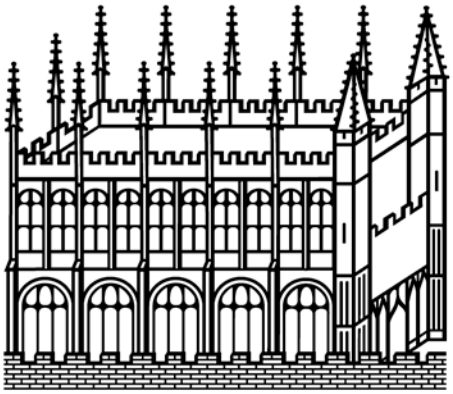


JAMES BRIGHT,
THE SHOPMAN.

THE COLLISION.

A TALE.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

TALES LATELY PUBLISHED.

ADA'S THOUGHTS; or, The Poetry of Youth. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, gilt edges, 2s. 6d.

"We have been much pleased with many passages in this little volume,—a volume which strikes us as combining more sound sense, with practical piety and elevated religious sentiment, than is often so united. Its brief but healthy and attractive lessons are calculated to interest and benefit a large class of educated readers."—*English Churchman.*

AMY GRANT; or, The One Motive. A Tale designed principally for the Teachers of the Children of the Poor. Fcap. 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d.

"* * * Has for its object to inculcate a higher standard of duty, and the great fruit to be gathered by an earnest and religious perseverance. Its purpose is good, and its working out useful."—*Guardian.*

"We can gladly recommend 'Amy Grant, or The One Motive,' to all who are engaged in the work of education, especially among the children of the poor."—*Ecclesiastic.*

THE VILLAGE CHORISTERS. Uniform with "The Matin Bell." 16mo. 1s.

The two together, cloth, 2s. 6d.

PASTOR OF WELBOURNE AND HIS FLOCK. 18mo. 2s.

"Is the picture of a Parish Priest of the patriarchal kind, who makes it his business to become acquainted with all the affairs of rural life, believing that people, by what they understand, are best led to what they understand not."—*Ecclesiastic.*

Just ready, fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d.

THE CALIFORNIAN CRUSOE; or, The Lost Treasure Found. A Tale of Mormonism.

WOODLEIGH; or, Life and Death.

MOTHER AND SON. (In the New Series of Tales for the YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN OF ENGLAND.)

OXF[illegible] PARKER.

PRESENTS FOR THE YOUNG.

A New Edition in the Press, with Illustrations.

KENNETH; or, The Rear-Guard of the Grand Army. By the Author of "**The Heir of Redcliffe.**"

ANN ASH. The History of a Foundling. A narrative founded on Fact. By the Author of "**Charlie Burton,**" "The Broken Arm," &c. 18mo. 2s.

"Ought to prove an excellent pattern to young women in her rank of life, on the principle that no great moral progress can ever be made, except a *perfect* example be presented for our imitation."—*Ecclesiastic.*

ANGELS' WORK; or, the Choristers of St. Mark's; "Do your Best;" and "The Brothers, a Wayside Sketch." Three Tales Suitable for Children. Second Edition. 2s.

"Three well-written tales of great and general interest. We heartily recommend them."—*Ecclesiastic.*

THE SINGERS OF THE SANCTUARY, and THE MISSIONARY. Two Tales by the Author of "Angels' Work." 16mo. 2s. 6d.

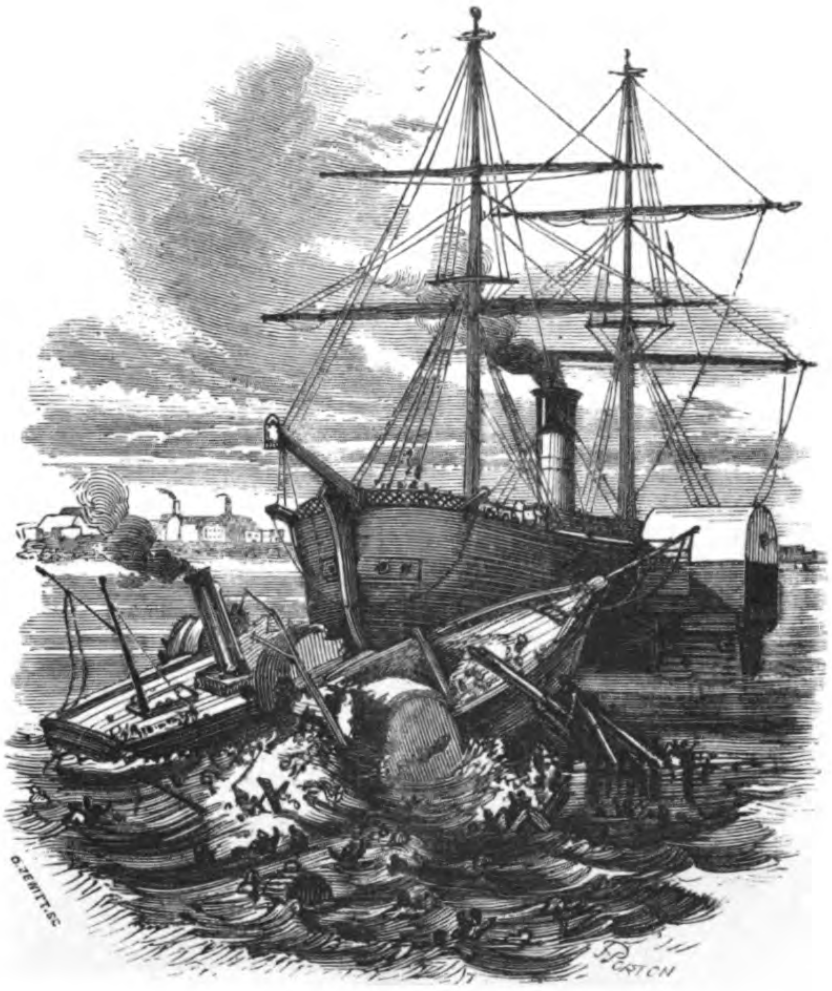
COXE'S CHRISTIAN BALLADS AND POEMS. A New Edition, with corrections by the Author. 12mo. 3s.

A selection from the above of 12 Ballads, price One Penny each, or in packet, 1s.

1. Dreamland.
2. Hymn of Boyhood.
3. England.
4. Lenten Season.
5. Chronicles.
6. Chimes of England.
7. Churchyards.
8. Little Woodmere.
9. Matin Bells and Curfew.
10. St. Silvan's Bell.
11. Daily Services.
12. The Calendar, and I love the Church.

"They cannot fail to please all who love frank-hearted truthfulness, bright loving thoughts, and sweet melody. . . . I envy your first reading of them, they are so joyous, and full of spirit and fervent piety." *Penny Post.*

OXFORD AND LONDON, JOHN HENRY PARKER.



JAMES BRIGHT.

[*p.* 35.]

JAMES BRIGHT,

THE

SHOPMAN.

A TALE.

LONDON,
JOHN HENRY PARKER,
377, STRAND.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORN-MARKET, OXFORD.

CONTENTS.

JAMES BRIGHT, THE SHOPMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE LONDON FOG.

A MAN may have seen the mountain-mist which wraps everything in its shivering cloak, and the sea-fog which seems to penetrate the whole body with cold, and the marsh-damps which oppress the breathing; but until he has seen a London fog he does not know how dreary, and filthy, and painful a little steam may be made. Laden with the breath of millions of mouths, the vomitings of ten thousand sewers, and myriads of chimneys; thickened by the fumes from areas and ginshops, and butchers' shops, and all the processes by which man odorizes or deodorizes the substances of nature,—it chokes the lungs, blisters the throat, makes the eyes to smart, the nose to tingle, and the whole man to fret.

But it was not in a London fog only, but in a London thaw, that James Bright first entered the metropolis. The flagstones were one puddle of melting snow, too thick to drain off, yet subtle

enough to penetrate boots and shoes for colds and for chilblains. Omnibus, cab, tax-cart, high-wheeled car, all walked their horses. Boys ran before the carriages with lighted torches; the lamps were lit. It was neither day nor night; funeral pace and funeral torches, without solemnity; illumination without joy; in a word, a London fog.

James was the son of a widow who had supported herself since her husband's death by keeping a little shop in a Norfolk village. She had but one relative in all the world, and she did not know where he was. He had sent her £20 to stock her shop with when he heard of her husband's death, for his ship was in port at the time, and now ten years had passed, and without tidings of his life or death. Meantime her son grew up, and it was time for him to do something for himself; so here he was on his way to —— Street, one of the great thoroughfares leading into the city, to be a grocer's shopman.

How is the reader to feel interest in James Bright? He was neither clever nor stupid, neither handsome nor ugly, neither short nor tall, neither high-principled nor unprincipled, neither religious nor profane. Well, then, he was commonplace, and the more like ourselves, the more true specimen of our kind; one whose conduct and progress we ought attentively to watch, for it would probably have been that of ourselves, had we been in his circumstances.

Slop, slop, he walked along, now running against a man, and now against a lamp-post. His box was carried by a lad, his hat-box and a blue bundle by himself. It was an awful passage across the first street; the Straits of Magellan are nothing to it: but at last he passed the Scylla of an omnibus, the Charybdis of a truck, and finally the Symplegades of two cabs running opposite ways. Ten more houses, another crossing, and behold the corner house,—J. Johnson and Co. above, J. Johnson and Co. below, J. Johnson and Co. all round about. Slides of moist sugar of various shades, like geological strata, displayed their cheapness and hid their adulteration; cones of loaf-sugar reared their summits; boxes of tea covered with mystic symbols of China, (alias London); currants much better than those in the tub, and numerous other articles, displayed their sweets, and said, "Come, buy." If one could believe what one saw, one would have thought J. Johnson and Co. the most fortunate firm for securing the best articles at the lowest prices, in the nick of time, at the very only possible market; and oneself the most lucky of all customers, to have found, not their shop, but their warehouse, emporium, and wholesale importing house.

Inside, however, J. Johnson and Co. dwindled down to solitary Mr. Johnson; unless you counted his wife and his children, who could hardly be said to make the business a *firm*, and might not

unreasonably be thought to have an opposite tendency.

"Is this—is this Mr. Johnson's?" asked James, when he had surmounted the gaslight, and the awful display of tubs and of canisters.

"To be sure it is," was the reply. "You might have seen that at the door. I suppose you are the young man from the country;—no mistake there. Shew him in, Edward."

James looked to his guide. A pale youth stood waiting for him, with a quiet and contemptuous smile on his countenance. His long black hair shone like an Esquimaux's, and was scarcely disturbed by the pen which protruded from behind his ear.

"This way, if you please Mr. Bright," and with mock solemnity James was ushered into the awful presence of Mrs. Johnson.

As for this lady, any one who has been down the river to Greenwich, or Erith, or Rosherville, or Gravesend, has seen hundreds like her. She was good-natured, vain, talkative, and vulgar; a little older than her husband, who traded on her fortune, and a little higher, if possible, in her own estimation.

"Will you take anything now, Mr. Bright?" she asked, in a tone which implied that the answer must be No. "We shall have tea in an hour. Or perhaps you would like to see your room, and unpack your box."

"Thank you, ma'am," he replied, "I don't want anything now; and I will just take up my things." It was a small room with two beds into which the new-comer was ushered. The house itself was a very old one, with beams in the ceilings, and panelled walls; although you would never have guessed it from the outside. Like the green tea on the counter, it had received a polish, a new outside. Plate-glass windows, a brass string-course underneath, for the everlasting legend, Johnson and Co., and other modern inventions, said "*I am a new house.*" The drawing-room, excepting its low ceiling, said "*New;*" but the bedrooms, and especially James's, said "*Old.*" Thus the grocer's house was drawn into the trade, and had a double face,—truth behind and falsehood in front,—like the rest, and in keeping with it.

The young men's bedroom in particular was a portion screened off from a long old-fashioned chamber, two-thirds of which, with two windows and a half, were now a warehouse, and the remainder, with half a window cut in two by a partition, was the dormitory of Mr. Edward Jones, the senior shopman, and of Mr. James Bright, the new-comer.

It did not take long to unpack James's box, and to arrange his few possessions. Nevertheless he contrived to spin out the task until tea-time, that he might not feel himself in the way. When he descended he found tea made, and the party

seated. There was no formality about places, for one was ready for him, namely, the lowest and the farthest from the fire.

"Do you take sugar?" enquired the lady.

"No, I thank you, ma'am."

"Quite right; not necessary," remarked Mr. Johnson, whose own tea was sugared.

"Bad for trade, Sir, if every one did so."

James looked up. It was Edward who spoke, and he thought, "So then we may talk."

"Bad for trade, Edward, if the customers did without sugar," rejoined the master; "but good for the house when the young men do."

"Umph," answered Edward, but scarcely audibly.

"Perhaps you are cold out there after your journey?" enquired Mrs. Johnson.

"O no," her husband answered for him, "country people are never cold, and young men ought not to know what cold is. When I was a young man——"

"Why you are not an old man now, Mr. Johnson," interrupted his wife; and Edward longed to reply, "not if *you* are young."

But tea was now over. Edward went into the shop, and Mr. Johnson, after drawing nearer the fire and clearing his throat, began to instruct James in his duties. Poor James! So much for so little! His heart was heavy with its responsibilities, and his pocket was not likely to be heavy enough to keep

the balance. He listened respectfully, promised attention and care, and at last was allowed to follow his master into the shop, and to learn how to put up the shutters for the night.

The next duty was supper. We call it a duty, because it was not always a pleasure. This night, however, some sausages smoked upon the table, and the remainder of some Christmas turkey appeared floating in white sauce. Poor James was helped last. To be sure, he was a stranger; but it was better for him to know his place, and he would be more at his ease without any formality. Thus his lot was a drumstick with abundance of thew and sinew, and plenty of sauce to conceal the bones underneath.

James had a tough heart, which bore him up against his tough supper. He sawed and he masticated, and sawed again, but at last, under a desperate effort, the knife slipped, the bone leaped up and fell on the table. James was full of confusion. Should he pick it up, or should he not? He made the effort, but in making it, his knife fell on the ground. In a moment he stooped to regain it,—but alas! it never rains but it pours, as James soon felt: for his plate was too near the edge; his forehead touched it, and pressing the rim downwards, he turned it over as neatly as the slip of a coal-meter. When he lifted his head, the white sauce streamed from his hair, down forehead, and nose, and chin like a frozen torrent from a hoary

mountain, and the plate fell to the ground with a crash. Peals of laughter followed peals, and the sin of the broken plate was forgotten in the folly of the sauce.

"Call him Bright," said Mr. Johnson to his wife, as James retired to his room; "call him Bright? His parents should be prosecuted for cheating. Why, he's no right to the name. I wish I'd had the ticketing of him."

And yet, Mr. Johnson, poor James was at least as justly called Bright, as your chicory is called coffee, and your slow-leaves called tea. If things are to be ticketed by their true names, let us go into your shop and begin.

Thus ended the arrival, the introduction, the first view of London, and the shop and family of Johnson and Co. Welcome, welcome was bed-time, even in that little dreary room, and so far away from home, and in spite of the first loss of a mother's good-night. But on this occasion James had the comfort of being alone when he said his short prayer, and felt it as he had never felt any prayer since he mourned for his father's death. He was in bed by the time that Edward came up, rapidly undressed himself, and without prayer lay down in his sins.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHOP.

