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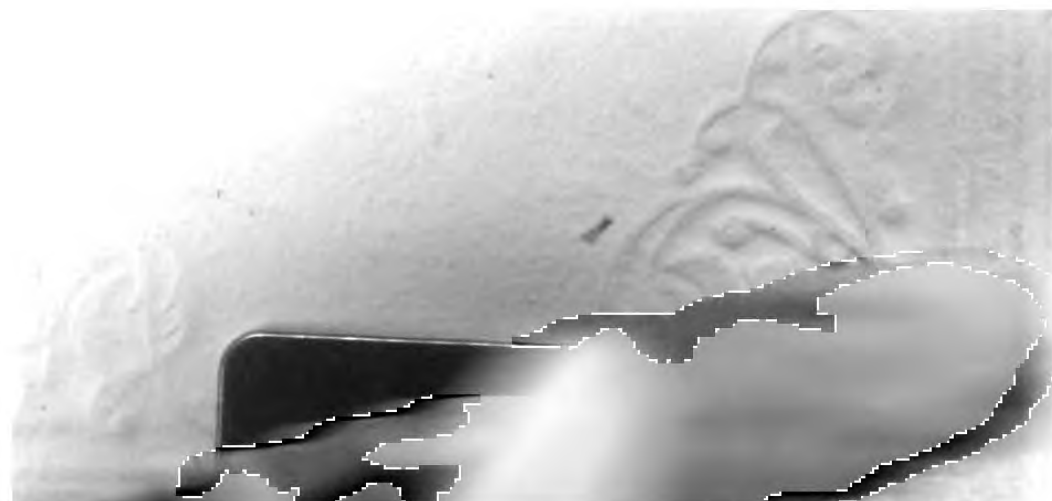
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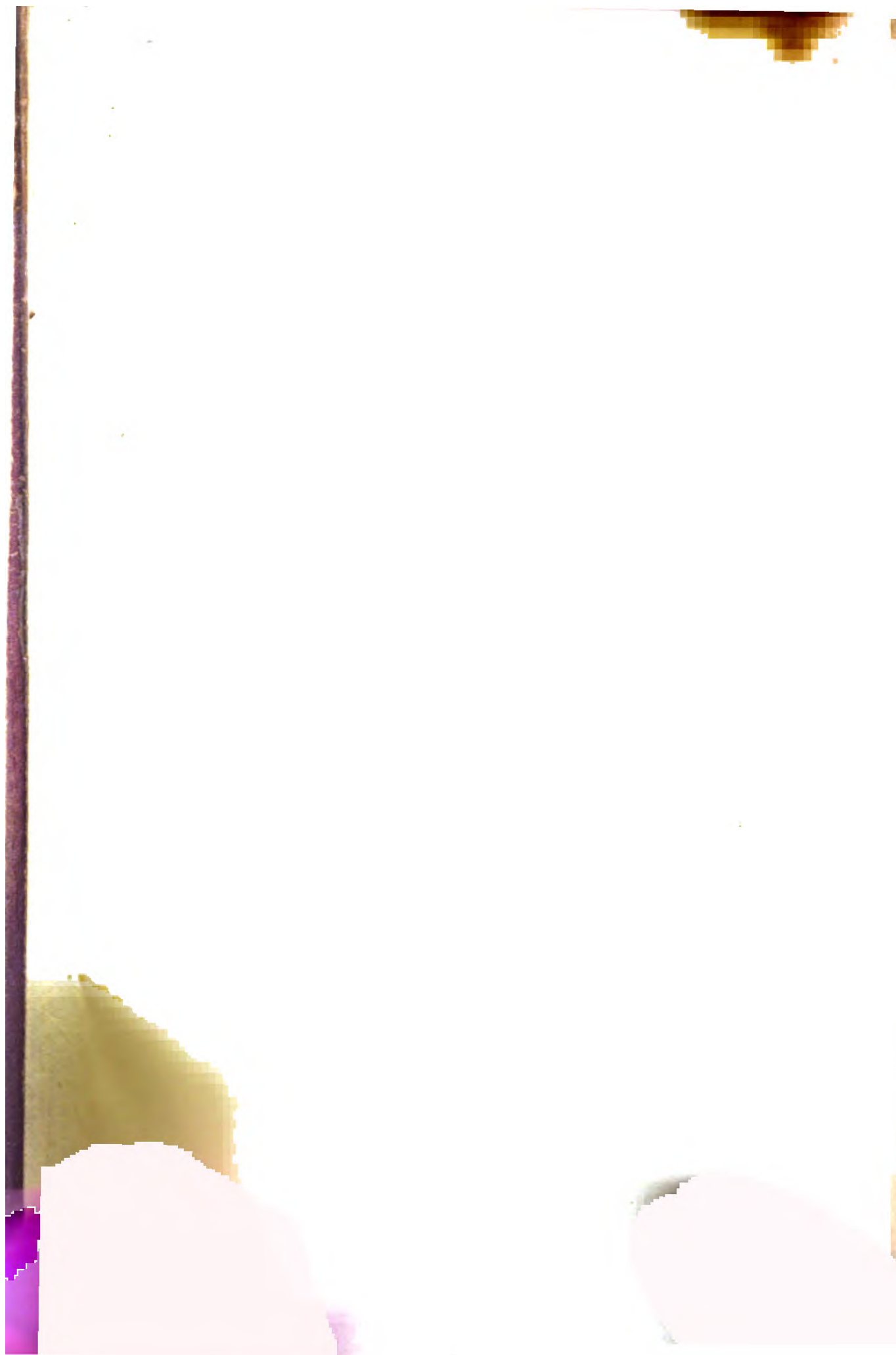
THE LIFE
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WILLIAM FLETCHER
THE CONVERTED SOLDIER

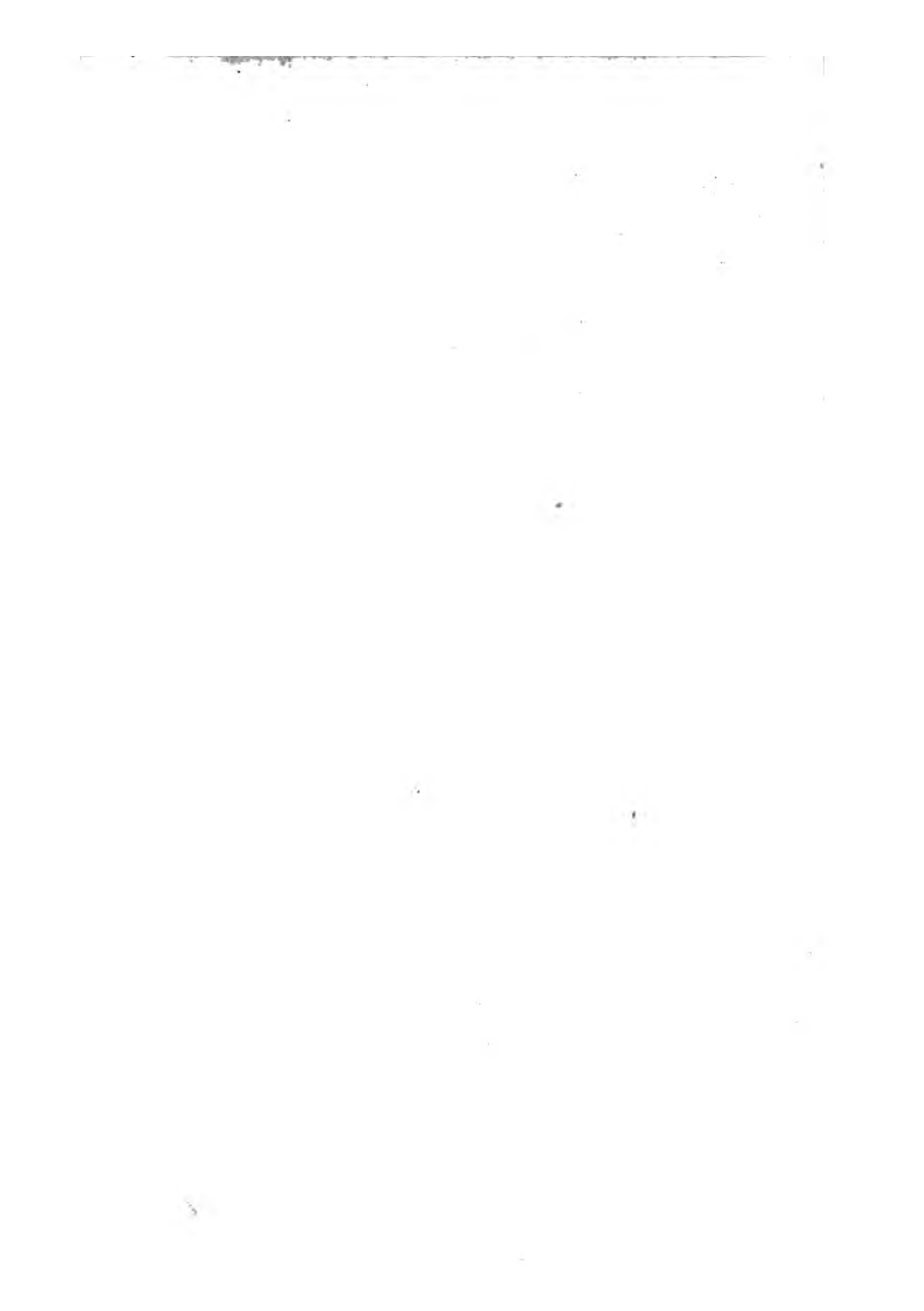
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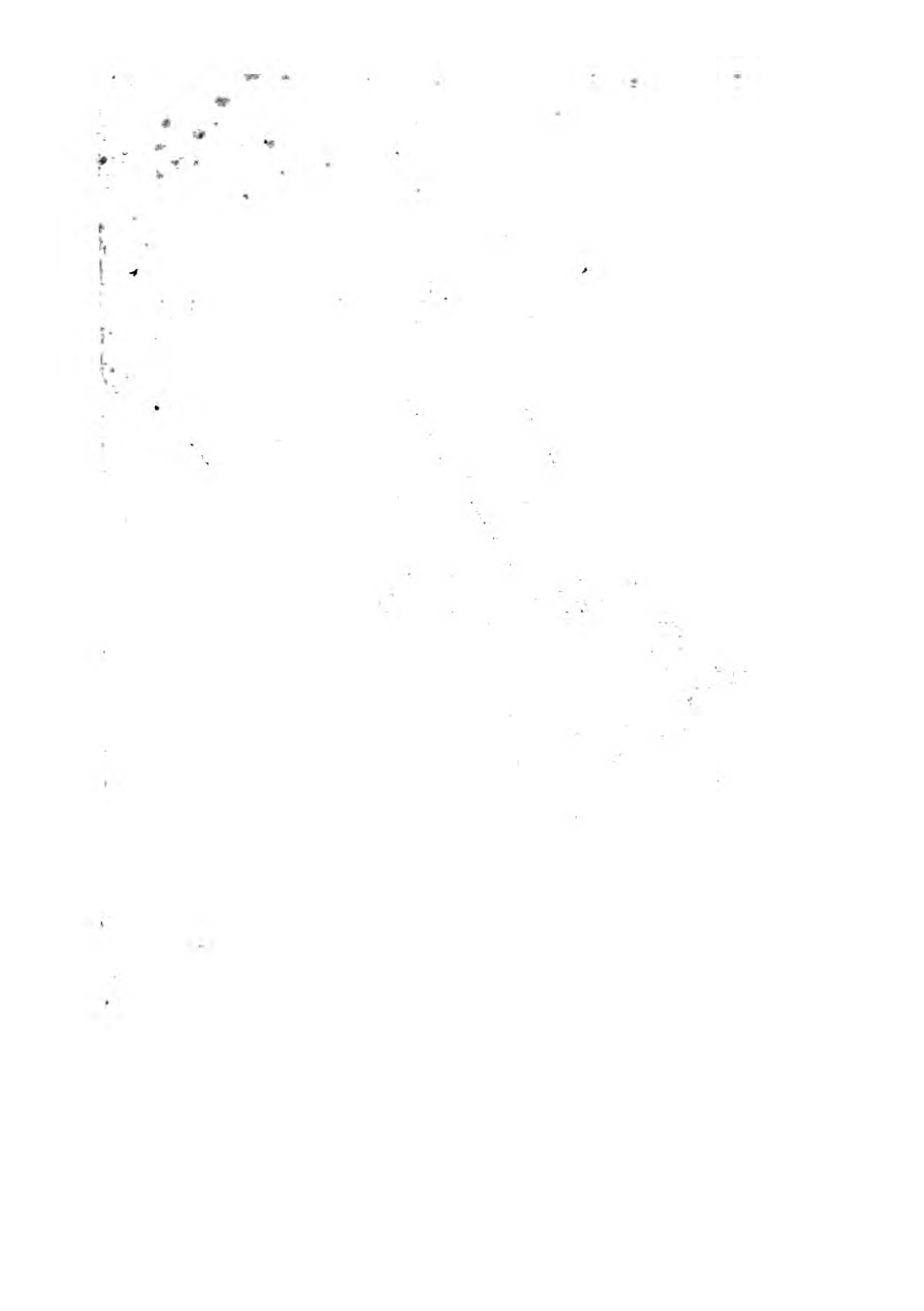


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yours in Christ
W. Fletcher.





THE LIFE
OF
WILLIAM FLETCHER

(THE CONVERTED SOLDIER,)

WHO WAS WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF ALMA, 1854.

Containing an account of the Battle, his Conversion, his labours as
an Evangelist, and incidents of his life up to the present time.

BY
J. E. F.

WITH STEEL PLATE PORTRAIT.

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P R E F A C E.

THIS little volume is not sent forth to the world as a literary production, but simply as a record of events connected with the life of one whose labours the Lord has been pleased to own and bless—written in plain and simple language, that “he who runs may read.”

The subject of this sketch is, in the full meaning of the term, “a brand plucked from the eternal burning,” and one of those to whom the apostle Paul referred when writing his first Epistle to the Corinthians—“one of the foolish (uneducated) things whom God hath chosen to confound the wise.”

The idea of writing the following pages originated from the repeated requests made to Mr. Fletcher by those who had relatives in the Crimea, and others, to “tell them something about the war.” But to be often dwelling on that subject, was not his desire—he had a theme to dwell upon which he felt to be of infinite more importance—having had much forgiven him, he loved much, and his sole desire was to

“Tell to sinners all around,
What a dear Saviour he had found ;”

he therefore promised that if it was the Lord’s will, he would prepare a short account of his adventures as

a soldier, and have it printed. However, after much prayer and careful consideration, it was decided to issue an outline of his life. After having become acquainted with the leading incidents thereof, and having found that he had been the means, under God, of bringing so many of the masses from darkness to light in a comparatively short space of time, I undertook to write it. Trusting that the Lord will bless this feeble effort, and that many poor wanderers who think they have sinned too grievously to be pardoned, may be induced by the perusal of the following pages to take courage, and seek salvation through the precious blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin; and that the Lord's blessing may rest on my brother and those friends who have so kindly supplied the necessary information respecting him—is the prayer of

THE WRITER.

THE LIFE

OF

WILLIAM FLETCHER.

CHAPTER I.

William's birth—The sailor leaves home—His mother goes to service—William is taken to work—A cold job—Flogged by his aunt—Bad habits—The pear tree—The fruitless search—A novel bed—Stolen apples—Promotion—Removes to Bayton—The white dog, and the "large black pig"—Bad influence—Is sent to school—Leaves his situation—Punished for misconduct—The cake—Bad treatment—The negro—Economy in clothing—The scapegoat—Goes to Sunday School—His mother's visits—Taken to the workhouse—The orphan—The champion's flight—Brighter prospects at home—Sin and its results—More stolen apples—"All alone"—The unkind steward—His cousin and the donkey—Goes to Bury St. Edmunds—Takes care of his uncle—Good policy—"Don't tell"—The swearers—Visit to an execution—More cruelty—Change of occupation—Independence—Tuition or revenge?—A bed of sorrow—Unheeded advice—Stubborn boys.

WILLIAM FLETCHER was born on the 1st day of November, in the year of our Lord, 1834, in the Parish of Wivestone, in the County of Suffolk. His father went to sea when the subject of this sketch was but six months old, leaving his mother to provide for him and his sister: she accordingly went to service, and placed her two children with their uncle, allowing him a part of her wages to keep them.

When William was but five years old, he was taken by his uncle to work with him, who frequently had to

carry the little labourer in his arms; and though so young, he often had to be in the barn from six o'clock in the morning till six in the evening. Shortly before he was taken to work, he heard his uncle tell his aunt that he should make him a little flail, and would give him no rest until he had made him one; little thinking how soon he would have to use it from compulsion. He used to call his uncle up very early in the morning, but after a few mornings his uncle had to call him, and many times did he cry with the headache, but was obliged to get up and go to work.

His uncle's master was a gentleman farmer, living at Drinkstone, for whom William's sister also worked. They were both sent into the fields on cold winter mornings to pick spear-grass: this appeared more than William could bear, for though he was very hardy and of an uncomplaining disposition, he used to cry with the cold. On one occasion his master noticed him crying, and sent him home. When he arrived there his aunt flogged him, and afterwards tied him to a leg of the table.

It is not necessary to detail the many acts of cruelty to which William was subjected, but merely to give a sketch of the kind of treatment he had while young; and we cannot be surprised to hear that under such treatment his little heart became hardened, even while very young; and we must follow the example of the good old Book, and give the dark side of his character as well as the bright. God's word declares that we are "shapen in iniquity," Ps. 51, 5,—that we "go astray as soon as we be born, speaking lies," Ps. 58, 3,—and that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. 17, 9,—which truths are more fully realized when children are under

bad example, and not trained up "in the way they should go," Prov. 26, 6.

William, like most other boys under similar training, soon became an adept in lying and other evil habits, and being of a determined disposition, when flogged by his aunt, frequently kicked her legs till they were badly bruised.

One night, when he was seven years old, his uncle returned home and found that a beautiful pear tree he much valued, had been cut down: he asked William if he had done it, but he denied it, although he had cut it down to make a horse of—and told his uncle that his aunt had cut it down and burnt it. Thinking possibly she had done so, he swore at her, and left the house. When he had gone, thinking who had caused it, William's aunt caught him and beat him with a poker, after which, having a spirit though an evil one, he turned at his aunt and bit her arm.

Expecting that when his uncle returned he would be again beaten, he ran out and hid himself in a large ditch near the house. As soon as he was missed they commenced searching for him, for as it was getting late, they doubtless became anxious about him. There he sat fearful of being discovered, for he had heard his uncle say "If I can find him, I'll pay him for all." His aunt was crying, for she was afraid he had fallen into the pond; they therefore got three large rakes and dragged it. After having searched for a considerable time, assisted by the neighbours, they all went home; and when all was quiet, he got out and went into a neighbour's shed, and laid under a large tub. Early the following morning, the woman got up to commence her washing, and on lifting up the tub, she was surprised to find William there sound

asleep; she awoke him and took him to his aunt, and fortunately for him his uncle was gone to work.

About this time he got into a garden and stole some apples, and was caught by the owner, who detained him and said he would send him to prison. When his uncle returned home, having heard of the affair, he went to the man, and begged of him to let William off, but he would not; so his uncle borrowed some money to pay for the apples, for he was afraid to have him sent to prison, his aunt having beaten him dreadfully the day before. When he had paid the money, he took William home and punished him severely, and sent him to bed without his supper, which was frequently the case.

The following day he made him go to work with him again, and after a few days William had to clean his master's boots, assist the servant, and make himself "generally useful" in the house. After being thus occupied for about a month, he was taken to the sales for miles round to drive home cattle that his master bought.

When he was 10 years old, his uncle removed to the village of Bayton, in Suffolk, then he had to walk to Drinkstone every morning with his uncle, and frequently had to return home at midnight, crying most of the way, for he had to pass through a wood, and was very timid when alone. One night having this journey to travel with no other companion than conscience, which was doubtless disturbing him, he saw something white, and not knowing what it was, (though it afterwards proved to have been a white dog) he did not like to proceed homeward, but ran across a field towards a barn, into which he got and laid down until morning, when he returned to his daily labour.

Some may smile at a boy being so foolish, but children of a larger growth have been frightened at no worse a sight. We have read of a Rev. who, while returning home late one night, after having preached at a distance, was startled at hearing something coming along the pathway after him, and though he turned round to look what it was, could not see anything, but on walking on again faster, the creature travelled faster too, he then ran—still he heard it after him—he became excited—ran as fast as he could, thinking Satan was after him, for whatever it was it seemed to keep close behind him. At last he unfortunately missed his path, and fell headlong into a ditch. Having scrambled out he found his way home, the creature still after him. He was quite exhausted—but judge his feelings when he discovered that he had been followed only by a “large black pig.”

Here William was under the influence of a bad mistress, who encouraged him in acts of dishonesty. He used to steal hen’s eggs belonging to a neighbour and take them to her, and she remunerated him by frequently giving him a dinner, or some cold meat and other eatables to take home with him, which he gave to his uncle. To use William’s expression he was “quite a favourite” with her. How soon do the seeds of evil take root and spring up, even when no bad example is shown, and where no inducement whatever is offered to commit evil; how then can we wonder at hearing that a poor boy who was under bad moral example at home, and who scarcely had a kind word spoken to him there, should steal when induced to do so by an ungodly and covetous employer.

When he was 11 years old, his master sent him to school and paid for his board, but after three months

he caught a severe cold, and his master took him away considering his health declining. He was then employed as an indoor servant, in which capacity he remained until he was 13 years old.

About this time some misconduct on the part of William resulted in his leaving. This caused him much uneasiness, as he feared his uncle would be dismissed also, but his uncle was retained. He then stayed at his uncle's for six weeks, during which time he had to collect a certain number of barrow loads of manure off the highways, per day, and if he did not get the quantity he had to go supperless to bed. One day he wanted to play with some other boys, so away they all went for an excursion: when he returned at night, he asked for one of the cakes that his aunt had baked during the day; but to punish him, she gave him only dry bread, and because he cried she flogged him, upon which he turned at her and bit her arm. He knew that when his uncle returned he should be severely and deservedly punished, as in the first place he had not done any work during the day, and in the next had wickedly bitten his aunt. The same night, when his sister and aunt had gone to meet his uncle, he went down stairs and took a large cake, and having broken it open, ate the inside and put the crust under his pillow, and fell asleep.

When they returned with his uncle, who had been informed of his conduct, he was very angry, especially when they found that one of the cakes was missing. He went to William's bed, and on looking under the pillow, found the crust of the cake, he then pulled the bed clothes off, and with his strap, beat the poor misguided lad unmercifully. Referring to that circumstance, William said, "I really thought my uncle

would have killed me." The following morning he was told that if he could not get work he would be sent to the workhouse. He accordingly tried all he could to get a situation, but did not succeed.

We have heard and read much of the treatment of the dark-skinned sons of Ham on the other side of the Atlantic, and our heart has often grieved at their sad lot—toiling day after day under hard taskmasters—kept in ignorance, and scarcely a ray of hope to cheer them in their weary pilgrimage—unless perchance a soldier of the cross should meet them in the way, and tell them of Him who shed His blood to save the bond and free alike. In thinking over the early history of William Fletcher, though born free in a christian country, we are unable to say in what respect he fared better than they. Brought up to toil as a beast of burden—with little food and badly clothed—beaten, bruised, and no education, save the little acquired by occasional attendance at a Sunday School, which was soon lost through the ungodly example at home.

Though William was so disliked at home, others became attached to him. On one occasion a gentleman sent for him, and gave him sixpence and some new clothing, which he wore on alternate Sundays with one of his cousins. Whatever he earned or had given to him he always took home to his aunt, but he met with little encouragement, even when he tried his best to please, and was made the scapegoat for his cousins' misdoings, for either of them were believed before poor William. He felt as an outcast, and when he would do good, evil seemed to be ever present with him. About this time he attended a Sunday School, and as tickets were given for early attendance, he was desirous of getting as many as possible, as prizes were

given at the end of the year; but he often had to stay away as his clothes were being worn by another, or was late, as he dared not go until his cousins were all ready.

His mother occasionally visited him, but he was never allowed to be alone with her, for fear he should tell her how he was treated. She sometimes sent a half-sovereign in a letter for his use, though he never received one, neither were the letters read to him; but he was often told that his mother did not care about him, and that she never sent anything for him. Often did he cry bitterly, thinking he had no one in the world who cared for him.

