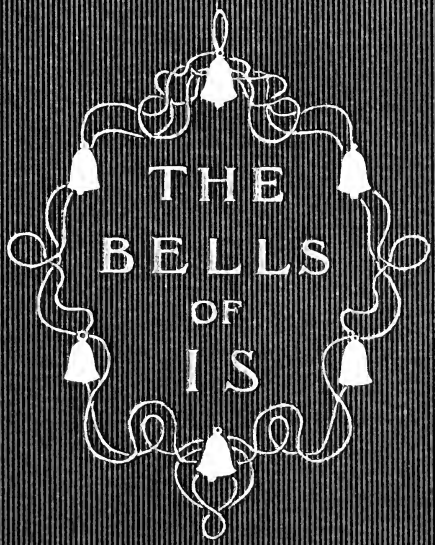
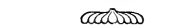


F. B. MEYER

THE BELLS OF IS

Rev. Frederick B. Meyer, B. A.



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THE BELLS OF IS

OR

VOICES OF HUMAN NEED AND SORROW

Echoes from my Early Pastorates

BY

F. B. MEYER, B. A.

AUTHOR OF "JOSHUA: AND THE LAND OF PROMISE," "THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST," "CHRISTIAN LIVING," ETC., ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

ONE of the most popular legends of Brittany is that relating to an imaginary town called Is (pronounced *Iss*), which is supposed to have been swallowed up by the sea at some unknown time. There are several places along the coast which are pointed out as the site of this imaginary city, and the fishermen have many strange tales to tell of it.

According to them the tips of the spires of the churches may be seen in the hollow of the waves when the sea is rough, while during a calm the music of their bells ringing out the hymn appropriate to the day rises above the waters.

Similarly, as it has always seemed to me, amid the submerged masses, deep down at the bottom of the ocean of human life, there are yearnings and desires for a better life, that ring sadly and

perpetually. It has been the aim of my life to listen for these, and where I have detected them, to present the only answer—the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Some of the ways in which I sought to do this during my Leicester life are narrated in this book, which serves to show what may be done in this direction amid the cares of a busy pastorate.

F. B. MEYER.

CONTENTS.

THE BELLS OF IS

A Birthday Reverie

"The Bells of Is are ringing
Far down my heart to-day;
They call me to the memory
Of scenes long passed away—
Of days almost forgotten,
Of feelings long passed by—
Sweet as the scent of flowers
We loved in infancy."

CLIFFORD HARRISON.

WE can never calculate how much we owe to other people. It would be easier to count the threads of the warp which cross and interweave themselves with the woof than to analyze and give due weight to the various influences which, from childhood upwards, have gone to make us what we are. And sometimes one falls into a kind of reverie, halting for a little on the hill of life and looking back or down; remembering the way by which one has been led, and

recalling the many faces and voices, once so familiar, which have faded away, never again to be renewed. Such a reverie often befalls one on the day which, from our earliest childhood, has been invested with sacred memories as the day of birth.

Into some such reverie I fell the other day, traveling back and back. Will it be deemed too great an obtrusion of self if I yield to the kind importunity which insists on placing my portrait in the frontispiece, and demands these broken memories of the past?

It is a great thing to give a child a sunny background to its life; as sunny as possible, so that whatever may be the shadows of after life, it may ever have a corridor of memory, a picture-gallery, into which it may turn for refreshment and stimulus. And how wonderful is that Providence which has ordained that time, which dims the brightest colors that ever left the painter's palette, only suffices to touch the lines of early life into more lasting and vivid beauty.

Happy indeed was the setting of my early life; one of the freshest memories of which seems to be long summer days spent on Clapham Common, when the gorse covered it from side to side, and the bracken grew high enough to hide the slight, childish figure that delighted to throw itself with wild abandonment into its midst. What

would not one give to have days of the same length as those used to be, spent in sailing boats across those mimic seas, or in absorbing games of cricket, as exciting as any that ever drew crowds to Lord's. The deep shade of those spreading chestnuts through the sultry hours of noon; the long drives through Streatham and Dulwich, when those suburbs were uninvaded by the modern terrace or the intersecting railways; my father's home, with its long garden and paddock; and, perhaps more to me than anything else, the house at the end of the long walk, where Macaulay wrote his history, and where my maternal grandparents lived.

It is pleasant, in looking back over the years, to be unable to recall one moment's misunderstanding with those beloved parents, who are now, together with some sweet younger children, in the presence of the King. One long pathway of unclouded sunshine stretches away from the shore of the present over the ocean expanse of the past. It is impossible to be thankful enough to my gentle, lovely mother for the careful drilling in Scripture which was her habit with us all. To this is owing a familiarity with the Bible which has been of inestimable value as the basis of after study. It was her regular practice to gather us around her on each Lord's Day morning for the searching of Bible references, and

for reading books bearing directly on Scripture. And how can we who shared in them ever forget the happy hours each Sunday afternoon, when we gathered around the piano, and sang hymn after hymn; our childish voices gathering strength as they were led and supported by that noble bass voice of my father, which was like an organ in the richness of its tones! It was not what they said, for they spoke very little directly to us; but what they were, and what they expected us to be, that seemed insensibly to form and mold our characters.

My grandfather was a successful city merchant, full of sound common sense; a strong man, who had made for himself a position of influence and honor in the business world. But the light of that home was the saintly lady, whose daily walk has been described, by one who knew her well, as one of close intercourse with God in Christ during nearly fourscore years. Her early life was spent among the Friends, a society which is remarkable for the high and noble character of its women. This early training was never lost on her; it gave a quiet dignity and charm to her character, an independence of outward formularies, a certain strength and spirituality of tone which made her unlike most others. And in her closing years it came back to her with renewed power, when, no longer able to attend the out-

ward ordinances of God's house, she would retire into the temple of the inner life, ever open to all devout souls, and there hold fellowship with God beneath the direct teaching and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

She was not only a woman of great spirituality, but of great strength of intellect. Few could write sweeter poetry than hers, and every event in the history of the great family of children and grandchildren seemed to awake some response from her lyric muse. It was no small privilege for the young lad to be allowed to sit for long hours beside her, as she poured into his heart the noble thoughts which were ever welling up within her soul, and which, especially in the early morning, would be so fresh and vigorous. Besides all this, she had a special faculty of making other people's troubles her own, and of living in their lives; never thinking of self, but ever eager to say or do something to alleviate anxiety, and promote their comfort. In her heart there was a true spark of the enthusiasm of humanity.

Then came school-life. First, the daily trudge along the interminable Acre Lane to the school kept by my excellent relative, Samuel Wilkins, Esq. Then a year or two of tuition by Mr. Peto and his son, in the house which, with its observatory, is so prominent an object on entering Brighton Station, but preëminently the Brighton College.

We were living at Brighton then, having removed for the benefit of my sister's health; my father making the daily journey to London. It was therefore possible for me to sleep at home, and so combine the holy influences of the home with the public spirit, the *esprit de corps*, the inspiration and stimulus of a great public school. At first the tenderly nurtured lad shrank from association with so many strong and boisterous spirits. But ah, how can we overestimate the influence of our public schools in enlarging the mind, in rubbing off ugly corners, in giving a sense of independence and self-reliance to the youth of England? Even now as I write, I recall the excitement of the great cricket matches; the frays with roughs and other schoolboys, with whom we had perpetual feud, culminating in the uproarious proceedings of November 5th; the paper-chases over the downs; the athletic sports, and the prodigious training that preceded them; the postage-stamp fever; the fossil furore; the expeditions with choice spirits over the rocks and along the cliffs when the tide was down; the opening of the chapel and the daily service. Oh, happy, happy days, whose traces will linger ever, as the ripple marks of ocean wave upon the soft marl, which is now stamped with them forever!

But, amid all this boyish life, there was rising up within the heart, like a fountain from un-

known depths, the steady resolve, as yet hardly realized, and never breathed, that the life was to be inspired by the one absorbing purpose of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Among my mother's papers I found recently some early attempts at sermons, and each Sunday night my proclivities found expression in the little service at which the servants attended. The hands that reached down out of heaven, molding men, had already commenced to form a vessel, which in after days He was going in marvelous condescension to use.

When yet about the age of fifteen, my father's losses in business necessitated our leaving the beautiful home in which we lived, and returning to London; but this was perhaps one of the most important factors in my life. It brought out all the lad's self-restraint in order to save needless expense; it took away the temptation to expect from others a deference due rather to wealth than worth; it threw me into close society with my beloved relatives, Mr. and Mrs. George Gladstone, and the cultivated circle which gathered round their home. The beloved Baldwin Brown was for months an occupant of that same house; Dr. Gladstone, with his wide knowledge of the scientific world, and his own researches into the worlds of chemistry and light, and many others, came and went, and opened up new and wider thoughts of the great world around. Those visits

to the meetings of the British Association; those evenings at the concerts of the Sacred Harmonic Society; those talks of books, and experiments, and fossils, and science. How invaluable all these influences! That surely is the true method of education which seeks not to destroy but to fulfill; and which so awakens the interest of the young expanding mind to the beautiful and true, that there is little foothold left for the false and hateful.

At last the choice must be made for the coming life, and there was but one answer from the young heart; but it was yet further tested, under the advice of Dr. Brock, whose ministry we had attended during our former stay at Clapham, and who had not a little to do with giving the first direction toward the formation of the earliest life-purpose in the little boy who sat on the book-box of the great corner pew. And so more than two years were passed in a city counting-house, in sampling tea, in learning book-keeping, and in acquiring habits of punctuality, exact attention to details, and a knowledge of the life of young men. Should any read these words who are contemplating the service of the ministry, let them by all means graduate in the college of city life, and study attentively the great book of human nature. It is impossible to preach to men unless you know men.

But all this time, the one desire of the city clerk was to know the will of God. Biographies were eagerly read, and experiences compared with his own. The mind constantly offered to the Divine Spirit that he would impress it with his will. Repeated conferences were held with the late thoughtful and devoted David Jones, pastor of the church at Streatham, and with younger men. And ever and again the opportunities of public service would be greedily caught at, whether to address the assembled Sunday-school, or to exhort a few old women crowded in some narrow cottage, whose blessings were sweeter than the fragrance of spring flowers to the young evangelist.

At last the probation time was over, and Regent's Park College entered, with inestimable advantage from the accurate scholarship of Dr. Angus, and the course of study prescribed for the graduates of the London University, attending the ministry of Rev. Thomas Jones, and generally preaching once or twice each Lord's Day.

My first charge was at Richmond, Surrey, where, during the latter part of my college course, I reared the church, afterward housed in a permanent building. Then, on leaving college, I was permitted to become the assistant minister of my dearly loved and venerated friend, the late Rev. C. M. Birrell, of Pembroke Chapel, Liver-

pool, whose heart and home were freely opened to me. To have known Mr. Birrell is to have known one of the sweetest, holiest, most catholic, and most cultured men of his time. He was richly endowed by nature in his erect and elegant figure, his intellectual face, with its flashing, expressive eye, and noble expanse of forehead, surmounted by the abundance of raven hair. His preaching was deeply spiritual, full of cultured thought, expressed in polished and classic phrase. But it was in his conversational powers that he was *facile princeps*. It was a rich treat to sit with him in the evening after supper, and let him talk of men he had known, of places he had visited, books he had read, and ceremonials which he had witnessed. Oh, rare and glorious man, will it ever be my lot again to be admitted into thy inner friendship? Surely thou wilt be too much sought after in that world where such as thou art take the first rank among their peers!

Then came the brief, bright pastorate at York, memorable for the visit of D. L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, who began their English tour in 1873 by the series of services held in my chapel. Then I caught a glimpse of a wider, larger life, in which mere denominationalism could have no place, and in which there was but one standard by which to measure men, namely, their devotion to, and knowledge of, the Son of God. Thank God, I

have never receded from that position, and I hope that I never shall. While willing to devote my energies to those with whom my belief on one great subject necessarily allies me, yet I refuse to be a mere denominationalist, and I glory most in being a member of the one Catholic Church, and the brother of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

II.

Melbourne Hall, Leicester

"I have no answer for myself or thee,
Save that I learned beside my mother's knee:
'All is of God, that is, and is to be.
And God is good.' Let this suffice us still,
Resting in child-like trust upon his will,
Who moves to his great ends, unthwarthed by the ill."

WHITTIER.

FROM the beginning of my ministry I had desired to reach the large masses of the people that are outside our churches. My favorite Old Testament passage has for years been that which tells how David made the greatest army of his time from the motley crew that gathered around him in the cave; and I have always desired to raise churches and congregations from those who have revolted, not from Christ, but from Christianity as it is too largely represented to them in the ecclesiastical organizations around us.

This desire was deepened during my pastorate at York, where, as I have said, Messrs. Moody

and Sankey, not then so famous, spent about three weeks with me, preaching those sermons and singing those hymns which were destined within a few months to ring through the world. By one means and another, it dawned on me that the majority of non-churchgoers become so not from antagonism to the gospel, but from dislike to the arrangements which raise barriers to the freedom of their access to our places of worship. The working-classes dislike the pew-system, with its class and money distinctions. They do not care to be beholden to the charity of others, especially if these act as though their yearly payment gave them the same kind of exclusive right to a pew that the house-rent does to a house. Many a man has given up attendance at the house of God because of some slight, intentional or not, received years before. Even where pew-holders are most courteous, and delight to entertain strangers, their very attentions are sometimes embarrassing to the sons of toil.

I had noticed what large crowds gather in public halls and theaters to hear the simple preaching of God's Word; and I often wished that the time might come when I could preach regularly in a building where all the seats were perfectly open and free to all comers, early attendance alone giving a claim to the same position.

On vacating the pulpit of the Victoria Road Church, Leicester, in May, 1878, a number of friends gathered round me and proposed that I should begin preaching to the people in a public hall, the Museum Buildings. Very shortly the place became crowded on Sunday evenings, even to the adjacent room, where people would sit to hear, though they could not see, the speaker. Large numbers also professed conversion, and joined the little church which was formed in order to give us permanence and follow the Scripture precedent. In this church the question of baptism was left to the conscience of each individual; though the pastor practiced the rite of immersion, but altogether independently of questions of church order and discipline.

In about a year it was evident that we should require a permanent building; and a few of us began to pray definitely for guidance. Shortly after, I happened to call on an invalid lady, not directly connected with us, who, as I left her room, put into my hand an envelope, and said that it had been for a long time her desire to give the sum inclosed for the erection of a building for my ministry, and that she had been praying for me to call that very day. On opening it I found a £10 note, and it spoke to me as the land-birds to Columbus, after his weary voyage, when they perched upon the rigging of his ship,

and told him that he was nearing land. To this other friends added the amounts they felt able to give; but they fell so far short of the lowest sum we should require as to test rather severely my weak faith.

