New Testaments and gave one to each boy. "This," he continued, "is the King's Word; look into it every day, and you will know the King's will. The King will help you."

During the week that followed the making of new Squires a new room was added to the two which the League occupied back of Wilmot's offices. This was to be the gymnasium and the fencing room of the Knights. When it was filled up with trapezes, lifts, swings, clubs, a bowling alley, and a bath like a small swimming pool, it became a joy indeed. Every afternoon when they had a leisure hour the boys, Squires and Knights, came up to try their muscles or take a dip.

As time went by Wilmot permitted them to issue invitations to their friends to use their gymnasium. Also they had once each week a chapel service in their reading room to which they invited as many boys as they had room to seat. Thus it was that the League became widely known amongst the younger boys of the city, and scores of them, enticed by the beautiful library, the gymnasium, and the bath, came to visit them and attended the service which Wilmot, assisted by the Knights, held once in the week. This consisted of songs, accompanied by Granger on the flute, a prayer, and a reading from the "Word of the King," and often a short talk or story; but generally it was only a reading by each of the Knights in turn out of his New Testament. When there was a secret meeting of the League, the Knights and the Squires met first together. After that meeting was over, the Squires retired and Wilmot and the six Knights had a "round table" together, and then they separated.

After almost another year had passed, Wilmot said to the Knights as they sat together in secret council: "We now have with us a good many boys who would like to join our League. These we can make Squires *prospective*—that is, those who are waiting to be made Squires—and when our six Squires are made Knights, then we shall let these that are waiting take the vow. We will then be twenty-four in all. You can read in the New Testament how there were 'four and twenty elders.'"

This plan pleased the Knights, and so twelve boys were found who desired to join the League as Squires *prospective*. The blue sash was given to each of

these, and they attended with the other Squires, only they could not be present, as the other Squires could not, at the "round table."

Thus the days and the weeks went by. The hands and heart of Harry Wilmot were filled with the details of his self-selected work, and he was fulfilling his course with joy. As yet his work was a secret except in his own home and in the homes from which had come his strangely assorted company of "men in the making." He was too modest to speak of it himself, and so the story had gotten but little abroad. Colonel Wilmot, alone of those outside, had realized the value and potency of it, and he was a man whose reticence had become a proverb. The pastor of the great Gothic Church, with its thousand members, at which the Wilmots were attendants, had heard of it incidentally; but he treated it as of small moment, as only one of many fads, which fanciful and empirical religious workers are given to following. Harry Wilmot had entered the Church of his parents early in life, and was known to his pastor as a religious young man, but one not demonstrative or desirous of special responsibility. He had never asked to be given any Church work to do. The pastor had often noted the serious, responsive face of the young attorney as he sat beside his mother in the pew; but he attributed the manifestation to the studentlike qualities of his hearer. Thus matters stood as the second year of Wilmot's unique enterprise drew toward its close. But a great change was near at hand both for himself and "the children God had given him."

In the meantime the homes of the new Squires had

been visited by Wilmot. These visitations had resulted in interesting and, in some cases, most unexpected revelations. One had been sad and had brought concern to Wilmot's mind. Visiting the father of Willie Wages, the bright and promising above all the Knights and Squires of the League, he found a cynical, unbelieving man, a patron of the cheap books at the race course, and an evening frequenter of near-by beer shops. He showed little interest in the hopeful departure of his son, remarking as the sum of his views and feelings: "Every tub must stand on its own bottom. I have no religion myself; I take a drink when I like; I do about as I please in other matters. My son may follow my example or not, as he may wish."

"It's a hard road for my Squire," sighed Wilmot as he walked away; and his reflections were the sadder as he had already reason to fear that young Wages's habits were not wholly up to his pledge. In this he was in the confidence of Granger.

At the home of Robert Mooney, the Irish Squire, Wilmot found both the father and mother present when he called after hours. "Coom in, Meester Wilmut," said the elder Mooney when he knew who his caller was—"coom in; me woif and me has been a-talkin' mooch of yoursilf from heerin' it of the lad. It's a foin business, that o' yourn, sir—a foin business; yez 'ave got the lads, hearrut an' sowl. It's a foin business." And John Mooney rubbed his hands together in token of his pleasure. He was a machinist by trade, and his home gave some certain token of being above the dead level of so large a portion of the laborers of his race. Presently Mrs. Mooney appeared

and joined in an interview highly satisfactory to the visitor and the visited. "It's Catholics we be, sir," she said as Wilmot was departing; "but we're not sayin' there mayn't be good in others. We want the best to coom to our Robert; an', seein' he wants to be goin' to the Protestant Church, it's nayther his father nor me nor the priest as will be preventin' him."

At the home of the Greek boy, Joseph Pontos, Wilmot met nearly the same answer. "Sure—all right—good," said the father of Joseph. "Dere iss no Grik Church in dese ceety—he shall go to Protes*tant* Church —you take him—all right—good." And the elder Pontos turned to wait on a customer, for he was the proprietor of a small confectionery store on a principal street, and his living apartments were somewhere amongst the labyrinths of walls and corridors that lay behind his shop.

In turn and in like manner Wilmot visited the homes of each of the other new boys—that is, all except that of old Simon, the peddler. Simon forestalled that visit by making one to Wilmot in his office. "What is it, Simon?" asked Wilmot when his visitor was seated.

"You an' dat Kinkee 'ave stole de heart of my leetle Moses—thadt boy he want to go to de Gristian Church. I have swear he shall not go; but hees mamma, she say he shall go, an' so eet ees;" and Simon shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Well, how is it to be?" asked Wilmot, a little puzzled by both Simon's air and answer.

"How ees eet?" asked Simon half in exclamation. "Eet ees thadt way. I am Alsace Chew, an' my wife,

she is American Chewess—so you see. Moses will go to Gristian Church. Thadt ees all."