At the age of 14, he was sent to the workhouse at Stone Market, for the purpose of swearing his parish, as his uncle would not keep him any longer. His uncle had an allowance of 1/6 each for him and his sister, and his mother allowed 1/9 each more, making 6/6 per week for both. The allowance his mother made kept her very poor, but the Lord was her helper during the many years of trial, through which she passed. William was taken into the workhouse, and after having been there about three months was taken very ill, and put into the sick ward, where the nurse treated him very kindly. When in the school he became acquainted with a poor little boy left without father, mother, brother, or sister, who was frequently got in trouble by a lad much older than himself, who made him give him part of his allowance. The little orphan had often been seen taking his food away, and on each occasion had received 16 lashes. One day while William was in the sick ward, the nurse heard a child scream, and said "There is that poor little orphan being flogged in the school again,

I cannot think what it is for, they will very soon kill him." William told her how the big boy had made the little fellow save part of his food for him, and how he had threatened him if he said anything about it. She then told the master, but on his making enquiries the boys denied it. He then went to William and ordered him to take off his jacket and go into the school, as he had been informed that he had told falsehoods. But as soon as the master had left the ward, William went to the gatekeeper and made an excuse to get out. He was allowed to pass; he then made the best of his way to his uncle's, in the workhouse clothing. When he had got near to a place called Woolpit, he met the relieving officer, but he did not see the runaway, or he would have been taken back and flogged. He ran on until he got home, and when his aunt saw him she cried, and said that he should not go back again while she had a bit of bread. When his uncle came home he was also glad to see him, and told him that if he would be a good boy he would keep him; so his aunt took the workhouse clothes back and brought home his own.

William then went to work for a cooper, to attend to his horses, for which services he received only one shilling per week for the first three months, then he had 2/6 per week. About this time his uncle bought a rabbit for him, and one also for his cousin J——, and as William worked in a stable he took some oats home for them; he afterwards took some tares out of a field on his way home. His master having missed some, watched him, and saw him pull up a handful, he then caught hold of him and said that he would take him to prison the next day. William was in great fear, for his master was a constable: he cried

and begged of him to forgive him; he kept him some time, and after giving him two or three blows on the head let him go. He then told William's uncle, who gave him another flogging, and made him go to bed without his supper, which was another punishment as he had worked hard all day. William knew there were some apples in a box in his uncle's bed room, so he resolved to get a few as soon as all were asleep, for he was very hungry. Accordingly, when all was quiet, he got out of bed and went into his uncle's room in the dark, but while unlocking the box he awoke him, and though he could not see the intruder, he put out his hand and pulled him on his bed, and beat him until he was tired, then said "You can go and get into bed now, and get ready for some more in the morning." But as William answered him saucily, he got out of bed and having found his strap, beat him with the buckle end. As soon as he could get away he went down stairs to search for some food, but could find none, so he went to bed again though not to sleep; there he lay weary hours, thinking what he had best do, for he felt he was leading a miserable life. His uncle called him early the following morning, and as he was unwilling to get up, he beat him again and left him. When he was gone, William got up, and before he went to work, he went to the cupboard and took a loaf, which he ate during the day.

Soon after this he was left in care of his master's house, and as he knew there were some pears and apples somewhere about the place, the thought entered his heart that he would like to have some. So he searched about the house until he found them, and after filling his pockets was proceeding down stairs, when he was met by his master, who observing his

pockets stick out, asked what he had got there, and made him empty them. He thought he would surely be sent to prison then, but he begged his master to forgive him; who, after having taken away the apples, gave him three or four kicks, and sent him home. The same evening he sent for William's uncle, and told him what had occurred. When he returned home he went out into the garden and brought in a stick, saying, "Now then my lad, I'll be the death of you, I'll learn you to go stealing apples, you are a very fine fellow aint you?" He then beat him with the stick, and though the poor boy entreated forgiveness, he used it as long as he could stand over him. Speaking of this time, William said, "Oh, thought I, if I had a dear father, what would I give—but he was gone, and my dear mother also—and I left alone, no one caring for me; often have I wished I had never been born."

William being again out of employment, his uncle allowed him only one meal a day, which was generally eaten early in the morning, before he went out to seek for work. After a short time he obtained a situation at a farm-house, where his uncle's eldest son worked. The steward and his uncle were particular friends. While there he often heard his mother spoken of in very disrespectful terms, which he resented, for he loved his mother, though he saw so little of her. The steward, doubtless influenced by his uncle or cousin, disliked William, and sought an occasion to discharge him, which was not long wanting. One day his cousin was chasing a donkey round a field, beating it on the ears with a stick, and though the steward was in the field, and must have seen it, he afterwards called William to him and asked why he

lost his time by riding the donkey round the field; and though he denied having done so, he was called a liar. William could not help crying at such unjust treatment, but he had no remedy, and was obliged to submit to his oppressor. Through the steward's report, the master discharged him, and he was again dependent on his cruel relatives.

After having been three or four weeks at home, his uncle took him to Bury St. Edmunds, to learn to be a stone-mason, where they assisted to build some houses. They stayed there during the week and returned home each Saturday night. For a short time he was treated very well by his uncle, but he began to get drunk, and then he often had to get out of his way. One Saturday, instead of returning home as usual, he staid drinking until midnight, he then got into other bad company, where he staid until 3 in the morning. William would not go home without him, but kept trying to get him away from his evil companions; so as he found that William would not go, he at last left his evil companions, and started towards the buildings, swearing at, and threatening to kill him; he then in his madness, ran after him, vowing to put his threat into execution; but he stumbled and fell, and William was able to get out of his way. His uncle had the key of the shed in which they slept, so he waited until he saw him safely in, then went to the carpenter's shop, and laid down until daylight. When he got up he went to see his uncle, who, he thought by this time would be sober, and found him sitting on the side of the bed, looking very miserable. On seeing William, he said—"Where have you been to all night, boy?" "Where have I been," he replied "why in the carpenter's shop,

for you swore that if I came near you, you would kill me; therefore, I thought it best to keep out of your way." "Well," said his uncle, "I must go home and take your aunt some money; here is sixpence for you, so be a good boy, and don't say anything about me; I'll send your dinner." So after giving instructions about taking care of the buildings and grounds, he departed. In the middle of the day his dinner was brought by one of his cousins, who stayed playing with him for some time. On the following morning his uncle returned to work as usual, and begged William not to say anything about Saturday night, and was very kind to him all the week.

William, who was now between 15 and 16 years old, was sent to help a carpenter put a new roof on to a barn, for the same master. The carpenter was a very profane man, and swore at him dreadfully the first day, but William having been long under similar tuition, returned oath for oath. The man became partial to him however, and preferred him to his own boy, who went to assist William's uncle.

Having been thus employed for a long time, the weather set in very wet, so that he could not work; so as a young man was to be hung at Bury St. Edmunds, it was arranged that William and one of his cousins should go to see the execution. It rained all the way; and just before they got to the town they met several people returning, who said that the execution would not take place. William was very vexed to hear that they had travelled so far for nothing, but resolved to go and see for themselves. When they arrived in front of the Goal, they found a large concourse of people gathered together, and had not to wait there long before the unhappy young

man was brought on the scaffold, which caused a shudder to run through William, and when the drop fell he nearly fainted. When he had seen the awful sight he returned home with his cousin, and went to work in the garden. As soon as his uncle was out of the way, William and his cousin went to the potato heap and got some out, which they took into an adjoining field, where a companion was scarring birds; they then made a fire and baked them. While thus enjoying themselves, his uncle discovered their retreat, having been searching for them with a large stick in his hand; William's cousin and the other boy observed him and ran away, leaving him to bear the punishment alone. His uncle also punished his son when he reached home, but his aunt declared that William must have persuaded him to take the potatoes, and was very angry because her son had been punished, as she said, through him. William said his cousin had not been punished half so much as he had, and he would not stay there to be starved and knocked about: upon which she struck him with the poker, and told him to "hold his tongue." He was constantly in trouble through one or other of his cousins, who would ill-use him, and if he resented it at all, would be flogged by his aunt, or she would set them all at him like a pack of hounds at a deer. Having been sent on an errand with one of them, who after going a short distance refused to accompany him further, so he took hold of him, and said he should go; upon which he took up a stone and threw it at William and cut his head open. He ran back to his aunt, the blood running from the wound, but she told him she knew "he was as bad as the other or he would not have done it."

After working with the masons some time, William thought he would like a change of employment; he accordingly took a job on the piece, and as one of his cousins was out of work, he gave him 8d. per day to assist him, though he only had earned 4d. per day before. William thought as he was getting on so well, he would board himself, which he accordingly did. Having finished the first job, he was offered another at a less price, but would not take it; so he had to seek other employment. Shortly afterwards, a person sent for him to dig his garden, for which he received 2s. per week, and almost all his board. He remained there four weeks, when he was sent for to help a poor old man fell trees, at which employment he continued until he got a situation at his first master's, where he staid until he was 17 years old. He then went to work at another farmer's, but could not agree with the steward, so he left, and got employment in a brickfield. During this time he kept himself on 3s. per week, his wages being 4s., out of which he paid his uncle 1s. per week for lodging and washing. However, he considered himself independent, and but for the continual broils with one or other of the family, would have been as comfortable as an unconverted lad, under similar circumstances, could be. His aunt was displeased because he still made his home with them, and was continually finding fault, though his uncle treated him rather better.

We have now to record the last act of cruelty that occurred at his uncle's, which we shall give nearly verbatim, as related by himself. It appears that an unpleasantness had arisen between William and one of his cousins, who had taken a box of bird-lime one Sunday, belonging to him, and after she had teased him about

it until the evening, he became angry, and said he would kill her: his aunt either misunderstood him, or from other motives, told his uncle that he had threatened to kill *her*. He was naturally very vexed at it, and resorted to his usual cruel and injudicious mode of reforming the offender—or, what is most probable—gratifying his own revenge:—“My uncle got a large hazel stick, and when I was standing on the door step, he came up to me with it behind his back, and said ‘So you’ll kill your aunt, will you?’ ‘I did not say aunt, I said the girl,’ I replied, ‘she would not give me my bird-lime,’ but he did not mind what I said, so he drew the stick from behind him, and as he was about to strike me, I went opposite a neighbour’s house and took hold of the palings, and told him if he beat me into pieces I would not cry, nor would I hit him, but, ‘Remember,’ I said, ‘If I liked I could hide you.’ But, however, he beat me until the blood ran down my back; as I did not cry he beat me all the more, and when he found he could not make me, he left off. I then went into a shed, and there I wept bitterly, indeed I thought my heart would break, and when I had my cry out, I went into my uncle’s house and took my food for the next day. My cruel aunt was sitting there, and she said ‘You should have cried, and then he would not have beaten you much, but as you did not, it made him very angry; he is sorry for what he has done, and has gone out to get out of the way of seeing you; so I hope you will be a good boy.’ I said ‘Aunt, do you think that ever I can like you after this, for it was you that got me this sore back, and I hope I shall never see you again, I shall never like you as long as I live. Oh, aunt, how could you be so cruel to me, knowing that I have no one to look to but you, I wish you well, but I

shall never come to see you any more while I am in the same mind. May God bless you and my cousins for ever."

He then left the house and went to his master's stackyard, where there was a large stack of straw. Having made a hole in it for a bed, he laid himself down, but could not rest, as his back was very bad from being lacerated with the stick by his cruel uncle. There he laid, thinking over the unkind treatment he had received, and his mind was carried back, and he pondered over his past life; and his sufferings and misdoings passed in review before his imagination; he felt that he was not entirely blameless, but still he knew he had been often cruelly used when he did not deserve it. Surely he must have felt as David did when he said—"They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty," Ps. 69, 4. His heart was burdened with grief, but he knew not where to obtain rest. He knew nothing of Him who said "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. 11, 98: and but little of His word, which says, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee," Ps. 55, 2. How many years of sin and sorrow he would have been spared, had some child of God directed him at that time to the Saviour of sinners; but he had yet more fully to learn that "The way of transgressors is hard," Prov. 13, 15. While laying on this bed of sorrow, it began to thunder and lighten, and the rain poured down in torrents, but he did not fear it, for he wished himself numbered with the dead; and after lying in pain a long time, he fell asleep.

The next morning, he awoke with his back stiff and

painful, and sick at heart, but he went to his work. When the men saw the state he was in, they advised him to prosecute his uncle for an assault, but he would not, though he was very ill through the beating he had received. He slept in the stack for several nights, after which he made a bed in the stable, and often took the rugs off the horses to cover himself with. After sleeping there for about a fortnight, he was offered a lodging at 1/6 per week, which he accepted. He was then in the receipt of 4/6 per week, so he had 3/- per week to feed and clothe himself with.

We now conclude our sketch of the childhood and youth of William Fletcher. We have seen him as the rough unpolished stone, the child and youth "having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. 2, 12, his talents hid, and no one caring for his soul: nevertheless, He who died for us while we were yet sinners was watching over the fatherless one, and in due time, he who had been many years a servant of sin and Satan, became like Paul of old, a zealous champion of the cross. In our experience we have known many, who, like William, when driven, were stubborn and unmanageable, but when treated kindly and led by christian love, have not only become tractable, but have shown a spirit of meekness scarcely to be expected. May the Lord give us grace, that we may bear with the infirmities of others, even as he hath borne with our sins.

CHAPTER II.

His father's return—"A guilty conscience needs no accuser"—
Visit to his birthplace—Attends chapel for the first time—
Goes to London—Home at last—Works on his father's farm—
More trouble—Resolves to leave home—Nearly lost—The
preserver—The squire's sheep—Tries to emigrate—Good
resolutions—"The stranger"—The "Boy"—Is dangerously
ill—Bad treatment—Goes to chapel again—A happy week—
The strivings of the Spirit—The captive—Mercy—Gets a
situation—Locked out—The quarrel and escape—His uncle's
visit—The tin box—A rebellious son.

One Saturday, a few weeks after William had taken lodgings, as narrated in the last chapter, he was at work in the field cutting tares for the horses, when he noticed several people standing near his uncle's house; and shortly afterwards, a young man ran to him and told him that his father and sister were coming to see him. William was quite at a loss to know what to do, for after having lived 17 years without the protection of a father, he scarcely comprehended the relationship. The horsekeeper, who was standing near, advised him to go and see him, which he accordingly did. When he arrived at his uncle's, his father was sitting on the table, he ran to him and kissed him, calling him father. He was not allowed to return to his situation, so he stayed with his long lost parent, who was regaling himself and the neighbours with a plentiful supply of beer.

William's uncle having heard of his brother's return, kept out of the way, but came when sent for by him. After staying there for a few hours, William accompanied his father and sister to Norten, where

they remained drinking at the "Dog" until Sunday morning. They then went to Wivestone, where William was born.

On the following Sunday, William went with his sister to a little chapel in the village, for the first time in his life. He did not stay until the conclusion, however, for he wanted to get back to his father, to whom he had become much attached. Mr. Fletcher had been absent nearly 18 years, and none of the family knew whether he was dead or alive: on his father's return, William heard his grandfather say, "This my son, was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found," Luke 15, 24. His grandfather was a warm-hearted christian, and was a member of the Wesleyan Methodist society for about 40 years: he frequently prayed for William, and urged him to give his heart to the Lord: but he has passed away to his reward, with a good hope, through grace, and is now with the spirits of the just made perfect. The following beautiful lines on 'Death,' by Bishop Heber, will, no doubt, be read with pleasure by all:

"Beneath our feet, and o'er our head,
Is equal warning given;
Beneath us lie the countless dead,
Above us is the heaven!
Their names are graven on the stone,
Their bones are in the clay;
And ere another day is done,
Ourselves may be as they.

Death rides on every passing breeze,
He lurks in every flower;
Each season has its own disease,
Its peril every hour!
Our eyes have seen the rosy light
Of youth's soft cheek decay,
And Fate descends in sudden night
On manhood's middle day.

Turn, mortal, turn! thy danger know;
Where'er thy foot can tread,
The earth rings hollow from below,
And warns thee of her dead!
Turn, Christian, turn! thy soul apply
To truths divinely given;
The bones that underneath thee lie
Shall live for Hell or Heaven!"

About this time William accompanied his father and sister to London to see his mother, who had been living there in service since her husband had left her. She had heard that they were coming, and was waiting at one of William's aunt's to meet them. When they arrived she was so overcome that she fainted, and on recovering went into hystericks, and was dangerously ill for a long time; but God in his infinite mercy restored her, and she is still "the living to praise Him."

When William returned from London, he took a situation on a farm at Bacton, at the same time, lodging with his uncle William. He remained in this situation until his father took a farm at Norton, when he left, and took up his abode with his parents.

He now thought that his sorrowing days were over, for on first going home he was very comfortable, working on his father's farm: but alas, "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," Job, 5, 7, for he had been but five months at home when his father began to use him very ill. William had to attend to the horses early in the morning, then work in the field all day, and attend to the horses again late at night: but notwithstanding that he used every effort in his power to please his parent, he was continually in trouble. Many times did he lay on his bed and weep, many were the plans he thought over, in order to

better his lot. Now he would think of getting a situation at some other farm, but the idea occurred to him that if he applied for a situation he would be told that if he could not work for his own father he would not suit them. Again, he thought of leaving home altogether, but he had very little money to help him on his way, so that idea was also abandoned. He then made up his mind to enlist for a soldier, and went to a village where they were enlisting for the militia, for that purpose, but he was too short: so being again disappointed, and not caring what became of himself, he got drunk, and staid out late for the purpose of hanging himself. But the Lord in mercy spared him, and opened a way of escape—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live," Ezek. 33, 11.

A poor woman, whose husband worked for William's father, having heard where he was, went after him, to persuade him to return home, at last he consented to accompany her, but being very late, she kindly made him a bed in her house, where he slept himself sober. The following morning, when the good woman went to William's mother for some milk, she found her weeping. On asking her why she wept, she replied, "My son left home yesterday, and has not returned all night, what to do I do not know, and I dare not let his father see me fretting for him." "Well," said the poor old lady, "he is at my house, and has been there all night, for I heard where he was, so I went and fetched him." "Thank God," said his mother, "let him come home and get his breakfast before his father comes in, and then if he says anything to him, he must get out of the way." So

when William's preserver returned, he went home and sat down to breakfast, but just as he was commencing, his father entered, and began to swear at him, and told him that he could go where he had been the day before. William then left the table and went into the field to work with the other men. He had not been there long, however, when his father, who was very angry, came and found fault with his work, but as he knew he deserved his father's displeasure, for neglecting his work, he did not answer him, so he left him and returned to the house.

At this time, being so unhappy, William determined to drown himself, but the Lord restrained him in his evil resolution. Shortly afterwards, he went to a young man with whom he was acquainted, and who was probably in similar distress of mind, for the purpose of inducing him to assist him in killing one of the squire's sheep, in order that he might be transported; but, as his companion would not consent, he abandoned this wicked design.

William afterwards heard that the clergyman of the parish had influence to get young men sent out as emigrants to Australia; he accordingly went with three others to see him respecting the matter. He put down their names, and after a few days, they each received word that it would be necessary for them to get married, or a passage could not be granted them. William felt that to be an insurmountable obstacle, as far as he was concerned, and had to give up that plan also.

He then made up his mind that, if possible, he would stay at home, and determined to do everything he could to please his father. He had led such a life of sin and sorrow, had been so buffeted about, and

what with his own corrupt nature, the snares of him who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Peter, 5, 8, and the unkindness of his relatives, that he scarcely found rest for the soles of his feet, and could well have sung—

"Here o'er the earth, as a stranger I roam,
Here is no rest—is no rest:
Here as a pilgrim I wander alone,
And find no rest—find no rest,"

though he could not yet sing—

For I look forward to that glorious day,
When sin and sorrow shall vanish away,
My heart doth leap while I hear Jesus say,
" 'There, there is rest—there is rest.' "

He accordingly tried his best to please his parent: toiled from 6 in the morning until 8 or 9 o'clock at night, scarcely having time enough allowed him to eat his meals; and after having finished his day's labour, would have to attend to the horses before he retired to rest. Yet, notwithstanding this, he failed to accomplish his object. His father treated him with distrust, was constantly overlooking him, and when he found anything done amiss on the farm, he invariably laid the blame on poor William, and would swear at him dreadfully. He never owned him as his son, but always called him the "Boy."

After living very unhappily for a long time, he was taken dangerously ill, and was confined to his bed for four weeks, during which time, his father never went into the room, or even asked after him. Through mercy, however, his sickness was not unto death, he gradually recovered, and has been preserved to be as a light in a dark place, to guide the erring into the path that leads to glory and to God. "Bless the

Lord," said William, referring to this sickness, "He never left me altogether ; though I had wandered so far from him."

While William was still very weak, his father wanted him to go into the fields and take care of the cows ; but as he feared having a relapse, he did not wish to go, and his mother also objected to him going out. When Mr. Fletcher saw that his wife insisted on William remaining at home, it irritated him very much, and he struck her with a plough cord that he had in his hand. William was deeply grieved at seeing his mother treated so, and told his father to strike him and not his mother ; upon which, he struck him two or three times as hard as he could.

In about two months William got well again, and with returning health came his laborious work, and ill-usage. One day, William and some of the men were at work in the field, when his father, who was displeased about something in the yard, came up to him and said, "You are not cutting half the weeds up." William replied "Father you are always blaming me for what others do, those weeds are not on my ground"—he made no more to do, but ran at him and kicked him in the chest, which nearly took his breath away, and when he recovered, he hit him two or three times with the spud that he had in his hand. William said, "Now you may do the work yourself, as you have hit me," and left him ; he then went in and took his things off, and showed his mother the bruises, and still smarting with pain, said "Don't you think my father ought to be ashamed of himself ; if it was not for you I would have my revenge on him, but, mother, I will not break your heart, by quarrelling with him, so I shall leave you ; may God bless you

both." "But my dear boy," she said, "what will you do, you have no money to go away with; if you will go to work again, I will speak to your father and see what can be done for you." "Well, for your sake" he replied "I will, so I'll go into the top field, and if he comes to me there, I will not speak to him, but I shall never like him again." He accordingly complied with his mother's wish, and again tried his best to please.

On the following Sunday, he went to chapel with a young man, and felt very happy that day, and during the whole of the following week. Referring to that time, William said "All that week I felt happier than I ever felt before."

A week after, he attended three services at the chapel, and in the evening God's Holy Spirit strove with his wicked heart, so that he felt the burden of his sins, and was moved to tears. When the service was over, the preacher spoke to him, but he hung down his head and would not reply; for he felt that he should not like to tell any one his feelings. On his way home he went to a public house, and got drunk for the purpose of drowning conviction: thus he hardened his heart, and allowed Satan still to hold him captive. During the following week he frequently felt that he was a sinner in the sight of God, and as often sought to quench the Spirit's influence, by dissipation. He could not rest, neither could he go about his usual employment; this caused the breach to widen between him and his father, and was a source of very great unhappiness to his mother. When his mind was more at ease, he again went to work, but as the same ill-feeling existed towards him in the breast of his parent, and the quarrels became more frequent,

he made up his mind to seek work elsewhere. God has declared that His "Spirit shall not always strive with man," Gen. 6, 3; and yet how little heeded are the strivings of the Spirit with the bulk of mankind, though none know what a day, or an hour may bring forth, for man "cometh forth like a flower and is cut down," Job, 14, 2; "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grasss," 1 Peter, 1, 24.

Possibly, some who read this little book may have felt the Spirit's influence as strongly as did William Fletcher after that Sunday evening's service; and God through

"Him who lives above,
For us to intercede,"

has still spared them, though they have lived in open rebellion against Him; but let them not presume too much on His mercy and longsuffering, for ere long the command may go forth—"Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Luke, 13, 7, and then the trifling sinner, who would not have Christ for his Saviour, must await the awful day when he must have Him as his judge. But praise the Lord, that need not be: then let the unconverted reader take heed to Christ's words—"Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as you think not the son of man cometh," Matt. 24, 42, and let him "Prepare to meet his God," Amos, 4, 12, by a simple and childlike trust in Jesus Christ, as his all-sufficient Saviour, so that whenever he may be called hence, and his body returns to the dust, his spirit may be

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

William having resolved to procure work elsewhere, took the necessary steps in order to do so, and was

soon sent for by a neighbouring farmer to assist in haymaking, his father consenting to the arrangement. Shortly after going to his new place, he had to work late, therefore did not get home until 10 o'clock, when he found that they had all gone to bed and locked him out. He knocked at the door several times, and at last his sister looked out of the window, and said that she dare not let him in, as her father had gone to bed very angry, because he had taken a situation on another farm, when he was so much wanted at home. Finding he could not gain admission, he slept in the stack-yard, and got up early the following morning and went to work again. The next night he had to sleep in the same place: this grieved him very much, as he thought he would be more happy when he worked away from home. But he found now that his father was displeased because he had left him, though he always appeared to wish him elsewhere. The third night he had to work late, he resolved to get in if possible, should he find the door bolted; but on arriving home, he found that his father had not yet left the stable, so he went in, and not having slept in a bed for two nights was glad to retire to rest at once.