One evening, feeling very perplexed about the future, I resolved to devote some time to very special prayer for guidance; but the answer came before I called, for I noticed that a letter had been put under the front door, written by some anonymous friend, whose style and writing indicated great deficiency in education. The writer expressed an eager desire to see the Lord's house built, and inclosed £1. What followed that night is known only to the Great Master and myself; but I felt that I had heard his voice saying to me, "Come unto me on the water." For my part, I was perfectly willing to obey his invitation, though I could see no earthly chances of success. That was the moment of decision; and though many things happened afterward to test my faith, I never hesitated from that time in the belief that I was in the line of the divine purpose.

My friends and I now came to the decision that we would all give as much as we could afford towards the object that we had in hand, and that we should let our needs be known; but that we should take no step towards making a

public canvass for money. I very much question the expediency of collecting money for religious work from those who have no special religious interest; who give because they are pressed to give, or because they do not like to disoblige their friends. We never canvassed for a single penny of all the vast sums we raised for commencing and maintaining the work at Melbourne Hall.

All through the following fortnight the post brought the paper slips, filled in with various amounts, some of them from the very poorest, and all bearing evidence of the efforts and sacrifices that were being made. And it was truly astonishing to find at its close that £1770 had been promised. We were led to select the site on which Melbourne Hall now stands by a very remarkable but divinely guided foresight on the part of two of our committee; for the neighborhood, which is now covered with houses, was only beginning to be laid out. And finally, after many preliminaries, on a cold evening in March, 1880, about three hundred persons gathered to dedicate the ground to God, preparatory to the builder's commencing operations.

While negotiations were proceeding for the completion of the purchase of the land, notices were inserted in the papers, requesting architects to apply for the printed list of specifications as

to our needs and requirements. These were numerous and particular. The building was to seat twelve hundred to thirteen hundred persons. It was not to be too ecclesiastical in style; but to resemble a public hall, that those who were prejudiced against churches and chapels might be attracted. There was to be a large supply of rooms for classes and sectional meetings. Special attention was to be paid to its suitability for seeing and hearing the speaker from all parts. The outside cost was to be £4900. We met daily to pray that some one architect might furnish a design which, in commending itself to the judgment of all, should be evidently God's design for us. This prayer was answered in the unanimity with which we all selected the designs which are now perpetuated in Melbourne Hall. The memorial stones were laid on July 1, 1880, and the opening services held on July 2, 1881. But not a step was taken that did not come before our little daily noon prayer-meeting.

What Melbourne Hall was and is to those of us who watched every brick added to its rising structure, words fail to tell. It is quite unique in its appearance. On winter nights, when it is lighted up, it would seem as though some giant, striding across the country, had for a moment set down his huge lantern at the junction of the four roads, from one of which the building

derives its name. Many a wayfarer is cheered in the stormy night by its gleaming welcome. Then within, the seats are so arranged that the congregation sits densely before the minister. And as it became the custom for it to be crowded, aisles and all, on Sunday nights, two rows of chairs being placed down each aisle, it was, and is, a very imposing spectacle.

One secret of success lay in the constant use we made of the place. Why should noble piles of building, with their attendant class- and reading-rooms, which have been erected at such cost for public service, be lit up and used for but one night a week, while gin-palaces and beer-shops glow in their gaudy splendor without one evening's pause? How can we expect to hold our young people, or our reclaimed workingmen, if we only give them shelter and welcome for two or three hours on Sunday, and leave them to spend all their leisure hours just where they may? Of course it may be answered, "Let them spend their evenings at home;" but you might as well expect a swollen brook to keep its course without spreading over the low-lying fields. The people will have change and recreation at night; and if they cannot get them under the shelter of the Church, many will seek it where they should not. I rejoice that this is increasingly appreciated, and that board schools

are being utilized for the well-being of the neighborhoods in which they are situated. Our advice to all Christian workers is, "Do not spare your coals, and do not study your gas bills." Every shilling spent in firing and lighting comes back a thousandfold in moral and spiritual good. The way to save your young people from inane and injurious entertainments is to secure their coöperation in providing wholesome and spiritual meetings for those who otherwise might drift into questionable surroundings: Mission or Gospel Services; Blue-Ribbon meetings; Saturday evening social gatherings for the tempted and reclaimed; Ambulance Classes; Christian Endeavor meetings, and many other agencies of a similar character, which combine the maximum of benefit with the minimum of peril.

It was with bitter pain and regret that I tore myself away from Melbourne Hall, and it will always live deep down in my heart; but I rejoice to know that it flourishes still, under the pastoral care of my beloved friend, Rev. W. Y. Fullerton, who has succeeded Rev. C. B. Sawday, now of Leeds.

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."

III.

Launching Out

"Whosoever may
Discern true ends here—shall grow pure enough
To love them, brave enough to strive for them,
And strong enough to reach them, though the roads be rough."
E. B. Browning.

"LAUNCH out into the deep," the Master said, when his sermon was done. On the shore stood the eager crowds that had thronged and pressed him. He felt unequal to go among them after the long strain imposed by his miracles and teaching. The calm lake, with its far stretches of tranquil water, in which mountain and sky were reflected, and from across whose surface the light fresh breeze came to fan his face, beckoned him. Besides which, he had probably already heard the story of the unsuccessful night. He knew something of the needs of a fisherman's home. He desired to pay amply for the use of the fishing-boat. And deeper than all there was the urgent necessity to give his fol-

lowers in parabolic form a lesson in catching men.

Peter and the rest had to learn that the way to success in Christian work lay in obedience to the command of Christ, though apparently in collision with the results of human foresight and prudence. No fisherman, of all that plied their craft around that lake, would have dreamed of launching forth at noontide for a haul of fish, knowing well that they would be lying in the deep water beyond the reach of his net. It was, therefore, a searching test of their willingness to obey the word of Christ. Our Lord also wished to teach his Church no longer to hug the shore, or to content herself with a work among the chosen people, and those who had an inclination toward good things; but to go forth where men congregated in the great deeps of human life, and there, even when experience and sagacity were at fault, to obey his command in letting down the gospel net.

Our churches have been too slow in heeding the Master's command. They have been content with their own small circle, the members, the congregation, and the Sunday-schools, with their several coteries; but they have made too few attempts to deal with the great masses which seldom come within our places of worship. These need our care, they are the other sheep

which the Good Shepherd said that he must seek; and they are really more susceptible to the appeals of the gospel than those who have been reared in Christian homes, or within the silver notes of the gospel.

I have sometimes described these reminiscences as "deep-sea fishing." A lecture bearing that title was once widely advertised in London, with the effect of attracting some sailors from the East End, who expected to hear something about their own calling. I am afraid they were a little disappointed when they discovered that my deep sea was not that of the ocean, but the great abyss of human life, with its teeming shoals, its countless multitudes.

These records of my own experiences in this direction are set down in the hope that I may encourage others to launch their fishing-smack, and let down their nets where I have found so much interest and such rich spoils. One main secret of success in church life is the organization of its members and adherents for work among the masses of people. Only our nets should be both mended and clean, that we may be prepared at any time to obey the Master's summons.

I well remember my first walk through Leicester, up its long London Road, passing out from the station, and meeting the long stream of op-

eratives hurrying down the street, from their brief dinner-hour, to the heart of the town, where the factories are situated. And as they passed me in the quick step of their busy life, I could not help saying to myself, "Shall I ever know these people, or understand them, or win their confidence and love?" And recollections arose before me of J. P. Mursell, and Edward Miall, and Nathaniel Haycroft, who had wielded a mighty influence over those same masses, by the force of an eloquence, a genius, a brilliance of thought and diction, a clear-headedness and directness of statement, of which I knew myself to be destitute. And my heart sank within me.

But I had yet to learn that the true way to the heart of a town is open to any man who will use the golden key of kindness, and concentrate his energies to doing those deeds of mercy the opportunity for which lies around each one of us, however small our powers, however circumscribed our sphere.

In the earlier years of my Leicester ministry I failed in finding the path which led to the accomplishment of my cherished purpose. There were many reasons for this; the chief of which, perhaps, was a certain idea of the dignity of the ministerial office, which restrained me from entering freely into the life of the people, and hedged me around with a reserve that hid my

real self. All this, however, in God's own time and way, came to an end when, having resigned my pastorate of Victoria Church, I undertook the work which developed into Melbourne Hall, and from the first was intended to reach those masses of the people who seemed altogether beyond the ordinary means of grace.

It was a little after the commencement of the services in the Museum Buildings that the work at the prison gate began, in the following way. A young girl who attended our services came to me one day in great distress about her father, who was in jail, and likely to come out on the following morning. She wished me to meet him as he was discharged, and do my best to save him from his bad companions, who would be probably waiting for him. This I readily undertook to do; and it was out of this trivial incident that all the work of which I am to write arose. How often it is that, when we are looking for some great work to do, a little child, as in the old legend of St. Christopher, asks us to carry it across the rushing stream; or a tiny act of ministry is required by some servant or neighbor; and this is the rill which broadens, widens, and deepens into the mighty river on which navies float and merchant-vessels pass far up into the land.

On the following morning I left my home at

a quarter to nine, not without considerable misgivings. It was a cold and dreary winter morning; a heavy mist was hanging over the town, and dripping heavily from the bare branches of the trees in the gardens and public walks. At nine I reached the jail, and asked through the grating if a man bearing the given name was about to be discharged. Almost to my relief I discovered that he had been transferred to another prison, and that therefore, so far as he was concerned, my errand was in vain. However, I retired across the road, and waited quietly to see the usual method of discharge.

In a few moments more the little door in the great nail-studded gates opened, and a man stepped out, looking nervously around him, as if anxious about the welcome which he would receive from the world of men, which had been compelled to banish him from its midst. However, he was not left long in doubt; for from the side of the street where I stood an interested spectator, two women sped across the road to greet him, one of whom—the elder—bore a long coat, into which she helped him, enveloping him from head to foot; while the other, slenderer and younger, perhaps wife or sweetheart, encircled his neck in a scarlet cloth, and so the two led him away into the public-house close by, and the door swung heavily behind them. Meanwhile,

another man had emerged from the prison door, but there was no one to welcome him; and apparently not knowing what else to do, he followed in the wake of the others, across the road to the public-house.

I have been credibly informed that the value of the custom of discharged prisoners had greatly enhanced the purchase-money of that public-house; and I cannot but be glad if my efforts did something to lessen the yearly revenue, because so often the whole of a man's good resolutions have been dissipated by a glass of beer, to which he has been treated with the well-intentioned good-will of his companions and friends. And as we shall see presently, the government *mark-money* may be put to better use than to be squandered in a drunken revel at the expense of the man who has earned it by months of industry and good behavior. I have no ill-will against liquor-dealers as a body; but I have learned vehemently to hate the trade, and the facilities which abound so plentifully for the sale of intoxicants. When will the Church of God arouse herself for one great, determined effort to break the thraldom by which myriads are being continually dragged down to perdition?

There were standing near me some men of the lower artisan class, pipe in mouth, either waiting

to go into their shops, or with nothing particular to do. These, too, had eyed the proceedings with a vague interest, and turning to them I said:

"Lads, is this the style of thing that goes on here most mornings?"

"Yes, sir," they said; "mostly."

"But," said I, "if a man comes out at yonder jail door, and goes into the door of the public-house, he appears to me to come out of the jail by the front door and go into it again by the back one; for I reckon that the public-house is the back door to the jail."

"Well," said they, "what's a chap to do? When he comes out of that 'ere place, there's nowhere else for him to go to but the public."

It was perfectly true; and I felt that the time had come when it should be true no longer. So I crossed the road, rang the bell, asked to see the governor, Miles Walker, Esq.—at whose hands from that moment I was to receive the most unwavering kindness and coöperation—and laid before him my request to be permitted to come each morning to escort the discharged prisoners to one of the splendid Leicester coffee-houses, which was within three minutes' walk.

He at once assented to my request, told me that he would put every facility in my way, and invited me to come there within the gates each morning,

that I might learn something of the prisoners with whom I should have to deal. And so I paid my first visit to the place into whose gloomy doors I was to be admitted each morning for several happy following years, as I hope to tell.

IV.

At the Jail Gates

"Now thou mayest give
The famished food, the prisoner liberty,
Light to the darkened mind, to the lost soul
A place in heaven. Take thou the privilege
With solemn gratitude. Speck as thou art
Upon earth's surface, gloriously exult
To be co-worker with the King of Heaven."

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

I SHALL never forget my first morning's work at the jail gate, following on the incident related in the last chapter. I fear that I more than once repented of the promise I had given the governor, and wished that I had never undertaken the cause of the discharged jail-birds. This was not owing to any lack of interest in them, but because of a great nervousness as to the way in which they might treat me; and especially as to the effect it would have on my church and congregation, who might seriously object to the close identification which must naturally ensue between their history and that of the new cause which I had espoused.

Altogether, between my fear of what the discharged prisoners would do to me, and what my own people and the townsfolk would think of me, I had an uncomfortable time of it; and my knees trembled as I went down, almost as much as they did when I stood up to preach my first trial sermon in the little chapel, Moor Street, Seven Dials, before a formidable phalanx of ministers and friends. I had not then learned what it is to be the slave of Jesus Christ—a condition of mind in which one becomes blessedly oblivious to what men may say or do, so long as the light of his approval shines warm and fresh upon the heart.

I cannot remember exactly how many were waiting for discharge when I reached the prison that morning at nine o'clock. It was customary for them to be marshaled in single file along the wall on the left-hand side within the gate, their faces directed away from the gate, and toward the bit of garden, beyond which lay the principal portion of the prison premises. So far as I can recollect there were four or five—and all men. The gate-keeper was the only other person present as I went up to them and made a short speech. It ran somewhat in this strain:

"My lads, I have come to give you an invitation to breakfast. When a man gets out of this place he often goes straight to the public-house, and gets back among his old pals, and they pull

him down. But if you come with me to a coffee-house, which is a step down the road, I will see that you have a good breakfast, and will do what I can to give you a fresh start."

They all turned and scrutinized me narrowly from head to foot, and seemed in doubt as to what to make of me; for I had no special distinctive dress, and they were at a loss to classify me with the chaplain, or the private gentleman, or the agent of some society.

However, one man touched his hat, and said, "I'll come, sir, and thank you kindly;" on which the others, one by one, expressed their willingness to do the same.