"Maybe you will come yourself some day, Simon," suggested Wilmot.

"No, I thingk thadt I will not—no, sure I will not. Thadt Moses, he is proud of hees secret of de Squires; he will not tell anythingk what he know. I like thadt Squire beesness—but I thingk I will not go to Gristian Church—no, sure," and with that Simon bowed himself out.

"Patience," murmured Wilmot to himself when he was alone. "I see the end; there is a mystery in Kinky's life—it is a good mystery too—and I shall know it by and by."

The next Sunday morning Wilmot accompanied by twelve boys, all plainly but neatly dressed, entered the big Gothic church and sat in a pew together. This went on from Sabbath to Sabbath. The eyes of the pastor, Dr. Chadborne, began to open. He soon had a proposition to make the young attorney.

IX.

THE DISCIPLE'S DEGREE.

ANOTHER year had passed, and the Castle of Arms had again welcomed the high fellowship of its Knightly lords. The State table had been spread, the candles had glowed in the semidarkness until the twilight faded into night. The six Squires had been made Knights with their fellows, and so about the board sat the perfect number of twelve with their leader. Outside also over the char of the former bonfire had been raised another heap of logs and fagots ready to blaze forth in the watch fire of the League of Twelve.

As Wilmot contemplated the completed circle of his Knights, besashed and besworded, under the blue banner of their order, he experienced a feeling of deepest satisfaction. What wonders had been wrought in two years! Several of the boys were growing tall and were beginning to take on something in face and feature which prophesied an early-maturing manhood. Especially was this true of Granger, Sim Phillips, and Willie Wages, Granger's friend. Several of the others were developing a vigorous youthhood. Abstinence from narcotics, which Wilmot had been able to secure especially in the case of the members of the first "gang," healthy athletics, and chaste thinking, which had come of their select association, had told on their frames and spirits. Not a day had he allowed the boys to go without attention. A committee, of which he was always the head, and made up otherwise of two

of the boys in successive pairs, instituted daily inquiry after the others. *"I am my brother's keeper"* was a text in gold letters which appeared in both the reading room and the Chapter chamber of the boys' meeting place in the city. Kinky in two years had grown marvelously. Wholesome food, tender care, and the atmosphere of a home pervaded by quietness and love had turned back the child's captivity, and it appeared that he had not only waxed in frame and spirit according to his nature, but had also recovered what had been lost to him during the pitiless years of his friendless orphanhood.

Wilmot looked long upon his Knights as they conversed and partook of their phantom-spread repast. Granger gave him perhaps the greatest pride—Granger his lieutenant, the Bedivere of all his Knights! And not without cause was this pride; for the tall, fair-looking youth had developed into a manly fellow, brave and honorable in motive and of a devout spirit. He led the prayers at their devotional meetings, read and expounded in unpretentious terms their brief Scripture portions, and was in all things accepted by the boys as their leader, next to Wilmot. One had not thought it possible that this was the gang leader of two years before. It was this reflection that gave Wilmot satisfaction, and so his eyes ran over the ranks of the first and the last of his clansmen. Of Sim he was also proud; of Jimmy Glenn, the widow's son, he had a healthy hope; Tommy Biles was a frank and honest fellow always asking "the reason why," but forging safely on; Mack Pooley struggled against environment. Wilmot felt that he feared for Mack in

the end, but the boy was confiding and faithful in word and act. But if the leader was proud and hopeful of others, what shall be said of his feelings when his eyes rested on Kinky? Kinky had become his life—a brother's love and more enshrined the child in his heart. Apt in everything, bright beyond his years, dreamy but obedient and affectionate, Kinky had been a revelation in the life of the young man who had loved him with that strange love. In this way the eyes of the leader passed also over the six newer Knights. There was not one of all the twelve that appeared so truly Knightly in face and form as Willie Wages, and in manner and spirit he excelled no less. Wilmot could never look on the lad without a feeling of most genuine admiration, yet a vague sense of concern obtruded upon his thought at every sight of the fine young face. The boy's future was, he saw, beset with perils; but secretly he prayed and waited with desire. This special concern extended to at least another of the boys of the newer group. He had never quite got the hold upon these that he had upon the first; but time might help him, he trusted, and so he passed his eyes down the list. The very last of all was little Moses, the son of old Simon the peddler. The future of Moses depended much on what might be done for old Simon and the mother. A strange thing had happened in the case of the mother. Regularly, month after month, she had been at the morning service of the Church where Moses attended with the others. Wilmot was impressed that happy and surprising things were about to come to pass. He was as one walking on holy ground.

As the Knights were about to quit their Castle of Arms, their leader said: "We have now outgrown our Castle in the cave, which has been to us so secure and dear a place. Next Sabbath afternoon at our Chapter room in the city we shall choose twelve new Squires. We shall then be four and twenty, too many twice over to meet in our Castle of Arms; but we shall at least once each year come and hold a council in our mystic and sacred groves. We can never forget Applegate Wood."

The boys appropriately attested their indorsement of this sentiment of their leader, and then followed him down the oaken stair into the grove, where by the glow of a roaring watch fire they renewed their pledge and sang marching songs, led by Granger on the flute. When the glow of the watch fire fell into the pallor of its own ashes, the company departed cityward through the starlit night.

The next day Wilmot had a call from Dr. Chadborne in his office in the Applegate Building. "I have been hearing much of your Boys' League of late, Mr. Wilmot," said the pastor. "I became interested when I saw half a dozen or so boys with you in the pew each Sabbath; but now my interest has become so intensified that I am moved to ask the privilege of attending your gospel meeting next Sunday afternoon."

"I shall be doubly happy to have you do so, Doctor," replied the young man, "and shall be especially pleased to have you say a few words to our boys."

