

the first time he had prayed in years, but the passionate entreaty that came from the man's soul needed no guidance.

Morning found him much worse, and when the doctor came he looked very grave: With frightened eyes Gabriel touched the good man's arm.

'He will not die?' he asked pitifully.

The doctor smiled reassuringly. But he had taken the case none too soon.

Presently a thought came to Gabriel. Some one must let the director know of his father's illness, and there was no one to do it but Mr. Johnson and himself. When the sweet-faced nurse arrived to take charge of the sick room, Gabriel slipped quietly from his post by the bed, and a few minutes later was making his way up the busy street through the jostling crowd, his crutch clinking bravely against the pavement, Mr. Johnson close at his heels. He was quite sure he would know the concert hall, for his father had once pointed it out to him, but the way to it proved most confusing.

It was a raw, unseasonable day in October, and Gabriel found it hard work battling against the wind. His arm, too, ached painfully from the continuous friction of his crutch, and twice he lost his hat. But with undaunted courage he struggled bravely on, while Mr. Johnson trotted steadily on ahead. At last, by a happy chance, they turned into the very street they were seeking, and the next minute Gabriel was timidly pushing open the heavy baize door of the concert hall. There was no one to be seen in the spacious lobby, so he sank wearily down upon a settee to wait, his aching body relaxing gratefully against the leather cushions. Presently a gentleman came slowly down the stairs. He did not notice Gabriel, but entered a doorway at some distance from them. The child sighed with disappointment. He had so hoped he would come their way. As it was, he patiently resigned himself to wait a little longer.

Not so the indefatigable Mr. Johnson. In his opinion it was plainly time for action. He had eyed the gentleman with a speculative air until he disappeared; then with evident purpose he started down the hall after him and vanished into the same doorway through which he had passed. Gabriel was alarmed. What could he be up to? He would go and see.

At the door he paused in astonishment, for right in the middle of the floor, bolt upright on his hind legs, sat Mr. Johnson; his front paws appealingly folded, his wistful eyes raised with a world of entreaty in their patient depths to a kindly-faced man who sat before a large desk. The gentleman was smiling broadly. His first intimation of the little fellow's presence had been when, chancing to glance up from his work, he discovered him sitting there, all the bursting, overflowing love of his loyal heart shining in his eyes, appealing straight to the broad, passionate humanity of the man.

His little friend needed help—help beyond his ken—and so, in pathetic acknowledgment of his own limitations, he had come to this stranger for aid.

Catching sight of Gabriel in the doorway, he ran joyfully toward him.

'Is this your dog, my little man?' inquired the gentleman pleasantly.

'This is Mr. Johnson, sir,' said Gabriel gently, with unconscious correction.

The gentleman repressed a smile. The child was most scrupulous to refer to his little chum always in this way, stoutly maintaining that he was a dog only in appearance. He had named him for the friendly old man who had given him to him, and had invested him with all his endearing attributes.

'I think he is trying to ask you, sir, where we can find Mr. Ludwig,' explained Gabriel politely. 'He is the gentleman who is to give the concert to-night.'

So interested had the man been in Mr. Johnson that he had not at once noticed the child's crutch. Now, as his glance fell upon it, a shadow almost of pain saddened his face. He had once had a crippled child of his own.

'Come in and sit down, boy,' he said kindly; 'I am Mr. Ludwig. What can I do for you?'

The child's face brightened.

'I am so glad you are,' he said naively. 'I am so very tired! We have come to tell you, sir, that dad is sick and cannot sing at your concert to-night. He is so sorry and—and disappointed, because it meant great things for him to have this chance.'

'Are you Mr. Newton's son?' asked Mr. Ludwig gravely.

'Yes, sir; my name is Gabriel.'

'I am sorry to hear of your father's illness. I was afraid of it last night. Did it mean so much to him to sing at this concert? Tell me about it—that is, if you would like to,' he added, in quick recognition of the child's sensitive nature.

