



Alone in London

Hesba Stretton

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Alone in London follows the lives of two people, and a third is intertwined with them. Mr. Oliver is an old man whose hasty words years ago had driven away his only surviving child. His health and faculties are deteriorating, but when he finds a precious little girl abandoned outside his shop, he is more than willing to take her in. When he finds the note in her pocket identifying her as his granddaughter, he is anxious to do what he can for her, and is delighted at the thought of being reconciled with his daughter. Tony is an orphan who has been living wherever he can, and was captivated by Dolly, Mr. Oliver's granddaughter, when he saw her outside the shop. Even though he had nothing of his own, he volunteered to take care of her if Mr. Oliver should refuse to take her. Mr. Oliver gave him a place to sleep under a counter in his tiny shop, and Tony came every day to see little Dolly. He noticed that Mr. Oliver's eyesight and memory was failing, and he began to help him get his shop going in the morning, and remind him of necessary things. He especially liked to hear Mr. Oliver tell of his Master, the Lord Jesus. Tony had never heard of such a wonderful employer, and wondered if he could work for him sometime. When Mr. Oliver's sister came to visit, she was appalled that her grandniece was associating with a barefoot beggar, and sent Tony away, and he was alone in London again. We follow his fortunes, and see the workings of his heart, all in the care of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hesba Stretton (1832-1911) was the nom de plume of Sarah Smith, an English author of children's literature. The name Hesba came from the initials of her siblings. She was the daughter of a bookseller from Wellington, Shropshire, but around 1867 she moved south and lived at Snaresbrook and Loughton near Epping Forest and at Ham, near Richmond, Surrey. Her moral tales and semi-religious stories, chiefly for the young, were printed in huge quantities, and were especially widespread as school and Sunday school prizes. She won wide acceptance in English homes from the publication of Jessica's First Prayer in 1867. She was a regular contributor to Household Words and All the Year Round during Charles Dickens' editorship, and wrote upwards of 40 novels. Hesba Stretton was the pen name of Sarah Smith (27 July 1832 – 8 October 1911), an English writer of children's books. She concocted the name from the initials of herself and four surviving siblings and part of the name of a Shropshire village she visited, All Stretton, where her sister Anne owned a house, Caradoc Lodge.

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