Some time after, William heard his father come up stairs to bed, and also heard him swearing about him; so as he had been "putting an enemy into his mouth" before he came home, he jumped out of bed and went to his father's bed-room, and asked him what he had to say against him; so a quarrel ensued, and when William had got into bed again, his father, who had threatened to kill him, got on the bed and kneeled on his chest, holding him at the same time tightly by the throat, until he turned black in the face. His poor mother was deeply affected at the sight, and strove to

take his father away; which at length she succeeded in doing. He then went down stairs, and having armed himself with a thick stick, returned to the attack; but as there were two staircases, William escaped down one while he was coming up the other. He then ran out of the house, his father pursuing him, and just as he was entering a neighbour's, a blow was struck at him, which providentially missed him, or the consequences might have proved fatal.

After this unhappy circumstance, William again resolved to leave home entirely, and seek his living elsewhere. About this time, however, one of his father's brothers, whom he had not seen for 20 years, came on a furlough, so all was comfortable for a short time; but comfort was never of long duration for him. Two or three days before his uncle left, his father struck him several times in his presence, which revived the desire to leave home. The next day, as all were out, he thought he would see whether he could get any money to help him on his journey, if so, he would go at once, and he resolved, sooner than return he would drown himself.

When Mr. Fletcher first came home, he gave William a sovereign, so he bought a tin box into which he put his treasure, and gave it to his father to take care of for him; he locked it in his box, and though William often asked him for it he would not give it to him again. Accordingly, he went up stairs to his father's room, and found the box unlocked, and on looking in, saw his tin box with the lid cut open, and the sovereign gone. He then looked into the till and found some money there, from which he took a half-sovereign, this he put into a little box and hid in the gravel field until he should want it for

his journey. His father afterwards missed it, and as William denied having taken it, his poor mother had the blame, and many were the unhappy hours she endured through this wicked act of her son.

CHAPTER III.

William leaves home—The mother's sorrow—Journey to London—Wanderings in the metropolis of the world—St. James's Park—His mother's prayers—Deliverance—His Irish friends—Goes to Sydenham—The naveys—Practical sympathy—More friends—Gets employment—Returns to London—Works at Highgate—Another serious illness—More hardships—Reduced to begging—Hears from his mother—Faithful prayers—London again—The tutor—Gets into trouble—Hackney fair—The funeral—Resolves to alter—Enlists in the Tower Hamlets Militia—The hawker—Drilled at Hackney—The two praying mothers.

Two or three weeks had elapsed after the circumstances narrated in the latter part of last chapter had transpired, when William was again ill-treated. He then made preparations to seek a shelter elsewhere. Accordingly, the following morning he put on a double suit of clothes, with the intention of starting on his journey at once; but there was one he could not leave without seeing once more, and bidding her farewell; so he went to his mother's room, and on entering said, "Mother dear, I'm going to leave you all, so good bye, and may God bless you for ever." She looked at him with surprise, and while the tears stole down her cheeks, she said, "Oh my dear child, what shall I do, you will be the death of me, I know,"

and after giving vent to her grief, added "Where are you going to my child?" "I don't know yet, and don't care," he unfeelingly replied. His poor mother was nearly heart-broken, and endeavoured to persuade him to remain at home, for she felt notwithstanding his waywardness, and the trouble he had caused her, that her heart still clung to her only son, and she could not part with him without sorrow: none but a mother knows the bitterness of such a trial. After staying in her embrace for a short time, he said, "Let me go, I don't want any more of this bother with you, father will be in directly, and I don't want him to know anything about it." "Oh! don't go, my dear boy," she entreatingly said. "But I will, and won't be stopped for anyone," he replied. His mother's tears and entreaties were alike disregarded, for he was evidently bent on carrying out his purpose. She then affectionately said, "Well then, if you will go, the Lord go with you, my child, and I will pray for you until I die, you will shorten my days, William my lad, you have not treated me well." But he only replied, "I think you are going mad, mother," and left the house. How often must he have grieved over the manner in which he parted with his dear parent; when far away from home, in the great metropolis, wandering about without a friend—when in the haunts of wickedness and depravity, or on a bed of sickness—when in an enemy's land, expecting soon to be called hence, or when suffering from his wounds—then must the remembrance have caused him sorrow indeed.

On leaving the house he went to the gravel field, and having found the half-sovereign, started on his journey, little thinking what trials and difficulties he would have to encounter; but like many more, pro-

bably thought that if he could but reach London, his troubles would be over. He first went to Long Mel-ford, and having refreshed himself there, started for Sudbury. On arriving there, he stopped at a public house called the "Black Boy." After he had his supper, a sergeant of the 30th Regiment came in, and as he stood with his back to the fire, asked William whether he would enlist: he replied, "Yes, if you like," and a shilling was accordingly handed to him. He then ordered some beer, and after they had drunk it, the sergeant took him to the standard, but found he was not tall enough, so William returned to the "Black Boy," where he lodged that night.

The next morning he arose early and contined his journey until 10 o'clock, when he rested at another public house, and after having partaken of some bread and cheese, started off again: that day he walked 39 miles. The following day his feet were very tender, so he took off his boots and walked without them. The third night he stayed at Colchester, in Essex, and when morning again dawned, he set out towards London, travelling 30 miles further on his jorney.

On the evening of the fifth day after his departure from home, he arrived at London, with only two shillings in his pocket. He did not know where to get lodgings, so he walked about all night. The following day he wandered about with no definite object, and as night drew on, he wished he was out of the "wilderness town;" he asked a policeman which way he could get out. The policeman laughed at him, and wanted to know where he had come from, and where he was going to. He told him that he was a stranger to London, and wanted to get out at a different part to where he entered. Poor William soon had enough

of London, he had spent all his money, was homeless and friendless, and wanted to get into the country again. The policeman directed him, and he moved wearily onward, but after turning several times to the right and left, keeping straight on, &c., he found himself at the place where he started from. "Well," thought he, "if this be London, the sooner I get out of it the better." He had been two days in town, during which time he had scarcely any food, and had been unable to pay for a lodging, and began to think he should certainly be starved to death. He had got into St. James's Park, the weather was cold, but there the wanderer sat, beneath the canopy of heaven, wretched, cold, and hungry, apparently with no eye to pity and no arm to save. All was still as death; the leafless trees scarcely moved, and the moon seemed to pass softly through the cloudless sky, while the stars which bespangled the heavens, shone with native splendour, adding their beauty to the night. But his heavy heart could see no beauty there; he was thinking of the home he had left; and of his mother's sorrow at parting with him: in his despair he thought of cutting his throat, as no one would be likely to know who he was, thus putting an end to his miserable life. Just then, he remembered that his mother said she would pray for him, and he thought "perhaps she is praying for me now—this is all my own fault, and if I kill myself I shall go to hell, oh, Lord help me." The Lord says "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee," Ps. 50, 15. While we know this is a promise to the christian, we do not think it exclusively so, and believe that the burden of that short prayer reached the ear that is never heavy, and brought deliverance down.

While St. Paul's clock was striking twelve, a poor old Irishman was passing through the park; close to where William was sitting, and observing him, went to him and asked why he was sitting there, at that time of night? He told him that he was a stranger in London, and had no one to help him; the poor man then told him if he had a handkerchief to lay it on the grass and he would help him. So when he spread out his handkerchief, the man put a lot of bread and meat into it; he then told William if he would go with him he would give him a lodging for the night, and he was very glad of the offer, so he followed him to Westminster, and after traversing two or three streets, he turned down a narrow passage, and knocked at a door, which was opened by another Irishman. After conversing a few minutes William was invited in. He found the family sitting round a large fire, a large dish of potatoes and milk was on the table, of which he was invited to partake; and when the meal was finished, the children were sent to bed, and he was asked what part of the country he came from, and where he was going to. William answered their enquiries, and they seemed very much interested in him; they conversed until two o'clock, when he was shown to a little bed-room, where he had a comfortable night's rest, for the first time after arriving in London.

About eight o'clock he was called up, and a nice breakfast of tea and bread and butter was provided for him by those hospitable people. After breakfast they directed him to the Crystal Palace, at Sydenham, telling him he was likely to get work there; and gave him tenpence to help him on the road. In all probability they had been "rocked in the rude cradle of adversity," and knew how to feel for a

brother in distress. Oh, how thankful he was to his kind benefactors, he could scarcely find words to express his gratitude ; and doubtless since the wanderer's conversion, many have been the prayers offered up at the throne of grace on their behalf, that he may again meet them where parting is no more.

William started for Sydenham, but having missed his way two or three times, at last found himself in Bermondsey, and knowing he had an aunt living somewhere there, looked about until he found her. His uncle, who was a soldier, was at home on furlough from Chatham. He was received coldly, and when he said that he thought he should enlist, as he was tired of living as he was, his uncle told him that he had better go and throw himself into the Thames. He stayed there for a few hours, and when he left they gave him a shilling ; he then thought he had better make the best of his way to Sydenham, so he took the train from London Bridge, and soon arrived there.

He at once sought for employment, and not being immediately successful, made enquiries for a lodging, but found that all were occupied, on account of so many men and their wives living there during the building of the palace. This was on Christmas eve of 1852, and having only sixpence in his possession he scarcely knew what to do. After walking about from place to place, he noticed several men sitting in a booth, outside the "White Swan," so he sat down among them, and told them that he was seeking work, and wanted a lodging, but was very poor. The navvys listened to his tale of sorrow, and though their exterior was rough, and their language somewhat coarse, yet their hearts were moved with compassion for the poor way-worn stranger, and their sympathy was not such as is

often manifested by the affluent, they could not find soft empty words of condolence, but gave a more sensible expression to their feelings,—one of them took off his cap and made a collection among his companions, which amounted to six shillings; and on giving it to William, said, “There, that will carry you over Christmas and Sunday, and I will try to get you work with me on Monday.” He thanked them for this unexpected assistance, and at their request stayed with them. At twelve o’clock he went with some of the men to the “Woodman,” where they lodged, in the hope of getting a bed there, but found all were let there also. The men spoke for him, and at last the landlord said that he could sleep with the potman in the hay loft, if he liked, which offer he gladly accepted.

The following morning he got up early with the potman, and went with him into the house and cleaned the knives and forks, and the navvies’ boots. The men were very pleased with him for this mark of gratitude, so one gave him his breakfast, another his dinner, and a third his supper, and the landlord would not charge anything for his lodging, so he fared very well.

On the following Tuesday evening he got a job of night work, at 3/9 per night. He then thought he should soon be in a comfortable position, but he soon became unsettled, and when he had saved a little money, he wanted another change, so he set off once more for London.

Arriving again at the scene of his former hardships, he found his way to Whitechapel, and took lodgings in George Yard, a noted resort of cadgers and thieves. His money was soon gone, so having the address of an

uncle at Highgate, he went to see him, and he got him a job at haymaking. William then lodged with his uncle, but found he could only just earn sufficient to pay for his board and lodging, so the following week he slept in a hay shed, and bought his own food. He found at the end of the second week he had a little more money, so he thought he would continue to sleep in the shed, thereby saving the amount he would have to pay for a bed, against a "rainy day."

When he had lived thus for a few weeks, he was taken very ill, so he went to his uncle's again, where he had to stay for about four weeks, and got into their debt. As soon as he was well enough to get out, he went to a brickfield and got employment there, but could only stay four days, the work being too laborious for him, as he was yet very weak. He then came to London, and obtained a situation at the City Wharf, City Road, where he remained until he had saved a little money. On leaving that situation he went to Kent, and wandered about until all his money was gone; after that he travelled nearly three days seeking employment, during which time he had scarcely any food. Being by this time nearly famished, and foot sore with travelling, he went to a farm-house for the purpose of asking for work; they were dining, so the farmer told him to wait in a shed near the door, and shortly after, sent a little boy to him with a plate of meat and bread and some beer, for his dinner, for which he was very thankful.

When the farmer had dined, he went to William and asked him what he could do; he told him he did not mind what it was, so long as he could get work. "Well," said the farmer, "come with me, and I'll see what can be done for you;" so he took him into the

orchard, and asked him if he could gather fruit for the London markets. William having answered in the affirmative, he gave him a ladder, and set him to gather plums. Having gathered 12 baskets full, it was getting late, so he left work, and went to a public house and engaged a lodging, but as he had no money to buy anything to eat or drink, he walked about until bed-time, and then retired to rest.

He went to work again at six o'clock the following morning, and at breakfast time sat down and ate two apples, which made him feel very faint, so he went to the potato field, and having got a few potatoes, made a fire and roasted them. During the remainder of the week he had nothing to eat but potatoes. On Saturday night he received twelve shillings, so he had the means to provide for himself the following week.

His master being in want of a carter, William told him that he knew a man in London who wanted a situation, so at his master's request he went to London to fetch him; starting directly he had paid for his lodging on Saturday night. The man went to work on Monday, but he was lazy, and the master soon had to discharge him. He then blamed William for fetching him from London, and ultimately persuaded him to leave his place. They then tramped to London together, where William arrived penniless. His companion got work, but he was unsuccessful, and was again a homeless wanderer. His shoes were nearly worn out, and he had scarcely any clothes to cover himself with: in this state while tramping from place to place, he met some men from Long Melford, who were also seeking work. One of them lent him a shirt, so he threw his own away, which was all in rags, but a day or two afterwards he had to return it, and was then without one.

He next obtained work on a farm, in Essex, to reap wheat, which he had to do with his coat on, having no shirt or any money to buy one with. When the job was finished, he again sought employment, but had now less chance than ever of obtaining any, for he was literally destitute, having no shoes to cover his feet. Finding he could not get work, he commenced begging, and again went to London, from there he tramped to several distant counties. When at Manchester he was taken very ill, and was carried to the workhouse, where he remained for three weeks, scarcely expecting to come out alive again.

When sufficiently recovered, he left Manchester, and went to the north of England, and being unable to get work there, he again made his way to London. Through insufficient food, and exposure to all weathers, he was again taken ill on his arrival in town, he then went into St. Thomas's Hospital, where he remained for three weeks.

On getting well again he took a lodging in George Yard, Whitechapel, where he became acquainted with a young thief, who offered to teach him to pick pockets. He now seemed to allow Satan to lead him captive at his will, and readily consented to become the pupil of a professional London thief. But he could not learn, something seemed to restrain him, and though he had many lessons, his tutor found him a very dull scholar, and had to use him principally to "look out." One night he missed his companion, and on reaching home, found him there with a bundle of clothes which he had stolen: they shortly afterwards pledged them, and both went to a theatre. When they returned home, they found that the inmates were gone to bed, and had bolted them out. His companion then looked

into a cab near their lodging, while William stood opposite against a wall half asleep. The cabman, probably thinking they intended to steal the cushions, knocked William down two or three times, severely hurting him. He thought that was a bad ending to his first visit to a theatre, and as soon as he recovered himself, he crept into the closet in the yard, and there sat until the morning.

While living in George Yard, having been from home about five months, he wrote a letter to his mother, to which he very soon had a reply. When he received it, he was in conversation with several who lived in the same house, and who generally spent the greater part of their time in idleness; most of them having no particular occupation. Having read the "sermon," as he called it, himself, he read it aloud for the amusement of his companions, considering it only fit to be made the jest of the ungodly, so hard had his heart become. But there was one present who listened to it with evident pleasure, and who rebuked him for disregarding his loving mother's counsel. The following is a copy of the letter, though not verbatim:—

"NORTEN, *May 4th*, 1853.

My dear and only Boy,

I received your welcome letter, and was indeed glad to hear that you were still alive. Both your father and myself have been very sorry about you, for we were afraid that you had made away with yourself; but why ever should I think that? when my dear Father which is in heaven, has promised in His word, that "whatsoever we desire, when we pray, believing," we shall have, and I verily believe that my prayers will yet be answered on your behalf, and that I shall see you home again, and I trust walking in the ways of the Lord, for my dear boy, he is still the prayer hearing and prayer answering God. Oh, my dear son, you have caused your poor mother many sleepless nights, and I have wetted my pillow with tears many a time, but dare not let your

father know it. Oh, my child, I often wonder whether you have any food to eat, or a bed to lie on. Before I received your letter I sometimes thought that I should die broken-hearted about you, and wept when I thought of the morning when you came up to my bed and kissed me and wished me good bye: I said when I found you meant to go, "May the Lord go with you," and I hope my dear and only boy that you will think of God wherever you are. Your dear sister was very pleased when she saw the letter from her brother William, and so was your poor father, although he does not say much, yet he feels it the more. Now my dear child, as you are alone, do not forget to go to church every Sunday: I shall pray for you, and may God bless you and keep you from harm, is the prayer of your loving mother,

FANNY FLETCHER.

Love from dear father and sister. Do not be long before you write again."

While William was reading the letter, one poor fellow stood by him, quietly wiping away the tears that ran down his cheeks, and when it was finished, and the reader began joking about it, he said, "Oh, my lad, you have got a dear kind mother; oh, how I wish I was in your place. I lost my dear mother when six years of age, and am now 26 years old: I have no friend in the world. Oh, if you did but know the loss of your parents, you would not make light of that letter as you do. I can't help weeping; what a beautiful letter that is! it would do me good if I could but see her." "Oh," said William, "I hope you never will, for I should'nt like you to go preaching to her about me." They spent a considerable time in conversation about it: but he did not write again until after he had enlisted, for his heart was still hard against them.

His mother knew by the tone of his letter, that all was not well: but little did she know of the hardships

he had endured, or her grief would have been as intense as David's, when he mourned over his son Absalom. Through the pride of his heart he would not let her know that he was in want, or she would gladly have helped him; and had he not continually sought to quench the strivings of the Spirit, but have yielded to its influence, and returned as the prodigal to his home, how gladly would she have received him.

How easily can be traced the effect of the mother's never ceasing prayers, in the restlessness of the wayward son, for "There is no peace saith the Lord to the wicked," Isa. 48, 22. It is also recorded that "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much," James, 5, 16, and our Lord has said for our encouragement, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21, 22,—and though the object of the mother's faithful prayers still hardened his heart, and sought peace in the bowl whenever he had the means, yet in God's own time he was plucked as a brand from the burning, and the mother's heart made glad by the prodigal's return.

We read in the Book, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Cor. 5, 17, but we have sometimes heard of persons being *converted*, when it would puzzle anyone to tell the difference between their *regenerate* and *unregenerate* state: some, we know, prior to conversion live moral lives, but none are so perfect but that a change *may* be observed. The transition from the bondage of sin, to the glorious liberty of the children of God, is strikingly manifested in such men as the subject of this sketch. How his heart has been grieved when thinking over his past unkindness to his mother and other relatives, and how often has he pleaded at the throne of grace for the conversion of

their never dying souls. Referring to his mother's letter Fletcher said, "I hope you will take warning, and not treat your loving parent as I did mine. I have wept many a time when I have seen children following their dear father or mother to the grave. I have thought that none can tell the love of a parent like those who have lost them. I cared not what I did to grieve mine; though many a time my mother pressed me to her breast, and often prayed for me. Oh, can a mother's tender care cease towards her child? no, never. The Lord be praised for a loving and praying mother, for

'I was a wandering child,
I did not love my home:
I did not love my father's voice,
I loved afar to roam.'

But praise the Lord, now I can sing—

'But happy now I am,
And happy shall I be,
Till gazing on my Lord the Lamb,
I all his love shall see.'

One Sunday, William and his companion went to a chapel for the purpose of picking pockets, but had no opportunity to carry out their design, so they returned home. On Monday they went to Hackney fair, where William again tried his abilities in the devil's work, but happily did not succeed. The next day they went to Whitechapel church, being a funeral there, and while the mourners were weeping for the dead they were burying, and the bell tolled out its funeral knell, the two young men, hardened in sin, were plying their wicked calling, and hastening on the road to hell. Having succeeded in robbing one of the crowd, they went to squander the proceeds of their wickedness in the ale house and the "gaff."

William soon got tired of living in such open sin, and with the fear of being taken continually before him, so he determined to leave it at once. He accordingly went to Hackney Green, and enlisted in the Tower Hamlet's Militia, receiving ten shillings as part bounty, with which he bought some stationery, and commenced obtaining an honest livelihood, by hawking writing paper and envelopes about the streets. At the end of three weeks he was measured for his regimentals, and then had to learn his drill. The company met at Hackney Green, where the clothing was given out to them, and they were drilled for three weeks.

When the time expired, William had £1 to receive. With this he purchased more stationery, and travelled about the country to sell it. Some time after, when at Manchester, he heard that the militia was to be called out, and he knew not how to get to London, for he had very little money, and could not think of riding, so he had to set out on foot, and travel as fast as possible, begging his way to town, knowing that if he was not there to time, he would be treated as a deserter.

He arrived in London the day before the time was up, and had a little rest before commencing his drill. At the time appointed he went for his clothing, with many others, and they were drilled very hard, so much so that William soon got tired of it, and thought that he had better go into the "regulars" at once, for he saw many of them walking at their ease, while he was sweating under a heavy drill.

Thus, having got tired of militia life, he said to a comrade, "If you will go into the regulars, I will, now then, what say you; that is better than being

here, for they do what they like with us." "Well," said his comrade, "I will, if you go into the same regiment, but I have a poor old widowed mother, and I'm afraid if I go away, it will be the death of her." "Well, what then," said he, "she is getting old, and you cannot keep her alive, and when the time comes she will have to go; and don't you think other people have got mothers and fathers; I have run away from a good house and home, and don't intend to go back again—not yet, at any rate, and if you do, you'll be a complete fool." "What, not go and wish my poor old mother, good bye?" said the young man. "No, to be sure not," replied William, "for if you do, she will only fret the more." "Well, I can tell her that I will soon come back again, for she was a good mother to me, and she kissed me and prayed for me before I left home." "Oh," said William, "you have one of those Methodist mothers, have you? so have I, for she would always be praying for *me*, but you know, I don't believe in such nonsense, Bill, and I hope you don't, for I think they are all going mad; but they are very weak-minded, you know, Bill, anything makes them cry: there was my silly old mother, when I bid her good bye, she kissed me, and cried over me, and said, 'Well, good bye, my dear boy, the Lord be with you.' Well, they're all alike, but they'll get over it before long, Bill, so cheer up, old chap, and let us take the shilling, and be whole soldiers, and not half ones any longer."

We have often sung the following verse:—

"Tis easy to begin,
 To serve the Lord betimes,
 But sinners that grow old in sin,
 Get hardened in their crimes,"

And our every day experience confirms the truth of those lines. Such was the case with William Fletcher, having no pious mother to train him while young, he was allowed to grow up in sin, and his heart became more callous as he grew in years; just as a crooked sappling becomes a crooked oak. But, praise the Lord, though the crooked tree never can be straightened, yet there is hope for the most hardened sinner, for "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth us from all sin," 1 John 1, 7; and,

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

CHAPTER IV.

The rendezvous—Sowing and reaping—Enlists—The surprise—Chooses regiment—Is sworn in—Billeted in Westminster—Leaves London—Winchester barracks—His associates—Job's comforter—The death bed visit—Neglect—His comrade's letter—Is taken prisoner—Cure for a bad memory—The "draft"—Under orders—"Fall in"—The colonel's address—Hard hearts—Leaves Winchester—Parting scenes—Thinks of home—Portsmouth dock-yard—A convict's tale—The embarkation—The runaway—Farewell to England—Is taken ill—An unheeded request—A dirty regiment—The triangle—Arrives in Turkey.

Shortly after the conversation referred to in last chapter, Fletcher and his comrade went to the rendezvous at Westminster, where the registry sergeants were enlisting recruits. During the remainder of the day they were carousing in the company of soldiers, and though frequently urged to take the shilling, they

declined to do so, and amused themselves by laughing at and chafing the soldiers. When night came on they were both drunk, and could not leave the place, being unable to take care of themselves, and scarcely knowing what transpired. They had been sitting in the "seat of the scornful," and like many others, while under the influence of drink, took a step which was afterwards regretted: they were ultimately carried to bed in an unconscious state. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," Gal. 6, 7.

