

***LAURA ELIZABETH
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***PIPPIN;
A WANDERING
FLAME***

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Pippin; A Wandering Flame

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PIPPIN

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CHAPTER I

PIPPIN SAYS GOOD-BY

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THE chaplain seemed to be waiting for some one. He was sitting in his office, as usual at this hour of the morning the little bare office in a corner of Shoreham State Prison, with its worn desk and stool, its chair facing the window (what tales that chair could tell, if it had power of speech!), its piles of reports and pamphlets, its bookshelf within arm's reach of the desk. (Bible, Concordance, Shakespeare, the "Life of John Howard," Pickwick, the "Golden Treasury"; these, thumbed and shabby, jostled the latest works on prison reform and criminology. An expressive bookshelf, as all bookshelves are.)

One would not have picked out Lawrence Hadley for a prison chaplain; if chaplain at all, he surely belonged in the army. Look, bearing, voice—that clear ringing voice we remember so well—all bespoke the soldier; and a soldier he was, not only because of his service in the Philippines—he was in the army till his health broke down—but because he was born one.

As I said, he seemed to be waiting for some one. His eyes were watching the yard, taking note of each figure that came and went, seeing that old Pete was walking lame, that French Bill was drooping and poking his head forward, a bad sign with him; that Mike was whistling, a good sign always; but while his eyes looked, his ears listened; and now, when it seemed that he had been listening a long time, came the familiar knock.

"Ah!" The chaplain's chair, which had been tilted back on two legs for meditation, came down on four for action. "Come in!"

"Pippin, sir!"

"Come in, Pippin! I was looking for you."

A young man entered and closed the door behind him, making no sound. He moved with an extraordinary grace and swiftness, like some wild creature, yet there was no haste or hurry about him. At first glance, the two men were of something the same build, both tall and square shouldered, holding their chins well up and looking straight forward; but there the resemblance ceased. The chaplain was sandy fair, with blue eyes as kindly as they were piercing; the other was all brown: brown, crisp, curling hair, brown skin, brown flashing eyes. The eyes were not flashing now, though; they were as nearly dim as they could be, for Pippin had been saying good-by, and now was come the hardest parting of all.

"Well, here I be, Elder!" he said. "I s'pose it's time I was off."

"Yes!" said Mr. Hadley. "Yes, I suppose it is. Well, Pippin, we're going to miss you here. The place won't be the same without you."

Pippin made as if to speak, but the words did not come.

"I just want you to know," the chaplain went on slowly, "what a help you've been to me this past year, especially the past six months. I don't know—I really do not know—how I shall get on without you, Pippin!"

Pippin cleared his throat and spoke huskily.

"Elder," he said, "say the word and I'll stay! Honest I will. I'd be proud, sir, if I could help you, any way, shape, or manner. I would so!"

The chaplain laughed rather ruefully, and rose from his chair. "That would never do!" he said. "No, no, Pippin, you mustn't think I'm not just as glad to have you go as I am sorry to lose you. You'll be helping outside instead of inside, that's all. We shall not let go of you altogether. How about Sandy Colt, Pippin?" he asked with an abrupt change of voice. "You've been with him a good deal this past month, I've noticed. How about him?"

Pippin considered a moment.

"Sandy," he said, "is all right; or I think so, Elder. I've been round with him, as you say. I kind o' thought mebber you got him put on bindin' with me?"

The chaplain nodded.

"I kind o' thought it squinted that way. Well, sir, that boy is about ready to go on the straight; leastways he's sick to death of crooks and their games, and that's the first step. I—kind o'—think—" the words came more and more slowly—"it's about time to leave Sandy alone with the money box, Elder."

"What do you mean?" The chaplain looked up sharply; met a glance full of meaning, and smiled. "So you knew, eh?" he said musingly. "I wondered if you did, Pippin."

"Know!" Pippin's eyes were shining now, and he spoke with suppressed energy. "What would you think of it? Lemme tell you, Elder! I've wanted to tell you ever since. I'd ben tryin'—tryin' hard. I'd found the Lord—found Him for keeps, and I knowed it; but yet, along that summer, after—"

that day, you know, sir—I couldn't seem to keep holt of Him *stiddy*. Now wouldn't that give you a pain, sir? Honest, wasn't it awful? But 'twas so!"

"Not awful in the least, Pippin! Did you ever see a baby learning to walk? He'll tumble down twice for every new step he takes. You were learning to walk, Pippin."