On the following day work began. First came the taking down the shutters, polishing the brass string-course, rubbing the windows, sweeping, dusting, setting out; then breakfast; then business. At first only a few poor persons came in, and one or two servants; and Mr. Johnson remained in his parlour with his feet on the hobs. But by-and-by more servants appeared. Edward went out for orders; chance customers dropped in, and Mr. Johnson and James were obliged to attend.

James had read of a chameleon, and now he thought he saw one. To some persons Mr. Johnson was the personification of indifference and contempt; to others, all smiles, attention, and subservience. Indeed, the rapidity of the change was often perfectly ludicrous; and if C. had watched the alteration of manner, countenance, voice, and everything else, as Mr. Johnson hurried from poor A. to rich B., he would scarcely have contained his amusement.

And unfortunately this adaptation and change in the master applied to his goods, and pervaded the shop. There were adulterated articles for the rich, and more adulterated for the poor. Chicory,

30 per cent. in the tin cases of coffee, 80 per cent., and beans too, in the jar. Some teas were merely labelled with false names, and mixed, inferior with superior; but others were faced with black lead, and bloomed with mica; and yet others with indigo, Prussian blue, and sulphate of lime. It is true that Mr. Johnson did not adulterate his teas himself, but he knew they were adulterated, bought them accordingly, and made a profit on their false appearance.

It so happened that an exposure awaited Mr. Johnson on the very first morning of James's initiation in business. An elderly gentleman, in brown coat, and drab breeches and gaiters, paused before the window, looked steadily at a bowl of green tea ticketed Superior Pearl Gunpowder,

5*s.* $^{6d.}$ per lb.

The old man looked, and looked, and at last went in, and said, "Shew me some of your green tea, if you please, at five shillings a-pound."

Mr. Johnson took down a canister, and displayed a coarser article than that in the window.

"This is not the same," said the customer.

"It is a very fine tea, Sir," replied Mr. Johnson. Very low price, Sir,—a very fine tea."

"But not the same," was the dry answer.

"Pardon me, Sir, you want that in the bowl. That is five shillings and sixpence."

"I saw nothing about the sixpence," replied the old man.

"Then look here, Sir, for yourself;" and Mr. Johnson thumped down the bowl with an air.

"I see, I see now," said the old man; "I see the poor little sixpence up at the top, that looks so ashamed of itself. I beg your pardon, Sir; I should have come in my spectacles."

"Will you purchase anything this morning, Sir, or not? I must attend to my business."

"I will look at your green *real* five-shilling tea, whilst you go to your customer there," replied the old man, with the greatest coolness; and taking a chair, he began rubbing some of the tea into powder in the palm of his hand.

When Mr. Johnson returned, the old man shewed him the powder. All sign of green tea had departed, and only a black deposit of dust was left behind. "Your tea, Sir," remarked this most agreeable of customers, "is like your sixpence; it has lost countenance."

"What could you expect for the money?" retorted Mr. Johnson.

"Just what I have found," was the reply; and the old man rose to leave.

"Can I shew you anything more?" said the shopkeeper, with a forced smile and stiff bow.

"No, I thank you; no, I thank you. I have seen quite enough."

Mr. Johnson turned sharply on his new shopman. "What are you staring at there? why don't you get about your business? what's that

old fool to you? Pretty way of learning business this!"

"Old fool! old fool!" remarked the retiring customer to himself, as he turned the corner. "Better fool than knave and fool too. Depend on it, Mr. Grocer, that a true trade is a sure trade."

Edward had now returned with his orders. All hands were piped to weighing, and packing, and sorting, and booking. Thump went the parcels of sugar and rice on the counter, to give them square ends; thump went the tea and coffee. James had learned something of this in his mother's shop; and although he was not so smart in his movements as Edward, yet he did his work well: and Mr. Johnson recovered his humour by dinner-time.

When that happy hour arrived, Mr. Johnson retired and took James with him into the parlour; for he was not yet trusted to manage alone. Soon he would receive this honour, and then Edward would eat the hot meat; and he, proud of his confidential position, would pick the tepid bones, and finish the flat beer at the bottom of the jug.

Now one would have thought the scene in the morning enough for one day; but it was not. About two o'clock a lady and gentleman came in, and enquired the price of various things, and of rice in particular. Carolinas, and Patnas, &c., were

exhibited: one was too good, and another not good enough. It seemed important to save even a halfpenny in the pound; and at last a sample was fixed on, and two sacks were ordered,—for it was for the poor.

All this took place whilst Mr. Johnson had gone down the street to meet a friend at the Station; and when he returned, Edward reported the transaction, and asked what he should do.

"How are we to send it?" was the reply.

"By the carrier from the Blue Boar, Aldgate."

"When?"

"At once."

"And how will it be paid for?"

"It is paid; and I gave a receipt."

"Did the gent. take a sample?"

"No."

"Well, then, go down with James, and get up two sacks of the lot in the far end of the cellar."

"Do you mean that, Sir, or the lot near the door?"

"I mean what I say; and you will do it at once, if you mean to live here."

Edward retired with James. He had questioned his master's wisdom, and not his integrity; when he ventured to cross his intention. He had been too long in the shop of J. Johnson and Co. to stand upon justice; but he thought his employer in error of judgment, when he purposed to send a rice worth 2½d. a-lb., when one at 3d.

had been ordered, and paid for. And Edward was right; for although no steps were taken to get justice, yet Mr. Johnson had lost a regular customer. The country clergyman was on the look-out for a London shop near the railway, on which he could rely;—and he had not discovered one.

At bed-time the two youths talked over the matter. James first described the scene of the tea, at which Edward laughed heartily.

"I think it would do very well," said the latter, "if it paid; but I don't think it does. Our governor runs too close; he certainly does."

"But you don't think it right, Edward?" replied James.

"Why, as for right, there's no right and wrong in business, that I can see; and the sooner you get that notion out of your head the better for you. You haven't been here so long as I have. You haven't read the "Lancet" as I have. Why, there's hardly a thing in the shop that is not adulterated. The marmalade is half apples and turnips. The arrow-root is full of potatoes and starch. The mustard is weakened down, for fear it should bite any one's throat, with flour, and coloured with turmeric. And this is not half the mischief. All sorts of poison and filth are put in. I don't say that our governor is so bad; but it's done, and I have read it. The pickles are coloured with copper. Coffee is mixed with red earth, tan-bark, baked horse-liver, mahogany sawdust, and worse. Cay-

enne pepper is full of red lead; and so is the curry-powder."

"Well, but Mr. Johnson need not buy these things unless he likes."

"*Mr.* Johnson, indeed! You are wonderfully respectful. But we'll let that pass for the present. Need not! No, he need not; but if he went to the best wholesale houses, he would give higher prices, and his neighbours would outsell him."

"But steady customers would support him."

"Perhaps; but there arn't many o' them: people are always changing. Who's cheapest? that's the word: who's cheapest? The most for the money: most saw-dust, most horse-liver. But I say, young Slip, what did your mother do, down in the country there? Didn't she sell faced teas and mixed coffees?"

"Not on purpose, Edward; not on purpose. She often thought the things sent her were bad, but she did not wish it, or do it; and this makes the difference, as far as I can see. I will not be a grocer, if this is the trade."

"Not a grocer! why not? Do you think we are any worse than our neighbours? Why, if you walk down the street right and left, it's all one lie and one cheat from the top to the bottom.

"There's the oilman first: and what does he do? He sells sauces, to begin with,—soy made of nothing but treacle and salt, anchovy coloured with red lead; real Yorkshire ham is stuck up

on hogs' legs that were fattened behind us close to the knacker's yard. They buy these tickets by the dozen, and stick them on as they like;—so very convenient!

"Then comes Lawson the draper. Every now and then he puts up bills:—TREMENDOUS SACRIFICE. SELLING OFF AT LESS THAN HALF-PRICE, WITHOUT RESERVE. ONLY TWO DAYS MORE. Then, when he is tired of these, or the public is, he changes the bills:—NEW ARRIVALS FROM PARIS. ROBES A LA MODE, and I don't know what. He puts one sort of article in the window, and another on the shelf. The other day a passenger called in a policeman, and insisted on having the very cloak in the window, and got it too, greatly to Mr. Lawson's disgust.

"Then the ginshop sells vitriol; and the clothier makes up things of cloth half cotton and half wool, and so on to the end of the street."

"Well, but surely there are some few honest men."

"One or two, perhaps; not more. There's that slow old Nixon, and Joseph Drinkwater: but they've old established customers, or they could not get on."

"It seems, then," replied Bright, "that all are to blame, tradesman and customers. One makes the other what he is."

"Sharp fellow, Mr. Bright, after all," replied Edward Smith; "but we must go to bed, or the governor will be up here about our candle." Then

he pulled off his clothes and was in bed in two minutes.

James knelt down to say his prayers. He felt ashamed whilst he did so. Why? Was it a shameful act? No. Was Edward's opinion worth taking? No. But God is unseen, and man is seen; and we are afraid of what we see and of what is close to us; else there would be no struggle of faith, no victory of faith, no crown of faith.

Edward however said nothing that night, and James had been fearing what a man might say, and did not say, of an act concerning which the Almighty will certainly speak before long, and will not keep silence.

So far, however, James had done no wrong; and had not only not yielded to the system in which he found himself placed, but had disapproved of it, and expressed his displeasure. Let him so continue, and he will gather strength and wisdom, and all will go well in the end.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRADESMAN'S SUNDAY.

SUNDAY came next. This day differed negatively and positively from all other days. First, the Johnsons, &c., did not do what on the six other days

they were wont to do: that is, they did not take down the shutters; they did not polish the brass string-course; they did not rise betimes; they did not sell. Secondly, they did what on other days they did not: they washed more, and dressed more, and eat more; they had a manner and degree of worship, and various manners and degrees of amusement.

In the summer, this was the order of the day. Mrs. Johnson went to church, as a rule, in the morning, and Mr. Johnson now and then; after this they dined at one, and then went up to the parks, or to Hornsey Wood, or Richmond, or Hampstead, or Norwood, for the afternoon and evening; and the young men might do what they liked, if they were at home by supper. The exception to this arrangement was when a longer voyage consumed the whole day, and the Gravesend steamer took the place of the church.

But in winter the order was different. Mr. Johnson never went to church in the morning, and Mrs. Johnson went also in the evening, sometimes with her husband. But every now and then came a sort of domestic party at home, or at a friend's, and then the shopmen enjoyed themselves by themselves in the little parlour, whilst the master and mistress and their guests were up-stairs in their own drawing-room, or in that of their friends.

James was almost as much surprised when he first entered a city church, as the early Christians

would be. He had been used to one of those noble old buildings which remain as they were after the mutilations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before those of the eighteenth. The solid black benches, the dark screen, the massive piers, the rich oak roof, the windows full of tracery, although colour and gilding were gone, preserved the idea and influence of a church; and it so happened that the vicar of James's parish sat in the chancel and chanted the Psalms, and by great self-denial had decorated the east end of the chancel, and filled the great window with coloured glass.

It is not hard then to picture poor James's astonishment when he entered St. Matthew's for the first time; felt himself shut up in a lofty box, looked up and saw no east window, but a mountain of pulpit and a mountain of desk; when he listened to the prayers, read softly, and coarsely responded to by one clerk; when the Psalms were unsung, and two hymns were screamed by the charity schools; and when all the congregation seemed well contented with this, and still more so with themselves. But what was more wonderful still was the size and composition of this same congregation. James thought the population was dense, but behold some hundred and fifty; he thought it was poor, and behold some twenty poor on a few narrow benches between the seats. However, it is vain to endeavour to describe his perplexity. If any person would shew

his ability, let him first prove such a process to be worship at all, and then to be Christian worship, and then to be Church worship; and when he has succeeded in doing so he will have proved, at the same time, all worship, if such be worship, to be hollow and worthless.

Two prominent parts there were in the first worship of Christians,—the singing of Psalms, and the celebration of the sacrifice of the death of Christ; and neither were here. Two prominent marks were there of the first Christian worshippers,—their perfect equality, and their earnest demeanour; and neither could be found in the church of St. Matthew by the Wall.

Whilst Mrs. Johnson and the young men were sitting at church, Mr. Johnson was sitting in the parlour. The ledgers were his Bible, and a cigar supplied the repose of body and mind which is generally administered by the sermon.

This was James's ordeal: six-sevenths of open worldliness, one-seventh of mingled religion and worldliness; cheating and falsehood during six days, and apathy on the seventh. All around sweeping one way; none to encourage, advise, or support him. Would he stand? could he stand? Would we? or, as we are, could we?

It was on the third Sunday that these questions began to receive a solution. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson had gone out to a friend's house for the evening, and the young men were left to themselves.

Edward yawned, and stirred the fire, read "Bell's Life" and an old copy of "Punch." And what did James do? He had no book but the Bible: how could he read that in such company? It did not seem necessary, and he knew it would involve him in argument. He too then yawned, and poked the fire when Edward had done; talked of one thing after another, and at last, against his conscience, listened to "Bell" and "Punch." All this was venial, was what might be expected, but it was not less hurtful. Not that a strict Jewish way of spending the Lord's Day is either needful or wise; but whatever is felt to be wrong, is wrong so long as it is so felt; and, at any rate, "Bell's Life" is not fit reading for the day of our Lord's resurrection. Yet all this was more to be grieved for than blamed, in one so unguided and left to himself as James Bright. But beyond this came another step away from right feeling and action. The papers were exhausted, but not the time. Edward began to quiz his master and mistress, and James laughed; then he made a coarse joke at their cost, and James laughed again. This led to another, and another, and to a tale of evil, in which Edward professed he had shared, and then the curiosity of sin was excited. James felt that he should like to see those scenes; was ashamed of the wish, and yet wished it again.

"Why shouldn't we enjoy ourselves as well as

the governor?" remarked Edward, as he tilted his chair almost over its balance.

"I don't know," replied James, rather timidly.

"Then let us," said Edward. "Here's my share, and you join, and we'll have some grog here by ourselves."

James hesitated; he had but little, and that was his poor mother's last gift. Edward saw his unwillingness, but a jeer at his stinginess at once overpowered it, and Edward went out on his errand.

Now here again there was much to be said for the act, as always there is, be it whatsoever it may. —The money was James's; to drink *some* grog was not intemperance; no duty to his master was neglected; and yet, somehow or other, there was an inward misgiving.

The gin was bought, the kettle put on, the tumblers got out, but certain little matters were wanting, such as lemons and sugar. Edward opened the cupboard, and found three lemons on the shelf.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed; "all right at last."

"But, Edward," James said, "we ought not to take them; they are Mrs. Johnson's: she has bought them, and put them there herself."

"Well, what if she did?"

"It's not honest, Edward."

"No more is anything here. Do you think the

governor is to have a monopoly? No, no, we'll have our turn as well as he. Besides, it's only a lemon. Why, I should be ashamed of the woman if she made a fuss about that, or cared a farthing for it."