"That you may count on certainly," replied the minister; and after proper ceremony, he was about departing, when Wilmot said: "Our quarters are on this

floor, immediately behind my office. I shall be happy to have you inspect them, Doctor."

Slowly and wonderingly the pastor permitted himself to be led through the reading room, the gymnasium, and the private Chapter room of the League of Knights and Squires. "Admirable! admirable!" exclaimed the learned divine time and again as he surveyed the well-loaded reading tables, the neat, well-stocked bookcases, and the pictures on the walls. "A love trap for boys," he added as they entered the gymnasium. "An inspiration!" was his comment in that place of wise device—"an inspiration! nothing less." But when Wilmot clandestinely slipped him into the Chapter room and showed him the sashes, swords, banner, and else of the Knights and Squires and minutely explained how everything had grown from the beginning, modestly adding the story of the Castle of Arms, which recital was helped by photographs, the sedate divine stood dumb with delight and surprise. Finding at last his words, he said: "Harry Wilmot, you are a *man sent of God.*" Wilmot had once thought of that very phrase himself. "This is a work for the Church to take up; the Church must take it up at once. Ask what you will, it shall be done. These young Knights belong to the Kingdom. I will be up here Sunday afternoon; next week we will talk. God bless you!" and with that the pastor of the big Gothic Church departed.

That which should have come to pass came quickly. When Dr. Chadborne saw the two score and more of boys which crowded into the library of the Boys' League and heard how the young Knights prayed and

spoke, he arose on the spot and said: "Mr. Wilmot and young gentlemen, this is the first and greatest work to be done in the world. There is no limit to it if it be gone about in the right way; for is not this city full—are not *all* cities full—of boys, bright, hopeful, promising boys, that might make pure, noble, useful, successful men if only they had help, if only somebody were willing to help? I want to help. I will help by encouraging you who have begun so well. Your library is too small for your meetings—that is, your boys' gospel meetings. I invite you to hold your next Sunday's gospel meeting in the chapel of our church. I don't want to interfere with you; I don't mean to run your meetings myself; I will not attend them except by your invitation; but I want you to come and be our guests."

After Dr. Chadborne had departed and the gospel meeting was over, the twelve retired to their council and, with Wilmot, accepted the invitation to hold a boys' gospel meeting at the big church. Another matter, not on the programme, came up also. Granger, arising, said: "Mr. Wilmot, we boys have something to ask you; we want your advice and consent in something we are about to propose."

"I shall be glad to hear you," answered Wilmot. "What is it, Granger?"

"A long while ago you told us," continued Granger, "that there was a better degree than that of a Knight —the Disciple's degree."

"So I did," answered Wilmot; "and I have been praying that all my Knights might some day take that degree."

"We want to take it now," declared Granger. "We've all talked about it, all twelve of us, and we have agreed to ask you to give it to us."

"O my brave Knights," answered Wilmot, with tears in his eyes, "that is something I cannot give; only the King himself can do that. Each one of you must ask the King to make you a disciple."

"Tell us how, Mr. Wilmot," insisted several of the boys together.

"I will let the King's own word tell you," said Wilmot; and opening his Bible, he read: " 'Except a man be born *from above,* he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' 'We love him because he first loved us.' 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; *so shall ye be my disciples.*' "

Closing the Book, Wilmot said: "You see now, my dear Knights, that the King first gives a new heart, a new life to his disciples. After that the disciple must bear much fruit in the King's name. Do my Knights all believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?"

Every hand was lifted in ready affirmation, even that of little Moses, the son of the Jewish peddler. "My fadther," explained Moses, "he does not believe in Jesus; but my modther, she believes a little; but I believe all."

"A little child shall lead them," murmured Wilmot, tenderly regarding the child. "The King is pleased with your confession, dear little Moses. He will make you his disciple indeed."

"If we believe that Jesus is God's Son, are we disciples?" asked Granger with a clear directness of inquiry.

"Yes, if you believe it with all your heart," replied Wilmot. "That is, Granger, if your believing it has made your heart *new,* then you are a disciple of the King."

"O, I know that my heart is new, Mr. Wilmot," returned the frank, brave lad.

"When did it become new?" asked Wilmot, with a full emotion expressed in his voice.

"That Sunday afternoon in the cave when we listened to hear the King speak. I have been another boy since then, sir."

"How do you know that, Granger?" asked Wilmot, with a choking gladness.

"Because I have never wanted to do wrong nor speak wrong since, but have wanted to do right and learn the truth and be a help to others. I have heard the King's voice every day since then, Mr. Wilmot."

"Surely," returned Wilmot, "the first of my Knights has long been a disciple. How many of the others can say with Granger that the King has given them new hearts?"

Sim and Jimmy Glenn and Kinky and several of the new Knights responded readily and confidently, but the others were reticent. When, however, Wilmot asked if all would not ask the King for a new heart, they responded with the most genuine interest. Kneel-

ing amongst the Knights, Wilmot then prayed tenderly and earnestly that the witness might come to each, and in the double glow of the sunset and that light of the Spirit invisible they separated, going softly out of their place of communion.

It was now Wilmot's turn to call on Dr. Chadborne. That call resulted in the bringing of a new influence into his life, and one that fitted well into the harmonies that already filled it. Entering Dr. Chadborne's study, he said: "I have come, Doctor, to accept on the part of the League your kind offer of the chapel for our gospel meeting for boys next Sabbath afternoon. We will advertise it well, and I trust it may be the beginning of a new epoch in our work."

"I trust that may be so, Mr. Wilmot, and I am giving myself most cordially and unreservedly to help you," said the pastor.

"Hitherto," explained Wilmot, "we have depended upon our boys for music. One of them, as you saw, plays the flute well, and we have had no other accompanist; but in the larger meetings now planned we shall need a pianist. Can we draw upon your musical corps for that service, Doctor?"