The following morning when they awoke they wondered where they were, for there were several soldiers in the room, and they could not understand how they got there. However, they got up and washed themselves, and went down stairs and ordered breakfast. When they had finished, Fletcher called for the bill, upon which, a sergeant came in and said, "It's all right, it's paid for, and now you must both go with me to see the colonel, and get sworn in." They were more surprised still at this information, and Fletcher said, "I don't know what you mean, for I have not taken any money from you." "No more have I," said his companion. "Oh yes, you have, you are both my men," said the sergeant, "and must go with me." "Well, then," said Fletcher, "if that be the case, we must go, so cheer up, Bill, my lad, it's all right. What regiment are you going into?" "Well, I think I shall join the 97th Highlanders," he replied, "for I think they wear good clothing." After some further conversation on the subject, Fletcher asked the sergeant whether they wore petticoats in the 97th, and on the sergeant answering in the affirmative, he said, "Well, that won't do for me, I shall go into some

other." He afterwards joined the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers, but his companion preferred the 97th, so they did not carry out their plan of enlisting into the same regiment.

Accordingly, Fletcher, with about 40 other recruits were taken to the colonel and sworn in, and each received seven shillings and sixpence. After the preliminaries were settled, they were taken to different places and billeted. It is well known that when a thief is convicted, he frequently learns much of what he may be ignorant, while in prison, by the contaminating influence of those older in crime; so Fletcher and his comrades, who had been billeted together, seem soon to have been "put up to a manoeuvre" to sell their billets. The landlord thought from what had transpired that the sooner he got rid of them the better, so he asked them what they would take, to go and get lodgings elsewhere. He was told that they wanted four shillings each, and two gallons of porter, to which proposition he agreed. The beer was sent in, and when that was drunk he laid down 16 shillings, which they divided between them. They then got lodgings at the rendezvous, for which they had to pay only three-pence each, thereby getting three shillings and ninepence each by the sale of their first billet; this they continued to do until they left London for Winchester.

On arriving at Winchester Barracks, he had to learn drill: and in the course of two or three days he had his uniform. He then felt that he was a "whole" soldier, and with his friend of the 97th went into the town, where they soon became acquainted with persons of questionable character.

During the first month his leisure time was spent

either at the public house, or other places equally as bad, associating with those who were as careless as himself about spiritual things; but about that time an incident occurred which left an impression on his mind, which has never yet been eradicated; we will give it as related by himself.

“One day, I was sent for to the hospital to see a young man, who was lying very ill, and as I looked at his pale thin face, I could not help dropping a silent tear, especially when he began to talk about his only earthly friend, his widowed mother, who had nursed him and pressed him to her breast; as he spoke his large eyes filled with tears, and he gave a deep sigh. ‘Fletcher, my lad,’ said he ‘you don’t know what I feel; I have more on my mind than what you may think.’ ‘Oh, my lad,’ said I, ‘you must forget these things, and then perhaps you will soon get better.’ I was something like Job’s comforter, for at this time I did not know anything about the blessed Lord myself, therefore I could not speak about things that I knew nothing of. It seemed as if no man cared for his soul, I tried to cheer him up, but could not give him any comfort, but I read to him out of one of the Testaments which we had given to us at the barracks, and then left him, and did not see him again alive.”

The nurse told Fletcher, that the young soldier was in a consumption, and could not live very long; but he seemed to have forgotten all about his sick comrade, as he did not visit him again. How different when the heart is changed by Divine grace, then instead of carelessness about others, the burden of souls is felt, and a yearning desire for the salvation of sinners ever present in the heart.

Three days after, a letter was given to him, and on opening it, found it was from the young man he had visited; he read it through with surprise, and when he noticed the signature he recollected that the writer was a companion he had when in the militia. He was very much affected, and was sorry that he did not go to see him again. The young man had enlisted on account of a disappointment in love affairs, which step he afterwards regretted; the two troubles so weighed upon his mind that he went into a decline. We here insert a copy of the letter, trusting it may warn some from taking a similar step.

“Dear Fletcher,

I am dying; oh, that I could see M—— R——, but I never shall now; but if ever you see her tell her that I died broken-hearted on account of her. It is through her that I am here, and I shall not get over it. Tell my dear old mother that I am gone where my dear father and brother and sister are gone. Oh, mother, I fear when you hear that I am dead, it will be more than you can bear; but don't weep for me, for I deserve it all, for I have treated you very cruelly, but all is over now. Let my dear widowed mother see this, and then you must speak to her. What will poor M—— R—— think when she knows that I am gone? Oh, Bill, you remember the time when we were at Hackney; they were happy days—when you tried to climb the greasy pole for the boots; but that time will never be again. Please remember me to all friends, especially to the Kings, and Mrs. and Mr. Rices, for when we were billeted there, they were very kind to us. Oh, Fletcher, lad, I feel very tired, and as I sit writing this letter, I am all of a sweat, for I am very weak, therefore I must bring this to a close, hoping that if we never meet again in this world, we may in the one to come, for I hope God will have mercy on me at the last, for my dear mother has prayed for me many a time. Well, good bye, William, from your affectionate comrade and brother soldier,

GEORGE FISHER,

7th Fusiliers, No. 4321, No. 4 Company.”

When Fletcher had been at the barracks for about a month, he was made a prisoner of for staying out later than the appointed time. He was on his way to quarters, and just turning the corner of a street, when he met the patrol. "Halt," said the serjeant, "right about face, quick march:" and he was marched off to the barracks. When they arrived at the gates, the serjeant said, "Halt—Prisoner, quick march," and he had to march into the guard room. Sometime after, a comrade took him his great coat, which he wrapped round him and laid himself down, there being no bed or anything as a substitute for one in the place.

On the following morning, the same comrade kindly took Fletcher some breakfast, for which he was very thankful, and he enjoyed it much after the uncomfortable night he had passed. At 10 o'clock the serjeant went to him, and told him he must go before the colonel. When his turn came, the serjeant took him forward. The colonel said, "Well, what about this man, serjeant?" "I found him in the town at 11 o'clock last night, and marched him to the guard room, colonel," said the serjeant. "Well, Fletcher," said the colonel, "what have you to say to that?" "It is true, sir," he replied, "but I am sorry that I forgot the time." "Well, then we must teach you the proper time," he said, "therefore, I shall give you seven days confinement to barracks, and two extra pack drills a day." Fletcher, thanked him, and was then set at liberty, but dare not go beyond the barrack gates, and had to answer to his name several times a day.

Four days later, an order was read that all the prisoners in the draft were to be set at liberty, as they would have to be ready to leave the barracks with the

others at four o'clock the following morning. Fletcher was very pleased at the news, and set off to the town to bid his friends farewell; returning at the proper time.

At the time of which we are now writing, the Crimean war was raging in all its fury—the lives of thousands of our fellow creatures had been sacrificed—and widows and orphans were being multiplied throughout the land—and many more brave men were wanted to assist in carrying on the scourge of nations, and overthrowing the power of the despotic Nicholas.

The following morning Fletcher got up at three o'clock, and was ready long before the time. At last the bugle sounded, and they all "fell in." The colonel who was a veteran in his country's service, and also a soldier of the cross, proceeded to address the "draft," in terms similar to the following:

"I am very proud to have the honour of addressing such a lot of young men, who have so soon learned their drill, and who are going out for such a solemn purpose. Many of you have left a poor mother behind you, and those who have not left a mother have perhaps left one more dear than a mother—a beloved wife. You may never have the happiness of seeing them again; and I would say if you never meet them again in this world, I hope you will prepare to meet them in a better land. I shall never meet you again, in all probability, for my time is nearly run out; therefore I would hope to meet you in a better world." Many of the men listened to the old colonel's exhortation with feelings which were somewhat strange to them, and many a stout-hearted man shed tears, when he remembered those he had left at home. But there

were some there whose hearts were proof against such an appeal, and among them was William Fletcher, who remarked to a comrade that he thought the colonel was an old fool to talk to men like that, who were going out to a field of battle.

The band then took their place, and all being ready, the order was given to "march;" the band then commenced playing "The girl I left behind me," and they marched from the barracks to the railway station. Many people went to see them off, and to bid farewell to those who were about to risk their lives in their country's service. Among them were many aching hearts—the mother, who was about to part for ever with her only son—the loving wife, who would soon be separated from her dearest earthly tie—children, who shortly were to look upon a father for the last time, and others who were near and dear by the ties of relationship or friendship, alike shared the sorrow of the parting scene.

We fear that comparatively few of the number who started that morning, parted with the assurance that should they never meet again on earth, they would meet in heaven. Alas, what a sad picture to contemplate—men for whom Christ suffered, bled, died—going forth to meet grim death, neglecting the only way of salvation, and perishing in their sins. But we trust that many were brought to consider their position—to feel their own wickedness and inability to save themselves—and find their way to the foot of the cross, feeling rather than singing:—

"Can such a one as I
Escape the sinner's end?
By Christ I may, and when I die,
Through Him to heaven ascend.

Then I for grace will pray
 While I have life and breath ;
 Lest I should be cut off to-day,
 And sent to' eternal death."

Fletcher was greatly moved while sitting in the train, watching the many sad upturned faces. He particularly noticed one poor old woman hanging on the shoulder of her son, weeping, and he thought of his own dear mother whom he had left, and of his father and sister ; he felt that he was alone, and began to reflect on the past. He also saw a little boy clinging round his father's neck and kissing him fondly, while the poor sorrowing wife stood by finding relief in her tears, and when the train started, and the wife waved her handkerchief, the poor little fellow cried as if his heart would break.

Fletcher felt deeply interested in the comrade who had just parted with his wife and little boy, and thought that he must have been a loving father and tender husband, for he could see that he felt the separation keenly. While musing thus, he tried to make a little poetry on the parting scene, which he repeated to himself frequently, and afterwards wrote it down when in the hospital at Scutari : we insert it here, not because our brother has any pretensions to poetical talent, but to show the state of his religious knowledge at that period of his life.

"Farewell, my wife and children,
 I bid you all adieu,
 I'm called to fight for England,
 And on my way pursue.
 If you and I should meet again,
 Within this vale of tears,
 We'll sing and praise the Saviour,
 For his great love and care.

And you my dearest children,
Lay heavy on my heart,
But from you very soon,
I must for ever part.

And while your loving father,
On the battle field doth lie,
Think of the day we parted,
And don't forget to pray.

So that both me and mother,
And you my children too,
May meet and sing together,
Of him that brought us through.

The train it is just on the move,
And I must now be gone,
I am bound to leave old England,
My native happy home."

When the train moved on, he thought he should have felt much happier if he had parted with his relatives as he had seen many part with theirs that morning; for he felt now that he was about to leave old England, perhaps he should never look upon them again, and it troubled him. Old memories revived; he contrasted the last two years of his life with others that had passed, and could not help acknowledging that when he left Norton, he left his best earthly friends. He thought of home during the journey to Portsmouth, where they arrived between 10 and 11 o'clock. They were marched through the town to the dockyard, where they had to await the arrival of the vessel that was to carry them over the mighty deep to the scene of bloodshed and death.

While in Portsmouth dockyard he was grieved to see the convicts working in gangs, and sympathizing with them, when opportunity offered, he threw them some biscuits, but they very seldom got any, as they

were so closely watched. One fine young man with a pale sad face, particularly took his attention, so when he was near him, he asked him why he was there? To which he replied, that he had stolen a sheep: and in the course of conversation said that he had only been married about a month, when being out of work and in distress, he committed the sin for which he was then suffering; his wife was the daughter of pious parents, who were members of a chapel at D——, in Norfolk. He appeared very penitent, and seemed to sorrow much more on account of his wife who was so soon widowed, than on his own. Fletcher thought less of his own troubles after conversing with the poor convict, and felt that he had learned some lessons that day that he should not be likely to forget.

When the "Kangaroo" steam ship, arrived in harbour, they were ordered to go on board, and many were the loving hearts that parted then, who will meet no more until the great judgment day: may many of England's brave defenders—who left her shores that day, and afterwards fell on Crimean ground—arise to everlasting life, and through Christ the Captain of their salvation, enjoy a blissful eternity with the blood washed through in glory.

A scene occurred as soon as they were on board, that more than ever caused Fletcher to feel his position: we will give it as narrated by himself:—"I saw a poor old woman come up the ladder, and when she reached the top, she cried, 'Where is my child, the only son of a widow? William, William,'—and when she found him she said, 'Oh, my own darling boy, I cannot endure to part with you, it will be the death of me'—and they both wept together. I found out afterwards that the young man had run away from

home, and enlisted as I had done, and was about to leave England, without writing to his poor mother, who knew nothing of it till she saw him passing through the town, as a soldier, for she lived at Portsmouth. Oh, how it made me think of my own poor mother; how I wished that I could bid her farewell, and see her dear face once more. The poor woman was taken away in a fainting state, and all other visitors having left the vessel, the captain gave orders to "weigh" the anchor, and we moved slowly out of the harbour, where thousands were waving their handkerchiefs to bid us farewell. The young man went into his bunk, where he laid and cried like a child, because he had nearly broken his poor old mother's heart, and was bringing her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. I went to him and said, 'Come, Bill, cheer up lad, you will see her again; don't be a fool, there's every sailor laughing at you, and saying that you are a pretty soldier, indeed,' but his heart was so full of grief that he would take no notice of me, so I left him."

After leaving Portsmouth, they touched the Isle of Wight, to take in gunpowder, and then steamed off across the mighty waste of waters. The first night Fletcher had no sleep, and was on deck early the next morning, watching the waves roll in majestic splendour against and over the noble vessel, as she sped onward with her living freight. When he had been three days at sea, he was taken with sea-sickness, and was very ill for about a fortnight: so bad was he that he wanted some of his comrades to throw him overboard. Then he wished he had his loving mother to attend to him, and get him what he needed; for though he was so ill there was nothing but salt fat pork or beef to eat. However, he got well and strong

again, and his appetite returned, but he was afraid to eat the meat as it was very salt, and the allowance of fresh water was so small.

None but those who have felt the want of water as Fletcher did at that time, can know the value of it; and none but those who have felt what it is to thirst for the water of life, know the blessing of it when received into the heart. May every reader have the happy assurance that he has within him, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John 4, 14.

By the time they had been to sea four weeks, the soldiers were very dirty, for they had to wash in salt water, consequently they could not keep themselves clean. One day they were inspected, and several were ordered pack drill because they were dirty, although the men did not have sufficient fresh water to drink, let alone to wash in.

About this time, the sea being calm, the soldiers thought they would like to swim as the weather was very hot; so when one of them was ready, his comrades put a rope round his waist and let him down into the water. After having his turn, they were about to pull him up again, when the rope slipped, and he began to drift away. The cry of "Man overboard" was soon echoed over the deck, and the vessel having been stopped, a boat was lowered, and several strong arms were soon pulling away to rescue the man from a watery grave. Fletcher got up to the yard-arms, to see whether he was picked up, and being seen there by the captain, was marked for two hours pack drill per day. At last the boat overtook the swimmer, he was taken in, and soon brought safely on deck. He was put in irons, and shortly afterwards tried by a court-marshal; he was sentenced to receive 25 lashes,

and was at once tied up to the triangle. When the word was given, the flogging commenced, and when the poor fellow was taken down, covered with his own blood, he fainted away. His back was afterwards bathed with brine, and his cries and groans were heart rending. Fletcher was quite horrified at the sight, and observed to a comrade that he would be the death of some of them if he was treated in such a manner.

After a pleasant voyage, they arrived safely at the port of Varna, in Turkey; and Fletcher was heartily glad at the prospect of soon setting foot on terra firma again.

CHAPTER V.

Leaves Varna—Has an attack of cholera—The quarrel—Union is strength—A fatiguing march—Bad rations—Arrives at Monastir—Forbidden fruit—Another attack of cholera—Flogging: its horrors—His own danger—A friend in need—The doctor's advice—Returns to Varna—An unpleasant journey—His sentence—Starts to the Crimea—Bad quarters—His mother's letter—The soldier's last arrangement—March towards Alma—Taken by surprise—A skirmish—Thinks of home—The night before the battle.

After lying in the harbour for two days, they were ordered to go on shore, and soon felt that they were in a strange country. They waited on the beach for a short time, and having partaken of some refreshment, the bugle sounded to "fall in," and they were marched a few miles up the country, the band preceding them playing "The Campbell's are coming." When they

halted, they pitched their tents, and remained there until further orders were given. At this time, Fletcher had an attack of cholera, but soon recovered, and was able to resume his duties.

The first Saturday night after their arrival, Fletcher was much annoyed by an old soldier, who jeered him as he was young in the service, telling him that he had no business there, pushed him about, and insulted him in other ways. Fletcher returned evil for evil, the result was that he was challenged to fight, which he accepted. On Sunday morning a ring was formed, and the two men fought until the sergeant was sent for, when they desisted. How dreadful to contemplate, that men who were in an enemy's land for the purpose of fighting a common foe, should have disgraced themselves at such a time, when one would think they would be knit together in brotherly love, knowing not how soon they would be called into action, and see each other cut down by the hand of ruthless enemies.

And is it not often the case in christian churches, where union of effort is wanted to storm the citadel of our common foe; that party feeling and prejudices are allowed to creep in, and not only hinder the pulling down of the strongholds of sin and Satan, in an aggressive warfare, but retard the progress of God's work, and give our adversary the devil opportunity to increase his kingdom?

The following Monday afternoon, the tents were unpitched, and they were ordered to march further up the country. The march was a very fatiguing one, especially for those who, like Fletcher, were young in the service, for the route lay over a soft sandy desert: many poor fellows fell out of the ranks and fainted,

and some died on the way. That day there were no rations for them after the march, though they were nearly famished. The following day some dark bread was served out to them, which tasted like linseed meal, and though the men were faint for want of food, they could scarcely eat it.

After a few days of heavy marching, they arrived at Monastir, situated in the midst of a beautiful and fruitful country, where the regiments were staying that the drafts had to join. The soldiers were kept very strict, orders having been issued that no one was to eat any of the fruit which abounded in the locality, for fear of cholera; and policemen or guards were appointed to watch lest the orders should be disobeyed. Notwithstanding that 25 or 50 lashes would be given to any one found eating the fruit, yet Fletcher resolved to get some, for which purpose he set out at 4 o'clock every morning for some time, taking a tin with him, and having filled it with the best fruit he could find, returned and boiled it down to make jam of, which he ate with his bread, instead of the meat that was served out to them, which was nearly black when it was taken out of the kettle.

Fletcher having eaten the forbidden fruit for some weeks, was at length taken with a very bad attack of cholera, and carried by four men to the doctor's tent; he was much swollen, and was constantly rubbed by two of his comrades for about three hours, when the swelling began to disappear. Shortly after he was taken in, another poor fellow was carried there also, with the same complaint; he was much worse than Fletcher, and when they laid him down, the doctor gave him something, but he was too far gone, and while he was dying, he called out for his poor mother. His

companion in sickness laughed at him, though he was in great pain, and was apparently near death. Fletcher was, however, through the mercy of a long-suffering God, again spared, while his companion was cut off, we trust not, however, as a "cumberer of the ground."

When they had been at Monestere for several weeks, orders were issued that they were to prepare to march back to Varna. Fletcher with many others were glad of the news, as they were tired of pitching and unpitching the tents, digging trenches, and other heavy work, which many had to do when they were so ill that they could scarcely walk about.

About this time Fletcher witnessed another of those exhibitions which are a disgrace to the British army: a comrade having drunk to freely while on guard, was put into irons, and shortly afterwards tried by a court-marshal, and sentenced to 50 lashes. The following day the regiment was ordered out in church parade, in order to witness the horrible sight. When the men were formed, the triangle was brought out and fastened to a large tree, and the prisoner strapped to it. The doctor was standing near; when the drum beat, the colonel said to the drummer, "Do your duty:" and as the dismal one—two—three sounded amid the awful silence, and the blood ran down the poor man, a shudder seemed to run through those who were the unwilling spectators of that awful sight. He was taken down, and saltpetre rubbed on his back, and then taken to the hospital.

Fletcher was happily saved from a similar punishment shortly afterwards, through the kindness of a sergeant. Shortly after starting from Monestere, he told the sergeant that he could see the masts of the vessels lying in the harbour of Varna, and on being

told that he could not, he bet five shillings that he could; he lost the wager, and was vexed with himself for being so foolish. He then went to the canteen, and bought a bottle of port wine and one of brandy, which he and the sergeant drank between them; he then went back and had his cag filled with brandy. When he returned to the camp the men were all in full marching order, so the sergeant with whom he had been drinking, told two of the men to help Fletcher dress, but he would not let them, and said they could send him to the guard room if they liked; and though the sergeant tried all he could to persuade him to go quietly into the ranks and answer his name, telling him he would be sure to get 50, as they were under orders to march the next day; yet he would not be advised. By this time the bugle sounded to fall in, and as he could not, the sergeant ordered two men to take him to the guard room. When he got in he fell on his face, and laid until he was sober. The next morning, the sergeant went to him for some water, as he knew that he had a cag full the day before; and when Fletcher gave him the cag he found that it was nearly full of brandy. He then told Fletcher that he did not know what to do to save him from being flogged, but advised him to make an excuse, and he would do the best he could for him.

The bugle shortly afterwards sounded to fall in, and though he was a prisoner he had to fall in with the rest; the weather was very hot, and they had 14 miles to march that day over the hot sands; he felt very sick and ill, and did not know what to do. He then went to the doctor and told him how bad he felt; he was examined, and a message sent to the captain to the effect that he was unfit to march that day. The

captain said that he believed it was through him getting drunk the night before ; however, he was ordered to get on the waggon, and rode most of the way. The journey was anything but a pleasant one to him, for he fully expected that he should be flogged for his misconduct, as soon as they got to their journey's end.

On arriving at Varna, Fletcher was ordered to go before the captain, to answer for having got drunk. The sergeant in his evidence, did all he could to get him off, and no doubt was the means of lightening the punishment. The captain ordered him seven days confinement, during which time he was not to be allowed to speak ; and to have his hair cut off close, which he felt to be the greatest punishment.

The vessels were lying in the harbour which were to convey them to the Crimea, and they were soon all on board ready to be conveyed to the scene of strife. While lying in the harbour, a young man was sleeping on the side of one of the vessels, and when the relief guard came up, the sergeant shouted "Sentry go;" he jumped up in a fright, rolled into the sea, and was drowned.

Early one beautiful morning, about a week after, the vessels left the harbour, for Russia, and arrived safely in the course of fourteen days, at the place where they were to land. This was found to be a great difficulty, as the coast was very hilly, and they could not tell whether the enemy was entrenched behind them or not. It rained very hard all that day, but however, after some time, they were safely landed, and then they had to march some distance up to the knee in wet grass. When that part of the country had been well reconnoitred, they laid down until the following morning. During the day the tents were received

from Varna, and they had to pitch and unpitch them each day they remained there.

On the 19th day of September, 1854, having been there ten days, Fletcher received a letter from his mother, and just as he had commenced reading it, the sergeant looked into the tent, and said that all were to be ready in heavy marching order by 2 o'clock. He read it through, and while so doing, felt deeply penitent for having treated his dear old praying mother so cruelly; she had not forgotten her son, and had constantly borne him up at the throne of grace—and had again written to him, entreating him to look to the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He answered her letter, bidding her an affectionate farewell, asking her to pray for him, and to pray in faith, and telling her to remember him to any enquiring friends, as he did not expect to return to England again, for he was soon going into action. Alluding to this time, when preaching in the Free Church, Hackney, Fletcher said: “When we expected shortly to go into action, I gave a comrade my mother’s address, so that he could let her know if I was shot; and my comrade gave me his address in case he was shot, and several others did the same. While in action my comrade was shot dead, and I took the news to his home; but bless the Lord for His mercy, He spared my life, though it was His will that I should loose my hand in the conflict.”

At the appointed time, the bugle sounded to fall in, and the word of command having been given, they marched on towards Alma. Having gone about ten miles, they halted for refreshment; and when they had piled arms, and some had taken off their accoutrements, which they put with their fire-locks, many of them went to look at a large barn to the left of the line,

which the Russians had set fire to. While they were thus straggling about, the Cossacks came down on them, and had it not been that the artillery was ready to receive them, many of the 23rd would have been cut off before they could have formed. Referring to this skirmish, Fletcher says, "Some of us ran one way, and some another, I did not know where to find my gun, so took the first I could get, and as soon as we were ready, we opened fire on them, and drove them back. We then formed a line, piled our arms, and laid down to rest ourselves, ready for the conflict that awaited us. At a distance, I could see the fires upon the hills, where the Russians were making strong batteries; and as I laid upon the grass I thought of days gone by; the moon was shining brightly, and the stars glittered in the heavens, everything was quiet except the tolling of a bell, which reminded me of the days when I listened to the village bells while sitting by the fireside of my dear mother's home. I then began to weep, and in my grief said—'Mother, mother, speak to your poor lost son'—and I listened, but no sound could I hear; and soon after fell asleep."