"Well, I got the tumbles all right!" Pippin shook his head. "Here was the Lord helpin' me, helpin' me good, and you too, Elder, and Warden, and Pete: and yet with all that—gorry to 'Liza!—with all that, if the devil didn't get in his licks too, call me pudd'n head! He'd wait till I was dog-tired, mebbe, or some one had spoke ugly to me. 'Huh!' he'd say, 'you're no good; what makes you think you are? You're spoilin' a first-rate crook,' he'd say, 'and you'll never make anything else, 'cause that's where your gifts lie,' he'd say. 'Nobody'll ever trust you, either!' he'd say. 'Sweat all you like, and pray all you're a mind to, and sing your insides out,' he'd say; 'twon't make any difference. A crook you are, and a crook folks'll think you!' he'd say."

"But you knew better!"

"Course I knew better; but there's times when knowin' don't seem to help; and them times he'd get me down, Satan would, and kneel on my chist, and lam into me—Green grass! he *would* lam in!"

Pippin was silent a moment; the chaplain watched him, silent too.

"Come one day," Pippin went on, "he got me bad. I tried singin', but that wouldn't do; I tried prayin', and all I could make out was the Lord was real sorry for me, but I'd got to play this hand alone. When you come round I tried to speak

up and answer pleasant and cheerful, but I guess I made a poor fist of it. I see you look me over; then you went off kind o' thinkin', whistlin' that tune—what is it, that tune you give us when you're thinkin' somethin' up, Elder?"

The chaplain laughed outright.

"Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" he said. "You know too much, Pippin."

"I know this much!" cried Pippin. "I know you sent for me half an hour later, and I come. Here were you, and there was I, and on the table was a box full of money, and you were counting it over; might have been a hundred dollars."

"Just!" said Mr. Hadley. "My quarter's salary!"

"Looked to be! Well, sir, I don't need to tell you. You began to ask me about my cell, and was I careful about this, that or the other; all of a sudden you pulls up and looks at your watch. 'Hello!' you says. 'Ten o'clock! I've got to go and speak to the Warden about something. Just watch this money till I come back, will you, Pippin?' And off you go full chisel, and leave me—"

Pippin's voice broke, and he brushed his hand across his eyes. The chaplain laid a quiet hand on his shoulder; his own eyes were dim for a moment.

"And you think Sandy is ready for that?" he said quietly.

"I do, sir!" Pippin straightened his shoulders and threw up his chin again. "I know for myself that was the devil's last kick. I've never had no more trouble with him since that day; and I think Sandy's time has come to find there's somebody trusts him and looks to him to be a decent chap from now on. Then there's Tom Kidd—but I'm keepin' you, Elder! Mebbe you was goin' out, sir? Pleasant day like this—"

"I'm keeping you!" The kind hand still on his shoulder, Pippin was gently propelled toward the door. "Time you were starting, Pippin, since you are determined to go in this way, without help or company. I'm coming down with you, and you can tell me about Tom as we go."

Down the stone stairs, talking earnestly as he went, pausing now and then for the unlocking of an iron door which clanged "good-by" as it shut behind him; through the narrow corridors whose brick walls shone with the rubbing of generations of shoulders; through the guard room, pausing here to shake the friendly hands of a dozen turnkeys, clerks, attendants, all wishing him good luck, all bidding him not forget them for they would sure miss him; down the final stairs at last went Pippin, the chaplain still at his shoulder, through the door behind which he had left hope three years ago, to find her again on the other side—out into the air and sunlight, a free man.

Now came the last handclasp—long and firm, saying many things; the last clear glance of love and trust between blue eyes and brown; the last word.

"And remember, my son, that wherever you look for the grace of God, there you will be pretty sure to find it!"

"That's right, Elder!" said Pippin. "Amen! I'll look for it, sure! And I'll never forget all you've done for me. So long, Elder!"

"Good-by, my son! Good-by, Pippin! The Lord be with you!"

The chaplain stood on the steps, watching the lithe, alert figure as it strode along the highway; coming to the corner, it turned, waved a salute and vanished.

The chaplain sighed; he was glad, heartily glad, that Pippin was "out," but he would miss him sadly; everybody would miss him. He had been the sunshine of the place, these six months past. He looked up at the gray walls, the frowning windows, and gave a little shiver; sighed and smiled, squared his shoulders, and went back into the prison.

Pippin, too, as he waved his farewell at the corner, smiled and sighed and squared his shoulders, then he thrust out his jaw in a way the parson knew well.