"I don't like it, Edward, and I wish you wouldn't," persisted James. Better to persist in action than in speech; but when the punch was made, with Mrs. Johnson's lemons, James drank it. Time ran on, joke and song followed, and Edward's were none of the best. James did not copy them, but he laughed at them; was ashamed of them, but enjoyed them. The fact was, the punch was taking effect. Two strong glasses mixed by Edward were three times more than he had ever taken before in his life, and he felt it. In the midst of a song, there was a knock at the side door; it was Mr. Johnson's own knock: Edward was up in a moment; the bottle was put in his pocket, the glasses carried into the shop, and no sign remained of what had been doing but a scent of spirits, and James's flushed cheeks, and Edward's particularly obsequious manner.

"There's a smell of spirits here," said Mr. Johnson, as soon as he entered.

"Is there, Sir?" answered Edward. "I don't perceive it," and he pretended to smell.

"I do though," continued Mr. Johnson, "and you may go to your room."

James muttered "good-night," and betrayed great confusion, for which Edward afterwards jeered him, and they ascended the stairs.

When once in his room, Edward turned pale and sat down.

"That was a near touch, James; but I think I did the old fellow."

"I don't know, I am sure," James replied; "I think he smelt it, and knows it, and I wish we hadn't done it."

"Pooh, nonsense, the risk is half the fun; but come, let us to bed."

James stood by his bedside and hesitated. Could he go to bed without prayer? he had never yet done so. What would his mother say? What would be the end of such a beginning? But could he kneel down as he was?—fresh from levity, and wrong conversation, and deceit? Could he kneel down before Edward, and reprove him by his prayers whom he had not resisted in action? He paused, and was startled by a voice at his side, "Come, you're not going to pray to-night, at any rate, I should hope."

It was the first time Edward had ventured to laugh at the prayers of his companion, but now he had the advantage, and he kept it. James lay down without asking for pardon; without asking that some check might be put on his downward course: he lay down for the first time without prayer.

But how should he do on Monday what he

omitted on Sunday? How on Tuesday what he neglected on Monday? James had not the courage to begin again, and henceforth he said his prayers in bed, so long as he said them at all.

CHAPTER IV.

SEPARATE INTERESTS.

Once or twice James had observed a strange transaction on Edward's part. He could scarcely believe it, but he thought he had twice noticed a less entry in the ledger than the amount received at the counter; but it was some days before he was certain. At last he observed a stranger purchase two pounds of black tea: he said nothing, but after a time quietly looked at the ledger, where he saw entered 1½ lbs. It was clear, then, that Edward habitually defrauded his master.

At night James charged him with the act, but to his surprise he found Edward by no means disconcerted, and ready to justify himself. It was the old argument, "Like master, like man."

"Why should we set up ourselves to be better than the governor? He cheats the public, and we cheat him. It is only our share of the profits."

"But Edward, it is stealing."

"So is the whole business of J. Johnson and Co. You don't suppose I went to school to learn nothing. I tell you what, James, when I came up from the country, a raw lad, like you, I knew right from wrong as well as you do, or better. I had been taught that cheating was stealing, and that one sort of dishonesty, as much as another, is a breaking of the eighth commandment; but what could I do? It's all cheating here from first to last."

"Why, you need not join yourself."

"Not join! why, I was expected to tell lies, and to tell one lie to sell another by. I was told to promise the servants of the old customers a large Christmas-box if they would bring large orders; and how do they bring these, but by stealing or wasting? Mr. Johnson corrupted me, and I corrupted them."

"And now," murmured James, "you are corrupting me."

"And that's not all, Mr. Bright," added Edward. "But you must remember what the governor said to the old gent.,—he who came to buy the green tea."

"What's that?"

"Why *you* forget! you told me yourself. The governor said, 'What can you expect for the money?' and the old fellow made a sharp hit. I should just like to have heard it. My eyes! I

don't think I could have held in. The old fellow said, 'What I have found.' A rare old bird, that. I should like to have patted him on the back."

"Well, but what has all this to do with you, Edward?"

"Why, just this. The governor expects to have two smart young fellows in his shop; and he has got one: I can't say much yet for the other. He expects a good accountant, a good appearance, good clothes, a slap-up, sharp, business-like fellow, and for what?—£30. and his board. Now, if he wants a good article, he should give a good price. What can you expect for the money, Mr. Johnson? Just what you've found; only I hope you won't find,—that's all the difference,—I call it, James, my share in the business. I don't see why there should be so many separate interests; first the public, then the shopkeeper, then the shopman. I'm for amalgamating all these, my boy. But I'll tell you what, separate interests in the little parlour make separate interests behind the counter; and if the governor is a sharp fellow, why he'll have sharp shopmen." And Edward burst into a loud, unnatural laugh.

"Silence, there," shouted Mr. Johnson from the bottom of the stairs. "You young men have got into a habit of talking, and laughing, and I won't have it. I'll have order in my house. So you may either keep it, or go. I have always kept a respectable house, and I always will."

"Umph! old fellow," whispered Edward, "some folks have different notions of the respectable from others."

But silence was restored, and the two lads soon fell asleep.

On the next Sunday morning, Edward began to quiz the dress of his companion. His coat was so rural, and his boots, no one ever saw such things before; and as for his hat, why, the brim might do for a donkey-race, but for no other purpose.

Meantime, Edward himself was smoothing his long black hair, which now hung over his ears, unimpeded by the pen; then he adjusted his false shirt-front, and put in the studs; next he carefully put on his satin waistcoat, buttoning only the two lowest buttons, that the expanse of false shirt might be manifest, and might say to the world, "My master's a gent., and no mistake." Then came the Joinville tie, and then the coat, and then many a turn and look in the glass, and adjustment, and fresh turn, and fresh contemplation. James would have laughed at all this, and have seen through the folly of it, if he had not feared ridicule. But all the while Edward was quizzing him, and he had not courage to see things for himself.

"You really must go to the tailor, Mr. Bright, if you expect me to walk with you on Sundays."

"I can't afford it."

"Why not?"

"Why, I have only been here a month, and it will be two more before I get any money."

"Write to the old woman, then."

"What, my mother?

"To be sure!"

"That will never do, Edward. She has done more for me already than she could afford; and I promised to help her when I could."

Edward saw he had made a mistake, and changed tactics.

"Well, but you don't know how good-natured people are up in London. My tailor will make for you without any money, and you can pay when you will."

"That is, to get into debt."

"You may call it by that silly name if you like, but it just shews you don't understand business. All business goes on credit. J. Johnson and Co. buy of the wholesale house, and pay *when they can.* J. Johnson's customers buy of him, and pay quarterly, or yearly, or *when they can.* Credit, my man, is the word, and not debt; and credit's the soul of business. You should go with me to the Institute, and there you would hear that the national debt is the life of the country, and the root of our greatness. You would hear about the paper currency, which is nothing but credit; and then your foolish, narrow, country notions would vanish."

"But how should I pay again?" asked James.

"There you are again; you begin at the wrong end. The first question is, not about paying, but getting. First get what you want, and then pay for it. It's only a few strangers that pay ready money, isn't it? All our regular customers go on credit."

"Still they pay at last."

"And so can you!"

On the Monday they went to the tailor's, and a whole quarter's salary was spent beforehand; and then to the bootmaker's, and hatter's, and to one or two more places, and three pounds more were gone. Everything was so cheap, so good, so fashionable, so becoming; it was such a difference. Certainly; but everything was unpaid for: and the difference was that which exists between an independent man and a man in debt; a man out of temptation to dishonesty, and a man in it.

Next came Sunday lounges, cigars in the streets, a share in "Bell's Life," and James Bright was at last a London shopman.

But James Bright was no longer that honest youth and dutiful son who had left Norfolk a few months since.

The first quarter-day had passed, and no remittance to his mother. Four pounds had gone in instalments to the tailor, cigar-shops, &c., and one was kept for present use. She, poor woman, thought London more expensive than she expected,

and only doubted her calculation of James's means, but not for a moment his integrity and affection. True, his letters were fewer,—but then business increased; nor were they so simple and affectionate; —but then his mind was so full; and nothing was said now of communicating, which James had promised to do when once he got settled;—but then he was under great disadvantages in London; he had no guide, and felt strange in church. Here poor Widow Bright was correct. Her son was under great disadvantages, and unhappily he was not superior to them.

And now there needed but little to complete Edward's work, or Mr. Johnson's, or Satan's,— call it whose you will,—or that of each and all. Secret visits to the low theatre opposite, encreased expenses, decreasing principle paved the way for greater and greater violations of conscience. The greatest of them for the present was the desecration of Good Friday. It took Edward more trouble than anything previous, to draw James into an expedition of pleasure on that day; and his success was the greatest success of the devil, and the worst downward step which James had yet taken.

It was the separate interest. If the Johnsons had kept the day in any decent manner, or had done anything to check evil or assist good in the young men under their charge, this crying sin and evil might have been saved; but unhappily

Mr. Johnson thought of nothing but himself, and Mrs. Johnson only of herself and her children. They both went to church in the morning, and then set out for the day. Edward knew this, and thought he might just as well ask for a whole holiday for himself and for James, as for half. He did so without consulting his companion; said that they both wanted to go into the country for a day, and the favour was granted. But when granted, it was long before James would accept it. He had never done such a thing before as to make Good Friday a holiday, in the worldly sense of the word; and at last he was only persuaded to go upon the promise that he should go to church in the afternoon at Gravesend, or in London on their return in the evening.

Thus Satan adds year by year to the number of those who mocked the Lord on His cross, to the drunkards who made songs upon Him, to all those that journeyed carelessly past, and to whom the Saviour called: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." Thus Satan adds year by year to the guilty crowd hastening from the hill of salvation to the bottomless pit.

It was at nine o'clock, the very hour of the Crucifixion, that the steamer cast off from London-bridge wharf for Gravesend. It was filled from one end to the other, and no one but was mocking some act of the Passion, and turning it

from salvation into damnation against himself. Some swearing, some drinking, some full of lust, some of greediness, and all full of levity, they ridiculed the blessed Saviour's wounds, and crucified Christ.

Of course it could not be without pangs of misgiving that James witnessed this scene. His very presence in it proved the depth of his fall. His jokes were forced, and he constantly relapsed into silence. With Edward it was not so, for he was older in guilt.

So they went down the river, that crowd of Christians, those members of a crucified Saviour. Whilst Christendom was watching Him on the Cross, and to all effect He was being crucified among them, these miserable persons went on laughing, drinking, smoking, swearing, jesting impiously, thinking impiously, — keeping the devil's holiday at the foot of the Cross.

Down they went, the band playing, the funnel smoking, fumes of tobacco, brandy and gin, shouts and songs defiling the air; past the holy haunts of our Saxon forefathers at Barking, past the desecrated sanctuary of Dartford, past the sweet church of Erith, across one broad reach, and coasting another till they arrived at Rosherville. Then came the usual tumult: — "Stop-'er-'er; ease-'er-'er. Any gentlemen for Rosherville—Rosherville—Rosherville?" Crowds hustled and bustled along the narrow gangway; the steamer lay over with

the pressure; and in five minutes three-fourths of the cargo had landed.

It is too sad to say how the morning passed, and the afternoon. There was no opening for the promised service. Like all other good intentions married to evil actions, it could not be kept, or was not. The day passed by.

Unnoted by the lost, the hours of the Passion struck; the darkness had come over and rolled away; the great cry had rent other hearts, but had been unheard by the rocks of those Christian breasts. The only bell heeded, the only summons regarded, was the signal of return; and weary, but still trifling, still profane, the crowd hurried to the steamer.

The tide, which was with the boat in descending, had changed, and was with her again in returning. The speed was great: they passed everything; Erith, North Woolwich, disappeared; Blackwall was nearing. What a fine day they had had! what a successful trip! The day had been made for them! so lucky from first to last!

"Helm down," cried the captain, with sudden excitement, from the bridge which joined the two paddle-boxes; "down—down—down!" and he beckoned furiously with his hand to the man at the helm.

The passengers looked upwards, and forwards; there was hurrying and scurrying among the sailors, and then a shock like an earthquake. A great Dundee steamer had come suddenly round

the point which their boat was doubling: there was no room, no time to turn. All that was effected by the shifting the helm and the shouting and bustle was this, that the great ship struck the small, not in her bow, but just ahead of the paddle-box, almost amid-ships, and cut her in two like a knife.

Death of the body sealing the death of souls! death temporal fixing death eternal! They struggled; they called; they clutched at each other. Many destroyed, but none saved, another. But fifty from out of five hundred reached the shore: amongst them were both Edward and James.

At first James was conscious only of an intense feeling of cold, and of a violent whirling and rushing in the head. When he rose he saw heads and arms all round him rising in the water, like the struggling devils in the old pictures of hell. Some person caught hold of him, and they went down together. He had not time for a thought or a prayer. If he had died, it would have been just as he was, just as he had sinned. But at the second plunge he touched ground. The rush of the water from the sinking ship and the current had driven him in. He touched,—stood; he was safe. Life was before him.

It need scarcely be said that this warning checked James Bright in his course. Even Edward was silent and thoughtful; and had there been any advice at hand, spiritual or lay, his whole life might have altered: but there was no one. Both

the youths received a reprimand from their master, for he had understood from Edward that he was about to visit some friend in the country; but Mr. Johnson thought the accident a sufficient penalty, and the matter passed over.

James however was more deeply affected, and had he been alone, would perhaps have recovered himself. He refused several plans of his companion's, and resisted him in several evil jests; but this was not enough.

"Now we shall have some fun," exclaimed Edward, rubbing his hands one evening in the shop, when Mr. Johnson was gone out. "Have you heard?"

"No, I've heard nothing," replied James.

"Not heard! Well then, Mr. Johnson's got so proud, or the governor's got so rich, or may be he's so hard up, that he's going to start another shop at the West End, and he can't be in two places at once."

"But where does he get the money?" remarked James, without any appearance of interest.

"Nay, that's not your business, nor mine. However, I have an idea. I think old Davis, the father-in-law, has advanced it. However, that's but a think; I neither know nor care, so he pays me my tin and makes himself scarce. I shouldn't wonder if he was to raise us, and take on some new hands. A poor case if we don't make something by it, at any rate."

It is true that J. Johnson and Co. had found Mrs. Johnson and Co., that is, the children, so ex-

pensive, that some move must be made; and this was that move. The shop was in —— Street, close to the great squares in the West, and a covered cart was to run to and fro,—J. Johnson and Co., No. 8, —— Street, —— Square, and No. —, —— Street; a green cart with letters of gold, and a fast horse rattling it along; the faster because there was not much in it.

The arrangements were these. The upper part of the house at the West End was to be let, and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were to remain in the City; but the former would go up every day. A housekeeper was to reside in it, and attend to one shopman, while the rest were to come for the day.

It took some months to effect all these changes, and meantime things went on as before. Would that they did! In those few months old habits returned; and a new habit was added, which did more than anything else to destroy whatever principle remained in James Bright. He became, with Edward, an eager and unceasing reader of the cheap shilling novels, which issue from the press like fumes from the mouth of hell. "The Mysteries of Paris," "Caleb Williams," and the like, were devoured one after another. They were the only books read: they destroyed all relish for anything less hurtful than themselves. Meantime James found his means run short, his expenses increase, his bills press. He did at last, with many struggles, and much shame,—he did what Edward did, and joined in cheating his

master. Within a year of his arrival in London, James Bright was habitually dishonest.