By this time the clerks had arrived in the office, and were calling for the men to come in, one at a time, to claim the money and trinkets and other articles which had been taken from them on their first admission into jail, all these things being always carefully entered and kept. The warrants also were examined, and then placed in the discharge-book, which was laid on the governor's table to await his coming.

Presently I heard, while waiting in his little private room, his steps down the long stone passage, as he came from his own house; and I was encouraged by a very warm and friendly greeting. We had some chat, and he told me a little about the different men who were to be dis-

charged, that I might not be quite unprepared to deal with them. These talks in after years became more and more interesting, especially as we had often to deal with those whom both of us had come to know as "old hands."

It would not be becoming for me to say all that I soon felt toward my friend the governor; but I had many opportunities of remarking the deep interest he evinced in the reformation of the prisoners committed to his care, and the sound advice which he was in the habit of administering, especially to young or new offenders. Nor must I forget the chief warder of those days, who took the governor's place in his absence; nor the chaplain, with whom I was always on the best of terms; nor the clerks; nor indeed the general staff, all of them taking a genuine interest in the work begun that morning, and which, I think, shed a humane and beneficent influence on them all.

At last the hour comes for discharge. One by one the men are summoned before the governor, and asked if they have all their property, and if they have anything to say; and then with a word of advice or warning he says, "You may go." And each passes into the gateway, and through the little door in the big gates, back into the world, from which he has been banished for days, or months, or years.

This was always my opportunity; I went out with the first, unless I had men waiting outside to help me, in which case they took, man by man, the prisoners as they emerged, and walked with them to the coffee-house. But on this, the first morning, I stepped out with the first, and we waited together till the whole had made their exit from the prison, and then started at a quick step to the coffee-house. It was a very strange experience. There was a little group of loiterers across the road, eagerly watching to see if any of their special friends were returning to their society, and they were evidently surprised to see me in such equivocal company. As we walked along that pavement, which I was so repeatedly to tread in the early morning, on a similar errand, I felt that the shopkeepers all along the route were eying me very curiously.

However, we got to the coffee-house at last, and I landed all my men without any great difficulty.

If only my pen were more quick in the delineation of character, I would now depict my friend Richard, the manager of that coffee-house, who was destined to play a very important part in the outworking of my scheme. He was a young man of about twenty-six, short, thick-set, perhaps not remarkable in his features, except for the light that shone in his eye; but a genuine

man—true, loyal, chivalrous to the last degree, ready at repartee, able to hold his own with the keenest; but, as I found, a Christian and a member of a Bible-class, the teacher of which, a lady, be held in high honor.

In the whole kingdom it is impossible to find a town so well equipped with first-rate coffee-houses as Leicester. I have never seen anywhere coffee-houses which, as a whole, would compete for a moment with those erected by the Leicester Coffee and Cocoa House Company. They had some nine or ten when I left the town, and it was a luxury to go into any one of them for a meal. The marble-topped tables were always clean; the floors always fresh with new sawdust; the provisions always of the best quality; the attendants always civil and obliging; the appearance always light and airy and comfortable. It is not to be wondered at that they are paying a handsome dividend; and that their accommodation is strained to the uttermost, especially at dinner-time, when the operatives crowd every seat and fill every corner.

"What's this that ye're up to?" was Richard's first salutation as I entered the coffee-house with my new friends.

I told him, and said, "I want you to get them some breakfast. Where shall they sit?"

We then located them in a corner of the coffee-

house, where they were screened from the immediate observation of those who came into the bar, and agreed that we must give them something more substantial than mere bread and butter. It is probable that we there and then instituted the plate of ham, which was in all after days to prove so great an attraction to palates which had been long accustomed to skilly and brown bread. This, with two or three cups of tea, coffee, or cocoa, and as much bread and butter as the hungriest could eat, cost about sixpence per head. Sometimes it seemed that the digestion turned against the richer food, and we gave the breakfast to be taken away in the pocket in the shape of sandwiches.

It was a great business to get this first breakfast arranged and carried through; and I cannot remember any of the conversation which I doubtless had with the men over the meal. But when they had all gone, I learned from Richard that there was no objection, so far as he could see, to our coming there every morning, as the coffee-house was always empty about that time; those who had been to breakfast having gone, and the luncheoners not having arrived.

"Are you doing this on your own head?" Richard asked.

"Yes," said I; "I don't know who's to help me."

"Well," said he, "if you won't be above taking it, I would like to give you the first subscription." And Richard put a piece of silver into my hand, which shone there like a gleam of the divine blessing, as it was certainly the first-fruits of gifts which were to come to me from all parts of the community when the work began to be known, and which enabled me to give breakfasts to between forty-five hundred and five thousand men and women on those same seats before I left Leicester and my interesting work at the jail gate.

V.

My First Case

"I have been wild and wayward,
But you'll forgive me now."
. . . .
"Am not I nobler through thy love?"
TENNYSON.

MANY of my readers will be asking that I shall pass as soon as possible from the general description of my work to narrate some particulars as to its effect on individual cases. And I will, therefore, give some account of my first successful case—one on which I expended a good deal of thought, and the outcome of which was a great encouragement. It gave me indeed a new conception of the possibilities of my work at the prison gate.

One morning in the early days of my new enterprise, there were only two or three prisoners waiting for discharge, one of whom was very unpromising in his appearance. He had evidently been a tramp, his garments were unusually ragged,

and his appearance disreputable and unkempt. The rents in his trousers were scarcely drawn together by the wide cross-stitches; his boots would have taken in water at the toe and let it out at the heel; his clothes hardly covered him. I think I can see now his dejected, miserable look.

"Will you come to the coffee-house?" said I.

"Yes," was the almost sullen reply.

And I certainly had never before trodden that *Via Dolorosa* with such a ragged and wretched companion.

When we reached the coffee-house I discovered, after the warm food had exerted its wonted thawing influence, that he had been a Leicester workman years before, had then entered the army, but on his discharge had taken to drunken habits, and had gradually reduced himself to the very lowest level, associating with tramps and outcasts.

Something attracted me to this man, who was yet in early manhood, and I felt strongly disposed to help him back to respectability.

In all such cases, the first step was the signing of the pledge-card, of which we always kept a large supply at hand, with plenty of blue ribbon in case of need. In nine cases out of ten drink had been the ultimate cause of landing my poor friends in jail. It was sometimes lamentable in the morning to run the eye through the warrants

of discharge, or down the list made in one's own book for guidance in dealing with the specific cases, and see as the repeated description of their crime, "drunk," "drunk and disorderly," "drunk and assault." Very often men and women would tell me that they had no remembrance of committing the crime with which they had been charged, and had only awoke from a kind of stupor to find themselves in the cell of the police station. The fact being, I often fancied, that the stuff which they took was neither good beer nor unadulterated spirits, but in many cases vile decoctions which utterly poisoned the system, and perverted the working of the brain. In these cases, and indeed in all, the first great effort was always in the direction of pledge-signing.

I know that many differ from me in this, and urge that we should in each case begin with the message of the gospel. I hope that this was never far away from my thoughts or lips; but I have always found that one's message falls flat until men are convinced of their sins, and made willing to confess and forsake them. Men cannot believe God or accept the gospel of his love on the one hand so long as they are concealing or clinging to sin on the other. It is of course clear that the sinner cannot deliver himself from the bondage of sin; he needs for this the Great High Priest and Saviour; but he must feel and

acknowledge and be willing to forsake his sin before the message of salvation can become to him the power of God unto salvation. The signing of the pledge in numberless cases, in the name of God, was a confession and avowal of sinnership on the part of some sin-cursed soul, and an expression of desire for deliverance—yea, more, a pledging of the will on God's side in this matter; while it is undeniable that in hundreds of instances the resolution, being kept in prayer and dependence on the divine help, has led to a new and blessed life. When the will is yielded, God's Spirit can always begin his blessed work of deliverance and salvation.

No effort was therefore spared to induce discharged prisoners to sign the pledge. In many cases they had themselves seen the results of their folly, and came out of jail determined never again to touch intoxicating liquor. In other cases the most earnest entreaties were obdurately and determinedly resisted; and this was specially often the case when evil companions were lurking about the door of the coffee-house, prepared to escort their "pal" to some neighboring public-house. But often our persuasions won the day, especially being supported by the fact that in prison the men had been able to exist, had done their work quite comfortably without the drink, and had really enjoyed better health than before.

In these respects prison-life is a perfect revelation to many men, showing how much happier and easier life may be without yielding to inveterate appetite. Indeed, there are times in which incarceration is the only way by which these evil habits may be broken off, and a man or woman disentangled from their old companions. Frequently when a wife or mother has come to tell me of the conviction of husband or son, I have astonished and comforted them by recounting the many instances in which the solitude of the prison-cell has led to the disillusioning and deliverance of those who had come under my care. This is especially the case with the first experience of the prison-cell; after that, and when it has been twice or thrice repeated, the heart becomes stubborn and obdurate, and the character degraded rather than elevated. This is particularly the case with women.

The man of whom I am writing did not need much persuasion, and signed the pledge-card with some show of resolution. He told me his former trade; though it seemed likely that his hands would be long in recovering the skill they had once possessed, and which was almost essential to enable him to hold his own with other workmen.

In the meanwhile, and to give me time to test him, and to look about for a situation, I took him

to a small but respectable men's lodging-house, where I knew he would be shielded from many of the temptations which are so intimately connected with the common lodging-house system.

If any one desires to save men or to arrest the process of deterioration in them, he must deliver them from the ordinary common lodging-house. Perhaps it will be well to reserve the further consideration of this matter for a separate chapter. In the meantime, let me advise those who are working in these directions to establish common lodging-houses of their own, which, under proper management, should pay their own expenses.

My *protégé* went on very well for some days, keeping steadily to his pledge, and I was able, through the kindness of a friendly manufacturer, to obtain him employment. And here I must stay for a moment to acknowledge the kindness which I invariably received from the Leicester manufacturers. I often had to trouble them, in the midst of busy mornings, with requests that they would give some discharged prisoner a second chance. I cannot recall a case in which I did not receive a courteous hearing; and very often men were taken on again whose places had been filled up, or vacancies were made to give some fallen man a berth. Often if we met in the streets, these business men would stay to have a

few moments' talk about some such case, regretting a relapse, or speaking kindly and hopefully of a good promise being abundantly realized.

Of course I had to rig out my poor friend with more decent clothes. In after-days this was rendered more easy by the parcels of cast-off clothes with which the Leicester philanthropic public supplied me; but at that stage of my work I had to obtain them from second-hand salesmen, with whom I came into interesting relations, which experience might make a story of itself. One or two of these men became really interested in the work for its own sake.

It is interesting to realize how much charitable feeling is latent in most hearts, waiting to be elicited and drawn forth in other ways than in the mere gifts of money. Many people are rendering but little help to their fellows, not because they will not, but that they do not know how to begin. Once show them how they may become interested in others, they will gladly embrace the opportunity, and find a new zest in life, to be henceforth gratefully connected with the agent or cause that first evoked it.

One day, when my case was getting somewhat out of hand, because he was able to save a little out of his earnings toward procuring himself another suit of clothes and other little necessaries, I had a longer talk with him than usual. It is

of the utmost importance in dealing with such men to see them pretty often, to show that you are still interested, and to speak encouraging and helpful words. There is a sense in which the words of a good man are spirit and life, and supply nutriment on which the soul feeds. It was my endeavor to come in contact with these cases as frequently as possible; and in the present instance, when my hands were less full, I could do more than subsequently.

In the course of our talk, and pitying his loneliness, for he seemed to have no companions to help him in the new path he was treading with some difficulty, I said:

"Haven't you any people belonging to you?"

"No, sir," was the reply; "they are all dead or gone away."

"But is there no one that cares for you, or for whom you care?"

"Well, sir," said he, "I'll tell you. There is a girl with whom I used to keep company—as nice a girl as you ever set eyes on; but she wouldn't be likely to look at me now." And he looked rather ruefully down at his clothes.

"Well," said I, "there's no telling. These women are wonderful creatures. I've known them stick to a man when he has lost all self-respect. There's no accounting for a woman's love."

"Do you think so?" he said wistfully.

"Now," I replied, "if you like, I'll go and see this girl for you. You see you needn't be jealous of *me*. And I will find out, if I can, whether she still thinks kindly of you. And then I'll let you know, and you can do as you like."

He seemed very relieved, and thanked me kindly. And I left him, rejoiced to be on this new track, because human love is so often a revelation of the love of God; and if only you can awaken in a man's heart the thought that some one cares for him, you will probably lead him to desire to be worthy of that care, and to rise to it.

It seems but yesterday morning that I found myself traversing a respectable street in an artisans' quarter, and knocking at a door half-way down. My summons was replied to by a respectable young woman, and I found that it was her father's house. I gave my name, and was admitted into the little front best room. It was furnished like so many others which it was my privilege to visit in Leicester, with the huge traditional Bible on the round mahogany table, and the little mirror over the mantelpiece, while the backs of the horsehair chairs were covered with the usual array of white antimacassars. And there the lady-fair stood before me, her sleeves tucked up, and her bare arms steaming with the results of the early morning wash-tub.

"Ah," thought I, "if you are the one I am in search of, you'll do; for the girl who will be well through her washing in her father's house so early in the day is the one to make a good wife for any man."

To my delight I found that her name was the one her quondam lover had given me, and I proceeded on my delicate investigations. I cannot disclose here quite the way in which I prosecuted them. I think I learned more by the flush on the cheek, the evident interest, the eager look, than by actual words; and after a little further conversation left the house, sure that the love had not died out of that woman's heart, and that she was still true to him who had woke it years before.

I told my friend the result of my interview. He was very pleased. I also helped him to get clothes more becoming a wooer; and some little time after I was delighted to meet the two, one Sunday afternoon, walking out together. I do not know whether they saw me; but I looked the other way, not wishing to intrude on their new-found joy, or to identify myself with it. It was better to let them feel that it was their own procuring, and God's good gift.

He had before this commenced to attend the Sunday Evening Service in Melbourne Hall. She was wise enough to encourage him in this, and

began to attend there with him. Eventually they both found the Saviour, or, better, were found of him. What shall I not say of the free and open seat system, which enables such people to come freely in; or of the advantage of a crowd, amid which those are able to conceal themselves who would shrink from being conducted through long aisles to some half-filled seat, where their dress or behavior might excite unkind remarks?

Some twelve months passed, and my friend came to me under the pressure of that nervousness in which most men come to their clergyman or minister once in their life. I immediately guessed the object of his errand; asked the place and time, and engaged to marry the happy couple, who had, through their united exertions, saved money enough to furnish a cosy little home. I remember that wedding, and how a policeman, who had known him in earlier and sadder days, stood as his best man. It was the first wedding of that sort, though, thank God, not the last. And many a time besides have I conducted a kind of second wedding in the coffee-house for those who had broken, or strained to breaking, their marriage bonds.