"Now, bo," said Pippin, "it's up to you! Green grass! I'll miss that man, I sure will. I'll miss him, and the Warden, and them little tads of his, and Pete, and—gee! I'll miss the whole darned show. Now wouldn't that give you a pain? Let's look it over a spell!"

He looked carefully about, and, finding a large stone, flicked the dust from it with a clean pocket handkerchief (which he then inspected anxiously, shaking every speck of dust from it before repocketing it) and, after laying down the bundle he carried, sat down.

"It is up to you, son!" he repeated. "The Lord will see to His end, you needn't worry about that any; you'll find your own enough to heft. The Elder knows a lot!" he added meditatively. "He doesn't give you no easy talk about blessin's an' golden crowns an' that: no, sir! 'You've got to behave,' he says, 'or you'll be back here again. And the way for you to behave is to hold fast to the grace that God has given you and to get hold of what He has given to others.' Yes, sir! Straight talk is what Elder Hadley gives. An' I'm goin' to do them things; just watch me! And to begin with,

I'm goin' to do some forgettin', a heap of it. I'm goin' to forget the crib, an' the gang, and the—the *entire* b'ilin'! Yes, sir! I'll say good-by to 'em." He stopped, and taking off his cap, turned it slowly round and round in his hands. "Say good-by to 'em!" he repeated under his breath.

He stared before him, as one seeing visions at once strange and familiar. A cellar, dark and noisome, under a city street: an old woman in a long blue cloak and a white cap, crouching over a spark of fire: a half-naked child playing on the naked floor: in a corner a man sprawling half-drunk, smoking a clay pipe. The child stumbles over the man's feet, is clutched and held fast in one hand while the other shakes the burning dottle from the pipe on the little bare back.

"To larn ye manners!" growls the man.

The woman rises painfully, totters across the cellar and brings down her staff with astonishing force on the man's head—"She must have been a hundred!" Pippin thinks—bidding him get out for the drunken brute he is. Whack! Whack! The second blow brings the man staggering to his feet and out of the door, protesting thickly, "I was only larnin' him manners! He'll remember that, see if he don't."

The child shrieked when the fire touched him; he is now whimpering piteously. The old woman finds a rag and rubs something cooling on his back, muttering some words—what were they? Pippin racks corners of his memory.

"White—white—patter, was it?" And then, "St. Peter's brother," and—no, it is gone. But he knows the other! He sees her now take the child's two hands in hers, hears her croon the unforgettable words to the unforgettable tune:

There was an old man,
And he was mad,
And he ran up the steeple.
He took off
His great big hat,
And waved it over the people!

"I won't forget that!" said Pippin. "No, nor I won't forget the whole of Granny Faa: some parts I'll keep. She was good to me many a time, and give me snuff out of her box. But I'll forget Dod Bashford all right. Just watch me—"

He paused, for the vision came again. A dark night, a dark house, shrubbery gleaming wet about it. A match flickers, carefully sheltered by brawny hands, and shows a small window, as of a pantry, standing partly open. Somebody is bidden with an oath to "boost the kid up!" A boy of ten is seized by other hands and raised to the window. "Get in!" says a rough whisper. "Round to your left and open the first door. If you make a noise, I'll cut your heart out!" For some reason—it is not clear what—the boy is unwilling, hangs back, struggling in air, pushing away from the window-sill toward which he is thrust. "Will you?" growls the rough voice, and the lighted match is held to his leg. Still the child struggles dumbly for a little; at last, with a smothered shriek, he gives up and climbs in at the window.

"Green grass!" mutters Pippin. "I'll forget *that*: watch me!"

He blinked twice or thrice, then straightened himself. "There!" said Pippin. "There ain't no such folks in the world. I don't know as there ever was—except old Granny! I'll keep her in it, 'long of them things she done for me. And anyhow

Granny was out of it before we begun to do auto sneakin', country houses, and like that. She was dead by that time. Now, son, you think of all the *good* folks you know. Count 'em over, what say? Take the other taste out of your mouth, see? There's Elder Hadley first and foremost: keep your eyes on him right straight along: he's like—like a window that's open, and no bars to it, and you see the Lord through it, some way. Then there's the Warden, and Mis' Warden—gee! remember that dinner she sent me in one day I pulled her little tad out the water? There was—" Pippin's eyes kindled—"roast beef, mashed potatoes—" he was checking the items off on his fingers—"fried parsnips, pickles, apple pie—green grass! that was a dinner! And she sent it to me by name, and her thanks, Elder Hadley said, all because I see that kid fall into the cistern and hauled him out. Well! and the kid—some kid that!—and he follerin' me round after that, every chanst he got; and the others, too, and nothin' doin' but I must sing to 'em. And then old Pete! gee! Pete'll miss me, and me him. You make brooms 'longside of a guy for a year and you know what each other thinks; and Pete is *all right!*"

