



## **Tom Gallon**

# The Idol of the Blind

#### **A Novel**

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## CHAPTER I.

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#### COMETHUP ENTERS LIFE DISASTROUSLY.

"My dear" had looked her last upon a troublesome world. She had taken life sighingly, in little frightened gasps, as it were, with the fear upon her, even from childhood, that unknown horrors lurked for her in each day to which she was awakened. It can scarcely be said that she had clung to life with any tenacity—rather with the instinct of living; and she had fluttered out of it resignedly enough, a little sorry, perhaps, that she had left any one behind to grieve for her. And yet, with the inconsistency which had marked her life, she had died at the very moment when life had actually begun to be worth living for her.

"My dear" was one of those who wait long for the happiness, if any, that is to come to them, and find it a little tasteless when it is at last given to them. She had been the younger child of a stern and unbending man, who bent or broke to his code of rules those who were weak enough to be bent or broken, and thrust sternly aside those whose strength opposed itself to his. He had found in his little daughter one who smilingly and timidly obeyed in everything, and worshipped him without question—up to a certain point. That point was determined by the arrival of David Willis.

It was an old and a very ordinary story; such stories are played out to their bitter end day after day around us. David Willis was poor, and had absolutely no expectations; so far as old Robert Carlaw was concerned he simply did not exist —except as many other people existed, as a part of the world with which he had nothing to do. David, for his part, was as patient and long-suffering as the girl who loved him; and so they solemnly and pitifully plighted their troth, and agreed to wait. Boldness or resource of action was not in either of them; the girl, despite her love for the man, and the sort of humble, patient faithfulness with which she was endowed, would not have risked her father's anger on any account. So, in a poor, half-ridiculous, half-heroic fashion, they parted and waited.

They waited, strange as it may seem, for nearly twenty years; until the man had entered the forties and the woman was nearing them. She was still a pretty woman, soft-eyed and gentle of voice, with a great mine of tenderness hidden away in her which no one had been able to discover. When, on her father's death, she married David Willis, there seemed a prospect that the mine would be discovered, but the time had gone past; life had been so long a flat and stale and unprofitable thing that the old fierce heart-beats at the thought of her lover, the old hunger of love for him, had died away into a mere tremulous wonder as to whether he would be good to her, or whether he might have moments of harshness and sternness, like her father. She had hung too long expectant on hope to believe that the world was going to be very good to her now; she was only a little glad, for her lover's sake, that his time of waiting was ended.

David Willis was a musician and a dreamer; not a very great musician, and certainly a dreamer whose dreams brought him no profit. He had filled the place of organist in one or two minor churches, living simply and contentedly. By the very irony of things, when the woman he loved was able to come to him and put her hands in his, and tell him that there was no further bar to their happiness, he was out of an engagement, and had scarcely a penny in the world. But, with a childlike faith which, even at their years, came near to the sublime, they married first and tried to be worldly afterward. Fortunately for them, her brother was a man of property in a small, old-fashioned town near the coast of Kent; and, having considerable influence in the place, he offered, through the clergyman of the parish, the vacant post of organist in the parish church to David Willis, after first roundly abusing his sister for having married a pauper.

It was a quaint old town, a place of red roofs and winding streets and strange old buildings; a very paradise to the dreamer and the woman who had waited so long for him. Her brother's house stood at the far end of the town, in the newer part of it; but they saw little of him, and had, indeed, no particular desire to do so. They had their own quiet dwelling-place, a little house nestling under the frowning shadows of the church wherein he worked; a strange old place, with low ceilings and black beams, with a garden of roses stretching right along under the gray old church wall. Her life, for a few months at least, was a sweet and shadowed thing; people said afterward—people who had never known her—that they had seen her sitting often in the old church, with her mild eyes looking upward at a great rose window over the porch, while her husband practised for the services on the wheezy old organ; had seen her wandering in her garden among the roses, singing to herself in a subdued voice—the voice of one who has long been forced to be silent, or to subdue any natural mirth that might be in her.