"Well, that might be done temporarily; but our musicians are hired, you know, and they are not easily commanded outside of their contract. But—stay; let me reflect a moment. There! Mr. Wilmot, I have a plan—it is an inspiration, as I trust—to draw a very gifted and choice young woman into religious work. I have been looking for an opportunity; this one is of providential ordering, as I believe. The case is this," continued Dr. Chadborne: "Colonel Burton, whom you

doubtless remember as a prominent citizen and leading member of our Church, at his death, ten or a dozen years ago, left a widow and two young daughters"—

"That I remember very well," interjected Wilmot.

"Well, having a comfortable substance left her and desiring to give her daughters the best advantages in the way of education and travel, Mrs. Burton leased her home here and went abroad. The daughters have been finely educated and are most gifted women. The younger married soon after her school days; but the elder, Ophelia, if you remember her, developed a remarkable talent for music, and has devoted herself to that art. The mother, as was the father, is deeply religious. The daughter is not, though she was baptized in infancy and carefully reared. It is a case of being allured by pride of talent and the love of this present world. Ophelia indulges all sorts of impossible dreams. If her womanly heart could only be touched for Christ, she would become a shining witness. The faith has dwelt in her family for generations. Ophelia is full of generous impulses. She will be easily persuaded to help us. Shall we not at once go and make the request of her?"

"By all means," returned Wilmot, who had learned to husband his moments, and who fell in with Dr. Chadborne's view of helping the worldly-minded young woman into a service that might bless her life.

At the home of Ophelia's mother the pastor and the young attorney were not kept waiting. In a plain home gown Ophelia responded to the summons. Wilmot had not seen her for ten years or more. He only imperfectly recalled her as a high school girl at the

time of his return from college. The schoolgirl in short skirts did not suggest to him the woman of five and twenty that he now saw before him. High-browed, fine-featured, intellectual, handsome—beautiful had been a term too conventional—in manner and movement, the woman of perfect genuineness, Ophelia Burton surprised Harry Wilmot out of his self-mastery. For a moment he was speechless.

After greeting the pastor, Ophelia turned and, waiting for no formal word, said: "This is Mr. Wilmot; I am glad to see you again."

"So you remember me?" returned Wilmot, recovering himself and showing more animation than was his habit.

"Perfectly," answered Ophelia. "It has been fully a dozen years ago since I saw you last; but I was not so young then as to make it difficult for me to remember," she concluded with a show of good sense that impressed Wilmot unusually.

When the object of the visit was opened to her, she declined at first; but, being urged by both the pastor and Wilmot, she at last consented to serve until a substitute could be found.

"That committal means a great deal," said Dr. Chadborne as together he and Wilmot walked away. "We must contrive to so interest her as to make it permanent, or at least a stepping-stone to another service. I have been for some time impressed that the Lord has fitted Ophelia for something unusual."

"In my heart I believe it," responded Wilmot. Wilmot had a heart most genuinely human, as well as most genuinely unselfish and religious.

The Sunday afternoon gospel meeting for boys held in the chapel of Dr. Chadborne's church was attended by a great company of boys and youths. It had been advertised in the usual way from the pulpit, and special invitations had been distributed in large numbers by the twelve Knights of the League. The music was a feature. Ophelia Burton's voice, sweet and birdlike, had been cultivated to answer every demand of harmony. She had, by arrangement, come in her mother's carriage an hour before the opening of the meeting to train Granger and the other Knights as an improvised choir. Granger's flute made a helpful accompaniment to the piano, and, following the winsome voice of Ophelia Burton, the nearly two hundred boys in the company made a soulful chorus. The meeting was conducted in the simplest way conceivable. Wilmot read appropriate selections from the New Testament and commented briefly; then there were a prayer and several songs. After this, Granger and the other older Knights read brief Scripture passages, adding a few boyish words of comment. Nearly all the boys of the League spoke some words or quoted a Scripture motto. At last all the boys of the company were asked to stand up for the King, and very many did so. Wilmot gave all an invitation to visit the reading rooms and gymnasium, and also asked to have each boy's name, with his address, written upon a card. After this, other songs were sung and a final prayer was said. As the close of all, Ophelia sang a solo: "I Know that My Redeemer Lives." It was a song that took the boys, and they listened in perfect silence. Very many of the boys were from the street, and some of them

had heard no such song in all their lives before. As Wilmot listened he wondered how Ophelia could put so much soul and pathos into a gospel song, and especially into *that* song, and yet be worldly-minded—without Christ. It could not be; it must not be, so he felt within his heart. As the boys passed out he shook hands with each, and stopped to talk with any who would tarry to hear a word about the King's business. It was the greatest day in the history of the League; it was a great day in his own history. As he handed Ophelia into her carriage and thanked her she said with the same genuineness which he had noted before: "I am rather indebted to you, Mr. Wilmot, for permitting me to see what I have seen to-day. I do not wonder that you have given yourself so fully to this work." From that hour unusually serious thoughts began to fill the mind of Ophelia, and simultaneously upon the path of Wilmot was falling a new light—a holy, interpenetrating light of human tenderness.

The Sunday afternoon gospel meetings for boys became a fixture in the chapel of Dr. Chadborne's church. Ophelia Burton was always at her place before the piano; her heart was being drawn out in the work. She studied and planned all the week in selecting and adapting songs to the needs and tastes of the boys. An hour before the meeting each Sabbath afternoon she had her boys' choir under drill. The progress which the singers made was wonderful. The music was one of the truly *gospel* features of each service. The attendance of boys increased until the chapel was filled and the tide rose into the gallery. But in the midst of all this committal and activity

the heart of Ophelia began to be filled with intensest hunger. She saw about her the joy of those who knew the King. The new and soulful songs extolling the beauty and love of the King which she was constantly coming upon took away zest for the voices and pride of earthly things, but they at the same time admonished her of her blindness and lack. Often in her distress she sighed and said: "O that I had not consented to do this thing!" But the thought of laying it down she would not entertain. It was the cry and hesitation of a heart "not far from the kingdom," though she understood not. But more prayers than she knew went up for her that she might "see the King in his beauty."