He paused once more, seeing things. No distant vision this time, but the familiar scene on which he had just turned his back—forever, he and the Elder hoped. A long vaulted room, bare and bright; forty or fifty men at work making brooms; the clean, sweet smell of the broom corn almost driving out the prison smell—almost!—near the door, under the watchful eye of an official, two men working together, binding and clipping, himself and Pete. Pete was talking, as he had talked that last day they worked together. He knew

Pippin was going out, and he, Pete, was in for life. Seemed an awful waste, Pippin thought. Just because his mad got away with him once—Hear Pete telling his story in a husky rumble, cheerfully, as a matter of course, this fourteen years now.

"I was cuttin' and rollin' my tobarker on the palm of my hand, and the old woman come along and give me a slap in the face. I shoved her off with my elbow and went on rollin' my tobarker. She come up again and hit me over the head with a stove lifter. I forgot I had my knife in my hand, and I just hit out and jabbed it into her. I hadn't oughter done it, but yet it oughter *been* done, 'pears like."

"Old Pete! And him, you might say, the Warden's right hand now, after ten years in solitary under the old management. Warden Merrow had him out of that in good shape, now I tell you! Takes care of the cows and pigs, sleeps with 'em, or so handy by he could hear if a shoat had the toothache, or like that. Warden sends him off to buy cows, order in his pocket, proud as a peacock; back in three days and he *is* back, on the dot. I tell ye! That's the way!"

Pippin lifts his chin, squares his shoulders once more. "Look at here!" he says. "If I'm goin' to set here all day belly-achin' over the folks back there, I mought as well *go* back there and stay back! It's bein' on my own, you see, after bein' a bunch of corn in a broom, as you might say. Green grass! I wish't I had some folks of my own!"

A silence followed. Pippin studied the road before him, drawing patterns in the dust with his stick. Mike Hooligan give him that stick: it come from Ireland, and was the pride of Mike's heart; he wouldn't take gold for it. Now wouldn't

that—He examined the stick carefully. It was an excellent blackthorn with an anchor carved on the head. Mike had been a sailor, and was "in" for making too free with a marlinspike on a shipmate's head. Finally, holding it up before him, he addressed it as if it were a living creature.

"Well! I ain't got no folks, see? But supposin' I had—what I would say—I'd have 'em dandy, that's what! And—what's to prevent my kind o' keepin' in the back of my head that if I *had* folks, and they *was* dandy—and they would be, for the reason I wouldn't have the other kind—why, I would act accordin' *to*. See? Well, you would! Now lemme tell you about the folks I'd have. Kind o' get 'em set up, see, and then I can carry 'em along, some kind of way, in the back of my head, and they'll do me good and keep out—other things."

Whistling softly, he took off his cap and turned it slowly round and round, considering.

"I'll have me a ma first!" he said. "She'll have a blue dress and a white apron, and—sort o' pink cheeks, and when she speaks, she'll sort o' smile all over her face. 'Sonny,' she'll say, 'sonny, come here and I'll give you a piece of pie!' No! I'm goin' too fast. 'Sonny,' she'll say, 'have you washed your hands? Go wash them good, and *then* come here and I'll give you a piece of pie.' That's the talk. Golly!—think of her carin' whether my hands was clean or not. She would, though; you bet she would! I've seen fellers as had that kind of ma. We'd have real good times together, Ma and me! I'll have me a pa, too. Lemme see what kind I'll have!" Again he paused, considering, his head on one side, his face grave and earnest. "Tall, I guess, and big; big enough to lick me if

he wanted to, but he wouldn't want to, and I wouldn't make him want to, neither. Smoke a pipe, and talk kind o' slow. Fought in the Civil War, I expect Pa would have, and no end of stories to tell. When he came in from—from—I expect he'd be a farmer: that's it! that's it! Nice white farmhouse with green blinds and a garding and white ducks and all the rest of it—Green grass! I wish't I was feedin' the ducks this minute!—Well, when Pa came in, he'd set down and smoke his pipe and then's my time. 'Tell me about Shiloh!' I'll say, or Gettysburg, or some place else. And pa'll take me between his knees—I see the Warden take his boy so, and it stays by me yet—and smoke, and talk, and gee! I'll hear the bullets zip and see the flag—old Pa! he'd be a good one, surely! Then—I wouldn't have no grandmother, because there's Granny Faa; no kin to me, but she give me snuff—but—there's brothers and sisters. How about them?"