The summer went by, while David Willis played on his organ, and his wife sang among her roses; and with the autumn came a new light in the eyes of the woman—a light as of one who waits and hopes for something. Poor, trembling, wistful creature, what dreams were hers then! What dreams when she sat by her husband's side in the twilight, looking out over the town where the lights were beginning to twinkle one by one like sleepy eyes! What dreams of a little life that was to recompense her for all she had missed, and all she never could find in any other way! Childish hands were to draw all that mine of tenderness out of her, as no other hands could have done; childish words were to wake echoing words in her dull heart, and stir it to life again. She dreamed tremblingly of all she would do; of all she would teach the child; saw it walking by her side among the roses; fluttered into church proudly, braving the eyes of younger women with the mite beside her.

Those were dreams which never came true. She had waited, through dull and spiritless years, for her chance of life; it was written, in that book which no man shall read, that her life in that fuller sense was to be but a short one. She gave birth to her child—a boy—and knew her fate even before they told her. She sank slowly, drifting out of life with as little effort to retain it as she had shown throughout her days. Almost the last thing she did was to take her

husband's hand, as he sat speechless with grief beside her, and put it to her lips, and draw it up against her cheek.

"We waited—a long time—Davie," she whispered. "I wish—I might—have—stayed." She did not speak again; she held his hand in that position until the last breath fluttered out of her lips.

David Willis was utterly incapable of appreciating anything except the magnitude of his loss. He wandered desolately from room to room, picking up things that had belonged to her and putting his lips to them, and weeping, in a hopeless, despairing fashion, like a child. Fortunately for that other child who had been the direct cause of the disaster, there were kindly people about the place who cared for it, and found a nurse for it—a young and healthy woman who had but just lost a child of her own, and who was installed in the house of David Willis at once. From that big house in the newer part of the town came Mr. Robert Carlaw, the brother of the dead woman, hushing his loud and blustering voice a little as he crossed the threshold of the place of mourning.

He had an air with him, this Robert Carlaw; a sense of saying, when he entered a room, that it was something poorer and meaner than before he came; a magnificent air of proprietorship in every one he honoured by a nod or a handshake; the very town through which he walked became, not a sweet and beautiful old place which seemed to have been dropped clean out of the middle ages, but an awkward, badly built little place in which Robert Carlaw was good enough to live. The swing of him was so fine that the

skirts of his coat brushed the houses as he went down the street; other passengers humbly took the roadway.

He was very kind and sympathetic with David Willis, with the kindness and sympathy of a patron to a dependent who has suffered a loss; he had scarcely seen his sister since she was a child, and knew absolutely nothing of her. He seated himself in an armchair—the chair which had been hers opposite to where David Willis sat with his head bowed in his hands; he coughed, with a little shade of annoyance in the cough, as of one who is not receiving proper attention. David Willis looked up without speaking.

"Bad business, this," said Mr. Carlaw, with a jerk of the head which was meant to convey that he referred to what was lying upstairs. "A man feels these things; I know / did. Cut me up dreadfully."

"Yes," said David, in a low voice.

"She was never strong, you know," went on the brother; "not like the others, I mean. And then she married late, which tries a woman, I'm told."

"Yes," replied the other again in the same tone.

"She was just the sort that would give in without making what I call a kick for it. Hadn't half enough of the devil in her. Not a bit like her brother in that respect. Why, I assure you, they've positively *tried* to kill me, half a dozen times; given me over for dead. But they didn't know Bob Carlaw; he's always proved one too many for 'em. There's a lot of life in Bob."

David Willis got up slowly. "Would you like to see her?" he asked.

"No, no; I don't think so. It wouldn't—wouldn't do any good, and the sight of any one dead always upsets me. No, I don't think I'll see her; I only—only called in case I could do anything. A man needs sympathy at such a time." He got up and took his hat, and swung toward the door. Turning there, he said abruptly, "What about the kid?"

"The——" said David, looking at him blankly.

"The child; is it alive?"

"Yes," replied David; "doing well, they tell me."

"Ah—that's bad—for you, I mean." He paused a moment, coughed uncomfortably, and stuck his hat sideways on his head; then remembered himself, and took it off and frowned at it. Finally he got out of the door awkwardly, and swung himself out through the garden of the roses and went up the street, trying hard not to whistle.