How many slept that night for the last time, before they slept in death! Doubtless, many were the tears shed—many were the heavy hearts, when thinking of the loved ones at home—many were the prayers which ascended to the Majesty on high—and can we not hope with confidence, that the angels in heaven rejoiced over many poor wandering erring sons of Adam, who found salvation there? May He who is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind, ever watch over England's brave defenders, until the time when war shall be no more, and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," Isa. 11, 9.

CHAPTER VI.

The morning of the battle—Order of advance—The 23rd charge—The vineyard—Thinks of home—A warning—Engagement on the heights—A blunder—Is wounded—The hospital tent—Morning after the battle—Scenes on the battle field—Peace and war soldiers—The amputation—Saved again—Scutari hospital—Where are the doctors?—Hospital scenes—Miss Nightingale—A dying christian—This world and the next—The sailor's testimony—The Turk—Leaves Scutari—Malta—The nation's blot—In trouble again—Homeward bound—Arrives at Liverpool.

On the morning of the 20th September, Fletcher awoke about four o'clock; little bees were humming about, and a lark was soaring high, making the morning glad with its melody. This made him think of home again; and the seeds which his mother had sown in his heart, seem to have begun to spring up afresh on that memorable morning. He prayed to God, but could get no rest for his troubled soul, the language of his heart was :

“Could I but read my title clear,
To mansions in the skies,
I'd bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.”

And though he could not then have his desire, yet he resolved to leave his life entirely in the hands of the Lord.

At an early hour the bugle sounded, and every man was soon ready; many being anxious to meet the foe. The 23rd were ordered to extend out on their right, and advance towards the heights of Alma, which were very steep, so that in order to make the ascent

they had to cross and recross, advancing as they had opportunity, and occasionally lying down. The French were on their right, and the rifles in advance up the hill, and the artillery and cavalry flanking them.

The Russians had set the village of Alma on fire, and being on the heights above the allied armies, had a great advantage over them, especially as the smoke hid them in a great measure from our soldiers view. As soon as the 23rd had got a position, they were ordered to open fire, and a scene of carnage was soon beheld. On! on they advanced! with that steady firmness known to be characteristic to the British troops: then there was a pause—they had entered a vineyard, and though the shot and shell flew about like hail-stones, many stopped to refresh themselves with the beautiful grapes that were growing there. Just then a comrade was carried past with one of his legs off; and while Fletcher and another comrade were eating some grapes, his comrade was shot dead by his side. Fletcher seeing his danger, cried "O, God, help me," and as he advanced, he poured out his soul to God in prayer, asking forgiveness for his past sins, but still could find no rest.

They then had to ford a stream on narrow river on their way, and when they got to the side, Colonel Chester, a very gallant officer, and valiant leader, rode his horse through, and waving his sword, cried, "Come on, my brave 23rd Fusiliers, follow me like men, it is not deep here," and they passed safely through, though the Russians had made large holes in different places, for the purpose of drowning those who should attempt to ford it. The colonel then rode to the summit of the hill, and was instantly shot dead,

having received 11 balls. His company were close behind him, having mounted the hill with a British cheer, and the enemy at once retreated, so they had but little difficulty to gain the heights.

Fletcher was then for some time in the thickest of the fight, and though many brave comrades were shot down about him, yet up to that time he escaped uninjured. After several hours hard fighting, the command "Fusiliers retire," was given. The 23rd had lost many men, and they thought that they were to retire, and the Fusilier Guards to advance. But by some mistake the Guards retired also; and as the Russians noticed it they rallied, and came down on the retiring forces, and made sad havoc among our men, though they bravely stood their ground. After firing several rounds, Fletcher was in the act of biting a cartridge, and holding his rifle by the muzzle with his left hand, when he felt his piece fall from his hand, and could not tell for a few moments why it was, but soon noticed the blood pouring from his wrist and his hand nearly off; he soon fainted away, and laid there until he recovered, when there being no assistance at hand he tore part of his shirt off and wrapped it round the wounded arm. When sufficiently recovered, he made his way back towards the river, which he forded, but had great difficulty in getting up the embankment, on account of his wound. At last he reached the hospital, where he had to stay until the next day before his turn came to have his wound dressed, as there were so many wounded to be attended to.

On the following morning he felt better, though his arm was in great pain, and he thought he should like to see the place where the battle was fought the day

before, so he stole out from the hospital and went as fast as he could to the fatal spot. There he recognised many whom he had known, and some he knew had left wives in England. He looked cautiously round, in case a wounded Russian should be there who would shoot him, but all was quiet; and he then looked about for something to take to England with him. On noticing a Russian near him, he took off his boots and put them on his own feet, and left his by him; but when he had collected a few things, he began to feel very ill through the pain in his arm, so thinking that he probably should never get home again, he left the things where he had found them.

Fletcher then heard some one groaning at a distance, and on going to the place, found it to be one of the 7th Fusiliers, who had lost a leg, and was also shot through the shoulder. He went for two men, who carried him to the hospital, but before he arrived there he was dead. Just as he was returning to the hospital, he met a comrade who had taken two Russians prisoners; he asked Fletcher whether he would like to see them, but he replied that he had seen quite enough of them. "Well," said Fletcher, "what do you think of the battle field, Frank?" "Ah," he replied, "it is not like being at Winchester; soldiering is all very well in time of peace, but not much pleasure in war:" he then added, "I see you have got it Fletcher." "Oh, yes," he said, "I have been winged, and rather expect I shall loose my hand, for it is only hanging by a small piece. I suppose you heard that our friend the drummer, was killed?" "What drummer do you mean?" asked Frank, "Why, that one that flogged the young chap as we came over." "Oh, him, why you don't mean to say that he is killed?" "Yes, I do,

he lies over the hill yonder, if you would like to see him, I'll go and show you where he is." "No, thank you, I saw enough of him when he was alive." The two comrades then parted and have never met again.

Fletcher then returned to the hospital, and shortly after, the doctor called him and examined his wound. He said that the arm must come off: upon which Fletcher told him that he could do what he liked with it as he did not expect to live. The doctor then requested him to sit with his back to one of the supports of the tent, and proceeded to amputate the arm, assisted by three other surgeons. As he was very weak he only had a little chloroform given him, so that he had to endure the pain without being put into an unconscious state. While the bone was being cut through he thought he would have died, but as the operation was performed very quickly, he soon began to feel better.

We here insert part of Gerald Massey's beautiful poem of "ALMA," extracted from his poetical works:

"OUR old War-banners on the wind
 Were dancing merrily o'er them;
 The hope of half the world behind—
 The sullen foe before them!
 They trod their march of battle, bold
 As death devoted freemen;
 Like those Three Hundred Greeks of old,
 Or Rome's immortal Three Men.
 Ah, Victory! joyful Victory!
 Like Love, thou bringest sorrow;
 But, O! for such an hour with thee,
 Who could not die to-morrow?"

"Brave Hearts, with noble feelings flust,
 In ripe and ruddy riot
 But Yesterday! how are ye husht
 Beneath the smile of Quiet!"

For us they poured their blood like wine,
 From life's ripe gather'd clusters;
 And far thro' History's night shall shine
 Their deeds with starry lustres.
 Ah, Victory! joyful Victory!
 Like Love, thou bringest sorrow;
 But, O! for such an hour with thee,
 Who could not die to-morrow?

“Yes, there they lie 'neath Alma's sod,
 On pillows dark and gory,—
 As brave a host as ever trod
 Old England's fields of glory.
 With head to home and face to sky,
 And feet the tyrant spurning,
 So grand they look, so proud they lie,
 We weep for glorious yearning.
 Ah, Victory! joyful Victory!
 Like Love, thou bringest sorrow;
 But, O! for such an hour with thee,
 Who could not die to-morrow?”

“The spirits of our fathers still
 Stand up in battle by us;
 And, in our need, on Alma's hill,
 The Lord of Hosts was nigh us.
 Let joy or sorrow brim our cup,
 'Tis an exultant story,
 How England's Chosen Ones went up
 Red Alma's hill to glory.
 Ah, Victory! joyful Victory!
 Like Love, thou bringest sorrow;
 But O! for such an hour with thee,
 Who could not die to-morrow?”

Shortly after the arm was amputated, Fletcher had another of those suicidal desires take possession of him; why we cannot determine, unless it was caused by the excessive weakness of physical power, or the pain he was suffering; but God in mercy spared the erring one, and though on the brink of hell, His arm

again saved the wanderer. Fletcher took the chloroform sponge and filled it, for the purpose of destroying his life, but he only took sufficient to send himself to sleep, and while lying under the influence, a doctor went to him and roused him, telling him that the vessel was ready to convey the wounded to Scutari. The tent being three miles from the place of embarkation, he had to be carried on a stretcher, and then hauled up to the deck of the vessel by a pulley.

On Thursday, the 21st day of September, the vessel left for Scutari, and arrived there on Sunday, the 24th. Just as they were entering the harbour, the vessel struck on a rock, but all were ultimately safely landed, and those who were unable to walk, were carried to the hospital. Fletcher felt very comfortable there, as he had a good bed to lie on; but as there were so many wounded to attend to, and the number of doctors was small, there appeared no chance to have his arm attended to. He waited until the following Friday, when, seeing large maggots crawl from the bandage, he was afraid it would mortify, so he went in search of a doctor. When he found one, he was told that there was a doctor to attend to the ward that he belonged to: but on Fletcher showing him the state his arm was in, he dressed it for him. He then returned to his ward, and did not have his arm attended to for four more days: but as he was soon able to attend to it himself, it gradually got better.

During the time Fletcher was at Scutari, he saw some dreadful scenes, such as no pen can describe. The groans and cries of the poor unattended sufferers were heart-rending, and sometimes three or four poor fellows died in one night, near his bed. Frequently about 50 were buried in a single day. These scenes of

suffering are better felt than described; how many poor creatures passed from time into eternity, in that place, with no one to minister to them in their dying moments—no wife or friend to smooth their pillow or hear a dying wish—and, alas, no one to point them to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.

Shortly before Fletcher left, Miss Nightingale arrived, and then the poor wounded men were better tended; not only were their temporal wants attended to, but many a heavy heart was lightened of its load of sin, through the instruction of this pious and devoted lady. Fletcher has many pleasing recollections of her visits to him during the short time he remained after her arrival: he says she seemed like a mother to him. All honour to such noble, self-defying, open-hearted christians, may the Lord raise up many more like-minded, that the sorrows and sufferings of fallen humanity may be alleviated by the consolation which can only be afforded through the christian ministrations of such devoted followers of the Lord Jesus, as Miss Nightingale and her co-workers.

During the time Fletcher was in the hospital, a comrade belonging to the 44th regiment, took him to see a poor man who had his lower jaw shot away: he was a christian man, and Fletcher was greatly surprised at his resignation, for though he was suffering excruciating pain, yet he was so calm, and was always either reading God's word, or praying to his heavenly Father. He had left a wife and four children in England, and never will he meet them again until the day of judgment. After lingering some days, he was called away to be

“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”

One day Fletcher was talking to one of the guards who laid on a bed near him, when his comrade made the remark that he did not think we should suffer in the next world, as we had to suffer so much in this. A sailor who had lost his leg on a man of war, hearing the remark, said, "I hope you are right, Harry, then it will be well with me, but I cannot think as you do, for my Bible tells me that the wicked shall be turned into hell; and if that book be true there is a heaven and a hell. My father often used to speak about heaven as a place of rest and joy, and I hope I shall get there." Harry, replied, "Why, Tom, you talk like a madman, you are getting quite a methodist, but I suppose the missionary has been talking to you." The sailor then told Fletcher, that his mother died when he was 16 years old, and his father, who was a christian man, died when he was 19, and being an only son, he was left quite alone in the world: he afterwards went to sea, and lost his leg during the war. He then asked Fletcher whether he could read, as he wanted him to read to him. The conversation then turned upon their parents, and Fletcher told him that he had a good old mother who did not neglect him although he had neglected her. Fletcher then asked him how he liked Miss Nightingale? He replied, "Oh, she is a dear lady, she has been praying and reading with me, and I hope she will soon come again, for she makes me think of my dear mother; I often knelt with her while she prayed: how do you like her, Bill?" "Oh, I like her very well," said he, "but I don't care about her talking to me." The young man died the day before Fletcher left Scutari, and there was hope in his death, for he died trusting in the all-sufficient atonement and the finished work of Christ.

Shortly before Fletcher left Scutari, he was in danger of being seriously injured through the absurd veneration which Turks have respecting vermin. He was sitting on the grass, one fine day, close to a Turk, who had been an inmate of the hospital, when he noticed one of those lively little insects which sometimes trouble us during the summer months hop from the Turk on to him: he at once caught it and killed it, when to his surprise, the clouds gathered on his companion's countenance, and as he saw him feeling for his knife, he got up to get out of his way, and just as he turned the corner of the building the Turk threw it at him, and had it hit him, it would most likely have been buried in his body to the hilt, for they can throw with such precision.

May the time soon come, when the followers of the false prophet (who are now blinded by the superstition and gross darkness which covers the nation) shall turn from their ways of sin and folly, and worship the true and living God.

After having been 48 days at Scutari, Fletcher, with others who were sufficiently recovered to take the voyage, embarked for Malta. They had a very pleasant journey, and arrived quite safe.

Fletcher again got into trouble through the same cause for which he was nearly flogged at Monastir. He had not been at Malta long before he was taken prisoner for getting drunk; for which offence he was taken before the colonel, and ordered seven days' confinement to barracks. Oh, what a stain upon the escutcheon of our nation is the sin of drunkenness! How many thousands of our fellow countrymen are hurried prematurely to the grave through this insatiable vice? How many who once promised fair to be

ornaments to society, have become wrecks mentally and morally, through the delusive cup? How many of England's fairest daughters, who were once happy in the homes of their youth, are now wretched outcasts, and whose first step to ruin was a glass of—"that which biteth like an adder and stingeth like a serpent?" Drunkenness! the GREAT sin of England, the one sin that heralds so many more. The sin that has robbed the church of some of its most promising and zealous members, deacons, leaders, and preachers. That has robbed Sunday Schools and Ragged Schools of Teachers. That has robbed the wife of her husband, the husband of his wife; children of their parents—and parents of their children. Oh, christian, do you use your efforts to stem this monster tide of iniquity? Reader, are you among those who are trying to arrest this evil, or do you take your moderate glass? Give it up for the sake of your weaker bretheren! deny yourself this one little gratification. Think of what Christ did for you! Think how He became the man of sorrow, and was acquainted with grief for you; and resolve by God's grace, never to touch, taste, or handle the accursed thing again.

We rejoice that so many in the army are adopting the temperance principle, but are not suprised at it, when the example has been set by such noble-hearted men as General Havelock and others, who have, and some of whom are still serving God, their queen, and their country.

While Fletcher was confined to barracks, at Fort Mourel, he was severely bitten on the back of his right hand, by a large monkey, kept there by some of the artillery, and was obliged to have his arm in a sling, so that he was quite helpless for the time. His hand

was a long time before it got quite well, and he suffered greatly through his drunken freak. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without a cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine," Prov. 23, 29.

He was at Malta for about six weeks, and had it not been for his self-sought affliction, he might have had a pleasant time there, for it is a beautiful place. At the expiration of that time, all the wounded were taken on board a vessel, which soon steamed away towards old England, where so many were anxiously looking for the arrival of the first draft homewards. They had a good passage until they got to the Bay of Biscay, when a gale sprung up, and they had to lash the things to the deck. At another time they were greatly alarmed at 12 o'clock at night, as the vessel came to a stand, and many hurried on deck, in great alarm; but it was found to be only a little accident in the engine room, and they were soon on their way again. At 12 o'clock, one Saturday night, the vessel reached Liverpool, with her freight of wounded and disabled men, who having fought and bled for their country, were now about to be welcomed back to their homes, and end their days in more peaceful occupations.

CHAPTER VII.

Liverpool workhouse—The son's regret—Chatham—The soldier that wouldn't fight—A soldier's trick—Leaves Chatham—London—Starts for home—The "Dog" again—The prodigal's return—"Home from the war"—Goes to London again—Returns to Emswell—Appointed post messenger—Attends chapel—Pleasant company—Gets married—Broken vows—Good works—Conviction—Precious promises—Seeks salvation—An encouragement.

When the vessel arrived at Liverpool, there was no place ready to receive her living freight, consequently they had to remain in the harbour until the following Monday evening, and in the mean time the workhouse, which was the most available place, was fitted up very tastefully, and other arrangements made, in order to give them a hearty welcome when they landed. As the time drew near, thousands assembled on the quay, in order to see the first draft who were "home again" from the war. As soon as they were landed, they were marched through the town, with a great number of people following them: some of whom in order to do the soldiers a kindness, bouget beer and gave them as they were marching. The same evening, several of the men got out of their quarters, and spent the night in drinking, and were afterwards confined in a room until they left the place.

While Fletcher was staying at Liverpool, he got into conversation with a recruiting sergeant, of the 19th regiment, who told him that he had had three brothers, who were soldiers, but that they were all dead, and that his poor mother, who was a christian woman, was dead also, having died of a broken heart,

through the trouble caused by her sons. He also said that he had not treated his mother well, and he felt very sorry for it, for he missed her now that she was gone. Referring to that conversation, Fletcher, says: "I could not bear to hear him talk like that, for I felt what a cruel lad I had been to my dear mother, and not only to her but to others also. The poor man spoke so feelingly about his mother, that I wept and was obliged to leave the room."

After staying at Liverpool a week, they were sent to London, and from there to Chatham, where they had to stay pending arrangements for their discharge or otherwise. While there, Fletcher visited an old soldier who had been bed-ridden for 30 years, through cutting his ham-strings rather than go into action, we presume that he had some strange idea of his own, though not exactly as follows:

"He that fights and runs away,
Lives to fight another day,"

for he preferred not fighting at all, and cut off any chance he might have had of running away.

In February, 1855, during the time Fletcher was at St. Marego barracks, he received an affectionate letter from his mother; she told him that one of his uncles, belonging to the marines, was staying with them on furlough, and named a day when he would call and see him at Chatham; he met him and heard how anxious they were to see him at home. Shortly after, he passed the doctor, and a day was named for him to leave. The day before he left he went to a comrade with whom he had been intimate, and they arranged to have a night's spree together before parting, but as neither had any funds, Fletcher disposed of some articles for 16 shillings, which he put

by until they should want it in the evening. His comrade, who was an "old soldier," planned how they were to get out of the barracks. He said to Fletcher, "When the time comes for you to answer your name, get into bed with all your things on but your boots, and when the sergeant calls 'Fletcher,' sing out 'Here,' and as soon as some of the lights are out, get out of bed and make as though you are going to the rear; take your boots in your hand, and I will meet you at the door."

According to arrangement they met, and Fletcher's comrade helped him over the wall, and then got over himself. They went to one of the public houses in the town, where they remained drinking part of the night, and then slept there until morning. At 8 o'clock they got up and went to barracks, Fletcher feeling very ill through getting drunk the night before. He was afterwards in the hospital for two weeks, and when he came out, he left Chatham for London, where he staid a night at one of his aunt's, and left the following morning for home.

While Fletcher was in the hospital, he conversed with another young man, who was dangerously ill, and whose mind was greatly agitated by the remembrance of his unkind treatment to his parents. He said "O, I know I was the cause of their death, I was their youngest child, I got into bad company, and went on very bad, and then enlisted without saying anything about it until it was too late. And now they are both dead, and I shall never see them again." Fletcher said, "Ah, there are many like you, my lad, we don't see it until it is too late; that has been the case with me. But if ever I see mine again, I'll treat them better." He was much affected by what the

young man said to him, and could scarcely speak; he then left the bedside because he did not want him to see that he was crying. The young man died shortly afterwards, lamenting his past life of ingratitude, and passed away with sorrow on his soul. May such a death bed never be the lot of any of our young readers.

On the evening of the 14th day of February, he arrived at Emswell station, at 8 o'clock, and he then had about four miles to walk; the snow was lying thick on the ground, nevertheless the journey was a pleasant one. When he arrived at Norten, he went into the "Dog," before referred to, where he staid until 12 o'clock, and then started again on his journey.

When he arrived home, he knocked loudly at the door, and the first voice he heard was his sister's, who asked "Who's there?" He replied, "It's your brother come home from the war." She then called her father, telling him that her brother was knocking at the door. His father then called out "Who's there?" to which he replied, "It's your poor son come home from the war." "Wait a minute, my lad," said his father, "I'll soon let you in." Fletcher waited, and when the door was opened, his father, who was very glad to see him, kissed him: he then went up stairs, where he found his mother and sister waiting to see him. They both wept for joy when they embraced him, so glad were they of his return, and all remained up till 3 o'clock, talking of his dangers, and making an answering enquiries on both sides.

The following morning, Fletcher's father, who was now very proud of his son, told all he knew in the village that his son had returned, and the news soon spread that one of the wounded Crimean soldiers was

at Norten. The result was that he soon received several letters from different parts, inviting him to call on gentlemen who felt an interest in the war. Sir H—— B——, who had a son in the 23rd, also sent for him and gave him £1; he also had presents from many others.

He remained at home until April, when having been disappointed in a love affair, he became unsettled, so he packed up his things, and left home again for London.

He only staid there four days, however, as he felt very unsettled, not having as yet any occupation, so he resolved to return. On arriving at Emswell Station, he heard that the situation of post messenger, at Woolpit was vacant. He then went to P—— H——, Esq., who wrote to the General Post Office, London, and got him the appointment; the wages was to be twelve shillings per week.

On the 1st of May, he went his first round, which was about seven miles. He left Woolpit at 7 o'clock every morning, arriving at Felsham at 9.30, where he had to stay until 5 o'clock in the afternoon; he then returned to Woolpit, where he lodged, arriving at 7 o'clock, in time to meet the mail cart.

At this time, Fletcher began to attend chapel regularly on Sundays, and resolved to amend his ways. But his resolutions, made in his own strength, were soon broken, for having to stay at Felsham during the day, with nothing to do, he frequented a skittle ground to pass away the time, and soon became expert at ten pin playing. However, he became acquainted with a family of the name of Pilbrow, and was invited to their house, and as he found the company there more agreeable to him than his skittle companions he soon

made quite a home of it. The reason was, perhaps, that the Misses Pilbrow were an attractive influence, for he soon proposed marriage to Miss Elizabeth, the youngest of them. His offer was accepted, and in the following October they were united together in the bonds of matrimony. They lived happily for a short time only, for he had not left off drinking the drunkard's drink. He neglected his home, spending the money in the ale house, that ought to have been taken home, and the result was that after the first two or three months, they began to lead an unhappy life.

When Fletcher had been married about fifteen months, he was induced to go to a large room to hear Captain Towers preach. While there he recognized several who he knew, and thought they looked very happy, so he said that he should go again.

The following Sunday Mrs. Fletcher went with him, and they continued to attend for a long time. His former companions jeered at him, and one of his new relatives endeavoured to cause an unpleasantness between him and his wife. These things tried him very much, but he had re-resolved to be a better man, and knelt daily in prayer, and often thanked God that he had not told a lie, or been drinking during the day. He was building up a righteousness of his own, which was necessarily to fall either sooner or later. But his own good works could give him no peace, and he could find no rest.

After being in that state for some time, he heard Captain Towers preach again. His subject was one that was just suited to Fletcher's case; he dwelt much on self-righteousness and good works being as filthy rags in the sight of God, and explained that attendance at chapel, morality, giving money to feed the

poor, reading the Bible, and even giving the body to be burned would not profit—unless the soul was washed in the blood of Christ, God's dear Son. After the service, he said to his wife: "I won't go and hear any more of that, for according to what he says, there will be no chance for any one to get to heaven, for he says that we cannot do anything to save ourselves."

His idea of works at that time, were such as are held by thousands at the present time: how frequently do we hear persons boasting of their upright conduct and morality, and imagine there is hope for them, because they are no worse than their neighbours. May the Lord open the eyes of such, that they may see the rottenness of the foundation on which they are building their hopes of heaven.

Notwithstanding that he had said he would go no more to hear of man's inability to save himself, he went again the following Sunday. That day the arrow of conviction was stuck in his heart, and none but the Lord could withdraw it, so as to give him peace. He felt very miserable during the following week, for the Spirit was again striving with him; he thirsted after spiritual knowledge, and read the Bible for the purpose of finding a promise that would give him comfort. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," Matt. 5, 6. O! what a precious promise! Reader, do you desire to know more of the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God? Do you hunger after the bread of life? Is your soul thirsting after the living waters? Blessed be God, the promise is—you *shall* be filled. Or are you seeking salvation, and yet still unsaved? The promise is—"Him that cometh to me, I will in *no wise* cast out," John 6, 37. Then pray

on my brother or my sister ; none ever yet sought the Lord with an earnest desire for salvation, who did not find peace for their troubled souls.