It was a pleasure to visit that little home. What a welcome I got there! How profuse were the expressions of gratitude! How regular their attendance at God's house! How evident

their growth! And just before I left Leicester he approached me with the request that they should be permitted to sit at the table of the Lord.

So all comes back to me again as I write, and stirs again the old love for this direct and personal work among the lapsed. I seem now to be called to somewhat other work, but my heart clings to the memory of those dear and blessed days at Leicester prison gate. Their memories will be green in my heart till death. And my earnest advice to all young ministers is—to mix freely with the people; to visit systematically and widely; to study men as well as books; to converse with all classes and conditions of men: always on the alert to learn from some fresh pages of the heart opened to the view of the sympathetic soul.

VI.

Our System of Relief

"Such mercy he by his most holy reede
Unto us taught, and to approve it trew
Ensampled it by his most righteous deede,
Shewing us mercie, miserable crew!
That we the like should to the wretches shew,
And love our brethren."

SPENSER.

IT is not enough to meet a discharged prisoner, and speak kindly to him, or give him a breakfast. If this is all, as soon as he leaves you, and the gnawings of hunger return, he will be very liable to be seduced from his new-formed resolutions by mixing with old companions, and to relapse into his old courses.

It is often weary work for men of *good* character to obtain employment. It is a common experience to meet men of irreproachable character who have spent week after week in fruitless search, willing to take anything that offered, but meeting with constant disappointment. How much harder, then, must it be for men who have a fatal

stigma on their character, or bear the brand of the prison! Very often their experiences in jail will make them more reliable and steady than others who have never fallen into the clutches of the law; but this is not considered by employers, who, for the most part, have no time or interest for such questions, their one aim being to get as much work done in as short a time as possible.

A man comes out of jail resolved to reform. He has made up his mind not to drink or mix with his old mates. He intends to go straight; and as soon as he has had his breakfast he starts in pursuit of employment. The air is fresh, it is a delight to be free, his hopes are high; let him but have work, and all will be well. But the day's search is in vain. He goes to his home, or some shelter for the night; and yet surely to-morrow will bring better fortune. But to-morrow comes and goes, and many such days, all full of fruitless search. Every door is closed, and some rudely and roughly. Want stares him in the face. His resolution and sense of independence die down. He begins to "shack" about the streets again, and to go with the men who do not mean to work so long as they can sponge on others, or get drink. And sometimes, in sheer desperation, the man who started a week ago so well, is back again in nearly the same position of drink and crime as before.

It is the good custom of our present prison system to allow prisoners to earn "mark-money." By attention to prison discipline, by prompt obedience to all rules and regulations, and especially by good behavior, a man wins a certain number of marks, which, if the maximum are gained, will procure him the sum of ten shillings at the end of six months, or a proportionate sum for any less time. Thus those who leave after a long term may have two or three pounds to receive, while those who have been in jail for only a few weeks will not be without a few shillings.

This may be a great blessing to those who do well. It provides them with a little capital to start with; or, at the least, finds them shelter and food while they are considering their next step. Where there is a Prison Aid Society properly established, at the discretion of the governor and the agent the government, in really deserving cases, allows an additional grant to be made to the mark-money, so that there may be an even larger "nest-egg" for starting the new and better career.

This mark-money may, however, prove a great curse. Before I began my work, it was the habit of a large number of loafers and ne'er-do-wells to gather near the prison gate, opposite to which was the public-house; and they would do their best to entice those who were leaving the prison

to come across for drink, with the almost positive certainty of spending the whole of the precious money so hardly earned, but so lightly and foolishly squandered in treating the entire party. In such society the weak resolution, hardly consolidated as yet, will soon break down, and within an hour the whole fabric of the new and better life rudely and irretrievably demolished.

It was always, therefore, my plan to get hold of this mark-money, and keep it until I knew how it was to be spent. All agents of the Prison Aid Society have a right to this, and the prison authorities are only too glad to intrust it to their care. Besides, there is an advantage to the prisoner, because his meager earnings may be augmented, partly from the government funds already alluded to, and partly from the funds collected locally for the support of the branch. Many a time have men been thankful that the spending of the money was not left to them, and that they could say truthfully to friends and others that they had not a penny in their pockets.

This money, and the other money at my disposal, enabled me to solve some of the difficulties about work to which I have alluded. It enabled me to set up several on their own account. Many times did we spend five shillings in a peddler's license, with another two shillings' worth of stock. Often we started women with materials to make

fire-screens, or to do wool and fancy work. Those were times when I knew all the kinds of fish that were in season, and their prices; and enabled my poor clients to start selling fish, or oranges, or other market commodities. But I confess that these latter were not very satisfactory, as there was such a temptation to live out of the total receipts, instead of laying aside a certain proportion of the takings for a renewal of the stock.

Perhaps the most useful ways of expending the money were in getting new boots, or strong serviceable clothes, or warm shawls for the women, and in procuring tools for the men. The understanding always was that they should get the work first, and bring us word to that effect on a paper bearing the name of the firm engaging them; and that then we would provide them with necessary implements. A riveter's kit would take a few shillings only, while a finisher's would cost a pound or more. A spade or pickax would be serviceable to navvies.

At first I used to go round to employers of labor soliciting employment, and often it took a considerable slice out of my morning to go from one factory to another; for this reason I was finally obliged to relinquish the practice, except in special cases. It really was better to promise men to support them for a day or two while they were looking for work for themselves. It encouraged

their self-reliance, and they were generally better able to ascertain where they were wanted. I urged them also to come to see me at the coffee-house each morning to tell me how they were going on, that I might hearten them up and inspire them with fresh courage, or even pray with them. Sometimes I would write a letter for them to take to some friendly employer. It was a matter also of distinct faith on my part in my heavenly Father, that he should help me and coöperate in the saving of these men from relapsing into their old ways. Perhaps it would be better and more correct to say that I coöperated with him. When at last the happy moment came that work had been obtained, the necessary tools were purchased, and I felt thankful that one more discouraged soul had the chance of climbing back to respectability and honor.

It was always most interesting to watch the different use men made of the help afforded them. Sometimes one would hear nothing at all of them for months; and then suddenly they would appear one morning in the coffee-house, looking happy, smart, and respectable, with a grand story to tell of returning prosperity. In one or two such cases, subscriptions were handed over to me to repay anything which had been expended. And, of course, warm words of approval and encouragement were given and received.

Once as I was walking through one of the principal thoroughfares, a man stopped a dashing pony-trap, and leaping down, shook me warmly by the hand, saying, "Look, sir! You know what you did for me at a certain place: this is what it has led to." He was engaged in a flourishing business, to prosecute which he had bought this neat little conveyance.

Frequently men were too shy to come to me, lest it might revive the memory of their fall; but I would hear that they were doing well, and freely forgave them for not wishing to identify themselves with me too closely.

But, of course, there were many disappointments. Sometimes it would be almost more than I could bear; and had it not been for the perpetual remembrance of the much patience which my Lord had had with me, and how his love had conquered, I could not have borne the terrible disasters with which some of my most hopeful cases met. A man might go on well for a time, and then break out drinking and undo everything, losing situation, self-respect, clothes—everything. In all such cases it was useless even to seem to lose one's temper, and rate the delinquent. To do so would be, perhaps, to drive the tempest-tossed bark from its only haven. Besides, conscience had already used its scourge pretty severely. And so I always endeavored to restrain

any feeling of natural resentment, and allowed my poor *protégés* to see that their fall had caused me real personal sorrow. The grief of the Christian soul for another's sin is a divine alembic for purging out the grosser elements from that other soul. It is in the tears of Jesus that we best discern the unutterableness of Jerusalem's sin and doom.

Love alone will save the world. As it is with God, so, in our measure, it is with us. Our methods and prophesyings and machinery will fail if they are substituted for love. But where holy love is, if it can endure, at last it wins. Probably there is no criminal, however debased, who is not susceptible to love, and might not be saved by it. Not our love, but the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

VII.

My Work as Banker

"Find thy reward in the thing
Which thou hast been blest to do;
Let the joy of others cause joy to spring
Up in thy bosom too!—
And if the love of a grateful heart
As a rich reward be given,
Lift thou the love of a grateful heart
To the God of love in heaven!"

MACDONALD.

ONE morning when I reached the prison, I found the clerks in a state of considerable excitement over a man who was to receive about £20, which he had brought in with him in a great medley of coins. There were one or two handfuls of them. Now, of course, while it was customary to hand over to me any money that accrued to the prisoners as the result of their good behavior, it was quite impossible to intrust me with their own. That was necessarily handed over to them, and signed for by them. And if I was to get hold of it at all, it had to be by their

own deed of gift, and in response to my solicitations. Though I could not, therefore, handle that money then, I resolved to keep sharp eyes on the owner, and to get it from him if I could, at the earliest moment.

As soon as we had got outside the prison gate I saw a little man who had been loitering about accost my *protégé* in a suspiciously familiar manner, and there was evidently an attempt on his part to induce the other to go with him to the public-house across the road. However, to my great satisfaction, I saw that my vivid description of all the blessings which would accrue from a breakfast with me at the coffee-house had been sufficiently alluring to enable him to remain steadfast to his promise to go there. So we all went along together. While, however, my attention was being given to others of my morning party, I suddenly missed the two. I looked up and down the road in vain. There was no trace of them; and I instantly suspected that probably the little man had a shrewd suspicion of that money, the same as I had, only that he wanted to spend it for his companion in scenes of dissipation and drunkenness. Perhaps they had already entered a public-house.

As soon as this idea flashed through my mind, I resolved to ransack every public-house in the line of march, so that my friends might not escape me.

In dealing with these men one is often reminded of the experiences of the salmon-fisher, who may have hooked a strong and vigorous fish, but has to act with the utmost prudence lest his prey escape him and carry off line and hook in his mad rush to his native depths. As the skillful fisherman willingly plays with his prize for several hours, content to keep but the slenderest hold of it if only he may succeed at last in drawing it into his net, so the fisher for souls must never be disappointed, though at first his best efforts are met with non-success; he must be prepared to give out line, to wait patiently, sometimes to lose sight of the objects of his solicitude for weeks together; yet the thread of love may follow them into the deepest, darkest depths, and some day, when they are weary of themselves and of sin, they will feel its gentle drawing and follow it back to your side.

I went into one or two public-houses without success. At last, as I was beginning to despair, I made for one which I well remember, because, unlike most places of that description, in which ingress and especially egress must be made as easy as possible, the door stood at the top of three stone steps. I pushed it open, and there, sure enough, the two men stood side by side at the bar, with two pewter pots of beer in front of them. They were laughing together; but whether I, or

their escape from me, was the subject of their merriment, I, of course, could not discover.

"Ah, my lads," said I, "you have made a mistake! This is not my shop. Come along with me, and I will put you right." They looked very disconcerted, and, to use a vulgar expression, "dropped on." However, there was no time for explanation; and as the bar-maid had for a moment left the counter, and no one else was there, I was able to sweep them both out, and down the steps and into the street, before they realized what was happening. I never inquired whether or no that beer was paid for; but if so, I am only thankful to know that by its purchasers at least it was not drunk. Had they but sipped it, I should have had one good tale less to tell; on the waters of strong drink those two men would have drifted beyond my reach.

So we all arrived safely at the coffee-house. I secured an extra good breakfast for each of them; and as I write I think I can see them sitting at the little marble-covered table in the corner, the tall one beside me, the other on my left hand.

When they were in the middle passage of the breakfast, I suddenly turned to the moneyed man, and said:

"My friend, you have got well-nigh twenty pounds in your pocket."

He looked at me keenly, as if to say, "How

do you know that? and what business is it of yours?"

The other man also stopped eating, and looked hard at me, evidently suspecting that I should prove a formidable rival to his plans.

"Now," I continued, "I want you to shell out, and hand over to my keeping all the money you have in your pocket. I will give you a receipt for it, and something to go on with; but will 'stick to' the rest till we can see what is best to do with it."

My friend stared at me, and for a little time was lost in a profound reverie, during which his little companion gave signs of evident perturbation and excitement. Finally, the great hand of the discharged prisoner dived down into the capacious pocket of his trousers, and brought up a handful of coins, gold, silver, and copper, heterogeneously mixed together with string, pencil, and other *et ceteras*. Throwing them all down on the table with a ring, and turning to me, he said:

"There's the lot, sir; take care of them for me." So I took possession of the money, carefully counted it, gave him a receipt, swept it into my pocket, and handed him a couple of shillings for immediate necessities. He said that he was desirous of leaving Leicester shortly, *en route* for London and New York. We made an appointment of day and hour for meeting at the station,

and in the meanwhile I directed him to a respectable place where he would be able to procure lodgings, and induced him to sign the pledge before he left the place.

At the appointed time I met him at the station, with his money in rather smaller bulk. He met me with a smile, as soon as he saw me come on to the platform.

"Sir," said he, "you have done me the kindest thing that any one could have done. That money which you took care of was sent me by my brother, who is doing well in New York City, for me to come over to him to make a new start. I have been a bad 'un, I can tell you. But it's about time that I did make a new start, and that's what I have determined to do."

"I am glad to hear it," I replied.

"Yes, sir," said he; "I thought things over a good bit when I was in yon place, and made up my mind that I would never touch the drink again. That's been my downfall, you see. If I can only keep from the drink, my brother says he will make a man of me."

Something in my look and manner probably recalled to him the scene in the public-house, and he added:

"You remember that man—him that met me when I came out? He meant me no good. He knew that I had got a lot of 'the needful,' and he came to help me spend it. I am glad you

saved me from him; he soon dropped off when he saw that you had cleared me out. I don't care if I never see him again. But it was a close shave that morning."

"A very close shave; but how did you come to let him take you in there?"

"I don't know, sir; but I am one of those easy-going chaps, and it's so hard to say 'No.'"

Then I told him about the keeping power of the Lord Jesus, and how he is willing to enter in and hold the door of our hearts against the foe; and I begged him to hand the keeping of his soul over to him.

The train was nearly due; but it suddenly occurred to me that I might get him a Testament, and I went across for one to the bookstall. I could find nothing but a copy of the Revised New Testament, which I bought, and wrote his name and mine on the front page, adding the words, "Meet me at the gate of the Golden City."

His train then came into the station; and he entered the carriage with many an expression of thankfulness, and a solemn promise that it should be indeed a new and blessed beginning.