It was on the day of the funeral that David Willis first seemed to grasp the idea of his responsibility in regard to his infant son. He had had no thought of that before; had listened to the sympathizing remarks of the few friends he had with indifference, and had scarcely appeared to realize that there was a new element in his life at all. He grasped things slowly at all times, and required time to digest them; he had room for nothing else in his mind then but the thought of his loss. The day that saw her committed to the earth in the old churchyard within sight of the garden where she had walked was a day which passed for him like a troubled dream; he had a vague remembrance that people were very kind to him, and helped him, and told him what to do and where to stand. It was while he stood beside the grave that some words from the burial service broke upon

his ears as though nothing had been said before; he saw in them something new and fresh and hopeful.

"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up and——"

He lost all that followed; with those final words came a new thought into his mind. The woman he had loved, for whom he had waited and hungered so patiently, was to sleep her last sleep in that quiet place, to sleep as calmly and as gently as she had lived. But there was something more than this, something to comfort him. God had, after all, been very merciful; so, in his simple mind, he told himself. The poor, frail woman was gone; in her place had come a little child. The words were true; he applied them at once to the baby. "He cometh up—like a flower." Surely that was true; his eyes brightened as he thought of it; the bitterness fell away from his heart; he almost longed to leave her sleeping there and to get back to the child. He scarcely seemed to have seen the child yet—to know what it was like.

As he crossed the churchyard to his house the thing was forced more clearly and strongly upon him; he saw, with the fine instinct of love, that this was what she would have wished, that the child must grow up to think well of her, and to take her place. A man of rare singleness of life and purpose, he had been capable only of single emotions; and those emotions must, of necessity, be great. His dogged patience in waiting for one woman through all the best years of his life had had in it much of heroism; that was ended, and he turned now to something else to fill his days. The child should do it; the child had been sent for that very

purpose. Over and over again the words came back to him, "He cometh up—like a flower." That was very beautiful; it seemed strange that he had not thought of that before. He dreamed a dream, even as the woman had done, of all that the child was to be to him.

He went into the room where the scrap of humanity lay sleeping against the strange woman's breast; the woman glanced up at him almost resentfully as he bent over the child; just such another child had lain warm against her, and this one filled the void in her heart a little. She was a humble creature, of no subtle emotions whatever; her sense of motherhood, so recently awakened, was the strongest feeling in her.

The man touched the baby's cheek with a hesitating forefinger, and then turned away and walked out of the room. He saw quite clearly how the child would grow up, knowing only him, desiring no one else to fill its world. Before another hour had passed, the solitary man had mapped out the seat the child should take in the house and in church; had wandered in fancy over the fields through which the child should accompany him. There was no disloyalty to the dead woman in all this; the child had sprung out of the woman, in every sense, and took her place quite naturally in the deep heart of the man.

That evening David Willis received an unexpected visitor. The visitor came slowly and timidly, and yet with a certain forced air of defiance upon him, up the garden path, and knocked at the door of the little house. The one servant the house boasted, and who did not sleep there, had gone to her own home at the other end of the town; David Willis

opened the door, and stared out into the twilight at the visitor.

The caller was a little man—very alert and very upright, with a tightly buttoned frock coat, and an old-fashioned silk hat with a curly brim. He carried something in one hand behind him. David Willis remembered to have seen him once or twice in the streets, walking very erect, and swinging a cane with a tassel attached to it; and always in church on Sundays, where he occupied a little odd pew in one corner, and gave the responses in a very loud and sonorous voice not at all fitting to his stature. David held the door in one hand, and looked out wonderingly at the little man.

"My name is Garraway-Kyle—Captain Garraway-Kyle—late of her Majesty's service. You are in trouble, sir, your wife"—he stopped abruptly and coughed and frowned, and tugged at one end of his white mustache with his disengaged hand—"your wife, sir, was good enough to admire my flowers; used to stop sometimes to look at them. I thought perhaps——" His sunburned face took on a deeper tinge, and he brought his hand from behind him and showed a carefully arranged bunch of flowers.

David Willis came out into the little path, and closed the door behind him; his voice was rather unsteady when he spoke. "Thank you, sir," he said. "Would you like me to go with you and point out the—the grave?"

"I know it. I was there this afternoon," replied the captain, shortly. "But I should like you to come with me." So the two men went in silence out of the garden, and by the

little gate into the churchyard, David Willis having no hat, and the captain carrying his in his hand.