Fletcher at this time seems to have been very anxious about his soul's salvation. The Bible was his constant companion. Referring to that time he says : " Sometimes I opened at the 8th of Romans and read, ' There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit ; ' well I thought, but I am *not* in Christ Jesus, so that can't apply to me. I then opened at the 3rd of John, and read, ' For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, ' that promise always gave me hope, but I could not find that peace of mind that I sought after."

Our Lord teaches a beautiful lesson in the 11th of Luke in order to encourage us in prayer : " I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish, give him a serpent ? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

CHAPTER VIII.

“Peace, be still”—First love—The rural missionary—Persecution—Visits a sick man—Cost of professing Christianity—Temptations—A dark picture—The sliding scale—The stray sheep—Family Jars—Conviction—A dream—“I will arise”—The backslider restored—Profession and possession—Humility—Joins the Brethren—“Watch and pray”—Excommunicated—Comes to London again.

When Fletcher had been in a state of conviction for several weeks, a young man named Ware preached in the chapel that he attended. The preacher took his text from the 5th chapter of the 2nd Book of Kings, and while he who was labouring under his heavy load of sin was listening to the discourse, the Lord spoke peace to his weary soul. Referring to this happy period of his life, he said, “Oh, how I sung—

‘The Lord has pardoned all my sins,
And now to praise Him I’ll begin,
I never praised the Lord before,
But now I’ll praise him evermore.’

Glory be to the precious blood of Jesus Christ, O, what a blessing it is to be one of the Lord’s dear children, many a time have I sung—

‘We won’t go home till morning,
Till daylight doth appear,’

but now, praise the Lord, I can sing—

‘Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus wash’d my sins away;
He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live rejoicing every day;
Happy day! happy day!
When Jesus wash’d my sins away.’”

He was in a very happy state of mind for some time, and like many other zealous converts, he could not keep the blessing to himself, but was constrained by the love of Christ, to

“Tell to sinners all around,
What a dear Saviour he had found.”

Accordingly, during his spare time, he took his Bible and read the word of life to the people in and around the village where he waited for his letter bags, and occasionally preached in the neighbourhood.

He was not long before he found what it was to make an open profession of religion. His late companions said that he had gone out of his mind, and people would call after him, and ridicule him. And his new relatives said that he “ought to know better than go about preaching as he did, for every one was talking about him, and they would soon be ashamed to show their faces out of doors.” This was a great trial to his zeal, for he was very grieved to find that his principal opposition came from his own household. However, he still kept on amid the jeers of sceptics, and the frowns of cold-hearted professors, and was the means, under God, of awaking many to a sense of the awful danger of living in sin. His words now seem to be ringing in our ears—

“Stop, poor sinner, stop and think,
Before you farther go,
Will you sport upon the brink,
Of everlasting woe?”

and imagine we can see the letter carrier, with his rustic congregation listening to his first attempts at preaching Christ to a sin blighted world.

He was once called to visit a sick young man,

named W—— B——, at Felsham. When he entered the room the young man was very pleased to see him. Fletcher said, "Well, my friend, how are you by this time. Is Jesus precious to you on the bed of suffering and pain?"

"I hope He is Fletcher. I thank you for coming."

"Well, do you think that Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, died for you as a poor sinner, for if you believe that, you have peace with God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the precious blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

He then read the 3rd chapter of St. John's Gospel, and prayed with him, and after some suitable conversation left. He did not see the young man again, but has since heard that he recovered, though he was thought to be dying when Fletcher was sent for.

At this time he was greatly tried through the taunting remarks of some of his relatives at Felsham. On the occasion of his visit to the young man, he was tauntingly asked, on his return, by one of them whether "he had converted the young man?" and another burst out laughing when the question was asked. On such occasions he usually went out and walked about; but even that was constrained into something wrong. He was constantly being teased, and if he replied in the least unguarded manner, he was immediately called a hypocrite.

This state of things continued for some time, when he began to yield to the temptations of the enemy, and gradually lost his peace of mind.

It is now our painful duty to record the falling away of our brother; but in the commencement of the present work we stated that we should give both the dark and bright sides, and however unpleasant it may

be, we have a duty to perform. It is not our object to lift up our brother's good qualities, and suppress much of what might be said of him otherwise. We wish to be faithful, for some who may read this book may be similarly situated, and our desire is that they may take courage, and though they may have returned "as a dog to his own vomit, or as a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire," (2 Peter, 2, 22,) go to the fountain that is still open for sin and uncleanness, for there is hope yet—

"Christ receiveth sinners still."

How gradually and imperceptibly do many leave the fold of the Good Shepherd. Fletcher first left off attending a reading meeting; then absented himself from the prayer meeting; and, about this time he commenced standing at the door of the "Bell Inn," talking to the landlord. After conversing at the door a few times, the landlord pressed him "just to step in and set down a bit," and when he had done so, a pint of beer was brought to him, of which he partook. Shortly afterwards, two or three of his old companions went in; they were very glad to see him, and insisted on him drinking with them. He stayed with them for some hours, and when he returned home, an unhappy altercation ensued.

He continued straying further and further from the fold; only attending chapel as a matter of form on the Sabbath; afterwards, not even then. By this time he was completely miserable, and instead of meeting on the Sabbath with those with whom he had often "taken sweet counsel," he wandered about in the fields and woods, feeling conscious that he had sinned against the Lord of grace and glory.

The most unhappy part of his backsliding was caused through a family disagreement, which it is not necessary to detail, for we do not believe that however a person is tempted or tried, that he is justified in giving way to his passions, and inflicting injuries either upon himself or others. We know that all persons, are tempted and tried, and none more so than christians, but we are told that "There hath no temptation taken us but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. 10, 13.

It seems that Mrs. F. was going to Felsham, to accompany some of her friends to Bury St. Edmunds, and he objected to her visit; but, however, it appears that she thought he was not justified in opposing her trip, for she started soon after he left home, and arrived at Felsham first. He was much surprised to meet her when he got there, and on expostulating with her, her friends took the matter up and severely reprimanded him for his unkindness to her. He was very vexed with them and his wife also; so like many others who had once been addicted to drinking, he went to the ale house and drank until he was scarcely able to take care either himself or his letter bags, and stood in danger of imprisonment for neglect of duty.

When evening came and the party returned from Bury, Fletcher was in no mood to receive them, and some unpleasant remarks were made on both sides. Afterwards one of the party threw a stone at him, which knocked out one of his front teeth, and another who was a powerful man, knocked him down and ill-treated him in a brutal manner. During the greater

part of the day he felt and deeply felt his sinful state ; the Spirit's strivings were felt by him even while in a state of semi-intoxication, and he could not quench its influence though he sought to do so. At last, what with his vexed feelings, the drink he had taken, and the consciousness of having brought disgrace on the religion of Christ, he felt utterly wretched, and while nearly mad with his conflicting feelings, he jumped into a pond and had it not been that his dear partner was at hand and ran in to rescue him, the consequences might have proved fatal. He was taken into the house, some medicine was given, and he began to get a little better ; but the matter was very public, and a policeman came to take charge of him, but was induced to leave.

That was a dark day to Fletcher, and doubtless the remembrance of it has often caused him grief. The following day he was frequently unpleasantly reminded of his conduct on the past day, and he felt more and more the heinousness of his sins against the God of Israel. He wished he had never been born, for he felt that his sins were of such a magnitude that he could not consistently ask for pardon. Satan often suggests this mode of reasoning, and endeavours to persuade us that we have sinned too grievously, when he has failed in his design of making us believe that we are not sinners at all, or no worse than the generality of mankind. But, Glory and praise be to our long-suffering God, the blood which cleanseth from all sin, may still be sprinkled in the heart of every backslider who desires to return to the fold !

While in this state of mind, he one night dreamed that he was in hell, suffering excruciating pain, and witnessing the torments of the lost—"where the worm

dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ;” and also, that he was apart with others in a place called “ Backslider’s Hall ;” he thought he could hear the groans and cries of his companions, and then that Satan came to him and he fought with him—and while so doing he awoke, all of a perspiration—and oh, how thankful he was that it was only a dream. Referring to this circumstance, Fletcher says :—“ I got up and walked about in the garden, but was very unhappy, for I felt how I had sinned against God, and brought disgrace on the Lord’s people, and wished that a millstone had been hung round my neck, and I had been cast into the sea rather than it should have occurred. ‘ Oh, Lord hear my cry, Lord forgive me. Blot out my sins and iniquities. Cleanse me and I shall be clean. To whom shall I go but unto Thee? Lord help me!’ I cried, but still the cloud remained.”

After being in this unhappy state of mind for some time, Fletcher met with a christian young man named Cornish, who took him by the hand and endeavoured to lead him on and encourage him in seeking forgiveness for having backsliden from the ways of the Lord. He then went to the young man’s house, and was prayed with and read to, and hope began to dawn on his troubled soul. His friend then induced him to attend chapel again, and very soon was his load of sin removed—then, how exultingly he might have sung :

“ My God is reconciled,
 His pardoning voice I hear,
 He owns me for His child,
 I can no longer fear ;
 With confidence I now draw nigh,
 And Father, Abba, Father, cry.”

Reader—a few words to you before we pass on.

How is it between you and your God? Have you still “the Spirit itself bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?” Romans 8, 16. If you have, then praise and love Him more and more for having, by His grace, enabled you “to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free,” Gal. 5, 1, and “watch and pray—daily—yea, hourly—lest ye enter into temptation,” for “let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall,” 1 Cor. 10, 12. Oh, may we be faithful to the grace given to us, that we may be spared the unhappy consequences and danger arising from returning to the ways of sin and folly.

Or if you have in an unguarded moment listened to the charmer, and lost your evidence of God’s favour, and your own peace of mind: take encouragement from what you have read of our Brother’s unhappy experience, arise, and go once more to your heavenly Father—tell Him how you have sinned, and how you desire to be restored to his favour—and while you are yet a great way off—just resolving to go and cast your burden upon the Saviour—he will welcome you with a kiss of forgiveness, and there shall be joy in heaven on your restoration to the fold.

An individual has been heard to say that he had been blameless for many years—and another, who during a like period had scarcely sinned in thought. Notwithstanding that it is our privilege to attain to great heights of holiness here below, such instances as we have mentioned we believe to be extremely rare; and if the walk and conversation of those who make such statements are somewhat below that of the average of the humble followers of the Lord Jesus, who feel constantly inclined to smite their breast and

say, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," we are not surprised at such statements being looked upon as savouring of the spirit of one of the men who went up into the temple to pray. May He who took the little child and said to His disciples—"except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," (Matt. 11, 3), keep us humble prayerful, and faithful—knowing that if we are "faithful unto death, He will give us a crown of life," Rev. 2, 10.

Mr. Cornish died very suddenly shortly after he had been the means of bringing the wandering sheep to the fold again. This was a great trial to Fletcher, as he loved him very much; which circumstance, coupled with that of a young man dropping down dead about the same time, showed him the necessity of living in a prepared state; so that whenever he should be called hence, he should be found with "his lamp trimmed and his light burning." He accordingly gave himself up to the Lord, resolving in His strength and by His grace, to walk as becometh all who take upon themselves the name of Christians.

He was shortly afterwards baptised, and broke bread with Capt. Towers, living happily by faith in the Son of God. He continued thus, going in and out among the Brethren for the space of two years, and was evidently a changed man—"a new creature" in Christ Jesus—old things had passed away with him, and his old companions could see it. Like others, he had many trials and temptations, but the Lord graciously gave him strength according to his day, and though there were those who said "it would not last long"—he still kept on, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. 12, 2, and

through mercy is still a monument of God's love and longsuffering.

One Christmas evening, his wife being from home, he called in at a neighbour's to spend a few hours. He sat by the fire talking to the other visitors, and afterwards, as two or three were raffleing, he unthinkingly joined them for a few minutes. A relative of his neighbour's wife was a member of the same chapel as Fletcher, and instead of cautioning him of his danger, said nothing to him, but told her sister, who reported the circumstance to Capt. Towers. The result was, that he was brought before the church and excommunicated.

This was a severe trial to him, for though he had certainly done wrong, it was with no wicked intention, but the result of thoughtlessness, which grieved him as much when he recollected himself as it was possible for him to be grieved. The command—"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one," (Gal. 6, 1,) was evidently not attended to in the above instance: but the Lord who can bring good out of evil, made this circumstance the means of extending our brother's usefulness.

He felt he could not be comfortable at Woolpit after being excommunicated, so having made it a matter of prayer, he sold his furniture, and with his dear wife, came to London, resolving to live and die for the Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

Enters the Commissaire Corps—Joins the Brethren at East Street—Goes to Felsham—A Cottage Meeting—First fruits—Visits his home—Preaches at Redgrave—Returns to London—Labours in Locksfields—Locked up for street preaching—A happy prisoner—Southwark Police Court—The plaintiff—A brand plucked from the burning—Preaches in Camden Town, a fair, and Hatcham—A midnight visit—A distressing scene—The rescued family—Little Emma.

Soon after Fletcher arrived in London he joined the Commissaire Corps, in which he remained for about 16 months. He did not immediately join any christian church, but attended the services of different denominations. At last he regularly attended a chapel in East Street, Walworth, belonging to the Brethren, and was very happy there, but though invited to break bread with them, he declined to do so until his wife could join with him. Having experienced the inward peace which religion only can give, he was anxious that his dear partner should be a partaker of similar joys, and daily besought the Lord on her behalf, knowing that—

“It is Jesus that can give,
Sweetest pleasures while we live ;
It is Jesus must supply,
Solid comfort when we die,”

and he soon had the unspeakable happiness of joining the church with his dear partner, who had passed from death to life.

During the time Fletcher was in the Commissaire Corps he frequently preached the Gospel, both in the open air and at different places to which he was

invited. This occasioned him much persecution from his comrades, and at last the captain was informed of it. He then told Fletcher that he would have no more of that while he was in the corps, for he did not care if the corps were all Mahometans, so long as they did not get drunk. "Besides," said he, "you have no business to go preaching about, it is only proper for educated persons who have been brought up as ministers, to do so." He then added that if Fletcher was to preach again, he was to send in his clothes.

This was another trial to him, for while in the corps he could support himself and his wife, and labour for the Lord as the Apostle Paul did, without any recompense, save the consciousness of being an instrument in His hands of bringing sinners to the Saviour, and thus glorifying his heavenly Father. He felt that having put his hand to the Gospel plough, he would be sinning to turn back, so rather than deny his Lord who had forgiven him much, and who he desired to serve, he sent in his clothes and left the corps, trusting in his Redeemer to open up another way in order that he might obtain a livelihood.

Having left the corps, Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher made arrangements to visit their parents, and as both were now the saved of the Lord, they determined by His help, that their visit should not be in vain.

They first went to Mrs. F.'s friends at Felsham, where they had a glorious time of it. They made arrangements for a cottage meeting, and gathered many of their relatives, friends and others together in order that they might hear of Him who "came to seek and to save that which was lost." During the meeting several wept who were never known to weep before, on a like occasion. One of Mrs. F.'s sisters and nearly

the whole of another family found peace there. In referring to this meeting, Fletcher says: "While they were crying—I sung

‘There’l be no more sorrow there,
There’l be no more sorrow there,
In heaven above, where all is love,
There’l be no more sorrow there.’

Glory be unto ‘Him who hath washed us from our sins in His own blood;’ He did the work, and to Him be the glory.”

Having staid at Felsham for several days, they went to Redgrave, in Norfolk, where Fletcher’s father and mother were living. He then preached on the common and engaged in mission work during his stay, and the Lord owned and blessed his labours.

Returning home one day, he met two of his old companions, who asked him to go and bowl with them for a pint, for old acquaintance sake. “Oh, yes,” he said, “if you will promise me one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Never mind what it is, will you promise me?”

“Oh, yes, what is it you want?”

“Why, I want you both to kneel down with me, while I ask my heavenly Father whether I may.”

“Oh, we don’t want any of your praying” said one of them, “come along Tom, he’s just like a good many others, but he won’t keep it long:” and away they went. Seven years have passed away, and their prediction is still unfulfilled, and through grace less likely than ever.

Having laboured for the Lord at Redgrave amid many trials and opposition, he returned with his wife to London. He then, in connection with W—— G——, a brother in the Lord, commenced labouring

in Locksfields, Walworth, preaching in a room there, and holding out-door services; and many precious souls were brought to the Lord.

After labouring there for 12 months, he again went to Redgrave, where for the space of six weeks he continued visiting and preaching at all the villages in the neighbourhood. He then returned home, and continued his labours at Locksfields.

Shortly after his return, he was taken to the station house for preaching in the open air one Sunday evening, having been given into custody by a grey-headed publican and sinner.

While the policeman was taking him along, with crowds of people following, he sung—

“Press forward, press forward, the prize is in view,
A crown of bright glory is waiting for you,”

and—

“The Lion of Judah shall break every chain,
And give us the victory again and again.”

When they arrived at the station, a policeman had to make way for them, as so many were round the door, and while Fletcher walked up the steps he sung—

“There’ll be no more sorrow there, &c.”

and as he continued to sing inside, the inspector on duty said, “Come, we want none of that row here.” Fletcher then said—“Now lads, let us look to Almighty God for a blessing on your never dying souls: may God bless and save all here.” “Will you hold your tongue? or you’ll have a staff about your head,” said one of them. “Lord save this man,” replied Fletcher, and commenced singing again. He was then put into a cell, where, like Paul and Silas in

the jail at Philippi, he continued to sing praises to God, for he felt that he was suffering for Jesus' sake, and was not at all uncomfortable in his prison house.

While he was singing—

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains,”

a policeman came to the cell door and said, “If you'll hold your tongue, there are some gentlemen ready to bail you out.” He was then conducted from the cell, and having stood for himself in £2, and two gentlemen for the same amount each, he was set at liberty, being let out at the back way.

The following Monday he appeared at the Southwark Police Court, to answer the charge preferred against him. The plaintiff, who was getting feeble from age, said that Fletcher had annoyed him, by holding services near his house, and collecting a mob of people. When the defendant was asked what he had to say to the charge, he told the magistrate that he had been in the army and had fought for his queen and country, and that he had enlisted in the army of heaven, and as long as he had breath he hoped that he should never be ashamed of Jesus or the cross—

“Ashamed of Jesus, yes I may,
When I've no sins to wash away.”

The magistrate cautioned him, but said that he did not like to punish such men, so discharged him.

Referring to the above and other similar persecutions, Fletcher says: “I have been in many a storm since I enlisted under the banner of the cross; but, blessed be God, he will bring me right through to glory, for I know in whom I have believed, ‘and there-

fore when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory ;' now I have to toil for the bread that perisheth, but then I shall rest for ever and ever in the bosom of his love."

The following letter is another proof of the truth of the beautiful hymn, commencing

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform,"

and is one among many instances of conversion through the zeal of our brother.

Locksfields, September 1st, 1862.

"Dear Mr. Fletcher.—With great pleasure I now write these few lines to you, hoping they will find you much better than when I saw you on Sunday Evening at the Room. I shall ever have to thank God for the time that they locked you up in the station, for I was a very bad drunkard then, and had been drinking all the day that you was taken, and when the two policemen were marching you down South Street, I was lying on a little straw which served as my bed, when I heard a row in the street; I got up and looked out of the window, when I saw hundreds thronging you, and you was preaching. I heard you say, "Prepare to meet thy God;" "Be sure thy sins will find thee out," "for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Then you shouted "Drunkard, how will you do in the swellings of Jordan?" I thought, well he is a rum chap, so down I came and went with the crowd to the station house, listening to you sing, and as bad as I was, I felt that I should like to have paid those chaps out that took you into custody; but I found they did not keep you there long. I went home and went to bed, but could not get any rest, for my conscience haunted me all the night; I had been beating my dear wife, and had turned the children out. I am afraid I shall weary you with my long letter, I will now say that it was the means of bringing in myself and wife, and mother and sisters, we are all now very happy in the Lord. My sister is married to the young man who was brought in the night I was. * * From a poor sinner saved by grace. All glory be to the blood of Christ. G. M.

About this time he preached at Camden Town, where the Lord owned and blessed his labours in the conversion of souls.

He afterwards went to a fair near Rotherhithe, with two or three Brethren, and was used very roughly while unfurling the banner of the cross, but the meeting was kept on until several of the shows closed, by reason of the few visitors they had: 5000 tracts were distributed by the Brethren on that occasion, and we hope that both the word spoken and the silent messages were the means of opening the eyes of some of the blind who attended the fair on that occasion.

Fletcher was afterwards invited to preach at Hatcham, and was taken to a district inhabited chiefly by Roman Catholics. He soon found that the Gospel was not acceptable in that locality, for they threw stones at him, and tried to push him down, and one threatened to kill him if he did not desist speaking. But he kept on although some continued to curse and threaten, and, at the close of the meeting, invited those who were anxious to a room in the neighbourhood, where they could be prayed for. Many availed themselves of that means of grace, and some were seen to weep, though it was not known whether any were converted.

At 12 o'clock the same night, he was sent for to visit a young man: he went at once, and spoke to him of his never dying soul. In the course of conversation, he said, "Suppose everyone believed that Christ died for them, but you, would their believing it, make it any better for you?"

"No."

"Is Jesus Christ now in the grave, or in heaven?"

"In heaven, for the Bible says so."

“If I quote a text, will you believe it?”

“Yes, I will.”

“‘If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.’”

“Yes, I do believe it, Oh, the precious blood of Jesus, I do believe he died for me—

‘That on the cross He shed His blood,
That I might happy be.’”

“That’s right my dear brother, He did shed His blood for you. May He keep you in the right way, until He shall call you unto Himself, that where He is, there you may be also.”

He left the young man very happy, at 2 o’clock in the morning, and returned home to rest, with that inward peace which passeth human understanding, experienced by those who faithfully labour for the Lord.

One Saturday night, Fletcher and a brother in the Lord, named B——, went to visit a destitute family in Locksfields. They were shown into a dirty little room at the end of a dark passage, where they saw a poor broken-hearted man sitting on the floor in the front of the fire, with an infant in his arms, and a little child standing by his side. On looking round the room, Fletcher saw a girl lying on some straw in a corner, who was evidently dangerously ill. There was no furniture of any sort in the place, and altogether it was a pitiable sight. In answer to a question, the man said that he had just lost his wife, and was left with five children, and was out of work. He also said that while he was out one day, seeking employment, his landlord took all his goods for rent. The poor man wept, and the visitors wept—such a scene they

seldom witnessed, though used to visit the homes of suffering and want. Fletcher spoke to the sick girl about Jesus her Saviour; and asked the man whether he would not like to meet his dear wife again? He clasped his hands, and wept bitterly, and said, "Yes, I should, but there is no chance for me, as I have been such a bad man, it was through me that she died, she died from want, what shall I do? Oh, if I could but see her once more. Oh, pray for me dear Sir." Both prayed for him, and then directed him to the Saviour. Fletcher then told him that Jesus was both able and willing to save *him*—that he had saved Mary Magdeline, Saul of Tarsus, and many other vile sinners, including himself, and that what the Lord had done for him He could do for any one else. When they were about to leave, Br. B—— put 2/6 into Fletcher's hand for the poor man, so that his immediate wants were supplied.

Fletcher visited him again the following morning, and he attended the services that day, and seemed already quite changed, though he confessed that he had made up his mind to shoot the landlord for taking his things and leaving him without anything to cover his children with. Through the kindness of some friends, who were appealed to by Fletcher, on behalf of the family, they were taken from their miserable abode to a better room, clothing was made for the children, and a little furniture purchased. On the following Sunday the whole of the family were at the meeting together: the man wept, but it was for joy and gladness. "Surely," said he, "my sorrow is turned into joy." Through mercy, the man was enabled to provide for his family after a short time, and up to the time Fletcher left Locksfields he had

lived consistently, and his children grew up respectable, and lived in the fear of God.

While visiting in Locksfields, one day, Fletcher called to see a little orphan, named Emma, who was dying. Since her parents death she had lived with her grandmother, who received a small allowance from the parish. The child had attended the chapel at Locksfields, and had there learnt about Him who said to His disciples—"Suffer little children to come unto Me," and now that she was about to pass away, was joyfully looking forward to the time when she should see her Saviour face to face. Fletcher asked her whether she was as happy as she was when at the chapel? "Oh, yes Sir," she replied, "I am happier, for I now know more about Jesus than I did. He is in this room, ain't He? and He can see me and you and grandmother, can't He?"

"Who do you love most, God, or grandmother, or me?"

"I love God best, for he gave Jesus Christ to die for me, because I was a sinner."