I know nothing more of him, though I have often wondered what has been his record since; but I trust that among those who will welcome me *there*, I shall meet again that man to whom I waved good-by as his train steamed out toward London.

VIII.

A Brace of Fowls

"Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was 'doing good.'
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude!"

WHITTIER.

JUST one more incident I will relate to show the gratitude with which my poor efforts were repaid by these discharged criminals, when the grace of God touched their hearts.

On one occasion I was preaching in a Primitive Methodist chapel in Leicestershire. It was a summer's evening, and the place was very crowded. At the close of the service the people lingered, and I went down from the pulpit among them. Some one said to me:

"There are three of your men here, sir."

I guessed what was meant, and asked, "Where?"

Two were pointed out to me on the right side of the building. On coming out of jail they had signed the pledge, and on returning to their vil-

lage had been saved through the Salvation Army, for the work of which I praise God. They had risen to become officers, and looked thoroughly nice, bright fellows.

What a blessing would come to our churches if only they were to insist, as the Salvation Army does, on all their members binding themselves to total abstinence! What a marvelous accession of spiritual and moral power would accrue if all Christian people would rank themselves on the side of total abstinence, as a safeguard for themselves and their children, and as a protest against the giant evil of our time, the mother of all woes! The strength of the Salvation Army is largely due to its freedom from drink and smoking, as its lessons of self-control; and to its teaching that the power of Christ can deliver from the power of sin and destroy the works of the devil.

I shall never forget going on one Easter Monday to the old barracks at Leicester, to see an exhibition of idols. In my innocence I supposed that they were missionary trophies from the South Seas or India. To my surprise, there was nothing of the kind; but something even more practical, interesting, and striking. For, at the most solemn part of the service, six men went to the rear of the platform, and brought out six large sheets of cardboard, each of which was covered with pipes, tobacco-pouches, cigarette-holders,

dog-whistles, ribbons, bows, trinkets, and many other things, all of which had been surrendered as having obstructed the growth of the inner life. Would that all who are so eager to destroy the gods of the heathen were equally watchful to keep themselves from idols!

My third friend was on the other side of the chapel, and I made my way to him. On coming up to the end of the little pew where he was standing, he took my hand in his, and, falling on his knees, kissed it. I confess that it made the choking sensation come in my throat. And among the many marks of gratitude for help given in the hour of need, I do not think that any ever made a deeper impression. Then, rising to his feet, he said:

"Bide a bit, sir."

In another moment he had passed me and shot out of the door, leaving me in the midst of the people, who seemed unusually interested and amused, as they crowded round. I noticed this, and rather wondered at it, but did not feel perturbed. God has ever allowed me to realize in a very distinct way in my life the presence and ministry of his angels; and I can record that in all my dealings with men in drunken frenzies, and with crowds, as well as in my many journeyings by land and water, they have always formed around me an inviolable cordon of protection.

Charge seems to have been given them concerning me, to keep me in all my ways.

In a moment or two the man returned through the chapel doorway, bearing in triumph a living token of his gratitude. At first I could hardly realize what it was; but on closer inspection it proved to be a couple of live fowls, which, hanging head downward, were, one from each hand, flapping and swaying about in a most extraordinary manner. Advancing to me, he said:

"You must take these home with you, sir."

"Not likely," said I; "I couldn't think of taking such a gift from a working-man."

"Ay, but ye must take them; ye have done me a sight more good than the gift of these fowls will do me harm," was the reply.

And then I learned that he had been *forty times* in jail through drink, but on the last occasion had signed the pledge with me and kept it; had been rapidly regaining his lost place in the little village; and was beginning to prosper in a small way. He, too, had given his heart to God, and was living a Christian life.

Now, I was in a considerable dilemma. On the one hand, I did not want to hurt this man's feelings; on the other, I did not know what to do with these two fowls. I should have to take them some distance home, and I did not feel sure of being able to kill them when I got them there.

I knew, too, that my servant was very timid, and I felt sure that neither of us could wring their necks. Death by beheading, strangulation, or drowning was, of course, possible; but I felt that I could not be the executioner. I suggested my difficulty to my friend, amid the laughter of the people, who could not understand how the man who did not scruple to attack the devil and his kingdom was so afraid of inflicting pain on these two birds. Certainly I should never have shot the albatross of which Coleridge sings.

"I'll soon put that right," he said, as he again disappeared. In a few moments he was back again, having committed the double murder on the doorstep of that little chapel. He carried those birds to the station, and I carried them home in triumph up the main thoroughfare of Leicester, amid the amazement of the passers-by, who at first sight may have thought I had turned sportsman, and was carrying home partridges or pheasants. But they soon saw it was neither, though I was as self-satisfied as if it were my first brace of grouse.

They were very good eating indeed. I ate one, and some friends ate the other. They needed no sauce, because of the fragrant kindness of the donor. I did think of preserving some part of the plumage; yet why should I? for I need no outward symbol of that man's love; it lingers still

in my heart, as the aromatic scent in the drawer where it has lain in years gone by. These are the things that sweeten life, and give it meaning, and come back again and again on the memory with unabated loveliness. Oh, that I were as true and tender to thee, my divine Master, as many of these saved ones were to me!

IX.

Prisoners' Aid Societies

"Man is dear to man! the poorest poor
Long for some moments in a weary life
When they can know and feel that they have been
Themselves the fathers and the dealers-out
Of some small blessings—have been kind to such
As needed kindness."

WORDSWORTH.

SHORTLY after I had commenced my work, I learned that there had been an endeavor on the part of some philanthropic men among the magistrates and others to organize a branch of the Prisoners' Aid Society; but that their efforts had failed in consequence of there being no one who was specially suited or willing to do the practical work. This want was now met, and there was no further reason why they should delay giving practical effect to their intentions.

Accordingly, a meeting was held at the instance of my valued friend, W. J. Freer, Esq., whose legal status gave him unusual influence with the visiting justices and other leading men; and a branch

society was formed, of which he was appointed honorary secretary, and I honorary agent.

The Prisoners' Aid Society is now recognized by the authorities, works in conjunction with them, and is even subsidized up to a certain amount from a central fund. When a long-term prisoner is to be discharged, he has a claim not only for the mark-money, of which I have already spoken, and which may amount to £3 or £4, but on the recommendation of the governor he may also receive additional help to the amount of £1 or £1 10s. from the central fund. Where a branch of the Prisoners' Aid Society is in existence, this money is handed over to the agent to expend it to the best advantage. This gives him some influence over the newly liberated, and keeps the two in touch at least till all the money is expended.

I was very much impressed with the results of the prison discipline on these long-term men. Of course there were not so many of them as of the others. But, with very few exceptions, there was a remarkable gravity and seriousness manifest in their bearing. They were evidently deeply in earnest to make good the resolutions they had formed during the months of confinement. And in many cases they spoke with high appreciation of the benefit they had received from the services of the chaplain, and from their attendance in the prison chapel. I believe that in scores of instances

such men are being converted to God by the Spirit of God working freely through the silence of the cell, and through such other voices as speak from time to time to their hearts.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the appointment of really converted and godly men to the post of chaplain. It is a thousand pities when ritual or form takes the place of simple gospel teaching, and when such great opportunities are intrusted to men who are perfunctory and careless, ignorant of the way of life themselves, and unable to instruct others. No one can estimate the marvelous change which would pass over the criminal population of the country if all the prison pulpits were occupied by men of God, intent on the salvation of the lost and fallen through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is much to be said on behalf of the system which obtains in Canada, where my friend, the late Mr. W. H. Howland, ex-mayor of Toronto, told me that he and others had access to the prisons on Sunday, for the purpose of holding Bible-classes among the inmates; the result of which had appeared in some marvelous conversions to God.

I am happy to say that my relations with the late Rev. Mr. James, chaplain of the Leicester jail, were of the most pleasant description. We worked together for the salvation of those who

came under our hands, sorrowing together over our failures, and rejoicing in common successes. He did his work with simplicity and grace, and was often spoken of in the highest terms by those who had benefited by his teachings and influence, in the cell quite as much as in the chapel.

It is quite refreshing to look back to those happy mornings. I can fancy myself now stepping through the little doorway into the prison, narrowly watched by the crowd outside. The gatekeeper would have some pleasant welcome. Then I would instantly turn to the row of men and women waiting for discharge, and perhaps go to speak a few hearty words to them. Then to the office to write their names in my book, and learn any particulars about them to guide me afterward. And it is only fair to acknowledge here the great kindness and civility received from the clerks, who always treated me as a friend. In the meanwhile the strains of music and singing from above warn us that the service is closing; and shortly the chaplain comes to say farewell to those who are about to leave him, and to impress on one or two of the more hopeful his parting advice. And now down the long corridor leading from the private house are heard the quick steps of the governor himself, as he comes for the discharge, accompanied by a magnificent dog whom I had known from a puppy, and who was either a for-

midable foe or an affectionate friend. Then began the discharge, which I have already described.

Once a month there was a meeting of the Prisoners' Aid Society, after the visiting justices had gone their usual round. Many of them stayed to the meeting; and it was encouraging to receive the tokens of good-will and appreciation from men whose titles and positions were the patents of real nobility, as well as from one's fellow-townsmen. At these meetings a report was given of the work of the previous month, money was voted, and special cases were discussed.

The Prisoners' Aid Societies only deal with the long-term cases. Perhaps that system cannot be improved on in dealing with public money; but it is a great mistake for any town to be content with dealing with these cases only. The short-term prisoners may include many of the incorrigibles, but they also include large numbers of first offenders. These are terribly ashamed as they emerge from prison. They are also full of good resolutions, which, if only they are enabled to carry them out, will bar their return to jail. They have been suddenly disillusionized, and are startled to see the real character of their life, and look eagerly around for some door of hope, some ladder by which to climb again to honor and respectability. "A stitch in time," with these,

"will save nine." If the first breaking in of the river through the dam is stayed, it will be possible to save the dyke, and hold back the volume of water behind. Important as it is to deal with old offenders, it is doubly so to arrest those who have taken but the first step in forbidden paths, and whose hearts are yet open to the sting of remorse and regret. So I had them all alike to the coffee-house, giving special attention to the long-term men; but entertaining all, speaking with all, and endeavoring to do my best to give all another start in the world.

I have never cared much to compute or print statistics; they are a very inadequate gauge of work done; but I am always glad to recall a statement which was one day made to me, that the numbers in Leicester Prison had gone down to the extent of there being fifty prisoners less at the close of three or four years' work, than when I began to visit it. In other words, a large number of the old incorrigibles had been converted and reclaimed, and were no longer turning up time after time for being drunk and disorderly. And if they did come back, I really believe that the shame of meeting me was, in some cases, almost as great a punishment as the days or weeks of confinement.

The formation of this branch of the Prisoners' Aid Society enabled us to appeal to our fellow-

townsmen for funds. Before this I had received what was forwarded to me privately; but afterward I had no longer any thought or care on the score of subscriptions, which were always forthcoming, and were given with good-will. Ah, Leicester men of business, I shall never forget your generous appreciation of my poor work, culminating as it did in the public presentation of that illuminated address—which is one of my priceless treasures—and of the purse of four hundred guineas. But I dare not begin writing thus, as it threatens to tear open old wounds and make them bleed afresh. How did I come ever to leave that town!—into the very fabric of which my heart seemed woven, and in the soil of which I have often thought I would like at last to lie amid the men and women and children whom I knew and lived for. But He has ordered it otherwise, and I am more than content: for a wide door and effectual is opened to me for ministry, and I am surrounded with noble and true friends; but I can never forget the old ones, or the common interests which confederate the citizens of towns that are not too huge or unwieldy to lose the sense of solidarity.

Since I left the town, the Prisoners' Aid Society has continued its noble work, and has gathered around it many devoted helpers, who supplement the labors of its efficient and pains-

taking agent, Mr. W. H. Morris. It is a great gratification to me to know that the little slip I planted in fear and trembling, beneath their careful tendance is becoming a strong and healthy tree.

X.

My Relations with the Publicans

"Draw through all failure to the perfect flower;
Draw through all darkness to the perfect light;
Yea, let the rapture of thy spring-tide thrill
Through me, beyond me, till its ardor fill
The ungrowing souls that know not thee aright,
That thy great love may make of me, e'en me,
One added link to bind the world to thee."

E. S. A.

AT this point I should like to give some few details of the relations into which my work at the prison gate brought me with the Leicester liquor dealers. Before I commenced it, I had been deeply interested in a Blue Ribbon Mission conducted by a prominent evangelist, in which, during a campaign of three months' duration in Leicester and the neighborhood, we had succeeded in obtaining no less than one hundred thousand signatures to the pledge and adopters of the Blue Ribbon badge. I was chairman of the committee which arranged this campaign, and was therefore brought to close dealings with the proprietors of

the great vested interests which we attacked; and often my experiences were far from pleasant.

On one occasion, for instance, I received a threatening letter with skull and cross-bones attached to it, in which the writer urged me to abstain from further agitation, at peril of my receiving physical injury from those whom he and others were resolved to employ. On another occasion it was deemed necessary that I should be accompanied home through certain streets, because feeling was running very high through our attacks upon the liquor traffic. And, in point of fact, the publican party were suffering such serious losses in their trade from the reformation which had come over some of their best customers, that they had every reason to be seriously annoyed.

Money which had been hitherto expended on drink was now taken to butcher, baker, shoemaker, and other tradesmen, for the purchase of necessaries for women and children. It was said, for instance, by one butcher in a poorer district of the town, that on former Saturdays he had been accustomed to provide some of the commoner parts of meat from which women might pick their little pieces for the following day; but that, during that Mission, so much gold was brought to him for the best joints of meat, that he found it difficult to get it changed! So I was not in very good odor with the publican party when it fell

to my lot to undertake the mission at the prison gate. And yet, for some wonderful reason, after I commenced there was a decided revulsion of feeling; and I am glad to say, on behalf of the publicans themselves, that, for the most part, they seemed cordially in favor of the work of reclamation in which I was engaged, so that on more than one occasion they furnished me with monetary, as well as practical, help.

Of course, the owner of the public-house immediately opposite the prison gate could not look with complacency upon the work which was turning the tide of custom from himself to the coffee-house, and diminishing his yearly revenue by quite £100. Very often little parties would sally forth from his bar parlor, to accost and, if possible, induce the men and women that were coming out of jail to leave me and go with them. On several occasions we seemed in danger of a *fracas* in the public road, as the two parties were engaged in wrangling over some undecided individual, who was not unwilling to leave the result to be determined by strength of will or muscle.

In all such conflicts, however, one was conscious of having the sympathy of even the lower and more disorderly classes, who would often advise these people to come with me, saying, "He's all right; you need not fear to go with him." And I am afraid that sometimes people

came to me with a secret understanding that when they had got all they could they intended to return to the public-house.