Now it may be a matter of wonder how these youths could rob their master without being discovered; and it is not for this book to suggest the ways in which it was done. It was done, and is done, and will be done every day, by like persons and in like circumstances. Tradesmen do not, and cannot, "take stock" every week, or every month; and all chests of tea, all bags of rice, all tubs of sugar, do not contain the same quantity. There is allowance also for waste; which waste may be large or small. Suffice it to say, that the thing can be done, and is done, and no precaution is adequate to check it.

In large shops there is what is called a cashier; all money passes through his hands; and therefore it appears that the shopman has no interest in selling two yards for the price of one; and yet it is not so.

At last Christmas came; but before it, no holy meditation, no examination of the soul, no reckoning of the soul in Advent, or at the close of the year. Stock-taking, and accounts, and bill-making, and preparations for the change, took up the whole time.

At last James got leave for a week, and returned home to astonish his native village as the young man from London.

CHAPTER V.

CHANGES.

It did not require much penetration to see that James Bright was an altered person. The village tailor and shoemaker saw it: they were old friends, and hoped for a job; but when they saw him, they did not venture to think of it any more. His old companions saw it: they spoke to him, and he to them; but there was a constraint. But worst of all, the vicar saw it, and his mother saw it, and both were uneasy. Moreover, it did not add to the happiness of the poor woman, that before he went, James did what a few months before he had indignantly refused to do,—he applied to her for money.

"Why, James, my boy," she replied, "I thought you were to help me in my old age?"

"So I will, mother, after a bit. I hope to rise soon!"

"But, James, you could do very well with £20. Why, you didn't spend half that here, and you always looked decent."

"Yes, mother, but things are so different in London; you can't judge!"

"I see they are, James," she replied, her eyes

filling with tears. "There was a time when you could do without studs and gold pins, and when you wouldn't let your poor mother do without anything which she wished for! It is different, indeed."

James was softened. He kissed his mother, and begged her not to think any more of his request. He could do without the money, and he would. But she, poor silly woman, was now conquered, and brought out five pounds, and pressed it upon him. Could he take it? Had he the heart to take it? No! he put it aside: but then he thought of the bills, and hesitated; and it seemed as if his mother was not in want of it; and he allowed himself to receive his *mother's last note.*

The time came when he would have repaid it with a hundred, but there was none to receive it.

And there were changes in master, as well as in man. Mrs. Johnson thought a pony-carriage would be so convenient for her husband to take him up to his business. In fact, it would cost no more than the omnibus. The pony could be kept with the car-horse, and it would be really next to no expense. So the pony was bought; it was a bargain: and the chaise was a bargain; and everything was in Mr. Johnson's favour. He must surely be a child of fortune, and in a rapid way to make one.

And Mr. Johnson was changed—only, to some people's surprise, in a contrary manner. Instead

of being more grand and consequential than ever, his face was more anxious, and he stooped, and walked slowly. The cares of riches, thought some, weighed upon him; but in reality it was the care of a great stroke, of a last and most perilous attempt, not at wealth, but at a livelihood.

Meantime, the salaries were raised; only they were not paid. This might be from the great outlay of the new business, or it might not. It was best for those interested to think that it was. It was pleasanter for Edward and James to expect salaries of £50 and £40 per annum, than to expect nothing; but in the interval the waiting was costly: their bills pressed, and the habits of the young men grew more expensive rather than less so, and the peculations increased. What Mr. Johnson did not pay, that he lost.

At first, Edward was sent up to the West End, and James was left in Shoreditch with a new boy, who would soon have been corrupted like himself, if things had gone on as they had before. But there was a little maid at hand, to lead Naaman to the prophet.

For some months a child had come early once or twice a-week to purchase things for her mother. At first she was the picture of health and of beauty, and James was so much pleased with her manner and looks, that he enquired her name and home. Her tale was simple, but it was of peculiar interest to him. Her mother was from his own county, from

a village not ten miles distant from his own. She was a widow, and this her only child. She was afflicted with a painful disease, and had come up for hospital advice, and had become an out-door patient of St. Thomas's. Weeks had gone on, and months, and the hoped-for cure came not. Money was vanishing fast. One thing was given up, and then another, until the want of good food rendered it impossible to follow the advice of the surgeon. During this process Mary was her mother's unfailing help. She never left her, but at her desire; and as hope failed, and food failed, the roses had forsaken her sweet face, and care darkened the child's countenance, and disease seemed following in the train.

It was early before breakfast. James had just weighed out a 2lb. packet of tea, which he meant to sell, and enter as 1lb., when the child came for an ounce of tea for her mother: James was touched by her looks, and, generous at his master's expense, gave an ounce and a half. The money was paid, and the child departed.

Scarcely three minutes however had elapsed, when the little girl came in with more colour in her cheeks than had appeared there for many a day, and saying,—

"You have made a mistake, I think, Sir. This is more than an ounce; I'm 'most sure it is; for I have so often been sent for an ounce, as you know."

James took back the parcel, made the weight right, and gave her sixpence as a reward for her honesty; but as he did so, he could not look the child in the face; and when she was gone, he burst into tears. He was alone, and he wept some minutes. Could it be? was it come to this,—that, to gratify his sins, he, a young man, the son of a widow, should be in the habit of selling more than he accounted for; whilst this child, who seemed to love nothing but her own widowed mother, refused to profit by what she thought a mistake? Could there be a greater contrast than this? or deeper degradation and shame?

At breakfast-time, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson could not think what had happened to James, his manner was so strange; and all the day long he was lost, as it were, and made many mistakes. However, his master went away to the West End, and so he got through, until the welcome hour of bed-time, when at last he could be quiet; and yet not wholly so, for George, the new lad, slept in Edward's place.

A year had now passed since James knelt at his bedside,—a year of sin; but the work of repentance and change was begun at last. James knelt and prayed. The presence of George was a restraint, and the remembrance of his former neglect; but the emotion of his soul broke down these barriers: he forgot everything but his sins; and when he began to pray, words followed words,

broken sentences, but many, one after another; verses of the fifty-first Psalm, which his mother had taught him after one of the few falsehoods of which he had been guilty before he came to London. At last his feelings were beyond control, and he wept as a child. George wondered, but said nothing. They were the tears over which all good and loving creatures rejoice. They were the cleansing waters of Jordan, to which that little maid had guided the leper; and it was well to weep, and weep, for there was much to be purified.

At first James was utterly perplexed: he knew no more of repentance than that it is sorrow and amendment; and this may seem all, to some persons, but it is not so, as the words sound, and as people generally understand in these days. How to conquer old sins, to resist old victorious temptations, to face companions in evil, to undo the past by acts of repentance, to persevere in grief and humility, and to grow in love; these are gifts which generally require guidance and aid, from those shepherds whom the Good Shepherd, as His crowning act of love, has left on earth, to gather in His wandering sheep, and to bring them to the fold.

Little did James know that he was to have this aid, when on the morrow his master told him that he was to move that very day to the other shop, and that Edward would take his turn in his old position.

At the West End, James found things going on as might have been expected. The other shopmen had learned of Edward, or were accomplished beforehand, in the same dishonesty. They had enquired of Edward what sort of fellow James was, and had learned that he was a jolly companion, and one of themselves. They were greatly surprised therefore to find him moody and sad, and still more to observe that he was strict and regular in his business. Of his devotions they of course knew nothing, as James was the only man who slept on the premises. But in trying to do right, James felt as awkward as he had done in first doing wrong; it had now become strange to be innocent, and he was always doubting what he ought to do, —whether to confine himself to his own duty, or to remonstrate with the rest. He wisely resolved to mind only himself.

On Sunday James was entirely free. Edward hoped that he would go down to the old house, but he did not. He took his Prayer-book and made for the nearest church, and entered it. Great was his astonishment to find a church and service entirely different from St. Matthew's, and one which called back all the associations of his home. It was a new church, built for the poor. There were no pews, no pile of pulpit and desk: the Psalms were sung: there was a hearty response, and the whole congregation were at worship.

And now it seemed that circumstances were making amends to him. Hitherto everything had led him astray and corrupted him; now one thing after another was calling him back to himself and assisting to restore him. It was Sexagesima. The sermon was on the fall, and the preacher dwelt upon the growth of sin.

"How many," he said, "have come up to this Babylon in which we dwell, innocent as Adam at the creation, without not only the practice of evil, but the desire; nay, without even the knowledge. They came from their village churches, their Christian homes, from the care of father or mother, untried and unfallen, undefiled, but unproved. And not only these, but all who have gone forth from pure homes even here, and from that blessed ignorance of sin and that love of what is true, and gentle, and good, which belongs to Christian childhood. They went forth. Satan met them, disguised in other form. Satan persuaded them—'This is not so wrong. This is not so dangerous. Try it. Taste. This is sweet, and not deadly.' They listened; they tarried near the temptation; they were persuaded; they fell. Immediately innocence was gone; false excuses followed to hide their nakedness, —excuses to their own conscience, and to those who reproved them. Thus they plunged deeper and deeper; and now many are like the tempter himself in evil, sons of the devil, and not of God; persuading others to follow them; missionaries of

hell. Look at this great river near its source; look at it as it leaves this city: breathe the fresh air which blows to us, breathe it again as it leaves us, laden with defilements;—such is the difference between pure youth and defiled youth; between what many were and what they have become."

Very bitter were these words to James. They were sharp arrows piercing him, one after another. He could scarcely help thinking that the preacher knew him, and saw him; and yet this could not be. His heart beat, his throat was dry. If he had been bidden to rise and leave the church, he could not have done it. But as he listened, the sermon restored him. There was still hope. After dwelling more upon the fall, and then declaring the second Adam the Restorer, the preacher said, "Ye see then, that if there has been a fall, there may be also an arising; if there has been defilement, there may be purification; there may be the cleanness of repentance, if there is not the innocence of perseverance. This foul river flows and flows into God's ocean, and its waters are bright once more. This thick air is wafted over fields and trees, and men breathe it fresh and pure, and know not that it has ever been defiled. Christ has undone what Adam did to mankind; and Christ will undo in each of us what we have done in ourselves. He is still among us to cleanse the leper, to open the eyes of the blind, to strengthen the paralysed, to raise the dead in sin.

"What then is needed? The very opposite of what our fallen parents did. They hid themselves from God; we must come to Him. They excused themselves; we must confess. They laid the blame on others; we must take it to ourselves. Do not try to restore yourselves by yourselves. The old Adam is only corrupt, and weak; you can do nothing. If Christ is our Restorer, it is because man cannot restore himself. It is not hearing, reading, resolving, that can purify the guilty; they must come to the streams of grace: not to Abana and Pharpar,—the world's reform; but to Jordan,—to Christ's repentance and Christ's remission. Ye know that at all times we your servants are ready to assist your repentance; and this present season is one in which you are especially invited, in order that you may keep a true Lent and come to a blessed Easter. Fear not. Hide not yourselves in the trees of the garden. Repent, return, do the first works, and be children of God once more."

This was news of life to James. Here was a way opened, if he had but strength to walk in it: but how could he venture? But there was no time now to debate this; the holy service began in which he could take no part, as he was, and he left.

It was a happy thing for James that he was wholly free. He could attend church again; thrice in a day, if he willed. He did not do this however,

but he walked out in the afternoon alone, thinking on what he had heard, and on himself. He felt his own weakness, feared that he should fall back, as he did after his peril in the steamer. He knew not how to face Edward, how to act with his companions. All these things urged him to seek the counsel which was offered, but shame, and the strangeness of the whole thing, held him back.

In the evening, however, he went again to St. George's. The sermon was by a different clergyman, but it was equally appropriate to himself; it was on the Deluge. The contrast between the bright, pure creation was set forth, and that guilty world upon which the Flood came; then the certainty and awful severity of God's vengeance was declared; then the Church of God, as signified by the ark, was shewn to be the salvation of sinners; and, at the end, much was said on the exceeding patience and long-suffering of God, which, when it is rejected, draws down heavier punishment.

James had never heard such preaching in his life; it quite occupied him, and carried him away. When the service was over, he remained upon his knees and prayed, and once more wept. How long he knelt he knew not: when he looked up the church was empty, but the preacher stood beside him, and asked, in a gentle voice, whether he could be of any consolation or service to him. The ice was broken, and James followed him into the vestry. What passed there, and in succeeding

visits, is no subject for this tale. The private intercourse between priest and people is sacred; it concerns secrets which shall only be disclosed at the day of judgment, and its object is that such disclosure may not be sudden, and overwhelming, and condemning. Suffice it to say that James had now begun the work of penitence; a hard, and long, but blessed work,—"the sorrow not to be repented of."

CHAPTER VI.

DIFFICULTIES.

One of James's first objects in his repentance was, of course, to make restitution, to return his peculations, and, if possible, to repay his mother; but how could these things be done? So far from being able to do that to which only conscience obliged him, he could not even pay what the law compelled. His salary was unpaid; his debts pressed. So far, certainly, he was relieved about restitution to his master, that his master had not paid him; but he had defrauded beyond his power to repay, if his salary was in hand. He, however, was not the only person in difficulties. When his time was over, Edward and he changed places again, and met in

the Strand on their passage. Edward evidently wished to speak to him, and they turned down towards Waterloo Bridge for privacy.

"Well, James," began his former friend, "they tell me you have come out in quite a new character,—a Methodist, eh? O no, I beg pardon, not a Methodist, but a saint, a monk, a hermit. How's this, Jem? Are you like the rats, going to leave the house before it falls? Do you think it best to take a new course in time, and to put on a long face before Messrs. Johnson and Co. smash, in hopes that some Puseyite shop will open its doors to you?"

"I am not leaving Mr. Johnson," replied James; "I could not, if I would; but if things are going wrong, I ought to stay all the more, and try and make up for the harm I have done."

"Well, I'm not going to argue with you now, nor to quarrel; if you like to turn—no, I won't say it,—if you like to turn what you choose, it is not I that would stop you. Every man for himself. But the fact is, we are both in the same boat; we can't get our money, and our creditors can't get theirs, and there's likely to be a great smash of it. I must do something, and quickly too."

"You seem to know more of Mr. Johnson's affairs than I do; but I hope it is not so bad as you say."

"Well, I guess I do, and never mind how. But

I wasn't speaking of him. It's you and I that will smash first, unless we bestir ourselves. Will you join me?"

"Join you in what? in anything fair and right I will, certainly."

"Aye, there you are again with your new cant. I see it's no good talking to you, so good-bye. I must act for myself."

"Stay, Edward, pray ——"

But the voice was unheeded. Edward turned down the Strand, and James walked sadly eastwards, thinking over in his mind what Edward could possibly mean, and how he could prevent any harm.

At the shop two letters were lying, one directed "Mr. James Bright," and the other "J. Bright, Esq.;" the first from the country, the latter from London. They were these:—

"Mr. Bright,—I am sorry to have to inform you that your mother is in great trouble and sickness. She has been poorly some time, and would not have the doctor because of the expense, and now she is worse. She will not write herself, and she says you must not come up and leave your business, unless she gets worse: I will inform you if it should please God not to strengthen her. And besides this, she is in trouble about money. That boy Bill Nixon, whom she took in to carry the orders, turns out to have been a thief, and the son of a thief, and he opened the door in the night,

and went off with his father, and took near £30, which your mother had got together to pay the traveller. If you can send a trifle, please do; and a letter would be a comfort.

