

GEORGE'S MOTHER

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George's mother by Stephen Crane

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STEPHEN CRANE

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MOTHER**

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BY
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I.

IN the swirling rain that came at dusk the broad avenue glistened with that deep bluish tint which is so widely condemned when it is put into pictures. There were long rows of shops, whose fronts shone with full, golden light. Here and there, from druggists' windows, or from the red street-lamps that indicated the positions of fire-alarm boxes, a flare of

uncertain, wavering crimson was thrown upon the wet pavements.

The lights made shadows, in which the buildings loomed with a new and tremendous massiveness, like castles and fortresses. There were endless processions of people, mighty hosts, with umbrellas waving, banner-like, over them. Horse-cars, aglitter with new paint, rumbled in steady array between the pillars that supported the elevated railroad. The whole street resounded with the tinkle of bells, the roar of iron-shod wheels on the cobbles, the ceaseless trample of the hundreds of feet. Above all, too, could be heard the loud screams of the tiny newsboys, who scurried in all directions. Upon the corners, standing in from the dripping eaves, were many loungers,

descended from the world that used to prostrate itself before pageantry.

A brown young man went along the avenue. He held a tin lunch-pail under his arm in a manner that was evidently uncomfortable. He was puffing at a corn-cob pipe. His shoulders had a self-reliant poise, and the hang of his arms and the raised veins of his hands showed him to be a man who worked with his muscles.

As he passed a street-corner, a man in old clothes gave a shout of surprise, and, rushing impetuously forward, grasped his hand.

'Hello, Kelcey, ol' boy!' cried the man in old clothes. 'How's th' boy, anyhow? Where in thunder yeh been fer th' last seventeen years? I'll be hanged if you ain't th' last man I ever expected t' see!'

The brown youth put his pail to the ground and grinned. 'Well, if it ain't ol' Charley Jones,' he said ecstatically, shaking hands. 'How are yeh, anyhow? Where yeh been keepin' yerself? I ain't seen yeh fer a year.'

'Well, I should say so. Why, th' last time I saw you was up in Handyville!'

'Sure! On Sunday, we——'

'Sure. Out at Bill Sickles' place. Let's go get a drink.'

They made toward a little glass-fronted saloon that sat blinking jovially at the crowds. It engulfed them with a gleeful motion of its too widely-smiling lips.

'What'll yeh take, Kelcey?'

'Oh, I guess I'll take a beer.'

'Gimme little whisky, John.'

The two friends leaned against the bar,