* * * *

"Oh, Sir, pray that I may not get well again, and that I may soon see Jesus, and pray that grandmother will not fret after me."

Fletcher prayed for her, and after having ministered a little to their temporal wants, (for he found out that neither of them had had any food that day) he left, promising to see them again soon.

Three days after, a message was sent to Fletcher, that Emma was dying; he went directly, and found the little sufferer lying with her hands clasped on her bosom, and her face beautifully pale, with an expression of faith and joy. When he entered the room, she

looked up at him and said—"Oh, Mr. Fletcher, I shall soon be like the angels in heaven, I am so happy." He then asked her if she should like to die? To which she replied, "Yes, Sir, for there will not be any pain in heaven." As she grew weaker he only spoke to her at intervals, but every reply showed that she was ready and anxious to meet her Lord. Fletcher sat with her little hands in his until she quietly passed away, and then spoke words of consolation to the grandmother, who was quite heart-broken. He prayed with her and directed her to Jesus, her little girl's Saviour, and left praising God that another jewel was added to the Redeemer's crown.

We shall conclude the present chapter with the following letter, which Fletcher received after leaving Locksfields :—

Oxford Street, September 20, 1862.

"All glory be to God.—My Dear Mr. Fletcher.—I have not heard from you for a long time, therefore I thought I would write to you, for I shall ever have to thank God that I heard you at East Lane, Walworth—never shall I forget that night, you spoke from this, "The Lord be with you." That night you spoke about a young man that dropped down dead at Woolpit, who had a good praying father and mother. Oh, how I cried to hear that, and you came and spoke to me, and prayed with me for a long time; at last I was saved. I am now speaking in the open air with a few others. On Sunday last we were pelted with mud and stones, but none of us were hurt, Bless the Lord! for He is as you once said, a wall of fire round us. * * May He bless you and yours for ever, is the prayer of yours in Christ Jesus,

H. Y.

CHAPTER X.

Mission work in Suffolk—The eleventh hour—A sandy foundation—Execution of the five pirates at Newgate—The Gospel in a police station—Smithfield—Visits some Whitechapel lodging houses—Bread cast upon the waters.

While in Suffolk, Fletcher was sent for to visit a man at Bradfield, named R—L—. After conversing for a short time, Fletcher said—“What about your soul, should you be taken out of time into eternity?” “Well, I don’t think I shall die yet. I have done all the good I could since I was a child, I have never robbed anyone—” “Stop, there is one you have robbed all your life time—the Son of the living God—did not your sins bring Him from heaven, His dwelling place? was He not robbed of His glory that He had with His Father before the world was? Do you believe that if you were to die to day, heaven would be your home?”

“I hope it will be mine before long Sir.”

* * * *

“Oh, Sir, I feel I have been such a bad sinner.”

“Well, the greater the sinner, the greater the Saviour, for ‘He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”

“Do you think then Sir, that Jesus died for *me*?”

“Yes, if you are a sinner.”

“Well, I know I am a sinner, but how can I know I am a child of God?”

“Because the Lord Jesus Christ saith, ‘He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.’”

“Well, I do believe that, and I believe that Jesus died for me.”

After some more conversation and prayer, Fletcher left him, and heard soon afterwards that he had died with a good hope, through grace, leaving a wife and young family to lament their loss.

Shortly after, he met an old man coming from a funeral at Woolpit, who remarked that death was a very solemn thing; he had just been to see poor R—D— put under ground, who was no older than he was. “Well,” said Fletcher, “suppose you should be the next, what about your soul, are you prepared to meet your God?”

“Well, I have attended church for the last 56 years; you see I have got my prayer book now, I have always done the best I could.”

“If you have done it yourself, I hope you have made a good job of it, for it is to last for eternity.”

“Well, I hope if I keep the ten commandments I shall go to heaven.”

“If you get there that way, I cannot, for I broke them long ago, and therefore cannot keep whole that which I have broken, and God says, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’ Gal. 3, 10. Have you never broken any?”

“Oh, yes, I have broken some of them.” “Then,” said Fletcher, “you are guilty of all, and must die.” He then spoke to him of the atonement made by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and exhorted him to trust in His finished work for salvation, and also repeated a beautiful hymn. The old man acknowledged that he had been in error, and while the tears ran down his furrowed cheeks, he exclaimed—“It is

enough, glory, glory for ever, I am saved, Jesus died for me.”

“Then you are happy my friend, glory be to God for His mercy—

‘I laid *my* sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God,
He bears them all and frees *us*,
From the accursed load.’

You can never make an atonement for your past sins, not even by perfect present obedience; nothing will satisfy God but the blood of His dear Son.”

Fletcher called on him soon after, and found him very happy, trusting in the finished work of Christ. He was, however, in the course of a few weeks, taken very ill and confined to his bed. Fletcher visited him as soon as he heard of it, and when he entered the room, the sick man said, “God bless you man for your love to me, I am so glad to see you; pray with me that the Lord may be with me while going through.”

“Through where?”

“Through the river of death.”

“Have you any fear of death?”

“Oh, no, I ain’t afraid, for love casteth out all fear; but I want to have more patience, to wait till my heavenly Father calls me.”

They prayed, and an answer of peace came down, for the dying man’s pillow was smoothed—

“Jesus can make the bed of death,
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

He fell asleep in Jesus, after a few weeks patient suffering, and is now where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” Rev. 21, 4.

Fletcher being in London at the time, he arranged to attend the execution of the five pirates at Newgate, who had committed murder on the high seas. He had preached at three or four executions before, so knew something of the work in which he was about to engage. He arrived there on Sunday afternoon, at four o'clock, with another young man, and had just commenced singing:

“Pity, Lord, those wretched creatures,
Those for whom the Saviour died,
Groaning 'neath their heavy burden,
Throbbing hearts and heaving sighs,”

when a policeman ordered them away. Fletcher told the people he was obliged to go, and commenced walking about distributing tracts, and speaking to the people about their eternal welfare, telling them that though those five poor men's time was drawing to a close, some might be present who would be in eternity before them. The policeman went to him again and told him to go and preach somewhere else, or he would lock him up. Fletcher told him that he wanted to give out the tracts, and he could not hinder him, and that he could speak in the streets as well as he could; and continued giving them away. At last the policeman took hold of him by the collar, and dragged him along towards the station through the place where many martyrs had suffered for the truth, as if he had stolen something.

As he was being taken there he sang and praised God; some hundreds of people following them, wondering what was the matter.

When they arrived at the station house, Fletcher was put into a small dock; he had no room to kneel down, so while standing up, said, “Let us pray,” and

continued praying for the policemen while they were swearing at him. He then sung—

“For the Lion of Judah shall break every chain,
And give us the victory again and again,”

and afterwards prayed again.

The inspector said, “Now then, will you hold your row, and give us your name and address; if not, we shall have to put you down into the dark cell.”

“Well, if you do, you will have to put me out again. Praise the Lord! I am not in the dark caverns of hell, am I? And as for being here for Christ, it is no disgrace to me or anyone else.”

“*What is your name?*”

“William Fletcher, of 16, Spa Road, Bermondsey.”

“Do you think you are in your right mind, kicking up all this row in the streets?”

“I had better make a row here, than have you men crying out when you are lost, that if I had warned you you would not have been where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. I will warn you all here this afternoon, that if you die where you are you will be eternally lost. Salvation through the precious blood of Jesus; he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned. Oh, may God bless you all, is my prayer. Lord save these men.” He then sung again.

“Will you hold your noise?” said one of the men, “for we want to get a little rest this evening, for we have to be out in the Old Bailey all the night.”

“And so have I, for I want to go and tell poor sinners about the love of Christ; Glory be to God, He died for me and for you. Do you believe it? if so, you are saved; if not, you will be lost if you die in the state you are in.”

“What ever did you bring that mad fellow in here for? We had better put him down drunk.”

Fletcher then prayed to God again, to stay the man's hand from writing a lie against His child, and then sang—

“Here o'er the earth, as a stranger I roam,” &c.

They had evidently had enough of their prisoner and were anxious to get rid of him again. The inspector ordered him to be discharged; telling him that he was not to go near the place of execution any more. Fletcher then opened his Bible and read Acts 4, 19, and told him that he could not promise any such thing, as he had brought 6000 tracts, and he wanted to give them away before he went to the City Theatre in the evening. “Well,” said the inspector, “we don't want to keep him here, we cannot do anything with him; he would only be shouting all night, and the men want to get a little rest. Well, we'll let you go this time,”

“Just as you like, it's all the same to me.”

“Well, you may go.”

“Will you accept of a few tracts?”

“Oh, yes,” said they, and Fletcher gave them all one each, and then went home to have his tea.

After tea he went to the City of London Theatre, where Revival services were being held, and then returned home to rest for a short time before going to the Old Bailey.

The following morning, Fletcher arose about 2 o'clock, and after having read a part of the 3rd chapter of John, and prayed for the five condemned men, he started to the place of execution, where he arrived at 2.35. Although at such an early hour, the weather cold, and snow falling, thousands had collected together

in order to get a good place to see five fellow creatures launched out of time into eternity. We pray that the day will soon dawn when such debasing sights will be seen no more. We will not stay to describe the scene witnessed by our brother on that occasion, or discuss the question of capital punishment, but we feel confident that all who are not debased in thought and hardened by "evil communications" must abhor such revolting exhibitions, and could only attend for the purpose of arousing the condemned spectators to a sense of their impending doom. Let us pray on, that Christ's kingdom may speedily come, and that everyone who is yet unconverted may be brought under the sound of the Gospel, and lay hold of eternal life.

Fletcher at once commenced distributing tracts, and speaking to those who were about him of the consequences of sin, and of the Sin-bearer: some listened attentively while others mocked, but whether heeded or not, he kept on warning and exhorting until the fatal drop fell, and then, with others who had been "sowing precious seed," left the crowd for the purpose of refreshing their nearly exhausted humanity.

After breakfast they commenced a meeting in Smithfield, which was carried on nearly the whole of the day, and many professed to find peace there.

About a week after, Fletcher was invited to White-chapel, for the purpose of visiting some of the lodging houses there. Having obtained admission into one of them, he commenced singing—

"I'm a pilgrim and a stranger,
Rough and thorny is the road,
Often in the midst of danger,
But it leads to God,"

when the landlady insisted on the visitors departing.

They were obliged to comply, so gave each inmate a tract, and obtained admission into another one where they were better received. As there were many tramps and others there, Fletcher felt his heart yearn towards them, and spoke at some length. He told them that many a time he had been as they then were, and asked whether any were there with no food to eat, and no money to pay for their lodging, if so, asked them to tell him, as he could feel for them, for he had often been similarly situated in George Yard. One poor widow sat there weeping, and somebody told Fletcher that she had neither food nor money, so he gave her 1/6. After speaking for some time, he asked them to kneel down while he prayed; they did so, and the Spirit's power was present, for when he rose from his knees, three or four poor creatures were weeping on account of their sins. He spoke to one poor man who seemed as if his heart would break; he was some time before he could answer, and then told Fletcher that he heard him preach at the Old Bailey, the day he was locked up, and that he had been unhappy ever since. He also said that he had a good mother and father, but did not like to go home again as he had treated them badly. Fletcher again urged him to trust in Jesus, and pointed out the way sinners should go to Christ: the man was under deep conviction, and with several others listened attentively to all that was said. Fletcher then invited them to the Gospel Hall; four at once consented to accompany him, and during the evening, the one who had been under conviction, found peace through the merits of a crucified Saviour.

CHAPTER XI.

Labours in Sheffield—Fallow ground—"Christ and Him crucified"—Way-side sowing—Leaves Sheffield—Invited back—Haymarket fair—"Precious fruit"—A converted drunkard—The undaunted one—Forbearance—The re-union—An old convert—Invited to Halifax—Important testimony—The Missionaries and their helper—"Just in time"—Leaves Sheffield.

In the month of March, 1864, Fletcher had a call to labour in Sheffield, shortly after the dreadful flood, which caused such sorrow throughout the land. He arrived in the town with only three shillings in his pocket, but feeling the assurance that he was about his Master's business, by his Master's will, he trusted in Him to support and sustain him while sojourning among strangers for the purpose of preaching the Gospel.

After walking about some time, he got comfortable lodgings, and having rested and refreshed himself, he went out to find a place where he could speak for the Lord. He first went to the Haymarket, but as there was a wax work exhibition there, with a brass band playing, he found he must seek a place elsewhere; he then asked a young man whether he could show him a place that would do for open air preaching, and was directed to a place where services were occasionally held.

He commenced the meeting by singing—

"Come to the Saviour; come to the Saviour,
Thou sin-stricken offspring of man,
He left His throne above,
To reveal His wondrous love,
And to open a fountain for sin."

While singing the first two verses, two or three hundred Irish people collected together, who by their gestures seemed determined to oppose him. One man shook his fist in Fletcher's face, and asked him what about the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ? To which he replied that he had not come to speak of her, but of Him who taketh away the sins of the world, for, said he—" 'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' Acts 4, 12, and if you are trusting in the Virgin Mary you will be lost;" at which they were greatly exasperated, and continually threatened him. He told them that his religion was a religion of love, and spoke of God's love to the world in giving Jesus to die for fallen man. He then said, "Neither the Pope, priest, or Virgin Mary can save you, but the precious blood of Christ can; I believe in Christ,

'I'm happy in Jesus, and cannot forbear,
Though sinners despise me, His love I'll declare,
His love overwhelms me, had I wings I would fly
To yonder bright mountains prepared on high.'

By this time a large concourse of people had gathered together. He continued to address them, though his life was threatened, and some of the Irish kept up a continual howl. Several seemed disposed to argue with him, but he told them that he was not there to argue, but to preach Christ and Him crucified. Having spoken of seeing Christ by the eye of faith, one man kept pressing him to tell what sort of a person He was. Fletcher replied, "I will tell what sort of a person He was, and what He now is:—He was the man of sorrows, He became the poor despised one for you and for me, that through His poverty you and I might be made rich. 'He was wounded for our trans-

gressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.' But though He was the man of sorrows when on earth in order to become our Sin-bearer, now He is adored by the angels in heaven, and crowned with glory and honour, and to Him shall all men bow, both rich and poor." When he concluded he gave away some tracts, and left without being molested, though during the whole time he was speaking he was cursed and threatened by the poor priest-ridden devotees of popery.

When Fletcher left the meeting, he noticed a poor man following him for some distance, so he spoke to him about his soul; he was evidently under deep conviction for he wept in the street, and told him his troubles. Fletcher spoke of Jesus, who called the weary and heavy laden, that they might have rest; and exhorted him to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," at the same time pointing out in a simple manner the way of salvation. Referring to the young man, Fletcher says, "I believe he went home rejoicing that night, and I have seen him several times since, and he was always very happy."

During Fletcher's first stay in Sheffield, which was for about four weeks, he preached every day on the ruins, besides visiting and preaching at the workhouse and other places. Many were the scenes of sorrow he witnessed, and many were the tales of woe he heard from the lips of some who had lost all, save their own life, in the flood. Many thousands who visited the scene of desolation heard of Jesus from the lips of the wounded soldier; may the seed thus sown spring up and bear fruit to God's honour and glory.

Shortly after Fletcher arrived in London, he re-

ceived several letters urging him to return to Sheffield. Among them were two which would have gladdened any Evangelist's heart, even had no other proof of the Lord's call been given him. Those to which we refer were two from the workhouse; one from the men, and the other from the women—each with a number of signatures. The purport of the letters was to thank him for the good he had been doing among the inmates, and to urge him to be at Sheffield again as soon as possible. God had blessed his labours among the dear souls, and they were anxious to have our warm-hearted brother back again.

Having staid in London for two weeks, Fletcher felt that as so many desired his return to Sheffield, and he felt so led of the Lord, that he would return to that field of labour again. He accordingly left London, and arrived safely once more in Sheffield.

— Shortly after Fletcher's arrival in Sheffield, he commenced holding cottage meetings, which he continued to do in addition to preaching in the open air until the Lord graciously opened a fresh field of labour. He then preached in a large School Room, and afterwards in the Temperance Hall, where the power of God was felt, and souls converted.

At this time a fair was held at the Haymarket, and Fletcher preached there each evening. Just after he concluded one evening, a poor man went to him and shook him heartily by the hand, and gave him his address. Instead of waiting to call on him, he at once pointed him to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. The poor man sobbed aloud while he hopelessly said that he thought there was no chance for him as he had been such an awful drunkard, had often beaten his wife, and had sold everything out of his home

that he could. Fletcher told him that he was not too bad for Jesus Christ to save, if he would only believe on His finished work. After exhorting him to repentance and faith, he left him under deep conviction, and prayed that the Lord would graciously reveal Himself to the poor penitent.

One Thursday evening he preached in the open air, near his lodgings, and at the conclusion of the service invited any who were anxious about their eternal welfare to go with him to the house where he resided, and he would speak to and pray with them. Many went home with him, and during the meeting several wept tears of repentance, and some tears of joy, among them was the poor man who spoke to him at the Haymarket fair. This man, who had been a notorious drunkard, with a soldier and one of the women also, signed the pledge at that little meeting.

Early the following morning, Fletcher was called down to see a visitor; when he went into the sitting room, he found the man who had found peace the night before, sitting with his face covered with his hands. He asked him what was the matter, but the poor fellow was so broken-hearted that he could not speak for some minutes. At last he said, "Oh, Sir, what shall I do? I have treated my poor dear wife so bad, and she has left me. I wish you would go with me to her father's and try to persuade her to come back, she will listen to you better than she will to me." At first Fletcher scarcely knew what to do in the matter, but after having read a chapter in the Ephesians, and asked the Lord's guidance, he consented, and at 9 o'clock went with his guide to assist in removing another sorrow from his heart.

When they arrived at their destination, Fletcher

spoke to the man's mother-in-law ; at first she would not listen to him, but flew into a passion, saying that if her husband was to catch them there he would "kick them both out." He told her that he wished to see her daughter, and that he had come for the purpose of making peace between her and her husband ; that he knew the man was altered in character and was sorry for having treated his wife so cruelly, and that he promised to treat her kindly if she would live with him again. "Ah, he has often made such promises as that," she said. "Well, mam," said Fletcher, "shall I read a chapter in God's word ?" "Yes, if you like," she replied.

He then read a part of Matt. 5 and 6, and prayed ; but nothing seemed to move her. The poor man then knelt down and asked her to forgive him, but she refused. Fletcher then said that he should not be surprised to hear shortly that she had been faken by death, for having been so unforgiving. At which she burst into tears and said she would forgive him. They both thanked her, and then went into the farm to find the wife. While looking about and enquiring for her, the man's father-in-law saw him, and when he knew the errand upon which he and Fletcher had come he swore at them in a dreadful manner. Fletcher endeavoured to calm him, but the more he tried, the more the old man swore at him, and wished him in hell several times, and also threatened to kill him. But he who had stood before the Russians' bayonets, and was then trusting in his Saviour for protection, did not fear what man could do unto him. He told the old man that if he swore like that he would be lost, which seemed to exasperate him more ; and he ran at Fletcher with a knife and threatened to "rip

him up." The old man then said — "If that black-guard comes near me, I'll kill him, and if his wife lives with him again, I'll throw her into the river." Fletcher told him that he could not move a step without the Lord gave him strength. The old man muttered a reply, and as they were passing down a narrow lane, with a ditch on either side, on their way to the field where his daughter worked, he threw Fletcher down three times, and tried to push him into the ditch. The third time he knelt and prayed for the man, and warned him of living in the sinful state in which he then was.

Shortly after, Fletcher saw the young woman, and entreated her to return to her husband; and the man begged her to forgive him for his cruelty towards her, but she swore at them both, and asked Fletcher why he had brought her husband there to trouble her? He told her that he had come to make peace between them, and her husband was very sorry for what he had done, but that he knew he would treat her better if she would try him again. The old man then returned, and swore dreadfully while Fletcher again warned him of his danger. They then left Fletcher and his friend, but when the young woman saw that her father had gone about his work, she returned to them, and two other women came and tried to persuade her to return to her husband.

After a long consideration she consented, and her husband promised Fletcher that he would treat her kindly, for, said he, "the Lord has pardoned all my sins, and now I shall be happy, and I know that what the Lord has done for me He can do for my wife." He then asked Fletcher to pray for her, and told him that whenever he was in Sheffield, to be sure and call

to see them. Thus was the faith and perseverance of our brother blessed by the Lord, and the poor drunkard reclaimed, made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and his wife restored to him: may the Lord keep him, and may his partner be the saved of the Lord, if she is not already so, that both may serve Him here below, and then praise Him throughout the countless ages of eternity in the upper and better world.

While preaching one day during the time the fair was held in the Haymarket, an old woman pushed through the crowd, and said, "Are you Mr. Fletcher?" "I am," he replied.

"The Lord bless you, then, don't you know me?"

"No, where have I seen you?"

"Why, sir, it was you that pointed me to the Saviour, and bless the Lord, I'm happy now. Do come and see my poor husband; he fell down paralysed, I'm afraid he'll die, I'm so glad I've found you."

Fletcher visited the man soon after, and found him very dark respecting spiritual things. He acknowledged that he was a sinner, but seemed to think that there was no hope of salvation for him. Fletcher then explained the reason why Christ came into the world, and God's willingness, for His sake, to have mercy on sinners. A ray of hope then enlightened his mind, and he said, "I hope God will have mercy on me by and by." Fletcher told him that his by and by would soon be ended, showed him the necessity of present salvation, and told him that it was only necessary to trust in what Christ had done, and leave the matter entirely in His hands, for when He died on the cross to save sinners, He said, "It is finished," and left nothing for man to do, but to believe in His finished work for salvation.

He then read a psalm and engaged in prayer, and while so doing, both the old people wept. When he had concluded, he asked the afflicted man whether he could then trust in Christ for salvation? He replied, "Yes, sir, I can."

"But, should you be called into eternity, what then?"

"Well, I should go to heaven, because Jesus died, and I believe He died for me!"

His wife then clasped her hands, and shouted, "Glory, glory, glory be to God! for now we shall both live for ever." "God bless you, Mr. Fletcher," said the man "if we never meet again on earth, we'll meet in heaven."

The poor woman said she was very sorry to hear that he was soon to leave Sheffield, and told him she had a son in the army for whom she was continually praying, and asked Fletcher to pray for him also. He bade them farewell, commending them both to God's care.

Since the preceding was in type, we have received the following testimony from Mr. H—, of Sheffield:—

"The Sheffield flood with all its vast calamities was not a calamity to all. It is true that whilst the waters rushed into many a happy home and made a wreck of all they had, and in numbers of cases took some of the family, without a moment's notice, into eternity, yet in hundreds of other cases the calamity was made a blessing. Hard hearts were softened: they felt eternity to be nearer than they had even done before, and when the flood of Gospel light went through Sheffield shortly after this terrible event, hearts that had never before been refreshed by the living water were thirsting for it. It was at such a time as this, that William

Fletcher visited Sheffield. The Lord had prepared a way for him, the soil was ready for the seed, and it was enough that he should sow it broadcast and then wait the harvest—the harvest when the angels will be the reapers. Hundreds gathered around him to listen to the message of mercy which he proclaimed to perishing sinners. On these occasions it was plain that the Spirit was working in the hearts of the people. Many rejoiced in the knowledge of Him who had purchased them with His life's blood. During his short stay he had frequently visited the workhouse, and spoken to the aged and young gathered there, of the kind loving Friend that they had in the better land. They would have him go again and again, so much did they like him. He left Sheffield after a stay of a few weeks, and had not been in London long before he received a memorial signed by eighty of the inmates of the workhouse again to visit them. It was made a matter of prayer by his London friends as to whether it was the Lord's will that he should go. It was decided that it was. Again he visited the scene of his former labours to renew the good work that he had begun. This time the workhouse had less of his presence than before: the town Missionaries, educated men, were willing to hold their peace while the "uneducated soldier" took their places. He went with them to the cottages where they held their meetings. In some cases the meeting was made up of the missionaries, the man and his wife and one or two neighbours. It was at one of these he refused to speak: he wanted to know to whom he had to speak. They were all children of God that were there, and he wanted some sinners, and then he would speak. He said "set me a night apart and I will fill the house."

He was true to his word: when the night came he did fill the house. He visited the people round about the place, left tracts, and gave them a hearty invitation to go. The night was rich in blessing: he spoke with power. The house was crowded, and there is reason to believe that in that small place the angels of heaven saw such a scene that made them rejoice. He would go into some of the principal thoroughfares and take his stand beside the pumps, often used for such purposes, and all alone, his loud, strong stentorian voice would soon gather a multitude of people to listen to him.