"Your old friend and neighbour,

"THOMAS FAITHFUL."

The other was this:—

"Sir,—I beg to enclose you a copy of bill delivered, and am sorry to say that I cannot wait any longer for my money, but must proceed to recover, if not paid forthwith.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"T. F. SMITH AND CO."

Here was a mother who had denied herself medical advice, whilst she did not deny her son her poor savings, when he wanted them for his selfish extravagance; a mother ruined by the dishonesty of her shop-boy, and that mother his own.

Here also was a request to send help, and he not only had none, but was in danger of prosecution for debt.

Very heavy is the penalty of sin, and awful the just punishment of God.

James's first step was to sell ring, gold pin, and studs, and to pawn his best coat; he next applied to his master for salary, and was only deferred. He obtained however enough by his own sacrifices

to stave off the prosecution, and to forward ten shillings to his mother, which was a little relief. He posted the letter with a heavy heart, and acknowledged the justice of his sorrow and shame. Meantime he found comfort in checking the corruption of George. He begged him to pray, and warned him of the danger he was in. It was a difficult task, full of many confusions, but it was humbly undertaken and accomplished.

About ten days after James had posted his letter, another came from T. Faithful. It was not in black, and the news was not put at the beginning of the letter; but Widow Bright had bidden farewell to her sorrow,—James was wholly an orphan,—and the day of the funeral was fixed.

Mr. Johnson could not now avoid paying James, and giving him leave to go down into the country. A few things were hastily put up, and almost broken with sorrow, poor James took his journey to the funeral.

Silent and sad was the house of his boyhood. One old woman, the nurse, was there, boiling the kettle in a darkened room, prattling, unfeeling; full of last sayings and last doings, each one of which was an anguish to the hearer. On and on she talked, how Mrs. Bright's last words were of her son; how she loved him, how she longed to see him once more, how she wished she had never sent him to London, how she missed his letters, how long she had put off sending for the doctor, how

she had denied herself this comfort and that, to save up a little money for her boy; and now it was all taken by that little villain Bill Nixon. However, Thomas Faithful sought to relieve James of this talkative woman, and of the grief of that desolate house, by inviting him to his own; but James refused to leave whilst his mother's body lay there; and this, and his whole demeanour, almost recovered him the good-will and respect of his neighbour, who before owed him a grudge for the sorrow which he knew the poor widow had suffered from her only son.

When Mr. Faithful had left, James sent the nurse off on some errand, and then nerved himself for his last look at the face which had been the sun of his life. With trembling hand he removed the covering: there she lay, deeply lined with grief and care, but without the expression of it. Just as many plain features fail to make a countenance plain, because expression overpowers them, and gives its own character to the features, so here all the furrows and hollows of anxiety and sorrow were unable to give their natural effect to the face, but were lost in the deep peace and kindness of the whole countenance. James saw indeed the stamp of the disappointment and care which he had helped to set on that beloved face, but he saw also the repose and resignation which had so often calmed his youthful spirits, and consoled his vexations; he saw that a stronger seal had set its

heavenly impression on the soul of her whose face he watched, and that nothing had been able to efface the testimony of her faith and hope.

Dreary was the day of interment. Drip, drip went the water, hour after hour, from the tiles above to the tiles below. There was no spirit in the atmosphere to rattle the casement or bend the trees, but steadily, heavily weeping, the skies poured and poured their drenching streams upon the earth. And dreary too was the funeral, as it is with us English now-a-days. We mourn as men without hope. The drenched crape drooped, and emitted an offensive smell. The pall was turned up for fear of being spoiled. The paltry tin nails of the coffin made the cloth appear blacker and more hopeless. The grave itself was full of water. Idle boys and girls crowded in the porch, and would have stood upon the seats, if they had not been forbidden. Thus much the vicar had accomplished, and a few crosses in the churchyard, but no more; for we cling to the moroseness of our religion. But who has not seen these things? who does not know them?

Then came the last arrangements. Nothing could be reserved but the Bible and the watch: all else must go to the hammer, and then to the creditors. Mr. Faithful and the neighbours were thanked; the kind advice of the vicar thankfully received; a request given that some evergreen shrub should be set above the grave; a last look

taken of the grave, and then James returned to the city.

There was a strange gloom in the shop and in the house when James Bright returned. Something had happened; something was feared. Thus much was clear at first sight; but it was not at once that the truth came out, so unwelcome it was.

At last however George found opportunity to say what had happened. It was much as James feared. Edward had absconded with nearly £300, and could not be heard of. He had been to some of the principal customers who paid quarterly, and received the amounts of their bills; this was all that was known. But this was not all that was feared and expected. It was known that Mr. Johnson was much embarrassed before, and this loss would not only add to his needs, but to his pressure. Those to whom he owed money would not be likely to trust him the better for it. A few weeks served to put an end to all these speculations. Mr. Johnson was in the Gazette;—no Co., but plain Mr. Johnson. The business too was not thought worthy to be carried on by the creditors: everything was sold up, pony, and chaise, and china, and the new drawing-room furniture; the shopmen were discarded, and Mr. Johnson disappeared from the world like a broken bubble. James was adrift, not only in London, but in all the earth; houseless, friendless, and worse than penniless, for he was in debt.

And yet James was not friendless; the incumbent of St. George's heard of the failure, and sought him out. He himself was the nephew of a grocer, but of one in very different circumstances from those of Mr. Johnson, and of very different character. The uncle had great respect for his nephew, although he did not agree with him in doctrine, and it did not require much persuasion to induce him to take James into his shop, at a salary of £40,—to rise in good time.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND SHOP.

THE new shop was quite another thing from the old. There was no dishonesty, high or low. Everything was good; and if it was dear also, why, that did not matter, for both situation and customers were nearly the grandest in London. Mr. Vere cared for his shopmen, and his shopmen cared for him. They had every comfort, a library, reasonable leave of absence, and they were not over-worked. There had seldom been any attempts at purloining, and such as there were had been detected, through the fidelity of the other shopmen. Mr. Vere's servants therefore were honest and respectable,

obliging and attentive; and yet there was something wanting in them, because there was something wanting in Mr. Vere; and that something was a fixed and practical religion.

Now certainly it cannot be maintained that a master is to preach to his men, or to talk religion with them, or to have them all of his own views; though he might fairly have all of his own communion, if he desired it. But it is quite possible to have a definite influential creed for oneself, and to encourage others by example to have the same. Mr. Vere said, "Always go to some place of worship on Sunday, where you choose;" and he himself went once. Further than this he did not go, nor desire that others should; and he carefully excluded from the library of his young men, not only controversy, but religion itself.

The consequence was, that his shopmen were trustworthy, but not Christian. They were free from some sins, but from others equally deadly they were not. Vanity, selfishness, conceit, thoughtlessness, love of money, and even what is commonly called immorality, were to be found in their ranks.

Into such a society James suddenly came. He differed from all in one way or other. If one was religious, James differed from him by being a Churchman. If another was quiet, and read, James was ignorant. If this man was gay, James was grave, and practised the strictest economy. If

another was saving, yet he found that James had no plan of investing his money, or setting up for himself in the end. Yet for all this he soon became popular, because he was quiet, and because he was kind. James still attended St. George's, and became a communicant, and then a member of an amateur choir; and he longed to enroll himself in a sort of guild or society, by which young men united together in works of mercy and usefulness, but he had neither money nor time for it.

Thus two years passed away in an even discharge of duty. Three days in each year had especial interest for him; two of repentance, and one of thankfulness. The days of grief were Good Friday, and that of his mother's decease; and the day of thankfulness was that on which he was first called to repentance. At last the debts were quite cleared, and a cross put up by the grave of his mother, and money was in hand only waiting to be restored to Mr. Johnson, when opportunity offered.

But where was Mr. Johnson? No one knew. His poor father-in-law, of whom he had borrowed the capital when he set up in the West End, was dragged down into poverty, and had abandoned the country.

Where was Mr. Johnson? Had he literally no friend left? The man who once stood for the ward, and thought he might one day become, not

only common councilman, but alderman; who had two shops, cars, chaise, &c., &c.,—was he literally lost? unknown? perished, he and his, from the memories of his fellow-creatures in the course of two years?

When all else fails, try an advertisement. "Mr. J. Johnson, late of No. 50, —— Street, or his family, may hear of something to their advantage by applying to Alpha, Post-Office, —— Street, Soho." But there was no reply.

But when what we seek is not found, what we do not seek often is; and so it happened to James.

It was drawing to the end of August, and all people who could, hurried out of London. Such a summer had not been known by old men for sixty years, nor by old women for a very long time, for *they* did not give any dates to calculate ages by. At Vere's shop the heat was intolerable; flies and wasps devoured everything; the shopmen shone like the heroes of Homer at a feast. Dogs were persecuted. Hansom's cabs, ice-shops, and soda-water sellers made their fortunes. Mr. Vere had gone up to Hampstead, and several of his men were enjoying their holidays; James however had none at this time: all he could do was to bathe very early in the floating baths by the bridges, and to walk into the parks after evening service at St. George's, which he attended whenever business was slack, and he could be spared. In this habit he was not alone. His example had an

effect; several of his companions had joined him, and more seemed inclined to follow in time. On this occasion, however, he walked out alone; and as he passed the shop-windows of an inferior street on his way to the park, and saw the same system prevailing of lying advertisements, and claptraps of every description, he fell into a train of thought which made him forget everything else. He was wondering at the goodness, but most mysterious mercy, which had rescued him from the falsehood and dishonesty into which he had fallen, whilst others were still left in their sins. Why was he recalled, and Edward permitted to grow worse and worse? He thought on the mysteries of grace, and wisely cut short his vain speculations with an ejaculation of penitence, humility, and gratitude for his own conversion, the goodness which he knew, and was sure of.

Meantime he had walked rapidly on, not observing his steps, and found himself suddenly in the midst of a crowd, collected at the corner of two streets, to observe a dispute between the driver of an omnibus and a drayman. James could not proceed; the crowd pressed closer and closer. He felt that he was hustled on purpose; his hat was knocked over his eyes, and when he raised his hands to protect himself, his arms were held up, and in a moment his pockets were emptied, and the crowd broke away.

But could it possibly be? Those eyes that met

his, and that face, they were so like. Surely it could not be! O no, James could not think it was Edward. He resisted the thought, called out for a policeman, told his case, gave his direction, and turned homewards. He had not gone far, however, when he perceived the same person following him. James quickened his steps, but checked them when he remembered that he had nothing to lose, and that there were plenty of people in the street. The stranger came up and said,

"Mr. Bright, you don't know me."

"How should I?" was the doubtful reply.

"You soon forget your friends, then; but they don't forget you. Here are your things; you will find them all right: and Edward has brought them to you."

"O Edward, is it really you? Can you have come to this?"

"To what, Mr. Bright? It's only the old trade. No worse, not a bit. Just shew me the difference, and I'll treat you to a pint of old crusted."

"Turn into the park with me," replied James; "I wish to talk with you."

"Very happy indeed, Sir; quite an honour to walk with you. But you must know that birds of my kind can't fly in all places. No. 1 A is there, and who knows but another peeler may be there in plain clothes. If you want to see me, I must choose time and place."

"Well, then, fix it."

"It can't be to-morrow, we've a little job in hand on the river; and then let me see. Well, on Sunday I'll meet you."

"Where, and when?"

"At the Two Pigeons, in the garden, on the Battersea Road."

"One word more. Do you know where the Johnsons are?"

"Know! to be sure I do; and I've known all your doings as well."

"Well, the Johnsons?"

"O, he, he,"—and his voice changed, and he looked serious for a moment; "he drowned himself in the Regent's Canal!"

James groaned.

"And where are Mrs. Johnson and the children?"

"Why she's married again, and they keep a public at Islington. The name is John Edes. If you want to help them, you must do what you do for the children, for I expect they've hard times of it."

So they parted; and James had two painful visits before him, and neither of them very respectable in appearance. That to Islington came first.

It was not really a public-house, but a ginshop, which Mr. Johnson's widow was keeping. James hesitated before he entered; but he made up his mind, pushed back the revolving door, and went

in. Behind the bar were two persons. The man was bloated, pale and low-browed. Surliness and vice were written on his face. The woman was high-coloured and dressy; her cap full of artificial flowers; long vulgar coral earrings drooping from her ears; and a greasy light green silk gown on her back. It was certainly Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Johnson become the keeper of a ginshop; Mrs. Johnson changed just so far, and no farther, than the new occupation would have led one to expect. She knew James in a moment.

"Well, Mr. Bright, who'd have thought of seeing you here? I hope all's going well with you. You see I'm obliged to do business of one sort or another, and it's hard enough to get an honest living in these times. Won't you come into the parlour?"

James was much shocked, but he followed her in.

"How are the children?" he asked, when he was seated.

"O, pretty well, pretty well. Sarah's learning to help me, and the others ar'nt good for much yet."

"Don't you send them to school?"

"Yes, they have been off and on; but there's no school here that Mr. Edes likes. He is a strange man," she added in a whisper; "and no one dare cross him."

"Can I see them?"

"O yes, I dare say. Here Sarah; I say, Sarah, call the boys in, and come yourself and see Mr. Bright."

They came: the two boys remembered him, and seemed pleased; but it made James unhappy to see them. William, the eldest, looked cowed and sickly, and the other seemed wild and unbridled. Sarah, the daughter, was now seventeen, and appeared modest and quiet. She looked timidly at her mother, and seemed afraid to shew any pleasure when she saw an old friend. The interview was short, and very constrained. James rose to depart, not knowing what to propose or what to devise for the good of the children. He asked leave to call again soon, and then said "Good evening." As he left the small parlour, however, and entered the bar, he found the place full. Two policemen were there, and they had been searching the premises for a burglar who had been seen to enter the house a few minutes before James.

It was evidently a house of the lowest description, and the policemen eyed him suspiciously as he left it. This was disagreeable enough; but James felt conscious of innocence, and soon forgot the unpleasantness in thoughts about the poor children of his first master. What to do he knew not. The money he had saved would but go into the pocket of Edes, and it would require much more to educate them and get them into respectable places.

Perhaps he might undertake one child, if they would let him; but time would shew.

Sunday came: James attended as usual at St. George's, and in the evening walked out to the place which Edward had fixed. If possible, this rendezvous was still more unpleasant than the former. He passed under an archway of green board, with a great inscription in yellow:—"TEA-GARDENS. DINNERS, TEA, SUPPERS, AT THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE NOTICE.—ADMITTANCE GRATIS."

The gardens were nothing else than a collection of tables in the open air, or under small wooden booths. Parties of two and three, up to six, were gathered in these, some eating, but the greater part drinking and smoking. Edward and another man was in one;—the latter arose and walked off to another part of the garden when James entered the box.