Meantime a month had passed, and on a summer Sabbath morning, memorable for the glory light which streamed through the high windows of Dr. Chadborne's church, Harry Wilmot led the six first-made of his Knights to the chancel and heard them take there the vow of discipleship in the Church of their King. That was a day of joy to Wilmot, for he saw the fruit of all his prayers and plannings. The great church was filled to its capacity; and as Dr. Chadborne told the story of the "Gang of Six" and how its members had come at last to the *degree of disciples,* there was deep emotion in the bosoms of hundreds. From her mother's pew Ophelia Burton saw the bright faces of the newly pledged disciples and the peaceful and satisfied face of the man who stood, like an elder brother, beside them. The dryness of dust was on her lips and the hunger of the homeless was in her soul. The choir sang, the final blessing was said, and the hungry-hearted one passed out with the throng.

That afternoon Ophelia was not at the boys' meeting. A note was sent to Dr. Chadborne explaining her absence and summoning him to an interview. When Dr. Chadborne arrived, Ophelia, like the frank woman she was, said: "Dr. Chadborne, I thank you and Mr. Wilmot for asking me, unworthy as I was, to lead in song those bright and wonderful boys. I went reluctantly; soon my heart took hold of it, and then I feared you might take from me the joy of so great a service. But now I see how far I am from knowing the King. I am unfit to lead and help; I must first be helped. I am unhappy; my heart is like a stone; and until the King comes and gives me a new heart and takes away the sin of my pride and folly, I cannot, I will not sing the songs of his praise. I will never face those happy boys again until I can say with them: 'I know the King.' "

"Daughter," said Dr. Chadborne with an unwonted tenderness in his voice—for such scenes as this were not frequent in his ministry—"daughter, this is as I prayed and trusted. I hoped that this little service done the King might show you his face. He is always willing, always ready; only commit your heart wholly to him. He will do the rest." Then, opening the little Testament which he carried, he read: " 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Here is the King's promise: 'If you *confess,* he *forgives.*' Settle your faith there, my child, and have peace." There was then a silence, and in the silence the venerable pastor said: "Shall we not ask the King to help you?"

"O if he only would!" sobbed the girl as they both knelt.

Few and simple were the words of the pastor's prayer, but they were the needed words. Still kneeling, he said: "Daughter, you ask the King to help you." Strange sound to her ears was her own voice; but she heard it, and the All-Merciful heard also. The tremulous words of distress broke suddenly into those of joy—the Light, the King was come! Dr. Chadborne went out of that home as Moses descended from the mountain where he had been with God. He was a new man as he went; the reserve of twenty years broke from about his experience. Henceforth he was to preach a new gospel, or rather the old gospel with a new power.

X.

THE NEW SONG.

On the Sunday afternoon following Dr. Chadborne's happy visit to the Burton home Ophelia was at her place before the piano, ready for the gospel meeting for boys. There was radiance on her face and peace in her heart. She could now say with confidence: "I have heard the King's voice." By request she sang, as she had often done before, "I know that my Redeemer lives." If the song had seemed a soulful one to Wilmot before, he now thought it like the rapture of an angelic harmony. St. John in the Apocalypse said: "They sang, as it were, a new song." It was not a *new* song, but an *old* one—the song of deliverance and triumph—sung to a new and heavenly tune. Before singing, Ophelia told simply and frankly her story to the boys—how that their glad, simple testimonies concerning the King had touched her heart and driven her to hunger and crying for the same witness of joy. She then lifted upon her rich and tremulous voice the words which have moved to gladness so many multitudes. In the great company that filled the chapel were many youths, and not a few who belonged to the class of those who had reached the stage of maturing manhood, for the fame of these meetings had gone out and the limit of the invitation had been strained.

Dr. Chadborne, who was present, filled to overflowing with the new purpose which had come to him and

joyful in a new baptism, saw how the whole company had been swept by the voice of that newborn singer. When, therefore, the meeting had closed in the ordinary way, which way was always extraordinary, the venerable pastor arose and said: "The meeting in this church to-night will be a gospel meeting for everybody, but especially for young people of both sexes and all ages, and such a meeting will be held every night this week. The League of Knights and Squires has agreed to act as a committee of invitation. There is a great searching of hearts in Israel to-day. Let the King come to his own!"

The old church, with its many pews and high galleries, was filled that night to its utmost inch, and scores had to be turned from its doors. The routine sermon was put aside; and after the choir's introductory, Ophelia Burton sang as only she had learned to sing in these last days. Then the pastor read brief scriptures with pungent, penetrating comments. After that, Wilmot told the simple story of his Knights and gave the genesis of the boys' gospel meetings, and how more than two hundred boys and youths had been brought to Christ in these simple meetings. After this, many of these boys, grouped by arrangement in a place near the chancel, sang their "songs of the King," led, of course, by Ophelia to the low peals of the great organ. And thus, night after night, the readings, exhortations, and songs went on. Also the searchings of hearts went on, and the fire burned openly, "and there was great joy in that city."

All the Knights and most of the new-made Squires were gathered into the Church as the days went by,

with scores of other boys and youth besides. Robert Mooney, the son of the Irish Catholic home, and Joseph Pontos, the Greek lad, were amongst the earliest to come. The last to come was little Moses Simon; and with him, kneeling at the same altar, was his mother, Rachel, who, through the leading of her child, had been brought to see in her great Countryman not a prophet only, but the Messiah, the Son of God.

