

moaning in my great misery until I fell fast asleep on the floor.

"I have no theory about dreams and visions; and I don't know, what you, Mr. Walton, may think as to whether these ended with the first ages of the Church; but surely if one falls fast asleep without an idea in one's head and a whole dismal world of misery in one's heart, and wakes up quiet and refreshed, without the misery, and with an idea, there can be no great fanaticism in thinking that the change may have come from somewhere near where the miracles lie—in fact, that God may have had something—might I not say everything?—to do with it. For my part, if I were to learn that He had no hand in this experience of mine, I couldn't help losing all interest in it and wishing that I had died of the misery which it dispelled. Certainly, if it had a physical source, it wasn't that I was more comfortable, for I was hungrier than ever, and, you may well fancy, cold enough, having slept on the bare floor without anything to cover me, on Christmas Eve—for Christmas Eve it was. No doubt my sleep had done me good, but I suspect the sleep came to quiet my mind for the reception of the new idea.

"The way Mrs. Conan kept Christmas Day, as she told me in the morning, was—to comfort her old bones in bed until the afternoon, and then to have a good tea with a chop; after which she said she would have me read the Newgate Calendar to her. So, as soon as I had washed up the few breakfast things, I asked if, while she lay in bed, I might not go out for a little while to look for work. She laughed at the notion of my being able to do anything, but did not object to my trying. So I dressed myself as neatly as I could, and set out.

"There were two narrow streets full of small shops, in which those of furniture brokers predominated, leading from the two lower corners of the square down into Oxford Street; and in a shop in one of these, I was not sure which, I had seen an old piano standing, and a girl of about my own age watching. I found the shop at last, although it was shut up, for I knew the name, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a stout matron, with a not unfriendly expression, who asked me what I wanted. I told her I wanted work. She seemed amused at the idea—for I was very small for my age then, as well as now—but, apparently willing to have a chat with me, asked what I could do. I told her I could teach her daughter music. She asked me what made me come to her, and I told her. Then she asked me how much I should charge. I told her that some ladies had a guinea a lesson, at which she laughed

so heartily that I had to wait until the first transports of her amusement were over before I could finish by saying that for my part I should be glad to give an hour's lesson for threepence, only, if she pleased, I should prefer it in silver. But how was she to know, she asked, that I could teach her properly? I told her I would let her hear me play; whereupon she led me into the shop, through a back room, in which her husband sat smoking a long pipe, with a tankard at his elbow. Having taken down a shutter, she managed with some difficulty to clear me a passage through a crowd of furniture to the instrument, and with a struggle I squeezed through and reached it; but at the first chord I struck I gave a cry of dismay. In some alarm she asked what was the matter, calling me *child* very kindly. I told her it was so dreadfully out of tune I couldn't play upon it at all; but if she would get it tuned I should not be long in showing her I could do what I professed. She told me she could not afford to have it tuned, and if I could not teach Bertha on it as it was, she couldn't help it. This, however, I assured her, was utterly impossible; upon which, with some show of offence, she reached over a chest of drawers and shut down the cover. I believe she doubted whether I could play at all, and had not been merely amusing myself at her expense. Nothing was left but to thank her, bid her good morning, and walk out of the house, dreadfully disappointed.

"Unwilling to go home at once, I wandered about the neighbourhood, through street after street, until I found myself in another square, with a number of business signs in it—one of them that of a pianoforte firm, at sight of which a thought came into my head: the next morning I went in, and requested to see the master. The man to whom I spoke stared, no doubt, but he went, and returning after a little while, during which my heart beat very fast, invited me to walk into the counting-house. Mr. Perkins was amused with the story of my attempt to procure teaching and its frustration. If I had asked him for money, to which I do not believe hunger itself could have driven me, he would probably have got rid of me quickly enough—and small blame to him, as Mrs. Conan would have said; but to my request that he would spare a man to tune Mrs. Lampeter's piano, he replied at once that he would, provided I could satisfy him as to my efficiency. Thereupon he asked me a few questions about music, of which some I could

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