Pippin whistled "There was an old man" carefully through three times, weighing, sifting, comparing. At last, "My brother ought to be a baby!" he announced. "That's the best way. See? That way I can watch him grow, and see him cut his teeth, and learn him manners—" he frowned, and drew his breath in sharply; then he shook himself and squared his shoulders. "Didn't I tell you I'd forgot that?" he said. "But my sister'd be in between. Call her about four; pretty little gal—pretty little gal—"

Once more the vision! An alley, or narrow court, where clothes are drying. A mite of a girl trying to take the clothes down. She cannot reach high enough; she stamps her little foot and cries. A boy comes and takes them down for her.

"Thank you, boy!" she says prettily.

"Say Pippin!" says the boy.

"Pip-*pin*!" cries the child in a clear, high little voice.

Pippin runs his fingers through his close-curling hair with a puzzled look.

"Now—now—" he said; "when was that? 'Twas after the first things I've forgot, and before the second. Pretty little gal! What was her name now? Polly? No! Dolly? No! Well, anyhow, I guess I'll have my sister like that little gal. Say her name was Dolly—and *that* ain't right somehow, but 'twill do. Now! you understand? Them's the folks I'd have—if I had 'em! See?"

He nodded to the stick, rose from his stone, and stretched his arms with a cheerful gesture; then he took up his bundle, a large bandanna neatly tied (it held a change of linen; the chaplain had offered him a small trunk and a second suit of clothes, but he liked to travel light, and could wash as he went along, he said) and swinging it over his shoulder on the end of his stick, Pippin took the road.

CHAPTER II

PIPPIN MAKES A FRIEND

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ELDER HADLEY had tried hard to persuade Pippin to commit himself to some definite plan when his time was up. He wanted to give him letters to this friend or that, who would help him to this or that position.

"Give you a leg up!" said the good man. "Why not? I'll guarantee your conduct, Pippin, and they'll be glad to help you, and give you a good start. It may make all the difference in the world to you."

"No offense, Elder," replied Pippin, "but I'd ruther not. I'd ruther walk on my own feet than other folkses', even yours. Long as I've ben here, I've took all you gave, and thankful; but now it's up to me and the Lord, and we'll go on our own. No offense in the world, and thanking you kindly, sir!"

"But what are you going to do?" asked Mr. Hadley.

"Haven't the first *idea!*" replied Pippin cheerfully. "But I'll find the right thing, just watch me! You see, Elder, this is the way I look at it. I was fetched up to a trade, and it was the devil's, wasn't it? Well! So I got a wrong start, you see. Now I've got to find the Lord's trade, the one He meant for me to find, and you can't find unless you look. That's the way I see it. I'm going to take the road and find my own trade that I was meant for: I'll know it when I see it, don't you have no fear!"

Pippin fared merrily onward, walking briskly. As he went, he talked aloud, now addressing the stick, which he called his pal, now an imaginary comrade, now the beloved figure

of the chaplain. This habit of talking aloud had been formed in his prison days. A wholly social creature, he loved the kindly sound of the human voice, and when there was no other to hear he must listen to his own. He even called up the family that his fancy had fashioned, and pictured them walking the road with him, "Ma" in her blue dress, with her pink cheeks and bright eyes, "Pa" brown and stalwart as himself ("only he'd wear a beard, kind of ancient-like and respectable"), the little girl, even the baby. A fanciful Pippin; but "I like to have things interestin'," he would say, "and they can't be real interestin' unless you have somebody to chin with. See?"

He was deep in an imaginary argument with the chaplain concerning the merits and demerits of Chiney Pottle, who had occupied the next cell to his.

"I don't say he's lively company, Elder, nor I don't say he's han'some. Take a guy like that, color of last week's lemon, and he's got somethin' wrong with his liver, most likely, and Chiney sure has. He has pains something fierce; I hear him groanin' nights. I see a yarn in a book about a bird interferin' with some guy's liver: well, Chiney sounded like that. But what I would say, you start anybody else groanin' or belly-achin', any way, shape, or manner, and Chiney's *all there!* Shuts up on his own, and is orful sorry you—"

"Hi!" said a voice close beside him. Pippin started violently. He had been so absorbed in talk that he had not heard the sound of wheels in the soft dust of the road.