At the grave the captain knelt stiffly, as though it were an effort for him to do so, and put the flowers at the head of the new mound. He remained for nearly half a minute kneeling, and then drew himself up and faced the other. "She was a sweet and gentle woman, sir; I have seen her often; I have ventured to peep over the wall when she was in her own garden. She was very fond of flowers."

"Yes," replied David, "very."

"I wished sometimes that I might have offered her some of mine, the finest garden in the town, sir. But, of course, I did not know her. I am sorry to have had to give them to her like this."

"You are very good," said David, softly.

Captain Garraway-Kyle turned away and looked up for a moment at the sombre church which rose above them. "You had not been married long, I think, Mr. Willis?"

"Not quite a year," replied David.

"Ah! The child lives. I think?"

"Yes."

They walked back together to the gate which led to the cottage; and there the captain held out his hand. "Thank you," he said, stiffly; and then, "I am very sorry. By the way —boy or girl?"

"Oh, it's a boy," replied David.

The captain had gone a few paces down the street when he turned on his heel and came back again. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Willis, but what will you call him?" It was almost an idle question, prompted in the captain's mind for want of something better to say; but it set the old train of thought running in David Willis's mind as it had run all that afternoon. The words he had heard at the grave-side seemed to sound in his ears again; the sudden thought struck him to give the boy some name that should keep in memory his mother, and the purpose for which he came into the world, and all that he meant to his father. He faced about, and looked at his visitor with a new light in his eyes. "I shall call him 'Comethup,'" he said, slowly.

"I beg your pardon—" The captain looked a little startled.

"'Comethup,'" said David again, half to himself. "Yes, that's the name."

"Oh, I see; family name, I presume?" said the other.

"Yes," replied David Willis, "a family name. Good-night." And he went inside, and sat down in the darkness to think about it.

## **CHAPTER II.**

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#### AND MAKES DISCOVERIES.

David Willis stuck to his determination, so suddenly made on that night of the captain's visit, and the child was duly baptized under the name of Comethup Willis. Simple David Willis chuckled to himself a little over his ingenuity; he grew to like the quaintness of the name, and it was a constant reminder—if such were necessary—of the tragedy which belonged to the boy's birth. He always spoke the name rapidly when addressing the child or when referring to it to any one else, slurring the cumbrous name that he might hide the secret of it; only to himself did he ever speak it slowly with the added words, "as a flower." It was a neverceasing source of joy to him to think how cleverly the name had been conceived; he dwelt upon it lovingly, with the pride of the inventor; and it became on his tongue a caress whenever it was uttered.

Apart from the mere name, the child filled his life and his thoughts to a greater extent than he had ever even dared to hope. He grew rapidly, and shook off the childish ailments which came with his years with greater ease than most children; he had about him, even as a little fellow, the grave, shy tenderness of his mother. Captain Garraway-Kyle murmured once, as he held him at arms'-length and looked critically at him, that he had his mother's eyes.

It was a strange life for the child, alone with a dreamy man in that old house under the shadow of the church; if he could have written down his impressions of life and those

about him at that time, they would have made curious reading. He remembered when it was possible for him, by a great effort, to get both hands up to the door knob, and to twist it round and stagger backward, pulling the door with him; understood fully what a steep and treacherous affair the stone step was which led down to the garden; and what a proud and wonderful day it was when he summoned step straight down upon it, instead of to manipulating the descent with one small bare knee on the stone and the foot of the other leg feeling for the earth below. He knew his mother's garden by heart, and all the wondrous corners of it, where strange things hid which no one saw but himself. He learned early that the roses which grew there, and nodded in a friendly fashion to him as he passed, only grew there for a small boyish nose to be poked up at them to get their scent, and were not to be pulled except on rare occasions, when his father went round the garden with a basket, and gathered the choicest, and tied them into a rude kind of wreath. Comethup knew then that a great expedition was on foot; that they would go out of the gate at the farthest end of the garden, and that he would stumble—holding fast by his father's hand—through a place where the grass was very soft and very green, and where some of it was raised in long hillocks higher than the rest; a place where large flat stones with curious marks upon them, and little babies' heads with wings cut on some, cropped up out of the earth. On one of these hillocks the little homely wreath would be laid, and his father would kneel and seem to whisper something behind his hand. He knew that his mother slept there, and that she would never

wake up again, and never walk with him, as his father walked, in the garden of the roses. Child though he was, he always felt a little sadness as he stumbled back over the hillocks to the garden gate, because the mother he had never seen lay, an inscrutable mystery, out of his sight under the grass.