"Good evening, Mr. Bright," Edward said, with an air of ease and assurance, the reverse of what he felt. "I suppose you don't know these places, but I assure you my host is a very good landlord. What will you take?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"Nothing? why they expect you to eat and drink, or they would not admit you for nothing."

"Then only some tea."

Tea was called, but Edward had a large rummer of brandy and water, which he seemed to relish far more than his tea-cup.

"Well, Edward," James began, after one or two pauses, in which both appeared awkward, "what are you doing, and what do you mean to do?"

"I live by my wits; and I mean to do the same as long as wits are a living."

"Honestly, Edward?"

"Well, that's as you please; as honestly as three-fourths of the world; and that's enough, I should think."

"O Edward, how did you come to this? I never expected it."

"Then you might have done," retorted the other sharply; "for you saw me coming to it. What we did then was the high road to this."

"But you know what it will end in, Edward. Pray change your life whilst you can."

"And what does all the world end in? What did Johnson end in? What will his wife and children end in? And what does life end in? Nothing. 'Live whilst you live.'"

"And then?"

"Why go the way of all flesh."

"And then?"

"No more thens for me. Who knows anything beyond? Who has been in the grave, and risen, and come back to tell us anything of the next world?"

"One has died, and lived, and will come and judge, Edward; but I fear you believe not in Him."

"Why should I, and how should I? I care not to believe what I dare not believe."

At this moment three well-dressed persons filled the entrance of the box, and one addressed James.

"Do you know, Sir, with whom you are talking?"

"Yes, very well."

"Then I am sorry to hear it, for I must take you both into custody."

Edward sprang towards the speaker, then turned suddenly between the two others, struck right and left, and was lost in a little crowd of enquirers. The garden was searched again and again, but in vain, and James only was conveyed to the station.

This is a very awkward business, he thought to himself as he went; and the more he thought, the more awkward it seemed. He had been found sitting quietly in conclave with a notorious thief, and when questioned by the police, had asserted himself that he knew his companion. It was true that his character might preserve him, and the fact that he had not tried to escape; but would this satisfy Mr. Vere, if it got him acquitted? Would not his pride be offended at having the dignity of his house compromised by such an affair? Then it would bring discredit on St. George's, and might do harm with his companions at Vere's. The more he thought, the more unhappy he was; and he came at last to the conclusion that no one would trust him but the Incumbent of St. George's,

and no one could save his character but He who is the protector of the innocent and the weak. Nor were James's apprehensions unfounded, for he knew not of another circumstance which would turn against him with great weight on the morrow. In the midst of all this he had one strange consolation: he acknowledged the justice of his unjust arrest; he felt that once he had deserved bonds and shame, and then did not receive them; now, as part of his chastisement, when they would lead, not to hardness and desperation, but to compunction and lowliness, they were sent. Thus, in the spirit of a penitent, he knelt down and prayed in the station-house, and then composed himself as he could for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POLICE-COURT.

On the following day, with a racking headache, James stood before the metropolitan magistrate. One of the legal practitioners of those courts offered his services, and James gladly accepted them. The magistrate was a thorough man of the world, upright, severe, just in intention, but not

always in practice; for he took a bad view of character, and looked with suspicion on all men.

Serjeant Jones stood forward and detailed his case: the friendly position of James with the pickpocket, his own confession that he knew who his friend was, and his not endeavouring to make an escape, in order to allay suspicion, and shelter his friend.

James was asked what account he had to give of the circumstance, and the other usual questions. He gave his name, and abode, and occupation, and then stated that he had known the prisoner intimately some years ago, before he had taken to his present courses; that he had met him accidentally in the streets, and had made an appointment with him, in the hope of reclaiming him.

"You knew Dick Lorreker," for that was the name by which Edward was known to the police; "you knew Dick Lorreker formerly?" said the magistrate. "Was he honest when you knew him?"

James hesitated, and said, "I cannot say he was."

"Yet you were intimate with him."

"I was in the same shop with him."

"What is his name?"

"I think I ought not to say."

"In what shop were you with him?"

"In Mr. Johnson's, of No. —, —— Street, and No. —, —— Street, as well."

"And how did he shew his dishonesty, then?"

"By peculation."

"And did you try to reclaim him then?"

"No, I can't say I did."

"Perhaps you were as bad as he was."

James was silent.

"Have you anything more to say in defence?"

"No, except that I should like to call some of my fellow-shopmen to witness to my character."

On this several young men came forward, and the senior clerk, and, although they allowed that they were much astonished at what they had heard, declared they had always had the highest opinion before of the prisoner.

This was the case for the prosecution, so far, and James's counsel made fun of it.

"I must say," he began, "that in all my experience, I never heard a poorer case made out against an innocent man, nor witnessed a more tyrannical infringement on the rights of the subject than his detention. Of course he will have his remedy against Serjeant Jones, and I shall advise him to take it. Why really, at this rate, not a clergyman can be safe in all England. Suppose my client had been a Scripture-reader, or a city missionary, or a friend of this Dick Lorreker in his better days, what could be more natural than for him to seek him out, and be with him in far worse places than a tea-garden?

"As to his saying that he knew with whom he was sitting, why of course he did. Would he have

said this if he had been guilty? And what surpasses everything is the charge that he did not try to escape: I should like to know what Serjeant Jones would have said, if he had tried. Why, it appears that to do what an innocent man would naturally do, is the high-road to Newgate. And as for my client's not giving Dick's real name, and telling things to his disadvantage, why any right-minded man would say that it redounds to his honour. I'll tell you what the whole case reminds me of. When I was over in Ireland some years ago, I was tired of doing nothing, and walked in to hear some cases before the magistrates in the county of Kerry. They had a man up for killing sheep, and witness swore to the dog. 'He was brown and shaggy, with sharp ears, and looked like a wolf. He saw him as plain as the sun when he ran by in the moonlight.' 'And what sort of a tail had he?' asked one of the magistrates. 'None at all, your honour; not a bit,—or may be a leetle bit like a sausage, just two inches or so.' 'That's unfortunate for your evidence,' replied the justice, 'for the prisoner's dog has a long, shaggy tail.' 'And what o' that your honour!' replied the witness without hesitation; 'wasn't the varmint ashamed o' himself when I saw him, and didn't he put his tail between his legs?'"

The court was in fits of laughter. But the benefit of the joke was lost in a new charge against James. Serjeant Jones knew very well that what

he had deposed was quite insufficient; but in suspicious cases police-officers speculate, and hope for more evidence as the prosecution proceeds. So it was here. It so happened that the policeman was present who saw James at Islington, and who eyed him so sharply when he left Edes' house.

A new witness therefore was heard. Serjeant Baines deposed that he had seen the prisoner only a few days before in circumstances quite as suspicious; that he had gone up to Islington to try and catch Polly-pheme, who had been engaged in an attempt on the Post-office.

"Catch whom?" said the magistrate.

"Polly-pheme, Sir, they calls him; because he has but one eye: the farm-maid poked out the other with the toasting-fork, when he made his beginning in Suffolk."

"Go on," said the magistrate drily.

"I was up after Polly-pheme, Sir, and tracked him to Edes', a regular thieves' house. I saw him in at the door, I would almost swear, and yet, when we got there, he was off; and whom should I see but the prisoner coming out of the parlour?"

"Were you trying to reclaim a thief here, as well?" asked the magistrate.

James did not reply.

"Did you hear my question?"

"I did not think I was obliged to reply," James quietly answered; "I am ready to do so, if you wish."

"O ho! standing on your rights, eh? You understand the courts, I dare say. You have been here before?"

"Never!"

"I dare say you have, though; and I am afraid you will see my face again some day."

"I hope not," James replied innocently.

The court roared with laughter, and the magistrate's brow contracted with anger; whilst poor James, who had not meant to be sharp, was astonished at the effect of his words.

"What account, prisoner, can you give of yourself at Islington?"

"I went to see Mrs. Edes and her children."

"And how did you know them?

"She is the widow of my former employer."

"When you were companion to Dick Lorreker?"

"Yes."

"I supposed so. Is there any more evidence?"

There was none.

"Well," the magistrate said, "this is no case for committal; it might be for remanding; and I have a great mind to remand the prisoner for a week. But perhaps it is more a matter for his employer's consideration than for mine. I must say I don't envy him; and I hope Mr. Bright is not what is called a confidential clerk to the house. It is quite true, as the prisoner's counsel has said, that the prisoner *might* have been a clergyman, *might* have been a Scripture-reader, *might* have been a city missionary; there is only one objec-

tion to all these suppositions, and that is, that he is not. Again, it is quite true that the prisoner *might* have gone to reclaim a thief, on the principle, 'set a thief to catch a thief;' might have felt very kindly to the widow of his former employer; but then there are some awkward little circumstances. It appears that the prisoner knew Dick Lorreker when he was with the former husband of Mrs. Edes, and that even then he carried on dishonest practices, unrebuked and unexposed by the prisoner. Moreover, the prisoner will not say that he did not share in those practices. But however, the court has had enough of this case. Serjeant Jones will make it his duty to see Mr. Vere. The prisoner is discharged."

Free from the shame with which the crowd thought him laden, and filled with shame of which it knew nothing, James stepped into the street. "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth."

Some of his companions who had been in the court turned away, and refused to walk with him. Two only of those who were there retained confidence, and James felt the comfort of a faithful friend in the hour of trouble, who will not believe what the world does so readily believe,—evil report; and will believe what the world cannot believe,—innocence.

But another trial still awaited poor James. In the evening Mr. Vere came in suddenly from Hampstead, paid him his salary to the end of next quarter, and desired him to leave the premises

forthwith. It was useless to argue. James packed up his few clothes, and went forth again into the wilderness of the great city, without a relation, and almost without a friend.

Yet in the midst of these chastisements he was grateful for mercies. He was not only no longer in debt, but had money in hand, and all his recent calamities had befallen him in the discharge of his duty; and although they were punishments in respect of his former life, they were a sort of confessorship in respect of his present.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCOVERY.

The first thing James did was to take up his lodging in a coffee-house close to St. George's. From thence he went to the church, and attended service that evening. How full of consolation were the Psalms of the evening, the 29th:—

"When my spirit was in heaviness Thou knewest my path."

"O deliver me from my persecutors; for they are too strong for me.

"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto Thy Name: which thing if Thou

wilt grant me, then shall the righteous resort unto my company."

"Therefore is my spirit vexed within me: and my heart within me is desolate.

"Yet do I remember the time past; I muse upon all Thy works: yea, I exercise myself in the works of Thy hands."

"O let me hear Thy loving-kindness betimes in the morning, for in Thee is my trust: shew Thou me the way that I should walk in, for I lift up my soul unto Thee."

James sang in the body of the church, and not in the choir. He felt that until God should please to help him, he must bear his reproach. After service he saw the Incumbent, and told him all. He was heartily believed and most lovingly treated; but Mr. Vere said that it would be useless at present to plead with his uncle; and indeed, unless all James's associates in the shop could be convinced, there would be little satisfaction in returning. James was therefore to wait quietly, and to be on the look-out for employment.

On the morrow, at breakfast, James took up the "Times" to read the account of his own trial, and he saw at once how open his answers had been to the very construction which the magistrate put on them. He was glad of this, for it diminished the angry sense of injustice which naturally kept rising in his mind.

At last he thought he would look at the adver-

tisements, and see if there were any of which he could avail himself. He began at the top, where the eye first rests on those heart-rending enquiries for the lost and the erring.

"If John will return, all shall be forgiven."

"A. B. The affair is settled, and his friends expect him."

"O Edward, write at once, or it will be too late. You little think the effect of your silence."

"M. shall be received by her mother as if nothing had happened, if only she will return."

"Lost, a purse containing notes and gold, between the Bank and the Auction Mart, on Monday. The finder shall be amply rewarded. X. Z. Adelaide Hotel."

"If James Bright, of Seaforth, Norfolk, applies at the Golden Cross, Strand, he will hear of something to his advantage."

He read and re-read the advertisement; and amid his surprise and embarrassment he could not help smiling to think that the very friend who was seeking him, would in the same paper read all the history of his disgrace. However, no time must be lost; he hastily finished his breakfast, and walked straight for the Strand.

When he arrived at the Golden Cross, he went to the bar and enquired whether any message or letter had been left for him. The bar-maid spoke to the waiter, the waiter to his fellow, and only a shake of the head was the answer. This was per-

plexing. James hesitated what he should do. Perhaps it would be better to leave now, and return at noon, or next day. If he had done so, he need never have called at all, for the person who sought him would not have wished for his company.

On how slight a thread our hopes seem to hang; on how small a pivot the whole machinery of our life seems to turn! James hesitated and hesitated, and at last walked boldly into the coffee-room himself, and enquired "Is there any gentleman here who has expressed a wish to see a person named Bright?"

An old man in the corner raised his head from the paper and said "Yes. If you are Mr. Bright, please to sit down."

James sat down on the opposite side of a small breakfast-table. The person who had answered him was old and rugged of feature, but kindly withal, and there was some expression of the voice, or the eye, or the mouth, which struck a chord in the heart of his hearer, and waked up memories which he could not grasp; some feeling, or scene, or act of other days, which he had forgotten, yet not forgotten,—which he remembered, but could not recall.

The old man sat silently looking at James, and at last it seemed as if the tears filled his eyes; it seemed too that his voice shook when he asked where James lived, and what he was doing. James prepared to reply, but the old man was impatient.

"Never mind, never mind; I'll hear all that by-and-by. I am your mother's only brother, and you are my only nephew. You have heard of Will Brand, have you not?"

James replied that he had, and that his mother had longed to the last year of her life to see her brother once more.

"I know it, I know it," he said. "I have been to Seaforth, and seen my sister's grave, and heard what there was to hear. And now I'm come up on purpose to find you, and to do what I can for you."

"Is there a private room?" enquired James.

"Yes, certainly, Sir," was the reply.

"Please bring the paper with you," James said to his uncle.

"It is wanted," interrupted the waiter. "This gentleman here has been waiting for the 'Times' this ten minutes."

"Which half does he want?" asked James.

"O, all of it."

"Then he may wait ten minutes more," said the old man; and taking up the three sheets of the "Times" he followed his nephew to the private apartment.

"Before you call me your nephew, read that, Sir;" and James placed before his uncle the account of his trial. The old man took off his spectacles, rubbed them, and began to read; looking up from time to time at his nephew, who sat quietly awaiting the end.

"Well," said Mr. Brand at the end, "and where are you now?"

"In lodgings. Mr. Vere discharged me at once."

"Are you penniless?"

"No."

"In debt?"

"No; I have some £30 in hand."

"Well, can you explain all this?"

"Yes."

"Then why didn't you do it in court?"

"Because it was in court. I can tell my uncle what I can't tell everybody."

"I believe you, my boy," the old man said. "It is your mother who speaks. Here's my hand; my confidence now, and the explanation at leisure."

James was quite overpowered. "Then I am not alone," he said; "I have still a relation."

The old man sat wiping his eyes, until both had recovered themselves; and then he enquired whether James had eaten his breakfast.

"An hour ago."

"That's right. Then come on to Waterloo Bridge, and we'll walk there and talk. I like the sight of water, and I like the fresh air, as far as one can get it in this chimney of a place. I always shall be a sailor, although I am come to anchor at last, and shall take no more voyages but one." So saying, he took James's arm and walked down the Strand, then down Lancaster Place, where James had conversed the last time with Edward

before the crowning act of dishonesty, and then on to the bridge.