“On one of these occasions a man, who stood close to Fletcher, said in his hearing, “snatch his watch,” the signal for a *melée*. Many a man, in such a fix, would have buttoned his coat to keep out dishonest hands, but not so with Fletcher: he threw his coat wide open; unbarred the place where lay his watch, and said, ‘that if it was the will of his heavenly Father that they should have it they could take it, but if not, they could not lay a finger upon it.’ Did they offer to take it? No! Like a true hero he fought for his great Captain who had promised never to leave and never to forsake him. The victory was his. The Irish, who would fain have left their marks upon his body, saw in him such heroism that took them aback, and they let him go in peace. Had he crushed the bold determined spirit that dwells within him, he would, doubtless, have met the same fate as others have done in similar circumstances.

“As soon as the Sheffielders became familiar with Fletcher’s face they did not hesitate to ask him to visit the abodes of the sick and those that were appointed unto death. In one of these cases he stood

by the bed-side of an old man who could not possibly live long by reason of his age. He had long been a member of the Methodist body. Fletcher did not take it for granted that he was a true child of God until he had questioned him. He saw that the man was filled with doubts and fears, that all his hopes were delusions; therefore they could give the man no real peace, or the least assurance of an entrance into the mansions Jesus has gone to prepare. He placed Jesus before him as his Saviour. Pointed out to him the efficacy of His blood. He told the poor man how the heart of the Saviour yearned to have even such as him, though in the eleventh hour, to be His disciple. Though nature was now weak, and intellect had already begun to fail, yet there was enough left to help that poor deceived sinner to the foot of the cross and there to find peace. A few days after Fletcher paid his first visit, the man was in another world, but not before he had given unmistakeable signs that he loved Jesus and that he knew and felt that Jesus loved him.

“On another occasion he was called in to see a young man, just in the prime of life, close on the threshold of eternity. He read, prayed, and talked to him, but for some time all seemed in vain. The man said that he had been too great a sinner to be saved. But the blood of Jesus, that can save the vilest of the vile, ever Fletcher’s favourite theme, was so placed before him, that infidel as he was, he felt half constrained to try it. Life was dear to him, and he did not like to think of death; but as time rolled on and he felt himself rapidly wasting, getting nearer the terror of all terrors—death, Fletcher’s message of mercy sank deeper and deeper into his heart, until even he could rejoice in the Lamb that was slain from before

the foundation of the world. When the few last moments of his life came he wanted some one to pray with him, and sent a lad whom he knew to fetch Fletcher immediately. He said that in his last sleep he had seen the golden gates of the celestial city, and angels had been with him too. He soon after fell into his long sleep to wake up in immortality.

“Such work as this was by no means his great work. Some of Sheffield’s largest buildings were crowded to hear him. Some how or the other he has a key that opens the heart. In speaking in the Temperance Hall, one Sunday afternoon, he took for his text, “The Master cometh and calleth thee,” which was suggested to him by one of the prayers before the meeting. Before he had been speaking long, tears were seen chasing down the cheeks of strong powerful men, and women in numbers, could not refrain from weeping. All eyes were intently fixed upon him, and remained so until he had finished. In the streets too, when he addressed the working men with their black faces, just leaving their daily toil, might be seen a clear white line from the eye down the cheek as they listened to that better rest so willingly given by the Saviour. He did not care so much about the public speaking as a “good prayer meeting,” as he called it, after the public services. On many of these occasions, seven, twelve, and fifteen would acknowledge themselves on the Lord’s side. It was pleasing to see them follow him from place to place as duty called. Where he had to be next, there they might be seen too. If the shepherd was there the sheep would follow.”

Having laboured in Sheffield for nine weeks, during which time he had been the means, in the hands of the Lord, of winning many souls to Christ, he received an

invitation to labour in Halifax, and having accepted the offer, prepared to return to London in order to rest a few days before commencing his labours at Halifax.

The night before he left Sheffield, he preached in the open air, on some rising ground, in a place where he was well known and greatly respected. As it was expected that he was about to leave, a large number of people was present. He spoke for some length of time with his usual animation, and was very hot when he concluded: a person present noticed it, and kindly lent him a shawl, and insisted on him wrapping it round himself, telling him to be sure and bring it back to her again the next time he came to Sheffield. At the conclusion of the meeting, he sung:

“I will tell you what induced me
 For the better land to start,
 ’Twas the Saviour’s loving-kindness
 Overcame and won my heart.
 When I first commenced my journey,
 Many said “He’ll turn again;”
 But they all have been deceived:
 In the way I still remain.
 I’m a wonder unto many;
 God alone the change hath wrought;
 Here I raise my “Ebenezer,”
 Hither by His help I’m brought.
 Soon to Jordan’s swelling river,
 Like a pilgrim I shall come;
 Then I hope to shout salvation,
 And go singing glory home.”

A friend then asked those of the people who wished Mr. Fletcher well at Halifax, to hold up their hands: when a multitude of hands immediately appeared. He then asked them not to weary him by all wanting

to shake hands with him as he was very tired; but they could not grant that request, and a great number crowded around him to wish him farewell. His friends then found it necessary to take him home in a cab, in order to get away from those who continued to throng him. Many showed their gratitude by presents of various books, and other things, with the wish that they should soon see him again.

The brother before quoted, says: "He left Sheffield with the prayers of many who had been awakened from spiritual death, who had been brought from darkness to light, and who had acknowledged Christ as their Saviour."

CHAPTER XII.

Labours in Halifax—A remarkable statement and its fulfilment—An apology—Letters from converts—Reaping—"New creatures"—The infidel's son—A good helper—"Bread cast on the waters"—Leaves Halifax—Visits Derby.

Fletcher arrived safely in London from Sheffield, where he remained for four days, and then left for Halifax, on Saturday the 4th of June, 1864.

While there, he preached at the Odd Fellow's Hall, which holds about 1600 persons, and was well attended at every service. Many souls were saved there through the instrumentality of the soldier preacher, and we doubt not that when the Lord shall gather His elect from the four winds, that a goodly company will be on His right hand who first learned to lisp the name of Jesus in faith through hearing the Gospel from him in that place.

According to his usual custom, he held open air services while there. While preaching in the street one Monday evening, two drunken men endeavoured to interrupt the meeting; one of them swore awfully at Fletcher. He warned him to flee from the wrath to come, but the more he entreated him the more he swore. Fletcher then took a small memorandum book from his pocket, and addressed the people thus:—
“Dear friends, I feel very solemn just now, for I verily believe that if I am a child of God, that man will be laid on the bed of affliction before 14 days. This is a very serious assertion to make, therefore I hope somebody here will put it down, and if it is not so, I hope you will expose me wherever you go: but such is my impression. I lodge at 2, Bedford Street.”

The following Friday afternoon, one of the men who was present at the meeting, arrived at Fletcher’s lodgings, nearly out of breath, and enquired whether he was at home. When Fletcher went to the door, the man said, “Sir, do you remember preaching on Monday night, when a drunken man was there, who you said would be taken ill before 14 days?”

“Yes, what about him?”

“Well, sir, you must go and see him, for he is very ill, and the doctor says he will not recover, and he has sent for you.”

Fletcher, with another brother, immediately went to see him, and found him dangerously ill. Fletcher spoke to him of his never dying soul, and asked him whether he was prepared to go into the presence of Almighty God? The man shook his head and said, “No, sir, I am not, I hope you will forgive me for treating you as I did.”

“My dear friend, I have nothing to forgive, shall I

read a chapter out of God's word?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

He then read a psalm, and prayed with him; and asked him whether he felt himself to be a sinner, and if he died in his sins that he would be eternally lost?

"Yes, sir, I shall be, for I am such a bad man."

"Well, Christ died for sinners, do you not think that He died for you?"

"I hope so."

"But hope won't do for you, He died for sinners whether you believe it or not; if you believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to die for sinners, and that he died for you, then you shall be saved."

Fletcher then read several precious texts of Scripture, and the poor man grasped the promises. Before Fletcher left, light having been shed on the broken-down sinner's soul by the influence of the Holy Spirit, he professed to find peace through Jesus Christ.

"Oh, how shall such a guilty man,
 Contend with such a God?
 None, none, can meet Him and escape,
 But through Christ's precious blood.
 Hell is darkness, deep, and awful,
 Turn, poor sinner, turn and flee,
 Heaven is light, and bright, and joyful,
 And its light may shine on thee.
 Hell is fire, for ever burning,
 Turn, poor sinner, turn and flee,
 Mercy waits for thy returning,
 With a pardon full and free.
 Now, beware, though judgment linger,
 Turn, poor sinner, turn and flee,
 God may strike thee in His anger,
 Who can then deliver thee?"

On leaving the sick man's chamber, he conversed

with his wife, who told him that her husband was taken ill on Tuesday morning and had gradually got worse. We are unable to say whether he recovered or not, but we hope that if alive he lives unto the Lord, and if dead that he died unto the Lord.

In answer to enquiries, we have received the following account of Mr. Fletcher's labours in Halifax from Mr. Rawlinson, of King Cross, who we believe acted as secretary during the time our brother was there; consequently was in a position to give reliable information:—

“I candidly believe that our brother Fletcher is one of those ‘ramshorns’ which God in His wisdom is making choice of in these days to do the work (God helping him) which many others have failed to accomplish, 1 Cor. 1, 25-28, ‘Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.’”

“Brother Fletcher's natural temperament appears to partake largely of a noble, courageous, and heroic spirit, yet at the same time, blended with benevolence and kindness, he has an oneness of object, which when once he commences to pursue, he appears to leave no stone unturned until he gains the same; these characteristics when wisely governed, we must admit, form

grand traits in a soldier when fighting for his country, but when once such a character is brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, it is then, and only then, we see the true nobility of a man, these prominent characteristics, when sanctified to the service of Jesus our Captain, develope themselves to be admired in such a way, as they could not possibly be under any other captain or monarch. Hence we find by our brother being called to preach the Gospel to the masses, he appears to glory in the pursuit of poor sinners to bring them to Jesus. All his sermons, all his addresses, all his labours, converge in one grand theme; viz., a present, full, and everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ, 'The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' His utterance is quick but easily understood, his illustrations are copious, but very apt and suggestive, his voice is good, and can be heard among thousands. I am fully aware that a man may be possessed of all these personal qualifications, and yet not be useful, but being myself an eyewitness of our brother's labours and usefulness also, in connection with the Oddfellow's Hall Religious Services in Halifax for the space of five or six weeks in succession, and also in various parts of our beloved town; I must say, to the honour and glory of God our Heavenly Father, that his labours have been much owned and blessed of God to many poor sinners, as well as a labourious and pious example to other believers, I am not going to say that all perfections are united in our brother, but with the exception of one or two points, and even those by the grace of God and a little more experience will vanish away; I repeat again my conviction, that he is one of those whom God is making use of, viz., one of the

weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

“During his six week’s sojourn amongst us, I was present at all his public meetings as well as all the cottage meetings. *Rather more than One Hundred names* were registered by myself; during the last *fortnight*, (other labourers were on the ground,) but *previous to that, between seventy and eighty* names were recorded as having professed to find peace in Jesus; amongst whom were rich and poor, learned and illiterate, drunkards, gamblers, adulterers, prostitutes—in fact, all grades of sinners,—‘Not unto us!’ ‘Not unto us!’ but to God be all the glory, and now, after six months, I could easily refer to twenty or thirty of the number, who has been showing to the world living proofs, that they are born again. In one instance, there is the husband and wife who are now consistent members among the Independents; the husband, who was once a drunkard, being a teacher in the Sabbath school, and the wife consistently labouring to bring others to Jesus, and they being changed from the power of Satan unto God, their home is also changed in its appearance, ‘old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new.’

“Another is a case where the younger son of an infidel father sought and found peace. At the outset of his religious career he met with much opposition both from his father, and the master to whom he was apprenticed, but by living consistently as a young disciple of Christ Jesus, under the blessing of God, this has produced a very favourable impression on the father’s mind, so much so that he has purchased his son a beautiful copy of Matthew Henry’s Bible and Commentary, and our young brother may now be seen

daily perusing the word of God, and engaged in tract distribution and other labours to bring glory to God. Another is the case of one whom the Lord has blessed with a larger portion of this world's riches than many of our fellow creatures and who has on several occasions addressed large audiences, on the great redeeming love of Jesus, which audiences, I have witnessed in tears while our brother has thus spoke: this same person has also promised £200 towards building a large hall or room in which to preach the Gospel to the masses in this town, which I doubt not will be accomplished. Many more cases of very great interest might be cited, but I feel sure I have already said sufficient, therefore I would say in conclusion, I heartily wish the blessing of God may attend the labours of our brother, wherever he may be led by the Lord."

We here insert extracts from some of the letters received by our brother while in Halifax:—

“Halifax, July 5th, 1864.

“My dear brother in Christ.—I now take up my pen that I may tell you what a blessed work God has wrought in my soul through you, blessed be God for He has cleansed me from all my sins in the precious blood of my dear Saviour; but it was you dear brother that was the first means of bringing me to feel my sins and to feel my need of a Saviour, and I shall for ever love you for it, for when I came to hear you three weeks ago I did not care about my soul and I took no notice of what my dear sister said, but now I thank the Lord for what He has done for me and that he put it into her mind to speak to you about me, for I was a backslider. Thank God I can now say with the Psalmist that I will praise Him for His loving-kindness and tender mercy, for He has been very merciful to me, for I have been a great sinner both in the sight of God and man, but Oh, how precious is the blood of Jesus. From your true sister in Christ,

E. F.”

“*Halifax, July 8th, 1864.*”

“My dear brother in Christ.—I shall never forget the night when I saw you, when I shed tears. I knew nothing of my soul then, but blessed be God I do now, He is my Shepherd and my guide all day long. May the Lord bless you and your wife wherever you go, and God be with you both, for Christ’s sake. I have got my feet on the rock and I mean to stand. As long as he lends me breath I will sing His praise. Glory to God and the Lamb for ever. From your young convert, M. F.”

“*Halifax, July 8th, 1864.*”

“My dear brother in Christ.—I write to tell you how very thankful I am that you came out for me last Sunday night, for I was very unhappy when I went out, but I thank the Lord for His mercies towards me in that He put it into the heart of my wife to pray for me and to try to persuade me to remain, and now I earnestly pray to God that He will help me in all His ways and whatsoever I do will be to His glory, and I hope to hold fast that which is good. Dear brother, pray for me, and may the Lord bless and reward you both in this world and the next, is the earnest prayer of one that hopes to remain yours for ever, in Christ, J. H.”

“*Halifax, July 8th, 1864.*”

“My dear brother in Christ.—I bless God that ever He sent you into Halifax, for it has been the means of bringing me to Christ, my only Saviour, for I now feel that He has washed away all my sins in His most precious blood on the tree, and that He was the means of softening the heart of my dear husband, that he should feel the need of a Saviour. Blessed be the Lord, He can turn the heart of the vilest sinner if they will only ask Him in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and we thank the Lord that we are both happy in Christ. You know it says in one place in the Bible “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,” and I am sure I had no peace until I knew Him, but now it is all happiness, and I sincerely hope we shall have a good meeting at Sobybrig, next Sunday, and that many poor sinners may be brought to Christ, M. A. H.”

“Halifax, July 8th, 1864.

“My dear brother in Christ.—I bless the Lord for what He has done for me in that he put it into my head to go and hear you up in the Hall: and I hope it will be the means of saving many more. O, how happy I should be if my dear husband was also a follower of the Lamb, and I hope the time will soon come when we shall be travelling together on the road to glory, for I feel that it is such a pleasure to know and love God. By His grace, I intend to go on and I hope soon to have my husband with me; pray for him and God will hear you, from A. T.”

“Halifax, July 9th, 1864.

“Dear brother in Christ.—I am thankful that ever the Lord put in my mind to come and hear you in the Odd Fellow’s Hall. I came there to hear the converted soldier, and by hearing him, instead of mocking him, I found peace in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have been happy ever since. O, that all the world could say:—

‘My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee, all the pleasures of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now,’

and that we might feel that there was a brighter prospect to look forward too, then we could see when we were in the broad road to hell. O, God, give all courage of heart to go on in this good way for Christ’s sake, and grant, O, God, to morrow, that it will be a day of conversion so many a poor lost soul, and make them to say:—

‘My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear,
He owns me for His child,
I can no longer fear.’

O, God, grant that it may be so, Amen.

J. P.”

“Allerton, July 15th, 1864.

“Glory be to God.—My dear brother Fletcher.—It is with pleasure that I take up my pen to write to a man working to save souls; a grand work, a blessed work. May you save many. I shall ever thank God that He ever caused you to come to

Halifax to save me, a sinner; but glory be to God, I am not a sinner now, for my sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb. May you never weary in well doing, but my dear brother in Jesus, put on the whole armour of God and you will be able to withstand the wiles of the wicked one. You are fighting for a glorious crown; glory be to God, it is undefiled and passeth not away. I will fight for one with you. I mean to have His name written on my forehead. How grand it will be when we appear before the great judgment seat and hear the Lord tell us to enter into eternal rest. He is a kind God, is He not brother? To think that I have served Satan 18 years and never done anything for my Maker, but I mean to do so now. Glory be to God, I have left the City of Destruction; I am on the heavenly road, what a grand road it is to travel on. Some have trials and temptations, but I know if I do fall into the Slough of Despond I shall not be left, God is willing and Christ as able as ever to help me out. Eternal salvation is the great end of life: if we lose it we lose the very purpose of our existence. O, God, may we not lose salvation. Pray for me.

‘I am going home to die no more.’

May I meet you soon again, I remain, your brother in Jesus,
R. T.”

“Halifax, August 19th, 1864.

“My dear brother and sister in Christ.—I write these few lines hoping to find you in good health, as it leaves me and my husband at this present time, you will be glad to hear that we still cling to the rock of ages, and I trust that by the help of our God we shall do so to the end. My husband has begun to attend the Sunday school and the chapel also, and when I see him get ready to go I bless God that ever He put in into your heart to come to Halifax to teach poor sinners the way of salvation, for my Father, which is in heaven, through your means has made us quite happy; for now in place of my husband going to the public house, all he thinks of is going to the school and chapel, and I trust to the Lord to keep both us and you also to the end of our days. From your affectionate sister in Christ, M. A. H.”

Writing under date, December 8th, a brother referring to Mr. Fletcher, says:—

“He was energetic during his stay in Halifax, and I believe was instrumental in bringing souls to Christ. Two young people (a man and his wife) joined our Church, at Sion, last week, who refer their conversion to his labours. Yours truly,
E. H.”

Fletcher then preached in a Hall at Sobey Bridge: the Lord was there in great power, and several professed to find peace through believing. On the Sunday afternoon, a love feast was held, which was a time of refreshing to many souls. One poor woman, after sitting quietly a long time, clapped her hands and shouted—“Precious Jesus, precious Jesus.” May those who found the pearl of great price on that occasion, ever be looking unto Jesus, and trust Him when they cannot trace Him.

By invitation, our brother then went to labour in Derby, preaching in the Temperance Hall while there. He staid about 8 days, during which time he laboured with his usual zeal for the conversion of sinners. We subjoin a note from a brother who is better acquainted with the result of his labours there than we are:—

“*Derby, December 31st, 1864.*”

“My dear Sir.—I am happy to say many liked Mr. Fletcher’s visit to Derby, and I believe what he said was blessed to souls. I am not able to refer to any special cases. My brother is an earnest and selfdevoted labourer in the vineyard, and one who will enjoy a bright crown at last. Wishing you every blessing, in the Lord Jesus, I am yours truly,
G. W.”

CHAPTER XIII.

To the Reader—Labours at Norwood—Barnet—Returns to Norwood—Hackney—The execution of Müller—Labours at Edmonton—Conclusion.

Reader.—Have you ever heard a choir of children's sweet voices softly singing in a Sabbath school, or elsewhere—

“Soon will our pilgrimage end here below,
 Soon to the footstool of God we shall go,
 Then, if to Jesus our hearts have been given,
 Joyfully, joyfully, rest we in heaven,”

have you ever thought seriously that *your* pilgrimage may soon *end*? And have you asked yourself the question, “Am I ready to go?”

When we finished the last chapter we went to take tea with a few christian friends, and was rather unceremoniously told of the sudden death of a dear friend and brother in the Lord: one who bid fair to be a bright and shining light—but He who gave hath also taken him away: may those who were connected with him by dearer ties than those of friendship have grace to bear their loss, and submit to the will of Him who doeth all things well. We had just commenced writing the first chapter of this little book when our friend visited us—we spoke to him of the task we had began, the only friend (except Mr. Fletcher) that we told who was writing it. We now commence the last chapter—but where is he now? Need we reply. Reader—our friend was ready to go.—Are you? Do you live with the assurance that to be absent from the body will in your case be only to be present with the Lord? Think before you reply—and may the

Lord of heaven and earth be your hope for time and your joy for eternity.

We must now be very brief, for the book now exceeds the limits originally intended. Many interesting particulars might be recorded of our brother's labours in and near London during the last four months, but we must merely give an outline of the whole.

When Fletcher returned from Derby, he went to labour at Norwood, where he soon became a favourite with many, especially the working part of the population—and the Lord graciously made him a blessing to the people.

He then visited Barnet, where a poor distressed Irishman was converted through hearing him preach in the open air. He remained about two weeks, and then returned to London.

Having had a short rest in London, our brother returned to Norwood, where he remained for four or five weeks. When we heard him at Norwood, it put us in mind of Jonah at Nineveh: Jonah at Nineveh, passed through the City warning its inhabitants of their destruction; so did Fletcher pass through Norwood warning its inhabitants by reciting texts with his strong voice, and exhorting to repentance and faith by precious promises. The common people heard him gladly, and so great was their love for him that they wished him to make his abode amongst them. We received the following from a brother who was in a position to give correct information respecting the results of Fletcher's labours there:—

“ Lower Norwood, October 24th, 1864.

“ Dear brother in Jesus.—I promised you that I would send a little account of what the Lord has done at Lower Norwood

through the instrumentality of our brother Fletcher. There are five cases of genuine conversion, where the dear souls are living in communion with the Lord, and many hopeful ones, which I am watching, but I cannot speak with confidence. And our blessed Lord has used him to stir up His own people in the neighbourhood, and some are now working for Him, who were taking their rest. And he has had open air services at Upper Norwood, where hundreds have been and listened to the Gospel with earnest attention. These are facts, and the names of the converts I can furnish you with if you wish it. Yours truly, in the Lord Jesus,
S. P."

After Fletcher left Norwood, he received several very interesting letters from those who had been blessed by his preaching, also some poetical farewells, and acrostics of no mean merit, which we should have gladly inserted but for want of space.

In November, 1864, Fletcher held five services in the Free Church, Hackney, kindly lent by the Rev. T. Dugard; but as the weather was very unfavourable, the attendance was small; but doubtless, God's own word was blessed there, for He has declared that it "shall not return unto Him void." A man was heard to say—"Ah, he's just the sort of chap I like to hear. Some of these here preachers talk so as you can't understand what they mean; but there's no mistake about him."

Fletcher was present at the execution of the notorious Muller, on November 21st, when a scene took place which showed the tact he has of getting the attention of the most unruly mob. A person who would most likely have been useful elsewhere, had been endeavouring to speak to the crowd, but had been very roughly used, his tracts and Bible having been taken away, and he was being hustled about when Fletcher went to the rescue. With a loud voice he called out to them to desist, and told them he believed

that the half of them would not mind staining their hands with human blood but for fear of the gallows. The men stared with wonder, and some said, It's the soldier, It's the soldier. The mob was quieted, and Fletcher then said—"Come lads, let us sing a song out of my little book." A person present soon sold several Revival Hymn Books, and Fletcher spoke to the people without interruption. A policeman remarked—"That soldier chap always gets plenty to listen to him!" When he was leaving the crowd, a man shook him by the hand and said that he heard him preach at the execution of the five pirates and had not forgotten what he then said.

In December, Fletcher was invited to Edmonton, where he laboured for the Lord about ten days, and his labours was not in vain as the following testifies:—

“Edmonton, January 9th, 1865.

“I believe that God has raised Wm. Fletcher to labour for His glory among the poor and needy, for he has laboured with success during his short stay in our neighbourhood. There are many who ascribe their happiness and peace to the message of good news from his lips. And my earnest prayer is that he may be spared to preach to many more the plan of salvation. I believe he has great love for immortal souls and is anxious to glorify God. I wish him God's blessing. Yours very truly, M. L.”

We conclude this sketch of the Life of William Fletcher, with the earnest desire that every unconverted reader will remember that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,” Heb. 9, 27: and, that “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin,” 1 John, 1, 7.