There was one never-to-be-forgotten day when he first learned of something outside his own small world. It was Sunday, and the heavy old bells were swinging, and his father had gone out through the sunlight with books under his arm to the church. It struck suddenly upon the child that this day was different from all the rest; that the little maidservant had a cleaner face and a whiter apron, and that his own tiny suit was one which was laid by in a tall old press all the rest of the week. Most of our impressions, whatever age we may be, come to us through the sense of smell, and Comethup's impression of the day came to him through the scent of the clothes. They bore the same scent as the big best bedroom upstairs—a room in which no one ever slept and into which he had peeped one day when the door was open; just such a scent as that which hung about it had been wafted out to his nostrils then. He began to see that there must be something "best" about this day also, as there was about everything connected with it.

When David Willis came back from church, the child had got his questions ready, and knew exactly what answers he required, as a child always unerringly does. He asked why all the shops along the other side of the street were closed, and why the bells rang on that day, and why the people sang in the big church which loomed above them. And then

he heard for the first time of that other world into which we try so hard to peer; of that dread Presence—dread to a child —beyond the skies that shuts in our vision. He was puzzled to understand how his mother could be right above him, watching to see if he were a good boy or a bad; and why, in that case, those flowers were put upon that grass-covered bed of hers out in the churchyard. He pondered the matter deeply, and was much disconcerted to think that the God of whom every one seemed so much afraid was all round him and could see everything he did.

He went one day into the church with his father—an experience indeed! It was quite empty, save for themselves, and the first thought that occurred to him was to wonder where the roof was; and why his voice rumbled and rattled and sprang at him from far above when he incautiously spoke in his usual shrill treble. The phrase which his father used—"the house of God"—awed him; he understood why the roof was so much higher than that of their own house. A lovely pattern of many colours on the stone pavement at his feet arrested his attention. He followed the shafts of light upward to the great rose window high up in the wall over the porch. His heart went a little quicker, and he gripped his father's hand with his baby fingers. That surely must be the eye of God looking down at him.

He went home tremblingly to think the matter over; saw in the childish wonder of discovery something that no one had found before; screwed his courage to make further inquiries of his father concerning this dread Being. It was a terror to him to learn that the Being was everywhere, not alone in the great place where people went in their best clothes to worship him. He crept up to his tiny bedroom under the roof that night, and hurriedly closed the door and drew the curtains, and lay in bed quakingly triumphant at the thought that he had shut It out, only to wake up with a start in a little while at the remembrance that It must have been in the room before his precautions were taken. He climbed out of bed, and pattered across to the window; pulled back the curtains, and pushed open the casement. All the benign influence of a summer starlight night was about him; the lights were twinkling sleepily and safely down in the town; and he could hear calm, slow country voices in the street beyond the garden. Life—great and wonderful to his childish mind, although bounded by so narrow a horizon -seemed beautiful and good and secure; he smiled, and dropped his sleepy head on his arms on the window ledge, and slept there calmly till the morning came.

The world is always a place of giants to us when we are very little; therein lies the tragedy and the terror of it. We are always told that childhood is such a happy time; we cry always how gladly we would return to it. But we know well that we would not return to it with the ignorance with which we left it; that we should go back to its delights and its irresponsibilities with the magician's wand of Experience in our hands to make it a fairyland. To a lonely child the world in which he lives is a place of terrors, with no one who understands his needs to explain to him all he craves so desperately to know.

Comethup was left pretty much to his own devices in those early days. David Willis liked to have the boy near him, liked to see him moving about the house. But, in his dreamy fashion, he took but scant notice of the child as a child; he painted to himself glowing pictures of what the boy would be when he had grown older and was ripe for companionship; for the present, he waited a little impatiently for that time to come. So it happened that Comethup explored his world alone.

The seasons seemed always to come suddenly. He would wake up, bright and alert, on a glorious morning of sunshine, with an endless prospect of sunny days before him; fires were things of the past, and the garden was no more a sealed place, wherein he must not run for fear of splashing his little white legs with mud. In just the same way there seemed no intermediate time between the summer. with its glorious abundance of roses and its long, hot afternoons, and the time when the roses were gone, and he was curled up like a little comfortable animal on the hearthrug before the parlour fire. That was the time, too, for going to bed in the dark, when the dreadful hour crept inexorably on; when he must leave the warmth and brightness of the lower room and climb with reluctant feet into a colder atmosphere, where grim shadows lurked on the landing, and the pale moon grinned in at him through an uncurtained window, like a gueer face all on one side.