When once there, and in quiet, James's tale was soon told. He concealed nothing that was needful for his uncle to know, but exposed his own sins, and their punishment. When the story was over, his uncle said, "Well, James, your life has been short, but it is more complete than my own. You have sinned, and repented, and made amends as far as you could; and I desire to do the same. I have been a thoughtless, careless man, and I desire to live the rest of my life to my God; but I will not speak of myself now; I wish to know your plans, and what you have in your heart. What can I do for you?"

"Thank you much," he replied: "I have no particular plan, nor wish. I only want to get an honest livelihood, and I don't much care how."

"Not in love then, James? Not waiting to marry?"

"No."

"What then do you want?"

"Nothing."

"I never yet met such a person. However, I do see one thing that you wish. You wish to help Johnson's children."

"Yes, that I do," said James, eagerly.

"Well, then, I'll tell you what: your mother's house and business were not large, but they might be made larger; I have bought them just now,

and if you will come down and live there, I think you might make a very fair business in the neighbourhood. I will find you the capital, and you shall do what you like with the profits."

"I shall be very thankful indeed, uncle; and I hope I shall not disappoint you."

"No, no fear of that; and if you do, it will serve me right, for not caring more for my relations before. But there are two other things to be done whilst we are here."

"What are they?"

"To clear your character, and to buy stock."

"I'm afraid the last is more easy than the first."

"Well, we'll try; and now for the stock. Can you tell me some good wholesale houses where they don't drug their goods and poison their customers. We'll shew them at Seaforth what an honest tradesman is,—not a cheat like —— O, I forgot, we must not speak ill of the dead,—and not a sneak like that Gibson, who succeeded your mother."

"Why, what did he do?"

"Why, he was yellow to the squire, and blue to the farmers, and Meetinger to the miller, and Churchman to the parson. I'll tell you what he did just before I went down. He left off coming to church at Seaforth some Sundays, and went down to Milsonbury, and when the vicar asked him the reason, he replied, 'Pray don't think I object to

anything, Sir, in the sermons, or the ceremonies, or anything else; but Mr. Wheeler has been such a capital customer in sausages lately, that I thought it only right to give him a turn."

How happy were uncle and nephew! What a calm had succeeded the storm! and how soon! And the uncle fulfilled all his promises. He cleared his nephew with Mr. Vere, and Mr. Vere declared his innocence in the shop. The goods were bought, and James left London with but two regrets: he was sorry to leave the few friends who had trusted him in the hour of shame; and he could scarcely bear to part with the incumbent and church of St. George. But these partings were necessary, however painful. James promised to attend the festival of the church year by year; and his friends at Vere's shop undertook to continue the good work which his example had led them to begin.

Mr. Brand soon made the house comfortable. It was not his way to allow leaks for air or for water. The old house lost somewhat perhaps of its beauty, whilst it grew in its comforts. The house-leek and cedum came off the roof. Abundance of whitewash was lavished outside and in, upon the walls. Little changes were made which did not please James, but of course he was silent. Any one could have told that it was the house of a sailor. There was a vane on the top of the house. The front court was paved with round

pebbles; not a weed could be found in them; and the little border, and round bed, which occupied part of the space where the house fell behind the shop-window, were neatly edged with thrift and double daisies.

But all this was nothing to the nautical atmosphere of the parlour. Atmosphere it was literally, for a mixed odour of oil and tar pervaded the room,—the very identical smell which gives landsmen such a sickening sense when they first go down into the cabin, as the steamer leaves river or harbour.

On the mantelpiece were ranged rows of shells shining brightly; and over them tomahawks, and stuffed fish, and leaf corals. On the walls all around, hung similar ornaments; stiff mechanical likenesses of the "Saucy Jane," as she stood out of the Bay of Naples in 1830, with a green Vesuvius vomiting crimson into an ultra-marine sky. Besides this, telescopes, cutlasses, Indian spears, cocoa-nut drinking-flasks, cases of humming birds, and numberless other curiosities, covered the walls. It took months to arrange them; to put up parallel nails, and hang equal loops of leather, and the like. But that which gave the room its nautical smell more than anything, was the oilskin hat which the old man would hang behind the door, and his over-all coat. He could not be happy without them.

On the sideboard were arranged cut glasses, and bottles, and tea-spoons radiating out from the

bottom of tumblers, like polypi in the sea; and in the centre stood a mysterious box, which added much to the old man's evening comforts; for from out of its bottles was supplied the temperate glass of grog which formed the basis of conversation and anecdote.

CHAPTER X.

THE MISTAKE.

As the autumn closed in, Mr. Brand enjoyed his fireside evenings. He was rather prosy at times, and James had to exercise the faculties of that most useful of personages, a good listener; but generally he was too glad himself, after a day in the shop, to listen to his uncle's accounts of strange men and strange scenes, of storm and of tempest, of pirates and war, which he had either witnessed himself, or heard from his messmates.

"Did I ever tell you, James, of a curious circumstance which happened to me some years ago, when I got into a scrape, from a mistake, like yourself?".

"No; I don't remember it."

"I wonder I didn't; I must have thought of it at the time, when I found you in London."

"I dare say, uncle; but we were too busy then.

You had to clear up my character, and buy stock, and I don't know what."

"True, true. Well, so much the better. It's a long yarn, but I think you will be interested, anyhow, from having been in a scrape like it yourself.

"I was second mate in the 'Caroline' in 1821. She was bound to Macao. A nasty, wall-sided thing she was. There was nothing that suited her but running before the wind. That she could do. I should never have joined her, if I had only seen her out of dock; but I went down one evening with light pockets, and, I am ashamed to say, a light head as well. I just walked through her, and saw the captain. He looked at my papers, and spoke to my old captain, who was by on the wharf, and the thing was done in five minutes.

"Well, a nice time we had of it in the Bay. We rolled, and rolled: I thought everything would have started. My eyes! how she did roll! She bowled out the poor cow as clean as a cricket-ball, and the hen-coop; and anything that was slack, over it went. But that wasn't the worst of it; the captain, he was a clencher. I have heard plenty of swearing and raving; but such a tongue as his I never heard before, and I never heard after. He couldn't tell you to do anything without cursing you first. And that wasn't all; he did it with such spite. It wasn't a way of talking, as some have; but he meant it. It seemed as if he really would have cursed all our limbs, and blasted

them, if he could. He and I very soon had a breeze, and of course I had the worst of it. He hated me, and I hated him; and we knew it.

"Well, so we got on till we crossed the line, and touched at St. Helena, and then after that we were caught in a gale off the Cape, and such a dusting we had as I never saw before or since. It wasn't the weather so much as the ship. There we were in our clothes day and night for a week straight off, and I don't suppose I had a pound of biscuit in my mouth all the time. Well, at last we got under the lee of the mountain, and worked into the bay, and got out our anchors, and made sure for a bit.

"I reckon our skipper had had about enough of it, for he was not in a hurry to start again. We lay there a week, and then one evening off came a boat with two as queer-looking fellows in as ever you cast eyes on. I noticed one as he handed up his chest, so that I could never mistake him. There was a red mark like a cutlass wound from right under his ear to his mouth, and another in his right upper lip. 'A nice gaol-bird you are,' thought I to myself; but I had no time to see more, for up came the skipper, and ordered the men's chests below, and sent off the boat.

"Next morning, just as we were heaving, a signal was made from the shore, and in a few minutes a long-boat came off, with an officer and two constables in the stern. When they got along-

side, the officer came on board with the constables, and asked for the captain.

"'Captain Jones,' he said, 'I am informed you have two sailors on board who are being looked out for, on a charge of mutiny and of piracy. Will you be so good as to muster your crew?'

"'Certainly, Sir,' said the captain; 'but there's no one on board but my own men that I sailed with.'

"'We shall see.'

"Accordingly, the ship's crew was mustered, and the men were not found.

"'We must search, then,' said the officer.

"'Certainly, Sir,' said the captain.

"Search was made, and no one was found.

"'Now Sir,' said our captain, as the officer signalled his boat, which had been lying off all the time, 'I hope you are satisfied; and will take a gentleman's word another time.'

"The officer made no reply, and returned.

"Well, we touched again at Malacca, and again at Singapore, and it was there that my adventure came off. As soon as we got past the fort, I saw a barque lying there. I thought I had seen her before, and began to consider, and then I remembered she was lying off Capetown when we sailed. She had clearly outsailed us, which might easily be in the 'Caroline.' It was a beautiful evening, and I asked leave to take the small gig and one mate, and go to fish, by the fort. The water was as

clear as the air: you could see right down twenty feet, and watch the great fish pursuing the small. We had plenty of sport, and then got the mast up to sail back again. We made a short tack out, just to get a little more of the wind, when what should I see but the 'Caroline' standing out of the harbour, royals up and all, right before the wind, at eight knots an hour.

"'Well,' thought I, 'this is a pretty job! That's a gentlemanly trick of our captain's to get rid of me.'

"'Holloa, Tom, what does that mean?' said I.

"'O, I don't know: some trick of old Jones's, as I suppose; but let him go to Hong Kong, if he will.'

"Well, Tom had scarcely spoken, when bang went one of the guns of the fort, and the shot went clean over us.

"'That can't be meant for us, mate,' I said; 'it must be a hint to the skipper.'

"'So I should think,' he says; and we kept on as if nothing had happened. Bang went another gun, and a shot came cutting ducks and drakes on the water, skip, skip, like a sneaking cricket-ball.

"'I say, that 's no play,' exclaimed Tom: 'here she comes, and no mistake neither.'

"We threw ourselves down. The shot struck our mast and carried it away, sail and all, and left us a wreck on a small scale.

"'We had better lie down,' I said, 'and see what they mean.'

"Well, in a few minutes, off came a boat from

the garrison. Nothing was said to us. We were taken on board, put in irons, and shoved down into a dungeon. I saw how it was, when I came to think a bit. The barque had brought a letter about the two men, and our captain had got scent of it, and made sail before they could board him."

"Well, but why fire at you, uncle?"

"O, they thought we were the two fellows themselves, making off in the 'Caroline's' gig."

"Well, they soon set you free, I suppose, when they found how it was?"

"Ah, but that 's what they didn't. I had no proof, nor Tom neither. Our boxes, clothes, letters, everything, were aboard, and not a soul knew us in all Singapore. There we lay until a ship sailed for the Cape, where we were to be tried, and back we went, all across the wide ocean, in irons."

"And how did you get off there?"

"O, one of my old captains was there, and spoke for me; and besides, I did not correspond with the description of the rogues. But it was a near touch, I can tell you; and you may depend upon it, that if it had happened some fifty years earlier, I should have swung at the yard-arm without more enquiry."

"Did you ever hear any more of Captain Jones, or the men?"

"The captain was lost, ship and all, and my things too, on her home voyage; and I ought to be thankful that I was not in her. Indeed, the whole business was a mercy, and saved my life."

"But the others?"

"Yes, I saw them again. I was taking in water at Manilla, when I was captain of the 'Saucy Jane,' when who should come into the coffee-house where I was having my cigar, but the fellow with the scar. Such a bush of whiskers he had, and a moustache besides, to hide it! but I saw through it all. Well, I didn't pretend to know him at all, or to take any notice, but when he went out I followed him quietly, and saw him on board a smart, mischievous-looking schooner that lay outside the shipping. I enquired who she was, and no one knew anything of her; so I took my gig and just pulled round her myself, without appearing to think of her. Well, I wasn't satisfied, and went straight to our consul, and he went to Don Allara, the governor, and by morning the schooner was in the hands of the governor, crew and all. There were no goods on board, no papers, no clearing, and plenty of arms. It was pretty clear what she was, and the crew were detained, that they might be identified. I settled the skipper. I asked the authorities whether they had not received an instruction in 1821, to look out for John Allen, alias Smith, with a wound on the upper lip, and a scar from the chin to the ear. The papers were looked up and found, and then they sent for a barber, and our friend soon appeared in true colours."

"And what was the end of him?"

"The end? Why, he swung at the yard-arm, with three of his crew, who were identified one after another."

"How strangely things turn out for the best, after all, when we have been cast down and quite out of heart!"

"My heart 's pretty tough, James; I have seen plenty of these things: but I agree with you, that God's oversight of us all is more and more wonderful, the more we consider it."

CHAPTER XI.

THE END.

James Bright was now thoroughly settled in business, although not in matrimony. His shop throve by constant attention and accuracy, but chiefly through the reliable nature of the articles sold. Coffee was coffee; tea, tea; sugar, sugar. No red lead, nor turmeric, no horse-liver, nor indigo, were found in his shop. Moreover, he did not tell lies. He did not say he was just out of a thing, and should have some to-morrow, when he had been without it a week, and would be so a week longer. He was not smiles and bows to the great, and frowns to the poor. He was a plain, straightforward, honest tradesman, saying what he meant, and doing what he said.

Money came in fast, and all the profits were James's. He was able to pay for Sarah Johnson at White-lands, and in time she became an excellent schoolmistress. The boys too were assisted, and the eldest brought down to Seaforth, to help in the shop, and learn the business. And well was it for them; for before long Edes himself was transported, and his mother had not sixpence for herself or her children; until, by James's exertions, she got into a situation as nurse at a union.

And Edward? One day, when James took up the paper, he saw, "Attempted *escape* of the notorious Dick Lorreker from gaol." He read on:—

"On Monday last, one of the most skilful and all but successful attempts at escape ever known, was made by the celebrated Dick Lorreker. He was visited the last thing at night by the turnkey, and was seen in his place just as usual, and yet four hours afterwards was apprehended two miles from the gaol, by the merest chance in the world.

"The reader must be made acquainted with the position of the prisoner, before he can appreciate the daring and skill of the unfortunate man. The cells of the gaol run along a gallery, which is closed by a door strongly secured; the gallery, when this door is opened, enters an inner court, from which another door opens into the outer court, and a turnkey occupies a little room at the door which joins these two courts. The outer yard is occupied partly by the governor's house,

chapel, and offices, and partly by a high wall, covered with a revolving bar of spikes, beyond which lie gardens, &c., &c., also surrounded by a wall.

"It appears that the prisoner had obtained possession of a file from some of his friends, and he had carefully concealed it on his person, or in his mattress. He did not attempt to file his irons up to the last, for it is the practice to sound them with the blow of a hammer, or some iron instrument, in order to ascertain whether they have been tampered with. The end of this file the prisoner seems to have ground flat, into the form of a knife.

"With this instrument the prisoner carried out all his plans. He first cut out the mortar of the jambs of his own door, so that he could take out at pleasure the stones into which the bolt of the lock ran, and the two outside bolts also; and he must have wedged up the blocks to the last, for fear of displacing them, lest the bolts should run heavily and betray him. What he did with the mortar is doubtful; he refuses all information on the subject: probably he eat some, and disposed of the rest as he could.