Sometimes I would go to see after my men in public-house parlors, and have always been kindly received. And if it had been possible, I should not have flinched from spending my hours at night in these places, conversing with the inmates and showing them that Christian men were prepared to come wherever there was an opportunity of influencing the dupes of intemperance for a nobler, purer life. On one occasion, I remember, a liquor dealer sent for me to adjust a dispute in his household, and arbitrate between himself and one of his servants. The more one knows of the curse that the drink brings with it to those that sell it, the more one pities liquor dealers and their families. Many of them have been employed in respectable households and brought up under Christian influences; but when once embarked in this traffic, they lose all respect for themselves and all hope of living a Christian life, and become henceforth condemned in their consciences and hardened in their hearts. Would that all Christians would do their utmost to support the agitation on behalf of the Sunday closing of public-houses; if not in the interests of the community at large, at least in those of the dealers themselves.

One amusing incident happened toward the close of my Leicester work. One morning there came out of jail the keeper of a neighboring cemetery, who was therefore something more respectable than the ordinary run of those that came into my hands. He accepted my invitation to come to the coffee-house, where he was met by his wife and two daughters, and, as they seemed well-to-do people, I conducted them from the lower hall, in which my men generally partook of their breakfast, into an upper room where they could enjoy comparative privacy. The whole party was at once provided with the usual coffee, rolls, and ham; and the breakfast was proceeding merrily when I sat down in the midst of the little party and said:

"My friend, what do you say to signing the pledge this morning? You know as well as I do that you have been falling under the power of drink, or you would never have come into this position."

"Well, sir," said he, "I can tell you I have been thinking a lot about it since I've been in yon place, and have almost made up my mind to chuck the whole thing up."

"You will sign the pledge, then?" said I.

"Yes," said he; "but I'll tell you what—I have made up my mind to have a pint of porter first."

"A pint of porter!" said I in dismay. "What's the good of waking up the thirst for it, when you have been all these days free?"

"Well," said he, "it would be a wrong thing for a man to make a vow and not keep to it."

"But aren't there some vows better broken than kept?" said I. "Don't you remember, in the Bible, that Herod made a vow of which he repented? Come, my friend, you'd better break a bad vow than keep it, any day."

"No," said he; "I'm one of those men that can be led, but not driven—ain't I, wife?" as he looked toward her with a scowl.

"Yes," said the wife meekly; "we know that."

"Well," said I, "if you have that pint of porter, will you give me your solemn word and honor that you will sign the pledge immediately after; and will you give me your hand upon it?"

He said, "All right, sir," and he grasped my hand.

Now, I was in such a position that I did not dare to send any of the men who were at that time assisting me into the public-house hard by, to get that pint of porter; and I knew that there was no one on the premises belonging to the coffee-house company whom I could employ for such a purpose. And so, as there was nothing else to do, I caught up the first jug that was within reach and sallied forth to the public-house

at the opposite corner, to get this pint of porter. I think it was nearly the only time in my life that I had purchased porter at a public-house, and I felt very strange. The bar-maid who served me looked at me with such amazement that I think she supposed that I had suddenly lost my reason. I assured her, however, that this was the *final* pint; and explained to her that it was not for myself, but for a man in whom I was deeply interested.

On arriving again at my little breakfast-party, with the jug and glass in hand, I poured the porter out as quietly as possible, without the "head" which porter drinkers are accustomed to appreciate. He took the glass and began to drink. At each gulp, his wife, daughter, and I gave such a unanimous groan that, after two or three efforts, he put down the remainder, and said:

"This is the miserablest pint of porter that I ever drank. Where's your card, sir? I may as well sign it as drink any more."

And so he signed the pledge, and afterward obtained a situation as a gardener, not very far from Melbourne Hall. One of my working-men friends, who heard the story and had become interested in him, went a mile out of his way each Sunday morning to fetch him to the service, with the result that he was shortly after converted to God. Before I left Leicester, I had the pleasure

of meeting him and his wife, looking perfectly transformed and radiant with thankfulness for the blessing which had been brought into their lot.

This incident, somehow, got into the local papers, and sent a laugh, at my expense, all through Leicester. But a more serious result was that I received a letter from the coffee-house company—whether in joke or earnest I never could quite make out—asking me that I should never again use their precious crockery for carrying anything stronger than coffee. Of course I wrote a very polite and humble letter back. But I am not sure whether I would not repeat the offense if I had the chance; and I would be prepared to do a great deal more if I could only induce another man to sign the pledge, and abandon the use of that greatest foe of domestic blessedness and manly virtue.

Once more, as I close this reminiscence, I would urge on all Christian people who may read these words the duty which is incumbent upon them of coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty; of abandoning at their own tables and in their own use this accursed thing; and of taking a pronounced and active interest in the cause of Christian Total Abstinence. It is, of course, wise to set on foot all those agencies which will improve the well-being of the people, for it is cer-

tain that adverse social and physical conditions conduce very much to the use of intoxicants; but there is probably no other way of saving those who have already fallen into this fatal habit, than by abjuring the use of alcohol for one's self, and then exerting that personal influence which is so often the means, in the hands of God, of winning a sinner from the error of his ways, and covering a multitude of sins.

XI.

"Providence House"

"I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the world go right;
But only to *discover* and to *do*,
With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints.
I will trust in him,
That he can hold his own."

JEAN INGELOW.

WHEN I commenced my mission at the prison gate, I endeavored to find work for my *protégés* by going with them to various manufacturers that were known to me, and to others who were not so well known. And I will say, with gratitude, that I was received with uniform kindness; and in many cases every endeavor was made to help me. But it was not entirely satisfactory—partly because the heads of the firms left their departments almost entirely to their managers, with whom they did not care to interfere; and partly because it was often prejudicial to a workman to seem too entirely under the patronage of "a parson." Besides this, I had no opportunity

of keeping in touch with men who needed my help and guidance. And, in addition, it consumed so much of my time to go round the town from one to another, waiting to see those who could help me.

Of course there were a great many cases in which men who came out of prison went back to their former berths, or were able to find employment for themselves. I am not now speaking of these; but of those who had no employment to turn to, and perhaps no trade at their fingers' ends by which to support themselves. This latter was rather a numerous class; and I found it most needful to set all such to work as soon as possible, before they relapsed, under the pressure of their companions, into their former sins.

This led me to wonder whether it might not be possible to start some kind of manufacture of my own, in which I could employ and supervise those who gave signs of being willing to help themselves if an opportunity were offered them. The first attempt was made in a cellar, where two men started chopping wood and making it up in bundles. The only outlay, so far, was in choppers, string, etc., and I was encouraged to go forward. Next to this, a small factory was taken, with a room below and one above, where we were able to employ more hands, and began to do a much larger trade. One of my working-

men, who was a shoe-finisher, kindly brought his work away from his own home, and did it on the premises, looking after the men at the same time. The goods were taken out first in a truck, and then by a small pony-cart; and though I did not make any profit, there was no loss, and it seemed as if we were on the right track.

There was one lack, however—we had the men during the day, but we had not sufficient control over them at night; and it seemed that if only we could have a place where they might work during the day and sleep at night, without the necessity of going out for any purpose whatever, it might be the means of delivering them from temptation, and at the same time of instilling into their minds the principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

While these thoughts were passing through my head, I happened to hear of a large disused yard and workshops, formerly occupied by a builder and contractor, and to be had at a reduced rent. I went to see them, and at once felt that this was the very accommodation we required. The premises were within a quarter of an hour's walk from my house. On the left hand of the entrance was a house which would suit well for the manager, and for the nucleus of a Boys' Refuge in the upper story. Going down the yard, on the right, was a stable with a loft,

that could be adapted for a mess-room and sleeping-room; while at the end of the yard was a long workshop, open below, but closed in the upper room, in which I could carry on all my work. A long wall running on the right-hand side of the yard, opposite the stable before mentioned, afforded ample opportunity for the erection of separate wooden workshops, as soon as all our space in the more permanent building was occupied. But the rent was £100 per annum.

It was vain to think of linking on so great a work to the Prisoners' Aid Society; nor did I feel able to form a separate committee for this special agency. It was laid on my heart, therefore, to assume the entire responsibility, with no treasurer but the Lord himself. I did not undertake it without much thought and prayer. Like Peter, I kept saying, "If it be thou, bid me come!" Then I waited for his reply.

It came at last. I was in the train on my way to spend two or three days at Llandudno, when as distinctly as possible I became conscious of the impression that I was to go forward; and that my God would be my treasurer and guide, failing me in no good thing, but leading me forward a step at a time. It is a glad thing for a man when he receives such an intimation as I did then. Nothing can hurt him, nothing daunt. All his need is met as it arises from those inexhaust-

ible stores; and he realizes that the work is no longer his, but God's through him, and that the whole weight of the responsibility is on the shoulders that bear the worlds. This is my record to the glory of God—that he never failed me. I had to use some of my own capital for that business; I passed through some terrific difficulties; I had much to plan and arrange; there was a great expenditure of time and energy; but I never regret having gone into it. There are fruits of the work existing in many places; and when I left Leicester, it was so arranged, through the goodness of God, that every penny of my private income was replaced, so that I was not one tittle the poorer than when I started on an enterprise which to the eye of sense seemed altogether quixotic and absurd. If a man is sure that he is on God's plan, let him go forward, stepping down even on the waves—he cannot be ashamed. On my return from Llandudno—it was a Saturday afternoon, which I remember well—I sat down and wrote my acceptance of this big place, at this annual rental, for the term of three years; and also made an entry in my diary that I undertook it in partnership with God, as a member in a great firm or fellowship, in which the division was thus—he to find all the money and guidance necessary; I to yield my brain and hands that he might use them to execute his designs. That

evening a friend gave me my first donation, of £20. I received it with deep emotion. It appeared to be so evidently the Lord's assurance; and I determined to call the place "Providence House."

The process of adaptation took some little time. The drains of the stable were plugged up with cement, the stalls removed, and the place transformed into a comfortable mess-room and kitchen, with cooking-range. The harness-room was turned into a lavatory. The hay-loft was fitted up with nineteen beds, after necessary alterations and enlargement. A number of beds were also put into the upper rooms of the manager's house.

In the workshop a crank for hand labor was erected to turn the circular saw, with which it was connected through a fly-wheel and leathern bands. And along the wall a number of cozy wooden workshops were put up, in which men might sit, working alone, and tying the chopped wood into bundles.

The neighbors heard of my intentions with dismay. The idea that I should establish a settlement of jail-birds in the midst of so respectable a quarter! Landlords wrote remonstrating with me for bringing down the price of property. Town councilors were urged to bring the matter forward in the municipal meeting. And lock-

smiths had quite a busy time of it in making good old and broken locks, fitting keys, and preparing against a siege, if the need should arise. Thank God, the event proved that none of these preparations were needed. No harm came of my little settlement. In time prejudice was disarmed; and the people would open their windows at our prayer times, that they might hear our men sing the praises of God.

But, on the other hand, my own people had begun to take an unexpected interest in the work. The ladies looked after the furnishing. One gave all the blankets, a second the sheets, a third the coverlets. Some gave one thing, some another, as the Lord prompted them. Difficulties were overcome with the sanitary authorities and others; and at last the opening day came, and the Dedication Service. This service was held in the upper room of the long workshop, and the place was formally handed over to God for his use and blessing; and he at least never forgot that it was from the first thus intrusted to him. After the meeting, the people went all around, inspecting the arrangements, and full of interest and expectancy as to the results.

We then began to fill up the beds, and to take in likely cases. There was no difficulty in this, as we had a constant stream pouring out of the prison, besides many old hands. Our first idea

was to feed the men as part of their earnings; but we found that each man preferred to be his own cook. So we ultimately arranged to pay about one shilling and threepence for hand labor in turning the crank, and about one shilling and sixpence for making up bundles. Out of this we expected fourpence to be returned to us for the bed, and the rest was largely used to provide food. If there were a surplus, we received it, allowing it to accumulate toward the purchase of articles of clothing.

Thus the men lived with us—working in the sheds during the day; sleeping under our roof at night; and constantly plied with those high and holy motives which come from repeated services and contact with Christian men. The latter is a principle of the highest importance in redemptive work; and it has been largely adopted by the Moravians, whose "brothers" work beside those whom they would save, esteeming it a sufficient reward if by their presence they can stay the spread of corruption, or instill the precepts of the gospel of Christ.

XII.

I Become a Fire-wood Merchant

"Nay, best it is, indeed,
To spend ourselves upon the general good;
And, oft misunderstood,
To strive to lift the limbs, and knees that bleed;
This is the best, the fullest meed.
Let ignorance assail or hatred sneer;
Who loves his race, he shall not fear."

LEWIS MORRIS.

AND so it befell that I became a Fire-wood Merchant, and had faint hopes of making my fortune! I purchased two horses and three carts, which went out laden with fire-wood two or three times a day, in charge of my drivers, who usually disposed of their stock. And the Leicester folk awoke amusedly to see "F. B. MEYER, FIRE-WOOD MERCHANT," among the other businesses for which that famous town was noted.

At first the anxiety was very oppressive; and I sometimes wonder how I was able to bear the strain of it, combined with my work at the prison,

which I never neglected, and my preaching, pastoral, and other ministerial duties. For at that time Melbourne Hall, with all its great operations, was in full work; and I had each Sunday night a crowded audience of about fifteen hundred people, of which thoughtful men formed a large proportion.

It was not always easy to keep up a supply of wood with a comparatively limited capital. Then there was considerable anxiety with the tramps and others who turned the crank of the circular saw. There was also the need to see after the bundles of wood, which were made up in the little sheds, in which each man sat at work by himself. Sometimes these bundles were too large, or too small, or too loosely tied; or the wood looked common and dirty, preventing our sales. In addition to all of which, the salesmen did not always do their work as well as they might. But all these things drove me very near God. It really seemed as though I were in partnership with him, and were counting on him at every step. I owed much also to my manager, who did his best to assist me, and has since taken on the business. It was a pleasure for me to arrange such terms as made it easy for him to do so.

But from time to time extraordinary difficulties arose. Here is a sample. I had always taken a leading part in the temperance and Blue Ribbon

movements; and the committee, of which I was president, was constantly engaged in a crusade against public-houses in Leicester and the neighborhood. On one occasion we promoted a deputation to ask the magistrates to reduce the number of grocers' licenses.