The result of that meeting was a great extension of the Boys' League throughout the city. In many places Leagues similar to the first were formed, all supervised by a central committee of which Harry Wilmot was the head. The boys' gospel meetings were also extended to the chapels of many churches, and so concern in this work became general with the evangelical pastors.

A committee searched the streets and tenements for homeless boys. Many were found lodging, as Kinky had before, in dark, unseemly places, and drinking daily and nightly a poisonous and death-dealing atmosphere. A nest of these waifs was located under an old tobacco barn.* Clean and healthful lodgings were provided for these, and good homes for not a few. The night school was extended so as to take these boys in; and for the very young boys of the poorer homes a system of kindergartens was begun. With joyful willingness Ophelia Burton took the oversight of these, and in many a round of the city in her mother's car-

*The Rev. W. M. Crutchfield, assistant pastor of Shearn Church, in Houston, reports having found many such boys living under an old tin shop in that city.

riage carried joy to the homes of the needy. She sang and read and talked in these homes, and learned to darn the torn socks and trousers of these often friendless wee boys with a thousand times more satisfaction than she used to find in her "impossible dreams." Wilmot organized and opened a workshop for boys in which he installed two or three of the older Knights and Squires who knew something of mechanics; he also helped Granger to start a job printing office in which a number of the younger boys learned to be printers, and that under the best and safest influences. A committee also found employment for boys, and in places where they could have friends and helpers in the higher and happier hope that had been brought them through the League. Thus it was that every boy who passed through the gospel meetings was helped in the way he most needed it. If he was poor, he was helped to school and employment; if he was rich or well to do, he found happy and religious young companions and was put in the way of helping others. Many a brave and youthful "Christ helper" was thus developed.

When the meeting in Dr. Chadborne's church had closed, having extended over two weeks instead of one, and the last note in which had been the voice of Ophelia Burton singing "I my cross have taken," Harry Wilmot walked softly homeward and sat long and thoughtfully in the elm shadows floating across the wide veranda of his father's home. The stars were shining serenely in a cloudless summer sky, but stars of peace and glory were shining in the sky of his soul. There lived that night no man who might not have

envied the joy and great-heartedness of that man of thirty. He could not sleep; in his heart there was too much of gladness and hope. The future of his years seemed flooded with one perfect song, and the voice which carried that to the sunset of his days was the one which an hour before he had heard swelling, unutterably sweet, through the arches of the great church. There is a fitness in what the Spirit does where human hearts are willing to be led.

The next day bourgeoned and blossomed for Wilmot in glad and surprising things—things the seed of which had been sown long before. It was an early hour of the morning, even before he had fairly finished the reading of his mail, that he had a call from old Simon, the peddler. Coming in with evident signs of excitement, he asked in an undertone: "Are you alone, Meester Veelmot?"

"I am," replied the attorney; "but we can be even more private if you wish."

"Yes, Meester Veelmot, thadt ees goodt; ve veel be most brivate, blees."

With that Wilmot led the way into his inner office, and, bolting the door behind him and his visitor, he said: "Now we are beyond the ear of any living mortal, Simon."

"Thadt ees goodt, Meester Veelmot," said Simon, seating himself and continuing: "Meester Veelmot, you haf make my leetle Moses a Gristian, and den he haf make hees modther Gristian."

"And I trust, Simon," returned the young man kindly, "that Moses and his mother may be able to lead you also to see in your greatest Countryman your own

and the world's Saviour. I am praying that it may be so, Simon."

"No; eet vass no use, Meester Veelmot. I cannot be Gristian, but I veel no more say thadt Messiah haf not come. I am Aknostic; I don't know; dere ees nobody can know, Meester Veelmot. I vas veeling thadt my vife andt Moses be Gristians; I cannot."

"But I am happy to see that you are nearer than you were when we last talked," said Wilmot interestedly.

"Thadt may be, Meester Veelmot; budt no matter. I haf come to talk seg*reet* weedth you."

"Very well," returned Wilmot; "I have no doubt that I shall be interested in all you say. To whom does the secret relate?"

"To thadt boy Keenky, of course, Meester Veelmot; you vass agsk me longk time ago of thadt boy."

"So I did, Simon. Have you something to tell me more?" asked Wilmot diplomatically.

"I haf on gondition, Meester Veelmot, on gondition—solemn gondition."

"And what is that condition, Simon?" queried the other, endeavoring to control the almost sensational interest which he felt.

"The gondition ees thees: thadt you veell swear to segrecy, andt gif me bond to do whadt vas just width thadt boy."

"I will pledge myself to secrecy, provided the secret should not be dishonoring to me or to others; and as for a bond to do justice to Kinky, I will readily give that in any case where his interests are involved," returned Wilmot.

"Very vell, then I trust you, Meester Veelmot. My

vife, now thadt she ees Gristian, veell not let me rest until I do thees pisness up. You veel be surprised, Meester Veelmot, to hear thadt I am reech man—very reech man."

"I supposed you were a fairly well-to-do tradesman, Simon, having seen your shop and stock; but I had not thought you very rich," answered Wilmot.

"Yess, I am reech, and I stay peddler to make eet seem thadt I am not reech. I haf hundred tousand dollar—more, hundred feefty tousand dollar. Budt, Meester Veelmot, feefty tousand dollar of whadt I haf call mine ees belongk to Keenky. My vife, she veell no more rest—and, peleef me, Meester Vilmot, *I* veell no more rest myself—until thadt money ees in your hand. You vill promise me, Meester Veelmot?"

"I think I can, Simon," replied Wilmot as confidently as was possible in his then state of surprise.

