



A CATHEDRAL SINGER.

By F. CARR.

Illustrated by Kenneth Watkins.

SEFTON WRIGLE was a child of the gutter, an ignorant, dirty, ugly boy. His father was a disappointed composer, a man who wrote oratorios and grand operas when the market demand was for coster songs and ballet music. He had drunk himself to death fiddling for a living in a music hall orchestra. His mother was a confirmed laudanum drinker.

When Sefton was eleven years old his mother, in an insane wandering fit, took him to the slums of an old cathedral town, and then fell into prison, and left Sefton entirely to his own resources, which were naturally very limited.

He had no money, no friends, and scarcely sufficient clothing to cover his undersized form. He also lacked the smartness and cunning which enable the average gutter boy to beg or steal a living.

Sefton had followed his mother and her guardians to the iron studded door of the prison. He was too timid and foolish to claim relationship with the woman, too quiet and unobtrusive to attract attention.

When the great door had closed with a softness and slowness which marked it unorthodox, Sefton turned helplessly away. He had not the slightest idea of what he should do, or where he should go, but he shuffled along—this helpless waif—until he found himself before a building, such as he had never seen before, though his whole life had been spent amidst buildings. It was the grand old cathedral. In wonder he looked upward at its stately towers and carved pinnacles.

Prowling in the shadow of the dark, high walls, he discovered between two great buttresses a deep snug nook—sheltered from the cold north-east wind which had commenced to blow, sheltered even from the cold fine rain which made the city miserable.

He curled himself on the grass in one corner like a cat or a dog, having only their desires at that moment. Soothed into contentment with the comparative warmth and rest, he dozed almost into sleep, when suddenly something—he knew not what—filled his whole being, something that thrilled him, that pleased him, that made him shiver. It was the music of the grand organ—low, sad, yet wonderfully sweet, swelling by degrees into floods of sound that shook the boy's world. The roar of the wind about the great towers, the rush of clouds over the lofty pinnacles, were forgotten. Glorious music had entered the lad's soul. He had risen to an eager, listening attitude. He stood with clenched hands and upturned face, drinking in the melodious sounds. If fate has any hand in directing the course of ragged, dirty, ignorant boys, then Sefton Wrigle had found that nook between the buttresses, under the guidance of that most fickle goddess. He owned a musical soul undeveloped, unconscious, like a perfect violin that has never been played upon, and like the violin, vibrating and thrilling with the notes of the great organ.

Higher, higher, wider and wider, swelled the music, filling the world with splendid sound. The boy's face took fire, his body grew rigid, his mind was awakening into life. Unconsciously he vibrated with pride