The church grew, quite naturally, from its mystic qualities, to be his chief delight. Everything about it was wonderful, from the long flight of stone steps which led up to the organ-loft where his father played, to the great brown wooden bird, with its beak open, and with outstretched wings, which stood on a carved pillar before the altar. Its seats were a never-failing source of delight to the shy child

—places in which one could hide, secure from every one, and look up at the great roof, and at the sunlight slanting in through the windows. But perhaps it was best of all to sit up in the organ-loft, as he sometimes did with his father; to draw a huge hassock close up against the old-fashioned wooden partition, and sit there and look down, unseen and unsuspected, at the people below. Comethup always stood up at the proper places on those occasions, and sat down when the people rustled into their seats; he tried, too, to murmur something which sounded a little like the responses which rumbled up from below.

His world widened out a little as the placid years flowed on. The garden of the roses no longer bounded his horizon; the gate ceased to be a barrier which must not be passed. The spirit of adventure was strong in Comethup one summer afternoon, when his father was sleeping peacefully on the hard horsehair sofa in the parlour, and the little maid who waited upon them was busied in the kitchen. The garden had been all explored; on such a day as this, when the air was heavy and still, the very scent of the roses hung heavily. Poor Comethup was a little tired of roses—a little tired even of that wonderful garden, every corner of which, every stick and stone, he knew by heart. And then, just as he clung to the iron railings of the gate, and looked out disconsolately into the quiet street, there came a playmate.

It was a dog; a mere boisterous, happy-go-lucky, tumbling, joyous puppy of a few months; a thing of comical crinkled mouth and serious eyes, a delightful romping rascal that loved the world and hailed every creature friend. It stopped opposite the gate where Comethup stood, and

backed itself upon its ridiculous little haunches and inch of tail, and barked deliriously; then dashed off a foot or two in excited chase of something which didn't exist; and then, suddenly remembering Comethup, returned madly to the assault, thrusting its little black nose under the gate in a frantic endeavour to bite Comethup's little white socks.

It was irresistible. Comethup cautiously pulled open the gate, trembling at his daring as he did so, and went down on the gravel on his knees, clapping his hands, and doing all in his power to induce the puppy to come to him.

But that wary animal knew better than that. He backed away, moving his stump of tail convulsively, and, as Comethup followed on hands and knees, backed away farther still out of reach. Finally the puppy scrambled off sideways, going through the most extraordinary gyrations and looking back at the child with one ear cocked up, and then dashing off again sideways, tripping himself up occasionally in his haste. Comethup got to his feet and set off down the pavement after the puppy, leaving the garden gate wide open.

The sternness of the chase awoke in Comethup's blood; he determined to have that puppy at all costs—to feel the soft, warm, live, struggling thing in his arms. Twice he was certain he had it; had dropped all over it, so to speak, in a frantic endeavour to clasp it. But the thing slid from under his arms and impudently snapped at his very nose, and was off again. At last, however, he ran it to earth in a corner, where it promptly rolled over on its back, with its four legs in the air, and surrendered.

By that time Comethup had lost his way; but that fact was of the smallest possible moment. He was in a glorious city he had not seen before; a place of curious old houses bending their upper windows toward each other as though to whisper; of long, quaint gardens thick with Old-World flowers—stocks and hollyhocks, and others beloved of our grandmothers; with another church, not so magnificent or so large as the one he knew, but older and quainter, with a great brass dial up on one wall from which a brass finger projected to show the shadow of the afternoon sun. The puppy was struggling in his arms, jerking itself frantically upward to lick his round, baby face, and to softly bite his chin. That of course was disconcerting; but Comethup managed to take in a great deal with his eyes nevertheless.

He managed, among other things, to take in the figure of an upright old gentleman with a heavy gray mustache, who was clipping and trimming with a pair of scissors in one of the gardens. Comethup had just stopped, out of the politest curiosity, to watch him, when the old gentleman swung round and marched toward the gate, and cried violently, pointing a finger at the child, "What the devil are you doing with my dog, boy?"