Well, to make Simon's story short, this is what Wilmot learned from all his circumlocutions and detailed accounts, which seemed to be honest in every syllable, though often difficult to translate into a comprehensible setting: Kinky's father was a young Jew, a kinsman of Simon, with whom he had been in business at the time of the former's death. His name was Isaac Meyers, and, like Simon, he was a native of Europe. Being the son of a liberal-minded father and being well educated, he had moved much in Christian society; and in New York City, where all nationalities meet and mingle, he had met the daughter of an Italian painter of some local celebrity, but of no means except what the doubtful sale of his colors could be trusted to bring. Beatrice Pizetti had easily been induced to accept the

suit of a handsome young lover from a land so near her own native soil and one reputed to be the heir of a rich father. But Beatrice's father was not pleased with the match. For a time there was hesitancy on the part of the girl. This hesitancy, however, soon gave way to purpose, and a secret marriage was celebrated by a civil magistrate. The match promised happiness, but death that passed by the cradle of one day with its wonder of a dark-eyed, dark-haired babe took the mother. Two days later the father, unable to bear the grief which came of the death of his idolized young wife, ended his own life with a revolver. There were no papers; both Meyers's father and the father of his wife had disowned them because of their unapproved marriage; the existence of a babe was almost unknown—indeed, the painter had died soon after his daughter's elopement. Simon determined on his course without delay. Turning into money the business which belonged equally to himself and his partner, he took the whole, with the orphan babe, his wife, and little Moses, but a few weeks older than the other, and, covering his tracks, came South. The remainder of the story tells itself: So soon as Kinky was able to run about and earn a few pennies, so as to support himself, he was rooted out of Simon's nest, nameless and without hope or claim for his legitimate inheritance. But there was one, even the King, who took him up, and now that Name above all names was powerful to disclose the secrets of the oppressor of the orphan.

"Well," explained Wilmot after he had heard the whole story, "I see no reason, Simon, why I should

not give you my pledge nor why I should not give bond and take over Kinky's inheritance. There is no evidence in the case except your own testimony, nor would there be recourse in law were I or any other disposed to distress you, which I am not. But is there no possibility that Kinky might have an entailed interest in other family inheritances—his grandfather's estate, for instance?"

"No, Meester Veelmot, belief me, there ees not; and, pesides, thadt wouldt be gontrary to your pledge of segrecy."

"Very good; I will not distress you, seeing you have done what seems honest and fair, though you were long in doing so, and were false—very false—to the child in his time of greatest need."

"Even so. Eet vass not rigdt; eet vass gruel. But I haf suffered, Meester Veelmot; and eef there be Messiah, I hope he veell forgif the sin."

"He will, Simon (for that is his promise), if you ask him. Could you not ask him now?"

"No, Meester Veelmot, I thingk I veell not—no. You veell make me thadt bond, and then I gif you check for money. To-morrow? Very vell. Good morning, Meester Veelmot," and with that the Alsatian Israelite took his departure.

At his father's home that evening Wilmot met with his second happy surprise. After tea, the father said: "Harry, I want to see you for half an hour or such a matter in the library." That was not an unusual call, for Colonel Wilmot's habit was to relax in the evening, and it was his delight to have the members of his family about him. But the son very soon made out that

the interview was to be strictly between him and his father. When they were seated in chairs which Colonel Wilmot had drawn up to the library table, the latter spread certain papers before them and said: "Harry, I have this afternoon bought Applegate Wood and two hundred acres of the meadows and cultivated land adjoining."

"What do you propose, father? an addition to the city?"

"Not exactly; and yet it will be an immensely valuable addition, as I believe. I propose to build and equip at my own expense an industrial and training school for boys. I see in this the greatest opportunity of the age. Our streets are crowded with boys who for lack of proper training and the impartation of worthy ideals are wasting through the bottom of society, as corn grains waste through the floor of a barn. There is a way for me to help in rescuing thousands and tens of thousands, it may be, in this generation. It is but justice, my boy, to admit that my inspiration, as well as my impulse to do this thing, has come through your work. I want to embody the ideals of your Boys' League in this new institution. I shall ask you to take the administration of the trust, and find, at whatever cost necessary, the teachers and superintendents of departments who will carry out your ideas. I have long deliberated this scheme, and have never been surer in all my life of a special guidance in reaching my conclusions."

So it was that Colonel Wilmot had worked out every detail of his generous benefaction. A long time the son followed the father as he went through his care-

fully written specifications and blue prints for buildings, the plotting of lands, the apportionment of studios, libraries, workshops, laboratory, greenhouses, schools, exercise grounds, and even to the appointments of a natatorium. "With all these," remarked Colonel Wilmot, pushing back his chair, "the religious spirit and ideals are to be paramount. These others are but adjuncts to that ultimate purpose. In a word, this school is to be the complete making of men, so far as human help and agency can go. The intellect and emotions will be touched with equal force, while the skill and gifts of each lad will be brought out. It is the first work of civilization; it is to be accepted as the ultimate high task of the Church in the saving of the race. Deeds, not theories; a direct, personal, and persistent ministry on the part of every one who can—the largest for those who have ability; the least for those who can offer no more. This that I offer is little, but it is dedicated in hope."

Harry Wilmot slept but little that night; the events of the day were overwhelming to his senses. His thoughts in half dreams wandered through heights and depths of purpose, present and prophetic, and mingling with them went high hopes born of a perfect and passionate human love.

. . . . . .

But why should I linger in the years of my story? Its lessons, though imperfectly expounded, have all been set down in their order. The story as I have found it is one of life, of possible, practical, logical application, in living, of the Galilean principle. The Master's secret is the one that forever holds, his plan the

one that always tells—namely, that each one who has found the kingdom of God should become to as many as he may the door to that kingdom; and these, if never so few, will multiply themselves into doors for others. The Master chose twelve to be with him, and these he filled with himself; in their turn they filled others, and the filling shall go on until the world is leavened into perfectness. Those who undertake to do all things will do nothing; but those who do humble things well will, in the end, be doers of great and immortal deeds. Duty is measured by ability, and opportunity is at last subject to a sane and prayer-helped judgment. We can do what we can do, no more. Love has ordained that we do so much, and woe to those who hold back from the doing! "Follow me!" is the King's command. That means movement, service—definite, intelligent, and in the end fruitful service. Harry Wilmot is our sober, everyday, heart-true ideal of a disciple. If his example helps any to profit withal, we shall feel repaid for our humble effort to coax him out of his quiet ways of serving and loving.