The driver of the wagon pulled up his horse and surveyed him curiously. "Who were you talkin' to?" he asked.

Pippin blushed, but met his questioner's look cheerfully. A thickset, grizzled man with an honest face, now screwed up in a puzzled expression, bent forward over the dasher.

"Who were you talkin' to?" he repeated.

"I was just talkin'!" said Pippin. "I admire to talk, don't you?"

The man looked about, to see if any one else were near: then again at Pippin. "You don't look like a drinkin' man!" he said.

"That's because I ain't!" Pippin smiled.

"Nor yet you don't look loony! Yet there you was, footin' it along, and talkin' nineteen to the dozen. Looks queer, to me!"

"Does it? Now I maintain that it's more natural for a man to talk than to keep still."

The man studied Pippin with shrewd, observant eyes. At last, "Like a lift?" he said.

"Thank'ee!" said Pippin, and in another minute they were jogging along the road.

"Nice day!" said the stranger.

"Dandy! Havin' elegant weather right along. Don't know as ever I see better. As I was sayin'," Pippin turned toward his companion, "talkin' is the way of natur', or so I view it. When a man keeps still—well, it may mean one thing and it may mean another. He may be gettin' religion: I never spoke for three days when the Lord was havin' it out with me: but then again it may mean that he's plannin' to get out, or that he's goin' home. Why, I've known men that never stopped talkin', mornin' till night, fear they'd lose their minds if they did; in solitary, they was."

The man looked at him sharply. "What are you talkin' about?" he asked in a different tone.

Pippin's eyes met his squarely. "When a thing is so," he said, "it's so. I found the grace of God, and there's no lyin' in mine from now on. I've ben doin' time, sir! I'm just out of State Prison."

"Is that so?" The man was silent, his kindly face grave. "What were you in for?" the question came at last.

"Breakin' and enterin'!"

"Whew!" The gray-haired man drew in his breath with a long, slow whistle. Again he studied Pippin's face intently. "You foolin'?" he asked at length.

Pippin shook his head. "Poor kind o' foolin' I'd call that, wouldn't you? I'm tellin' you the truth."

"Whoa up!" the man checked his horse, and looked about him. A lonely road, no house in sight, no sound in the air save the distant barking of an invisible dog. After scanning the landscape, he took a careful survey of his horse, leaning forward to scrutinize every buckle of the harness; at last his eyes came back to Pippin with a very grave look. "I guess we'd better go into this a mite!" he said. "I ain't accustomed to—no, you needn't get down! I don't mean that. I want to understand where I am, that's all. Out on parole, are you, or —"

Pippin stared at him; then broke into a laugh. "Or run away? That what you was thinkin', sir? Why, if I'd run away, would I be tellin'? I guess nix! No parole, neither. I'm out for good; served my turn—and had my lesson!" he added in a different tone.

"Breakin' and enterin', too!" the gray-haired man repeated. "How come you to be breakin' and enterin'? Weren't you sayin' something about religion just now? That don't go along with burglary, young chap!"

"Brought up to it!" Pippin replied briefly. "My trade, from a baby as you may say. I've give it up now, and lookin' for another."

"How long were you there? In prison, I mean!"

"Three years. It'll sound queer to you, sir, but I count them three years the best I've had yet in my life."

Glancing at Pippin, and seeing the bright eagerness of his face, the stern look of the elder man softened. "How's that?" he said, not unkindly. "Git up, Nelson!" he clucked to the horse, which started obediently on a jog trot. Pippin drew a long breath, and threw his head back with a little upward glance. One would have thought he was giving thanks for something. Then he looked at his companion, timidly yet eagerly.

"I don't know as you'd care to hear about it, sir," he said, "but perhaps if you had a boy of your own—"

"I had! I'd like to hear, son!"

Pippin breathed deeply again, and squared his shoulders, settling himself in his seat. "I thank you, sir. I'll make it as short as I can. Well! I hadn't no parents, to know them, and I growed up anyhow, as you might say, kickin' round the streets. Come about ten years old, a man bought my time of the old woman who had a kind of an eye to me—she was no kin, but she was good to me sometimes—and I went with him, and learned sneakin'."

"Sneaking?"