Poor Comethup had never been spoken to in that fashion before; he began to see in the old gentleman retributive justice sweeping down upon him for having left his father's garden—above all, for having left the gate open, an unpardonable thing. He would have liked to drop the puppy, but remembered in time that he might hurt it; so he lowered it gently to the ground, where it at once commenced tugging at his shoestrings. With as much dignity as he could

command under the circumstances, Comethup tremblingly began to explain that he had found it.

Before he had finished a half-dozen words, however, the little old gentleman, with an exclamation, had pulled the gate open, and had come out upon the pavement. Comethup began to tremble very much indeed, but the old gentleman took him—not unkindly—by the chin, and turned his face up so that he might look at it. Comethup must have looked very appealing indeed, for the old gentleman suddenly smiled, and exclaimed, "Why, it's little Comethup!"

"Yes," said Comethup humbly.

The captain, without a word, picked up the puppy with one hand and offered the other to the child. They went up the garden path together, into a quaint little room, where everything was very bright and very straight and very orderly; very poor, too, if Comethup had but known. There the old gentleman lifted him into a chair, and rang the bell. Then he turned round, in his abrupt fashion, and held out the struggling puppy with one hand toward Comethup. "You like this dog?" he asked.

Comethup faintly admitted that he did.

The old gentleman thrust it into his arms. "Take it," he said. "Be good to it, and feed it well."

Comethup tried to thank him, but at that moment the puppy had taken him at a mean disadvantage, and was dancing about frantically in his arms, and dabbing a tongue much too large for it against his face, so that speech was difficult. And just then a man came in, taller than the old gentleman, and much more erect; and put the back of his

hand quite suddenly up to his forehead, and held it there for a moment, and then brought the hand down smartly with a smack against the side of his leg.

Comethup became vastly interested in a moment; he almost dropped the puppy in his excitement. He knew that only one class of people did that kind of thing; the little maid at home, whose sweetheart was a soldier from Canterbury, had told him all about it. He began to speculate on what wonderful house this could be, where this sort of thing went on quite as a matter of course, and no one seemed to think anything of it. In a vague way he wondered if he could persuade his father to let the little maid move her hand and arm like that whenever she came into the parlour at home; it would be something to look forward to—something to ring the bell for.

The old gentleman ordered tea, and the man who had stood stiffly by the doorway went through the same wonderful performance again and disappeared. Comethup's curiosity swept away every other consideration.

"Sir," he said, in an awed voice, "he's a soldier."

"He was," returned the old gentleman, shortly. Then stooping near to the boy, with both hands resting on the table, he asked, with a curious tenderness in his voice, "Where did you get those eyes, boy?"

Comethup did not remember the other occasion on which Captain Garraway-Kyle had said that he had the eyes of his dead mother; he did not even know that this old gentleman was Captain Garraway-Kyle. He looked up innocently, and smiled, and said he didn't know. "You got 'em from your mother, boy," said the captain, almost in a whisper, still looking at him earnestly.

"My mother's in heaven," said Comethup.

"True, boy, true," said the old gentleman, patting him gently on the shoulder and turning away. "That's very true. Your mother was a saint."

Comethup had not the least idea what a saint was, but he knew it must be something very good, because the old gentleman looked so serious. The arrival of tea put an end to further conversation, and Comethup looked out eagerly for the man to go through his performance, which he did, to the child's great delight, as he was leaving the room.

The abrupt old captain was as gentle as a woman with the child; busied himself to mix milk and water for him, and to spread jam on bread. It was only toward the end of the meal that Comethup suddenly remembered the chief adventure of the afternoon: that he had left the safe line which bounded his daily life, and was with strangers in an altogether different world. Even the possession of the puppy could not wholly console him; his lips began to quiver, and it was with some difficulty that he made the captain captain understand. The with assured him. much earnestness, that he knew the garden where the roses were, and that he knew Comethup's father, and the little maid, and the church, and everything. Comethup was comforted, and the strange spectacle was presented to the town, about half an hour later, of Captain Garraway-Kyle, as closely buttoned as ever, and with his hat a little more fiercely tilted than usual, holding Comethup by the hand, on the way to David Willis's house; Comethup, for his part, clutching the puppy with difficulty but with determination.