"On the night in question, Lorreker waited until the turnkey had been his last round, and then set to work. He quietly moved out the upper and lower stones a few inches, so that he could insert the flat part of the file, and work the bolts back. The lock was more difficult. The bolt would have

made a noise, if forced back, and the prisoner probably spent a considerable time in working the stone about until the iron slipped out from its socket. He then took out the bolts from his own door, put them into his pocket, and proceeded to the next door, which closes the gallery; here he set to work at the staples of the hinges, and soon cut them out. It is stated that a stone-mason declares that he could not have done this in less than three hours with regular tools. Having accomplished this much, Lorreker stole softly to the room of the turnkey, and concealing himself in the shade by the door, threw one of the bolts across the court; the turnkey was startled, and ran out towards the place; but as he did so, a blow with the other bolt felled him, and laid him senseless on the pavement;—this blow was on the back of the head, and the man is not yet out of danger, although some hopes are entertained of recovery.

"Lorreker had now the keys at his mercy. He first took off his irons in an incredibly short space of time, then opened the third gate, and entered the last court. Here it was hopeless to try the great gates, where the porter slept; or the governor's house; or the offices, which were all full of people; and the only plan was to surmount the great outer wall, which was no easy task. Fortunately for him, however, he found some things in the court which ought not to have been there. A new washhouse was in course of erection, and

some bricks, a hod, and a trowel were left on the farther side of the yard. Lorreker with wonderful speed removed these bricks to the corner of the wall, and piled them up as high as he dared, with some steps to ascend by. He then returned into the first court, and went into the turnkey's apartment, unlaced the sacking of his bedstead, and got possession of the cord. This done, he planted the hod, handle downwards, on the bricks, leaning it up in the angle between the two walls. He then worked the trowel into the wall between the two courses of bricks, to the depth of three inches, to act as a step; fastened his cord round a brick, and taking it up in his teeth, it is supposed, he proceeded to get on the hod. This was, however, as our readers will readily see, a most delicate movement. The least over-pressure would have caused the bottom of the handle to slip off, or would have displaced the loose brick upon which it rested. This accomplished, there remained, if possible, a still harder manœuvre. Standing in the hod, Lorreker swung his brick over his head with such force as to pass it over the wall, and with such accuracy, that he neither disturbed his own footing, nor allowed the brick to rest on the spikes, or hang over them, but to catch in the small space between the iron upright in which the revolving axle of the spikes turned, and the wall of the governor's house. This done, Lorreker raised himself softly by the rope, which, worn and

cut as it was by long use in the bedstead, seems quite unable to have borne such a weight; and thus he reached the top of the wall. Here he was met by the revolving fence of spikes, but he scotched the axle in its socket by inserting the file, and changing the brick over to the opposite side, he lowered himself by the rope as far as he could, and then dropped down about fifteen feet into the garden below.

"Such skill and such daring were worthy of a far better cause; and we cannot but think that poor Lorreker might have become a most valuable member of society, if educated under different circumstances from those in which he was probably placed.

"Once free, our readers would naturally suppose it impossible to recapture so clever a thief, and perhaps so it would have been; but he captured himself, so to speak. He was still in his prison dress, and he was afraid that this would lead to discovery. This induced him to break into a cottage a few miles out of the town, and to take the man's clothes to whom it belonged. He did so unseen, but left the doors open, so that a great draught blew into the bedroom where the man was asleep. He awoke, and got up; found the cottage-door open, and taking his stick walked into the garden. Here he found Lorreker dressing, and in the act of putting on a pair of trowsers which he had taken out of the cottage. Entangled in the legs, poor

Lorreker could neither run nor defend himself; and the angry sufferer belaboured his prisoner, and finally bound him hand and foot, until he got some assistance; and poor Dick was conveyed back to the gaol.

"He is now closely watched. The assizes will take place next week, and he will then have to be tried, not only for the offences for which he was committed at first, but perhaps for the death of the turnkey.

"Since the above was in print, we are enabled to add that the turnkey is considered quite out of danger."

James laid down the paper, and sighed deeply. His uncle looked up, and asked what it was; and James in reply simply pointed to the paragraph quoted.

Mr. Brand read it through, and then said, "You will go and see him?"

"Yes."

"Well, take care and don't get into a new scrape, which unky can't help you out of."

"I'll try," said James, smiling.

It was a thick grey fog when James reached the gates of —— gaol. O how cold and dreary frowned the high walls and towers of modern mimicry! There was all the gloom of the old architecture, without its grandeur; the inconvenience, without the utility.

"Have you an order, Sir?" enquired the porter.

"No; but can I not see the governor?"

"I'll go and enquire."

In a few minutes the porter returned, and brought word that the governor was out, but was expected back immediately. James sat down in the lodge. Very gloomy were his thoughts as he waited. "Edward in such a place; and I might have been! What is there now to save multitudes in the same position as we were? Are dishonesty and cheating to go on spreading and deepening? Is there no power on earth to resist them? Can the Church but rescue a few here and there, whilst the masses rot and corrupt? Is each good work amongst us to be opposed, checked, foiled, and nearly prevented, by jealousy and suspicion? Why should not every church be like St. George's? or, at least, why should those who are not like Mr. Vere, consume their time and their strength in opposing him, instead of the sins of their people? O who and what will give us unity? who and what will allay our discords? Yet who am I, that I should murmur? I, who have been snatched as a brand from the burning? I, who deserve nothing but shame? Shall I be impatient, when God has been so patient with me? I despair, when He has delivered *me?* I censure the Church, who deserved her censures myself?"

Such were James's thoughts, broken by the clicking of the heavy lock and slamming of the wicket, as people came and went; or when the

porter returned to stir the fire, or the canary sang a strange, unnatural song of forced joy, as it seemed in such a time and place.

At last the governor returned. James preferred his request. "I am sorry I cannot let you see the prisoner privately," was the answer. "After his late escape, we are obliged to be very careful: but the officer will not disturb you."

Edward was sitting in a small cell, lighted only from the inside of the prison. His heavily fettered arms rested on his knees; his hands covered his face. He did not move, nor look round, when James and the officer entered; nor did he take any notice of the words, "Here's a gentleman come to speak to you."

But when he heard James's voice saying, "Edward," he started, and the colour rushed to his face.

"Is it you, James? This is kind. I didn't expect it."

"I would have come before, had I known. I saw the account of your escape only yesterday."

"Ah! I nearly succeeded. I feel quite low now. I had counted on it so much, laboured so hard, and so nearly accomplished it."

"Could you not seek something better, Edward?" said James, in a low voice, and with great kindness.

"Seek what? Do you mean reformation, repentance? If that's what you mean, say no

more: I don't want to be bored about what I don't mean to do. I have had the chaplain here till I am sick of it."

"But," replied James, "reformation would bring you happiness even in this world. Suppose the very worst happens, you will only go to the colonies, where, by good conduct, you may shorten your punishment, and get a comfortable livelihood out there."

"I know it; and that's what I mean to do."

"Well, then, why be impatient when you are asked to make this reformation secure? to make it such as will serve you in death as well as in life, in the next world as well as this?"

"Because I told you before, when I saw you at the 'Two Pigeons,' that I do not believe."

"No, Edward; you told me you *would* not believe."

"Nor *will* I. I have too long an account to make me wish for a judgment-day."

"But if it comes, whether we wish it or not?"

"Then it must come."

James saw it was useless to proceed whilst Edward was in this frame of mind, so he changed the course of the conversation.

"Can I do anything for you?"

"No, I thank you. Yet you can, if you will."

"You know I *will*: my coming here shews it."

"Yes, yes, I can trust you."

"You can."

"Well, then," he said, speaking very low, "there's £50 in the Westminster Bank in your name."

"*My* name!"

"Yes, James. I meant it for myself, when I got into trouble, and I didn't know any better way of securing it."

"Yes?"

"And there's something more in another place; but that's a more awkward affair. Do you remember —— Street, Chelsea?"

"Yes."

"Well, at the end of it comes some open ground, with vaults ready for building, where they began a street once, but the builder smashed."

"Yes?"

"If you count the sixth vault on the left, and go in, and then measure two feet from the end on the left side, and two from the wall, and dig down some ten inches or so, you will find a silk bag, and in it £60. There's some plate there besides, but I reckon you had rather not meddle with that."

"I had rather not meddle with any of it, Edward; it is a very dangerous business."

"O, well, do as you like. 'A friend in need's a friend indeed.'"

"Edward, you should not speak so. You know I will do what an honest man can do."

"I suppose so," he replied with a sneer. "But now let me tell you the rest. I want you to hold

all this for me; and when you hear from Australia, then consign it as I shall direct. It is for me to set up in business."

"I promise, Edward, that you shall have money for that, if I live: I must consider the rest."

"You used not to be so very particular."

"No, I wish I had; and if you ——"

He checked himself.

"If I had, you mean to say, I shouldn't have been here."

"Your time is up, Sir," said the officer to James; "I am afraid I have let you stay too long already."

"Well, then, Edward, good-bye; and God *save* you!" and James took Edward's hand.

"Good-bye, old fellow!" replied Edward. "You're a trump, after all. It isn't every one who would come to see me in here."

"I shall think of you, Edward; and I shall pray for you."

Edward shook his head mournfully, and they parted, never to meet again.

James did not wait for the trial. It was sure to be very painful, and he could be of no service; nor was there a doubt of Edward's conviction. He walked up to the station, took his ticket, and awaited the train.

On arriving at Seaforth, James narrated the whole to his uncle.

"Well, James," said the old man, after a pause, "at least I can praise you for your prudence this

time. You didn't rush to the vault, and drop into the police-court again."

"But what ought I to do, uncle?"

"That's more than I can say, all at once. But it is quite clear it won't do to go and dig in the vault, and be found by A No. 3 just lighting on the parcel of spoons with a nobleman's crest on them, and another with a judge's initials; and perhaps a tea-pot from Buckingham Palace, which lies very handy."

"Perhaps we had better take time, and think of it."

"I think we had; but you seem at last to have put an old head on young shoulders."

"It is partly, uncle, because you have put a young head on old shoulders, and enter into all my affairs as if they were yours."

"So they are, James. What I have is yours. I live only for you."

"Thank you, uncle; I know it," replied his nephew: "I don't deserve it," he added to himself, too low to be heard.

On the morrow they agreed to consult the vicar; and then went and laid the whole thing before him. His decision was that James should leave the £50 where it was, in case Edward should want it; and that he was not bound to enquire how the depositor came by it: but as for the rest, he must have nothing to do with it. The money was in bad company, and must fare with the plate;

and the only question was, whether it should be left to lie there for the finder, or whether the police should be informed of the circumstance. On the whole, he inclined to the latter course, in the hope that the plate might reach those who had lost it. The vicar offered, however, to request that the money might be reserved, in case the anonymous felon should recover his character, and might need it for entering on some honest employment.

Both uncle and nephew agreed to this counsel, and the vicar wrote accordingly to the metropolitan magistrate,—the same man, it turned out, who had condemned James himself. He willingly agreed to the scheme. The spoons and other articles were found, as Edward directed, and returned to their owners; whilst the money was sealed up in the police-court, and endorsed with the vicar's name, and his letter enclosed in the packet.

Meantime, Edward had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. He sailed, arrived safely, and went on well for a time, but then he grew out of temper with his work, and joined in a plot, which was discovered and foiled. The consequence was, that his treatment grew much more severe, and he would not endure it.

Of course, to one who had shewn such skill and daring in England, it was no hard matter to effect an escape. Edward waited his time, and

succeeded, with several others. The whole party fled to the bush, and lived by marauding, until at last they encountered the mounted police; and after a sharp resistance, Edward and one of his companions were killed, and the rest were secured.

It was some time before this sorrowful news came to Seaforth. When it did, James grieved deeply. The more he had repented himself, the more anxious had he become to save Edward; and the more he had laboured to do this, the deeper interest he had acquired in his welfare. There were always some good traits about Edward, which gave grounds of hope; such, for instance, as his returning James's property when his pockets were picked; but these, and whatever other signs of good might appear, seemed weighed down and extinguished by a determination to doubt all religion; and this in order to throw off some burden of conscience which he would not disclose.

Nothing now remained to be done but to find out his friends, and to make over the money in the bank to the nearest of kin. This James did not succeed in doing for years; but at last he discovered the family, who were in very fair circumstances, gave them the money he held, and informed them of what the magistrate had; but they never applied for it.

And so James married Miss Johnson,—and grew rich,—and bought a farm, and retired,—and was churchwarden,—and put up a gallery, and

painted his name on it? No, he didn't do any of these things.

"Not marry! I never heard of a tale ending so stupidly."

No; not marry. Neither Miss Catchem, at the 'Anchor,' nor Miss Peep, at the mill, nor Miss Ready, nor Miss Betsy Smirk, nor Miss Alleyes, nor any of the young ladies of Seaforth, have hitherto had the slightest effect upon him.

Perhaps the only person to be pitied at all is his uncle, who really wishes to see some great nephews and nieces; and yet he, poor man, is much better off as he is: for what would become of his quiet corner, and his shells, and his corals, and his chat in the evening, if any of the above girls had ensnared his dear nephew, and turned off his sea-chest for a piano, and routed his old-fashioned things out of the house?

It is true that James is a churchwarden; but there is no gallery yet, and it is hoped there will not be,—for the people of Seaforth are getting into the antiquated habit of kneeling.

James is still at his shop. He is not making a fortune, but only a competency. He thinks it a pity to spend money in legacy duty, and run the risk of his wishes being foiled by the Mortmain Act; and so, with his uncle's consent, he rebuilt the school, and added a bit to the churchyard at once, without waiting to enjoy the proceeds during his life.

How very uninteresting! Well, if it is, more's the pity. But James Bright, the person most interested, if the reader is not, is glad of repose. He had excitement enough at one time, and anxiety too, and it did not fare well with him then. Now he keeps the even paths of duty and industry, and has come to that most un-novel-like judgment, that the most stirring and adventurous parts of our lives are never the happiest, and seldom the best. And in this view he is encouraged by the peaceful old age of his excellent uncle, who values the stillness of his present life, and is gathering himself up for departure.

It is an old comparison, probably, but none the less true, that the most romantic parts of a river are those where it chafes against rocks, and hardly winds through steep crags, and leaps down the falls; but the most useful and influential parts are those where it glides with still and deep stream through meadows and plains.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. PARKER, CORN-MARKET, OXFORD.

SERIALS.

The National Miscellany.

A MAGAZINE for supplying high-principled and high-toned literature of a secular kind, which may be *safely* taken up by thoughtful persons when their more serious reading is over, and which may also indirectly act for good on those who thrust all religious works aside.

Monthly. Price One Shilling.

Vols. I., II. and III., handsomely bound in cloth, price 7s. each.

Now ready.

Vol. IV. Part V.

CONTENTS.

Vol. IV. Part VI.

CONTENTS.

Published at the Office of the National Miscellany,
No. 1, Exeter-street, Strand, London.

Monthly, One Shilling.

NOTICE!

THIS Series will be continued Monthly. A new Part containing one or more Tales on the first of each month.

PART V., ready on the first of May, will contain:—

"JONAS CLINT."

In the Press.

The Sisters,—Susan,—Wanted, a Wife,—Servants' Influence, &c.

Now ready. Price 1*s. each.*

No. 1. Mother and Son.
No. 2. The Recruit—*A New Edition in the Press.*
No. 3. The Strike.
No. 4. James Bright, the Shopman.