But I am mindful before closing these pages that certain questions are being asked by my readers, and these it will be my pleasure to answer.

Did Kinky recover his inheritance from the self-confessed Simon, the peddler? He did; it was paid into the hands of Wilmot, who gave the necessary bond as Kinky's guardian. The whole sum was fifty thousand dollars, with interest for ten years. After this payment, it appeared that Simon was still rich—"very rich," as he averred. Immediately after this

transaction he built a beautiful home on the Avenue, invested in a representative business in the city, and became a useful citizen. He was often thereafter seen in Dr. Chadborne's church with his wife and son. It is hard for the leopard to change his spots. Simon has never confessed the King; but often he has stopped, silk hat in hand, at the door of the great church after service to greet Dr. Chadborne and invariably to say: "Pastor, I like your *doctorments.*" There are many prayers going up for old Simon, and none of these is more earnest than those offered up by Kinky and Harry Wilmot.

I now hear the question asked: "Did all the Knights of the League hold out? Did they all keep the word of the King?" They did not *all* hold out. The Master chose twelve disciples, and of these there was found one to betray him and another to deny. It has ever been so. But I shall not disclose here the names of the two of those who took high vows in the Castle of Arms and then went astray in the enchanted paths of manhood. Shall he that follows his Lord build more securely than He?

It was twelve years after that first Sabbath afternoon visit of Wilmot and his street "gang" to Applegate Wood that I came into a full knowledge of the things of which I have written in this narrative. It was then that I learned that Mr. Parry Granger, a young man of four or five and twenty, the head of the largest printing establishment in the city, the chairman of nearly all its charity and benevolent movements, and a connoisseur in music, was none other than the head of the former "Gang of Six." The cheerful, wooded

slope before the Cliff of Arms in the Applegate Wood had been transformed. A wall with a high-arched gate inclosed the wood, and through the open spaces made therein looked the fine stone fronts of the ample buildings of "The Wilmot Technical and Industrial School for Boys." Before that splendid monument of his unselfishness had been completed Colonel Wilmot slept, as he had said, his last sleep; but a lifelike bronze statue of him looks from the front of the house of his building, and no boy ever passes under it without a sense of thankfulness and reverence. From his offices in the Applegate Building Harry Wilmot administers the munificent trust of his father, and attends, as he can, to the welfare of his Knights, represented in many Chapters modeled after that first fellowship in the Castle of Arms. Sim Phillips—I should say Dr. Phillips, for he took his *doctorate* in a fine old school beyond the waters—is the chief genius in the faculty of the Wilmot School. Robert Mooney, the Irish Knight, is the head of the finely appointed machine shop of the "Wilmot," where hundreds of boys taken from the street are every year trained to the highest degree of skill. The experimental and practical farm of the School, which is every year made like a tract in "fertile Phthia," is under the direction of three former Knights who were sent away to be fitted in chemistry, geology, and agriculture for this especial use. You would know the chief of this staff as Jimmy Glenn, the widow's son. Mack Pooley is director in the textile school, and Joseph Pontos, the Greek boy, who was sent back to his native Greece to study, teaches the classic course, and is master of the athletic field.

There are nearly four hundred boys gathered into the halls and dormitories of this model school last year. A fine chapel building stands over the very spot where the Knights used to light their camp fires, and from its rear a stone stair goes up to the Castle of Arms, about which has been built a castellated parapet of fine white stone. Every Sabbath afternoon these hundreds of boys gather in their chapel to partake of much the same simple but high and soulful fellowship enjoyed by the one-time "Gang of Six." Once each year Wilmot gathers together as many of his first Knights as have remained faithful to him—and they are a goodly company—and with them he repairs to the Castle of Arms, when the feast is spread, the candles are lit, and they live over in their stronghold, which is all unchanged within, the days that sealed their hearts unto a unity of purpose.

At this time Kinky, the youngest of the Knights, is finishing his education in an Eastern college. He has visited the native land of his mother to study art in rare old Florence. He is to give yet other years to art in the home of Raphael and Lorenzo, for a double portion of the spirit of his grandsire has come upon him. He is no longer Kinky, but Mr. Wilmot Pizetti Meyers, having assumed the name of his first benefactor along with those of his ancestors. Kinky—for so we must call him at last—is devoutly and evangelically religious. He still hears the voice of the King and still haunts with his eyes the glory of sunsets and sunrises. He has one supreme ambition, and that is to translate the mediæval art of his motherland into the saner light and color of the disenthralled faith of the

Christ of to-day. There is a studio awaiting his return under the shadow of the ferns of the Cliff of Arms. It will be a high day on Applegate campus when he returns.

A fine boulevard leads from the city limits to Applegate arch. It is now near the sunset. A glory is spread over half the sky; like a mist of gold it falls on the roofs and groves below the Cliff of Arms. A carriage is moving along the boulevard; it is passing through the Applegate arch. In it are a handsome man, whom you would take to be forty years of age, and a lady of striking features—beautiful, you would say, if that did not seem an insufficient term. Queenly is the word you feel impelled to use. A shout bursts from the throats of scores of boys on the campus, and caps are lifted in salutation by the way. I think we should know this handsome pair. They are Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wilmot. Of course you remember that Mrs. Wilmot was Ophelia Burton. She is a woman whose devout spirit and high gifts fit well into the life and ideals of her husband. God has made her new song a blessing to thousands.