So, with insight as unerring as that of his little friend, Gabriel raised his clear blue eyes to Mr. Ludwig's face, and was soon pouring into his sympathetic ears the simple story of their hopes and struggles, a story with no note of self-pity in it for his own helpless boyhood, but only of his great longing to lighten in some way the burden.

Just then a big, worried-looking young man hastily entered the studio.

'I'm in luck to find you, Ludwig! My soprano's voice has gone hopelessly bad, and I've moved heaven and earth to get some one to take his place. I can't give that congregation any old thing. It won't go. They've been used to the best, and they won't have anything else. I've worked like a dog to make it a success, and now the whole thing is ruined unless you can help me out. A fellow is out of touch with things in the country, but I hoped that, being in town here, you could put me next to something good.'

'I wish I could,' answered Ludwig regretfully, 'but the fact is boys' voices are not much in my line.'

'But you surely know of some one—hello! Who have you got here?'—catching sight of Gabriel—'a pupil? Can you sing, boy?'

'A little,' admitted Gabriel modestly.

'You can? Let's hear you,' and rushing impetuously to the piano Durland picked up a handful of music that was lying about.

'What can you sing, child?'

On top of the pile lay the songs his father was to have sung that night.

'I can sing that one,' he said, pointing to it.

'That!' exclaimed Durland incredulously. 'That? Why, boy, that is one of the most difficult things there is.'

'But I know it quite well,' Gabriel persisted. 'I've learned nearly all of dad's songs, though, of course, I can't sing them like dad can. No one could do that.'

'Well, go ahead, boy; let's hear you,' said Durland, still sceptical; and he softly ran over the few opening bars of the prelude.

With head thrown back and his soul in his eyes, Gabriel sang—sang with a self-forgetful abandon that gave to his glorious voice a power and sweetness almost unearthly. It was a voice that made strong men cry and lifted the most callous above the sordidness of earthly desire to the plane of heavenly inspiration. The child's whole being seemed to pulse and glow with the ecstasy of it, and long after the beautiful melody had ended his expressive face radiated with the divine joy it had given him.

'Gracious, boy, who taught you to sing?' cried Durland excitedly, when he could speak, while Mr. Ludwig surreptitiously wiped his eyes.

'Dad,' answered the child simply.

'I have never heard a more marvellous voice,' Durland said. 'The boy's fortune is made! Do you know that you have a wonderful gift, boy?'

'Have I?' Gabriel answered with glowing eyes. 'I love to sing better than anything else in the world.'

'And I want you to come and sing for me at my festival,' Durland continued, 'and every Sunday afterward in my church. Wouldn't you like to be my soloist? I am the choir-master, you know, and will pay you a good salary.'

Gabriel seemed scarcely to hear the inducement offered. But one fact absorbed him. He was to sing in a big church—the highest dream of his obscure little life, and the gentleman had said it was in the country, where the birds lived and the flowers, and where one might lie all day in the soft green grass and watch the sky.

'What does his father sing?' asked Durland suddenly, in an aside to Ludwig.

'Tenor, and he has a superb voice, though temporarily injured by ill-health.'

'Just the man I want, then,' cried Durland delightedly. 'I certainly am in luck if this man proves to be what I want.'

'Could dad and Mr. Johnson come, too?' The child asked anxiously. 'Because I couldn't leave them, you see.'

'Mr. Johnson?' asked Durland, mystified.

'My friend here,' Gabriel explained.

'Of course they can come, child. There is a cottage right near the church where a nice old lady lives. I live there myself, and there will be room for us all.'

Then Mr. Ludwig, laying his hands upon his head, said:

'There is something I want you to do for me, Gabriel. I want you to sing at the concert—sing your father's song for the people, just as you have sung it now for us here. Will you do this for me and for dad?'

Gabriel's eyes were wide with amazement. Sing in dad's place—he, Gabriel!

'Did you mean, sir, that you want me to—'

'Yes, boy, I want you very much, and you shall have