It is not easy to gauge the amount of injury done through the sale on the part of grocers of wines and spirits. Many a woman first learns to drink by the temptation thus put into her way. And it is so easy for her to get drink without attracting the notice of her neighbors by going or sending to the public-house. Besides, in the weekly account the liquor supplied to her can go down among the groceries; and many a working-man has bitterly rued the day when the drink came into his home by way of the grocer's shop.

To reduce the number of these licenses was our aim; and a map was prepared, dotted with round red spots, each of which indicated the presence of a liquor shop. On the morning when the deputation met at the Temperance Hall with the view of proceeding to the magistrates, it was suddenly discovered that the prominent men who were to have headed the deputation had not come. A hurried consultation was held, and it was unanimously agreed that the office should be assigned to myself. I was not altogether un-

aware what it would involve, but I dared not flinch. It has always been a habit with me not to put on others work which I would not do myself, and so I undertook the duty.

The court was crowded with the liquor dealers and their friends—with young lawyers who enjoyed the opportunity of baiting the saints; with policemen and officials. We made our statement, enforced the undesirableness of multiplying the objectionable licenses, and did our best to impress the Bench, which gave us a friendly hearing. Indeed, in their private capacity, all the magistrates were friends of mine; though on such an occasion we preserved a decorous distance. So we withdrew.

But then the storm broke. In the evening notices were sent out, and a meeting of the drink-sellers was held to discuss the situation, and especially my action. It was then unanimously agreed that as I had dared to interfere with their trade, they would "boycott" my fire-wood; and as my principal business was done among small grocers, this was a very serious matter. No grocer who had a license was free to buy our wood. Every epithet was heaped on me. Every bar-room rung with execration. And I was dared to go down certain streets of Leicester, under pain of personal violence. I walked down those streets the next day or two after in the most

leisurely way, knowing that those who brag most are cowards at heart.

Still it was sufficiently alarming. My chief means of carrying on the business lay in my ready-money returns from the shops. It was only thus that I could pay for my wood and keep my business going. And now suddenly the sales fell away to about *one third* of their former amount; the carts came back, day after day, almost as they started in the morning; and the salesmen became very disheartened. Besides, how could I go on with my manufacturing, when my piles of unused bundles were accumulating so largely?

Friends heard of my perplexities and generously helped me. I never shall forget the kindness of one or two; and I laid the matter before Him on whom I ever looked as the chief Partner in the firm. And after two or three weeks the tide began to turn. The sales went up. The carts came back from their rounds empty, and we were all more hopeful. On one of these evenings, as a driver came in with his cart, I asked him what had altered the attitude of our customers, and he replied: "*Well, sir, you see, the people don't like you any better than they did; but they say the religious fire-wood is better weight than the other fire-wood, and so they are coming back to us.*" It is a good thing to put your religion into fire-wood. It pays!

The routine of the day was as follows: The men were supposed to be up at six. An hour's work was done before breakfast. I managed to arrive at 7:45 for prayers. This was always a great occasion. Imagine a transformed stable, with tables running from end to end, except where broken by a great flat stove, in and on which several breakfasts were being cooked, the odor from them being extraordinarily fragrant. It was sometimes as much as I could do to stand my ground. Then the men came in, sometimes as many as thirty or thirty-five. We sang one of Sankey's hymns, more or less in tune, but always heartily. Next came the reading and exposition of some brief passage of Scripture, followed by prayer.

When prayer was over, any complaints were made or disputes adjudicated, the story of one of which I will here relate.

We had been much troubled with men breaking out again in drink, though one of the conditions of residence with us was that the pledge should be strictly kept. Here was a great problem. I could not turn the men out of my place without abandoning my efforts for their welfare; and if they left Providence House, there was nowhere for them to turn to. I could not punish them, of course; and yet it was essential to do something. So one morning I made the proposi-

tion that if a man broke out drinking he should leave the place, unless the rest of us were willing to raise *ten shillings* between us for the funds of the Prisoners' Aid Society. Of this sum the men were to contribute 2s. 6d., and I 7s. 6d. In this way I hoped to bind them into a sort of Mutual Protection Society.

Shortly after this four men broke out drinking all together; and after prayers they were sent outside while the rest of us consulted what to do. It was very interesting to watch the experiment, and to feel that for the first time some of the men were genuinely interested in each other's welfare, and stood in a strait between their own interests and the salvation of their brothers.

"Why should we fine ourselves for them?" said one.

"Well," said I, "on the same principle as led the Almighty to give Christ to die."

"Let's pick out one of them," said another.

"No," said the rest; "all or none."

And at last, after a great deal of talk, they agreed to raise half-a-crown for each of the men, making ten shillings in all, and I found the remainder.

It was very touching. One man gave up the money he was saving for some boots; another what he had put aside for his dinner; and so on. Then the four men were admitted. We told them

what we had done, and how we were willing to suffer in order to save them. It touched a new chord in their hearts, bound the whole of them together with a new tie, and helped to build up a strong breakwater of public sentiment against the drink, behind which the weaker could take shelter. Thus we tried to carry out the inspired injunction, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Under the rough upper crust of men of this class there are noble and generous qualities, crushed by long years of lovelessness, passion, drink, and self-will, and waiting for the call of the Saviour. Beneath his touch, and the entrance of his life, they awake; and instead of being spasmodic and fitful, become the permanent principles and possessions of the soul.

XIII.

Various Methods

"In blessing we are blest,
In labor find our rest;
If we bend not to the world's work, heart
and hand and brain,
We have lived our life in vain."

C. SEYMOUR.

AMONG other interesting results of my work at the prison gate, there are two or three which require notice, in order to give a complete idea of the various agencies set on foot.

First of these was the *Window-Cleaning Brigade.* It was said, a little unfairly, that a man must get into prison before I would do anything to help him. Indeed, rumor had it that some men actually committed some trifling offense, that through the prison cell they might come into my hands. This seemed to put a premium on crime; and I felt that I must discover some way by which respectable men who were out of employment might be enabled to help themselves.

After considerable cogitation, I bought a ladder or two, some pails, and leathers, and started one or two men on the job of window-cleaning. Cards on which my name was printed, which guaranteed their respectability, were left from door to door, to be followed up a day or two after. My friends throughout the town were very kind; and I think that, in many cases, windows were burnished to an extent that was a little out of the ordinary. Thus encouraged, I felt emboldened to try a larger venture, more especially as my ladders were too short to reach upper windows; and, notwithstanding my guarantees of respectability, my friends did not see their way to admit my *protégés* within their houses. Besides which, inducements were held out to me that I could do the large factories of the town at so much a window, if only I had ladders long enough to reach them. The result was that in a short time, at the cost (I almost shudder to say it) of some £20, I found myself possessed of two of the longest ladders in the town of Leicester. I think I can see them now, with my name printed down one side, "Rev. F. B. Meyer's Window-Cleaning Brigade." They were evidently so cumbersome, that when they were brought to the coffee-house one morning, I gave instructions for a special cart to be constructed to carry them; and the whole needed at least four men to push

the cart to and fro, and to set the ladders up and move them.

Many hairs were turned gray on account of the initial anxieties in starting this new branch of my work, arising largely from the fact that my men did not seem to recognize the distinction between the wages I gave them and the money that was paid for their work, some of which was due to me for my outlay. However, the result, as far as employing men who were out of work was concerned, amply justified my expenditure; and I had the satisfaction of employing men until they secured situations, which they had an opportunity of doing by moving among the residents and manufacturers of the town. As I was constantly about the streets, I met different members of my brigade, with their ladders and pails; and I always think kindly of my people at Melbourne Hall, that they were not scandalized at the eminently practical side of their pastor's character.

On the same line, and to give employment to the same class, I started the *Messenger Brigade*, something after the fashion of the Commissionaire Corps. This was intended more especially to help old men who were no longer fit for laborious work. We began with four, in different parts of the town. They stood at certain spots, waiting to be sent on errands, to be called in to black

boots, or do any odd jobs about the house. They wore a specially-made hat with my name in the front, and were paid so much per quarter of an hour, or per quarter of a mile, keeping all they earned. Had I remained in Leicester, I believe this might have been made a great success. Only one old man clings now to the spot where I located him, by Victoria Road Church, and I believe he still has one of these hats. He always comes to hear me preach on my occasional visits; and I am glad to think that I have done something to brighten his life. I have a sort of feeling that even in heaven he will tell me with a kind of simple pleasure that he was one of my messengers. He has now a little hut, like a sentry-box, that screens him from the weather; and many people treat him kindly for my sake.

One more item, though I trust that my readers will not accuse me of garrulity or egotism. My one desire in giving these chapters from my life is to show what an ordinary man, apparently without special aptitude for this sort of work, was nevertheless able to effect. When I first took Providence House, it was my intention to make it serve a double purpose—for discharged prisoners on the one hand, and for homeless lads who had been in prison, or were in danger of going there, on the other. In the top floor of the manager's house were several beds, and these I

filled with street boys who were in moral danger. Some of them I employed in the fire-wood factory, paying them wages of which they returned me something for their keep; for others we obtained situations among the manufacturers of the town.

We had some strange and surprising experiences among the lads; for instance, one afternoon the whole of them slipped out of the place, "to walk to London" to improve their position, evidently under the notion that its streets were paved with gold! We, however, not knowing where they had gone, were filled with dismay. But it so happened that one of our wood-carts coming in from the country happened to meet them walking bravely along the London Road, and brought us word; so my manager started in pursuit. We had this hold upon them, that the clothes they wore were our property. It was understood between them and us that they were a loan, and that they were free to leave us at any moment on returning to us our belongings. This enabled us to arrest the runaways and to bring them back.

I was very much encouraged with the work we were able to do among these boys. No other field of my work yielded such harvests. I could see the improvement working in them from week to week; and in many cases we received excellent

reports from their employers. To find further work for them we started cane-chair making, and produced chairs which are still to be seen in various parts of Leicester; but each chair could tell a story. All I need say here is that, if any of my friends should be thinking of teaching boys to make cane chairs, they should write to me for further particulars, as I would earnestly warn them against the attempt.

By far the best plan is to procure situations for the lads in the factories within easy reach of their Home; and this was the plan ultimately resorted to by us. This branch of the work was removed from Providence House, and a Boys' Home was opened in a neighboring street. I rented a suitable house, placed there my true and trusty friends, Mr. Burnham and his wife, guaranteed the rent, and started the little family. The lads were expected to bring us the whole of their wages. We deducted eight shillings for their keep, gave them sixpence for pocket-money, and put the remainder on one side for clothes or other necessaries. This system, with the help of a few outside subscriptions, secures the maintenance of the two good souls that nobly fulfill the office of parents to those who perhaps have never known father or mother.

This Boys' Home still flourishes, and is the means of starting many a young lad on the up-

ward path. After spending three or four years in the Home, the lads are able to take lodgings for themselves; and it is a great pleasure, from time to time, to hear tidings of their welfare.

One is a young Christian soldier, who reports himself when returning on furlough. Another is a most devoted Christian artisan. Others from time to time write to say that they are doing well, either in England or abroad. I subjoin extracts from two letters received comparatively lately. One writes:

"I write to you these few lines, hoping that they will reach you and find you quite well. I was glad to see you here in Leicester, and to shake your hand. I did not know what to say to you then; but if the people who gathered around you were not there, I should have liked to say a few more words with you. When we come to look back on the past, when you did come down to Providence House and talked to us all, there is one thing I do remember of your kindness to me, and trying to lead me to God; that was when you took me by myself and prayed for me, and forgave the wrong that I did. I am sure if I had not come to your Home I should have gone down into deeper sin. But God was with me, though I did not know it then. But I know it now, and it is only by my prayer that I have had blessing from him. I do thank God now in my heart for his kindness in preserving me from evil, and in giving me good things. I must tell you that I have been home and seen my friends. They were all very pleased to see me indeed; and I told them a good bit of my past life, especially my mother."

Another, a young man, now doing well in the United States, writes:

"I do thank you, sir, for helping me to come to this country; it has been my salvation; the seed you sowed in my heart at Leicester was not lost, but has sprung up, after lying dormant so long."

Many who desire to help friendless lads might work on these lines, which appear to me to do the maximum amount of good for the minimum expenditure of money and thought; the only necessity is to be prepared to supplement the income of the Home with a few outside subscriptions, in case slackness of work or other causes produce a slight annual deficit.

I have not made very prominent the earnest religious influence which we always sought to bring to bear upon the various characters whom these methods brought within our reach. Ours was no mere humanitarianism. The efforts we made for the material well-being of these men were subordinate to the constant desire to promote their total abstinence, and, above all, their devotion to Christ. Sometimes I had straight talks with them, oftenest I think they felt that I was expecting them to live pure, sober, God-fearing lives; and one by one several gave evidence that they were passing into the Kingdom. That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual.

XIV.

The Streets

"Let us watch awhile the sowers, let us mark their tiny grain,
Scattered oft in doubt and trembling, sown in weakness and in pain;
Then let Faith, with radiant finger, lift the veil from unseen things,
Where the golden sheaves are bending, and the harvest anthem rings."

F. R. HAVERGAL.

THIS Prison Mission introduced me into a great variety of Christian and philanthropic work throughout the town of Leicester. Most people knew of me, even if they were not personally acquainted with me; and one was able to do and say things which had not been received in such good part unless my fellow-townsfolk had learned to trust and respect my motives.

One of the most interesting branches of work was the expeditions which a band of Christian working-men and I used to make into the streets of Leicester on Saturdays, especially in the winter. We met about 9:30 in the evening, at the close

of the prayer-meeting; and, after we had fortified ourselves with supper, and divided into twos, taking several directions, we dived down amid the great multitudes of people that filled the streets.

What a sight they used to be, those Leicester streets on Saturday night! The glare of the gas in the market-place reflected from the clouds; the murmur of voices; the clatter of boots over the ill-paved causeways in the back parts of the town; the bags, and parcels, and satchels filled with purchases for the week. The working-classes seemed to reserve all their shopping for that single night, and to turn out *en masse* to do it. The public-houses were, of course, in full blast, the bars crowded with people; and scores of men would be reeling home, some just able to walk, others uproariously merry, others again inclined to fight. There would be plenty of incident to arrest the attention, plenty of cases needing a helping hand.

We were a kind of moral and spiritual ambulance corps. Sometimes we stopped a drunken fight; or led home a bewildered inebriate, making an appointment to call on him the following morning, to take his pledge and bring him to the house of God. At other times we might have to argue with a man for an hour or two, as he kept putting us off with false addresses, or evaded our inquiries. Often we were able to arrest some one whom we knew to be in temptation, and to say

in the words of Scripture, "What doest thou here?"