"Sneak-thievin'! Hallways, overcoats, umbrellas, like that! I hated it, but I learned it good. Shopliftin', too, and pocket-pickin'! I could pick your pocket, sir, and you'd never know I'd moved my hands. Your pocket-book is in your inside breast pocket—" the man recoiled involuntarily—"and I'd advise you to change it, for you see, sir, in a crowd, any one in that line that knew his business would slit your coat and pinch it just as easy—Well! So I learned that, and at the same time I was taken on breakin's. I was small up to about twelve, and I did the openin' and gettin' in part. I always hated that. You may not believe me, but I didn't really like any of it much, but it was my trade, and I wanted to do my best; and anyhow—anyhow I had to or I'd been killed."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that! He was that kind of man, the boss who bought my time. I saw him kill a boy—I guess I won't go into that! Well, sir, I grew up big, as you see, and I cut loose from Bashford's gang. I'd learned all he had to teach—all that was worth learnin'—and I was counted a master hand for a young un. Pippin the Kid—I had other names, too, but no need to go into that. I was as proud of 'em as I am ashamed now, and I guess that's enough. He tried to keep me, but I was fed up with him and his kind, so I licked him in good shape and went over to Blankton, 'cross the river. Along about then I got in with some fellers of my own age, who thought breakin' was the only trade in the world. They were keen on it, and they meant to be gentleman burglars, and get rich, and own the earth, or as much of it as they could cover. They'd been readin' a book about a feller named Snaffles; I called him a mean skunk, but they thought he

was all creation; well, they were good fellers, and we chummed up together, and pretty soon I got my pride up and wanted to show 'em that I knew all they did ten times over. *I did!* They had growed up in homes, nice clean homes, with mothers—green grass! mothers that took care of 'em, taught 'em to say prayers, kept their clothes mended; wouldn't that give you a pain? If I saw them boys now, wouldn't I put the grace of God into them with a jimmy—not that I carry a jimmy now!" he added hastily. "I wouldn't, not if it was handier than it is, and it's dreadful handy! Now a file's different!"

"Why is it different?" asked his companion, half smiling at his earnest look.

Pippin's hair curled thick and close all over his head, like an elastic cushion. He ran his fingers through it and produced a small file.

"Anybody needs a file, you see!" he explained. "There's your nails, for one thing; a crook has to keep his nails and hands just so, or he'd lose his touch—and yet an honest man takes care of 'em too, or ought so to do! This file is a good friend to me!" He replaced it carefully, the other following his motions with wondering eyes. "But a jimmy, you see, sir," turning an animated face toward his companion, "is a crook's tool, and no one else's. Well! Where was I? Oh, yes, I had joined them fellers. Well, we made up a gang, and we got us a name; the Honey Boys we were. Crooks are real childish, or apt to be; I expect most folks are, one way or another, but there's lots of crooks that ain't all there, or maybe they wouldn't be crooks. Elder Hadley would say—but I haven't come to him yet. So we was the

Honey Boys, and we was goin' to steal di'monds and jool'ry, and the kings of the earth wouldn't be in it with us."

"My! My!" said the stranger. "An' you lookin' like an honest feller! I'm real sorry—"

"I *am* an honest feller!" cried Pippin. He leaned forward and laid his hand on the other's knee. "Just look me in the eye! I couldn't pinch the Kimberley di'mond, not if it was stickin' out in your shirt front this minute. There's no pinch in me! Just you wait! Now was the time when the Lord began to take a hand. That is, of course He was playin' the game right along, but you couldn't see the cards; now they was on the table, so to say. He'd give me just so much rope, and that was all I was goin' to have. The first big job we undertook I got pinched and run in. Green grass! how mad I was! You see, it wasn't my fault. One of our gang had a hunch against me—I'd licked him one day when he robbed a kid. Brought home a little gal's bracelet he'd took off her at the movies; wouldn't that make your nose bleed? Well, I made his, I tell you, and he laid it up; kind of Dago he was, with an ugly streak in him. There was four of us on the job—country house job, and him and me was the two to go in while the others kep' watch. So we went through the rooms, did it in good shape too, got quite a lot of swag and didn't wake a soul till just as we was gettin' out the window. He got out first and I give him the bag; just then a door opened into the pantry where we was. He caught me on the sill, give me a shove with all his strength and knocked me back into the room, then he slammed the window and run off. I was too mad to move for a minute, and then before I could get the window open, there was a woman standin' by me—a tall

woman she was, in a white gown. She just looked at me and says she, 'Why, it's a boy! Oh, your poor mother!' That took me kind of sudden, because I hadn't no mother, so to say—and I guess she see the way I felt. I believe she would have let me off, but just then her husband came in, and—well, it wasn't to be expected he would look at it any such way. So I was run in, and I got three years."

"In Shoreham?"

"In Shoreham! P'raps you know the place, sir?" Pippin's eyes lightened inquiringly.

The stranger shook his head. "I never was in it, but I've seen some that have been—and more that ought to be. Pretty hard place, I'm told!"

"It used to be!" said Pippin. "They tell tales—and there's things still that don't seem to belong, someway, to the Lord's world. Left-over barber—barberries—no! barbarisms, Elder Hadley calls 'em. That's it, barbarisms! Him and the Old Man—that's the Warden, sir—are doin' of 'em away as fast as they can, but you can't clean a ward with one pail of water. And there's old crooks that wouldn't understand; they—I dono—" Pippin shook his curly head, and was silent, seeing visions. His companion jogged him with his elbow. The story was proving interesting.

"You say you found the Lord there; or the Lord found you! How was that?"

"I found Him!" Pippin laughed joyously. "He didn't find me, and reason good: He never lost me. He knowed where I was all the time. I'll cut it as short as I can. The first year I was no good. I was mad, and I stayed mad: there was nobody I inclined to chum up with. There was some kind o'

made up to me, but I didn't take to 'em someway. They was dirty, too. One thing I'll always lay kind to the Honey Boys, they was clean. Brought up clean, you see; learned to wash, and brush their hair, and that; mothers learned 'em. Green grass! and think o' their—Well, anyhow, I took to that like a cat to cream; I've never been dirty since, nor I can't abide dirty folks. I just grouched off by myself, and planned what I'd do when my time was up; nobody thought I was any good, and I wasn't. All I thought of was how to get out, and then get back at Chunky—he was the Dago guy I was tellin' about. I'd study over it all day long. I wouldn't kill him, I thought, just smash his face (good-lookin' guy, great on the girls, an' they on him), or break his back so he'd never walk again, or—*I'm tellin' you this because I am ashamed to tell it*, and because I want you should know what the Lord raised me up out of. I tell you I'd sit there after workin' hours, hunched up in my cheer, never speakin' to a soul, just feelin' him under my hands, feelin' his flesh go soft and his bones crunch—"

Pippin stopped abruptly, flushing scarlet. "Lord, forgive me!" he said simply.

"Amen!—Well?" The gray-haired man was looking expectantly at him. "Go on, young feller! You can't stop there." Pippin gave a gulp and went on.

"The chaplain used to come and see me once or twice a week, and he give me papers to read—nice papers they was, too; I liked 'em—and said I was in a bad way and didn't I repent, and I said no, I didn't, and he'd shake his head and say, 'Hardened! hardened!' kind of sad, and go away. He'd ben there a long time, and it had soaked into him, as you

may say. He'd lost his spring, if ever he had any. Well! come one day—I'll never forget that day! bright, sunny day it was, just like this—I went to chapel as usual. I liked to go to chapel, 'count of the singin'. I'd rather sing than eat, any day. I never noticed the words, you understand, but I liked the tunes, and I sang out good whenever I got a chance. So I went in with the rest, like a sheep, and sat down, never lookin' up. I'd got a piece of string, and a feller had showed me a new knot, and I sat tyin' it, waitin' for the singin'. I never took no notice of anything else. Then a voice spoke, and I jumped, and looked up. It was a strange voice, and a strange man. Tall and well set up, he was, kind o' sandy hair and beard, and eyes that looked right through you and counted the buttons on the back of your shirt. Yes, and his voice went through you, too; it wasn't loud nor yet sharp, but you couldn't help but listen. '*The Lord is here!*' he said. He let that sink in a minute; then, 'Right here,' he said, 'in this chapel. And what's more, you left Him behind you in your cell. And what's more, you'll find Him there when you go back. *You can't get away from Him!*' I can't tell you all he said, but every word come straight as a rifle bullet. I wasn't the only one that sat up, I tell ye! 'Twas different talk from what we was used to. He spoke about ten minutes, and it didn't seem three; then he stops short and says, 'That's enough. Now let's sing! Hymn 464!' Well, there was some sung, like me, because they liked it, and there was a few here and there was professors, but half of 'em didn't pay no attention special, just sat there. After the first verse he held up his hand. 'I said *sing!*' says he. 'And when I say sing I