Here let me be garrulous, and tell one story which is as fresh to me as on the day on which it happened. One drizzling Saturday afternoon I was in search of adventure in my favorite resort when in certain moods—the streets. My preparations being finished for the coming day, I felt free. As I was going down one long dreary street, I suddenly came on a man propped up against the wall, which he dared not leave for fear of falling, for drink had affected his motor nerves, though it had left his brain clear. He was unable to walk steadily, but quite able to understand what he was doing and what happened subsequently. A group of small children were eying him with astonishment, and I think he was addressing them more or less coherently. Discovering his plight, I offered to take him home. At first he refused, because I was too much of a gentleman. But finally I overcame his objections, and we started. He was a much bigger man than myself, and heavier; and I found it very difficult to keep him steady with one hand, and to shelter us both under my umbrella with the other.

Being anxious to take him to the address he had given me with as little delay as possible, I thoughtlessly took what I knew to be a shorter

cut, forgetting for the moment that it ended in a walk across some clay-pits, on the farther side of which his home lay. It was a perilous adventure, the remembrance of which even now makes me shudder; for no sooner had we got over the stile, and were well started on the sticky soil, than he collapsed helplessly on the ground, making it impossible for me to keep my feet, an experience which was repeated more than once in that never-to-be-forgotten tramp. In fact, no Turkish bath that I have enjoyed since has had a greater effect upon me than my efforts to keep my charge upon his feet on that slippery clay. A man passed by without offering to help, who reminded me instantly of the Levite in the parable; and yet how could I blame him, who perhaps had no change of clothes to substitute for those which would certainly have become thickly coated if he had borne me company?

At last we reached the other side, with its *terra firma*, and a few steps brought us to his home. We went up the side passage, and appeared in a besmirched condition as to our clothes, before the window of the back kitchen, where his wife and children were having tea. I can now see the look of wonder upon the woman's face. She could not understand who this man was that had brought her husband home; and I think she feared that I was a policeman in plain clothes.

Her fears, however, were soon dissipated, and we sat down at the table.

"Missus, give the gentl'm'n some tea," he said; and she at once climbed a chair, and began to search among her best china for a cup and saucer. Now, I always dread best china, partly because I am afraid of breaking it, and partly because of the dust which generally gathers in it; and so I begged the good woman not to mind, but to give me a cup of tea in the first mug or cup that came to hand. While she was preparing to do this, he broke in:

"Have ye got any of them cards with yer?"

"What cards?" said I.

"Them teetotal cards," he replied.

"Oh, yes," said I, "plenty;" for I always carried a supply of them with me.

His wife then sought for the ink, and brought at last from the front room a pot, in which were the dried remains of what had been ink, like the ashes of an extinct volcano. With these we made shift, and with some difficulty got the card signed. The wife and children had no need to copy his example, for they were already on the safe side. And I left the house with many assurances that he would come and hear me preach—which he did; and that afternoon ended most satisfactorily, in the winning of his soul for a new Master.

On another occasion, late one Saturday night, I picked up a man, incapable of taking care of himself, and found that he belonged to the neighboring little town of Loughborough. He confessed to me that he was married, his wife as nice a girl as you would wish to see; that she did not know where he was, but would be looking for him. Then he relapsed into a state of incoherency; and there was nothing for it but to take him to the station, pay his fare, give him in charge of the guard, and put in his pocket a piece of paper, with words like these written on it in a clear hand:

"My friend, I found you in the streets of Leicester, unable to care for yourself, because you were so drunk; I paid your fare, and sent you back to Loughborough. I urge you, in the strength of Christ, to give up this accursed habit, which will ruin body and soul."

But my working-men met with adventures even more thrilling and interesting; and they were happy hours in which we recounted our experiences. What a romance there is in the streets! Comedy and tragedy within touch; lights and shadows chasing each other, as they do across the hills. Who need live a lonely life when within reach of such a wealth of human need, and sorrow, and love, only waiting our search!

Closely connected with this were the open-air

services we held two or three times a week during the summer. Ah, those meetings by the weighing-machine in the Humberstone Gate, and in the Infirmary Square! My voice is not naturally suited for this kind of work; but I used to do most in guiding the meeting, giving out the hymns, introducing the speakers or solo singers, and giving the last fifteen minutes' talk.

If a man wants to learn to speak, let him go into the street, stand up on a chair, and begin. It will not be long before he learns what sort of talk will hold an audience. His congregation is apt to disappear in a remarkably short time, so soon as he becomes prosy. It is a great mistake to think that any one or that any kind of talk will do for the open air. We should put our best men forward there, and they should give their very best utterances. An open-air audience will listen to good, earnest, common sense, and you may season it with that natural play of humor and *bonhomie* which come and go when the soul is speaking without reserve.

I always sought to have a little ring gathered around me; but before now I have started absolutely alone. But the meetings which began with most discouragement generally ended with most success—as we discovered when, at the end of the service, we marched to the mission hall and counted up our gains.

There is so much in the open air to suggest topics for speech. The telegraph wires, speaking of prayer, and the messages which are ever flashing into our souls; the precautions taken against the lightning stroke and the outbreak of fire; the earthenware pipes to be laid underground, representing the life hidden with Christ in God, through which living water flows; the crescent moon, recalling the incompleteness which is the lot of us all; the full moon, emblematic of the light which, when in perfect fellowship with Jesus, we catch and reflect; the noise of the carts drowning the speaker's utterances as the rush of worldliness and business does "the still small voice." Texts peep out on all sides, and illustrations coyly offer themselves ready made.

Christian man, pining for a sphere of usefulness! young aspirant for a pulpit! minister, without a charge! take my advice. Do not pine in inaction on the shore; launch out into the deep of the streets, and let down your nets for a draught.

XV.

"The Cathedral"

"I believe
In one Priest, and one Temple, with its floors
Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and eve
By countless knees of earnest auditors;
And crystal walls too lucid to perceive—
That none may take the measure of the place
And say, 'So far the porphyry, then, the flint:
To this mark Mercy goes, and there ends Grace.'"

E. B. BROWNING.

BY this time I had become surrounded by a number of working-men who had been saved from the drink, and were willing to help me save others. They used to gather at the prison gate to render voluntary help whenever work permitted; so that sometimes I had a group of five or six men clustered by the big gate, waiting for my appearance with my morning's output of prisoners. I always called them by their Christian names—Joe, Harry, Alf, and so forth, to each of whom a prisoner was consigned for conveyance

to the coffee-house. There they would attend to their wants, talk to them, and help me in many ways.

Finally, some of them desired to start work on their own account, and obtained permission to visit the tramp wards of the workhouse each Sunday afternoon. Those services have been continued ever since, and have led—I am glad to hear—to the material as well as the spiritual welfare of the tramps, in whose surroundings a great change for the better has been made by the authorities.

In addition to this, my friends gained entrance to a common lodging-house, which was clean and well-conducted, and to which I was in the habit of sending a good many customers. Services were held there every Sunday evening, and were enthusiastically welcomed; and I have every reason to believe that the lodging-house keeper had not only more respectable "dossers," but more of them, owing to the fact of the services being conducted there. He finally offered me the use of an old loft in his back yard, in which it was difficult to stand upright except in the center. It was reached by a crazy ladder; and when I saw it first it was in an indescribable condition of rotten timbers, dust, and neglect. Indeed, it seemed more fit to be tenanted by rats and mice, or by stray birds entering through the broken panes of

glass in the windows, than to be of any use in the direction to which our thoughts immediately tended when we heard that it might be ours.

The working-men and I, however, resolved that we would do our very best to transform this dilapidated room into a meeting-place for the lodgers and neighbors. So we set to work, they giving time and labor, and I providing the materials necessary. It was the subject of immense interest for some weeks; and at last, one Sunday afternoon, as was announced at Melbourne Hall and by bills, I went down solemnly to dedicate it for the purposes of divine worship. There was an unusual stir in the street; neighbors were standing about in little groups, and as many of the lodgers and of my own people as could were crowding the little room to suffocation. But it was a very pretty sight that greeted me; the floor had been repaired, the walls had been color-washed and adorned with texts. Low seats had been placed across the room, a table put for me at the end, and the whole appearance was so inviting as I looked upon the sixty or seventy that had crowded in, that I dubbed the place by the name of "The Cathedral," a name which I believe it bears still. How they sang! How I preached! I have addressed many audiences, but I may fairly exclaim concerning that: How they listened! The very babies seemed to feel

the spell of their unwonted surroundings, and slept.

The bishop of this cathedral was, of course, myself; but the dean was a dear friend of mine, by trade a painter, tall, and straight, and true, whose work has resulted in winning many jewels for Christ's crown from those scenes of squalor and drunkenness. The result of the services held there, among the peddlers and flower-sellers, and other people that frequented the house, soon became apparent; and of this an amusing illustration was given shortly before I left Leicester.

It was my habit then, as now, to spend the bank holidays and Saturday afternoons with my people, especially with the young men—a practice which I would earnestly recommend to Christian ministers. The first conception of this was suggested by the story told in Kingsley's life of his work at Chester; of which it is said that, on the Saturday afternoons, the canon and his daughters would conduct from sixty to a hundred persons for botanical and geological investigation in the neighborhood. "Those were bright afternoons," the biographer says, "all classes mingling together; people who had lived next door to each other in Chester for years, perhaps, without exchanging a word, now meeting upon equal and friendly terms in pursuit of one ennobling object, and traveling in second-class carriages together,

without distinction of rank or position, to return at the end of the long summer evening, to their old city, refreshed and inspirited, with nosegays of wild flowers, geological specimens, and happy thoughts of God's earth, and of their fellow-creatures."

I could not lay claim to more than a smattering of geological knowledge, while I am deplorably ignorant of botany; but I tried to compensate for my deficiency in these respects by acquainting myself with the archæology of Leicester, which contains as many ancient remains as any town of its size. Ah! those days, when we visited St. Mary's Church, where the crusaders would watch the night before they started for the Holy Land; the site of the ancient Roman amphitheater, with the stump of the pillar that marked the stadium; the tessellated pavement, lying six feet below the level of the street, on which couriers, fresh from Rome, may have brought the tidings of the persecution of the followers of Christ; the Town Hall, where Shakespeare played, and Elizabeth held court; the church where George Fox "brawled"; the piece of wall where Rupert made one of his hottest charges, and Bunyan is said narrowly to have escaped death; these and such like would gather from eighty to a hundred young men who learned to read history from the books of old stones and moldering monuments.

In these explorations I received much help from various friends. One very happy afternoon, for instance, was spent at St. Mary's Church, already alluded to, under the personal direction of my friend, the late Canon Broughton. It is one of the finest churches in Leicester, and presents, in its various restorations, specimens of all the principal styles of architecture. The fine old gateway and the adjacent Newarke (New Work) are full of historic interest; and hard by is the bridge spanning the Soar, by which King Richard passed to Bosworth Field.

For more mixed audiences in the summer, we would arrange walks to the neighboring villages, where the kind people connected with humble chapels would provide us with tea, in return for which we held brief services. And it was at one of these that the trivial incident took place which I was about to narrate when I was led off on this long digression—much as when a whiff of air, bearing some country scent, carries the mind back to scenes now engulfed by the devouring waves of time.

We had walked to Anstey in the early afternoon, a large party, on a bank holiday. We were rather tired in the sultry weather, and eager for tea. Some were within the little chapel, hastening the preparations, while the majority were sitting with me on the steps, or standing about singing

hymns. Suddenly a conveyance drew up whose driver, and pair of horses, and general appearance, were all that could be desired. The vehicle had evidently been specially hired for the occasion; and I expected nothing less than that several of the Melbourne Hall people, who were possessed of more money than walking powers, had hired it to bring them, when, on closer inspection, I discovered that they were almost all strangers to me. But they were recognized instantly by some in the group as being the congregation from "the Cathedral." Costermongers, flower-women, peddlers, filigree-ornament makers, street fruit-sellers, fish-hawkers—some of whom had been in jail, but all were now total abstainers, if not Christians—had found their new life so profitable that they were not only able to dress respectably, but to treat themselves for a day in the country, hiring the conveyance for their greater comfort.

It may seem but a little thing; but their evident delight, and the shouts with which they were welcomed, and the way in which they were received into our circle, were to me a very gratifying indication of the value of persistent and devoted Christian endeavor. They much wanted me to ride home with them, but the larger demands of the walking party claimed me.

Before I left Leicester I had a scheme which I propounded to some of the principal men, of building common lodging-houses under the direction of the Council; sure I am that the majority of those who frequent such places would be thankful for more decent and wholesome surroundings. But this scheme fell through on my removal from Leicester; and I am glad to know how much good has been done in this direction by the London County Council. I have, therefore, contented myself with superintending two respectable common lodging-houses since I came to London, the story of which would be too long to tell. On the one hand, the enterprise has developed some of the noblest qualities of manhood in my fellow-workers, three or four of whom have elected to live in the common lodging-house, that they might better help the inmates. On the other hand, not a few have passed from the lowest degradation into a new life; and some, by the help of our Industrial Farm, in which I am interested, and with the assistance of the Self-help Emigration Society, have entered upon promising careers in the far West.

XVI.

On the Race-Course

"Greatly begin! though thou have time
But for a line, be that sublime—
Not Failure, but low aim, is crime! . . .
We are not poorer that we wept and yearned;
Though earth swing wide from God's intent,
And though no man nor nation
Will work with full consent
In heavenly gravitation—
Yet by one Sun is every orbit bent!"

LOWELL.

BEFORE finally leaving the record of my work at the prison gate, Leicester, I will relate how on one occasion it stood me in good stead, and was the means of saving, if not my life, at least my coat from being torn to shreds by an excited crowd.

It was a lovely day in July, and our Sunday-school was, as usual, having its treat on the same day on which the Leicester Races were being held, as a means of decoying the children from the perils of the race-course. It should be noted here as a piece of ancient history that when I

first knew Leicester, and for some years after, the races were held within the town, at the top of the London Road; and, being open to all comers without charge, were fraught with unutterable evil to the morals of the town.

It would be impossible to count all the young lives which were ruined on that breezy meadow; or how many Sunday-school scholars attracted first by curiosity were caught by a whirlpool the eddy of which finally sent them to perdition. Thank God, the episode which I am about to recount marked the conclusion of the time-honored custom of holding the races there; ever since, they have been celebrated beyond the boundaries of the town in an inclosure, for admittance to which each person is charged gate money.

For some previous days the town had been placarded by notices inviting the attendance of the townsfolk at a public meeting to be held on the course, just opposite the grand stand, at the conclusion of the last race, to determine whether the races should be in future held there or removed to Oadby. As one of the public, I resolved to accept the invitation, but without informing my most intimate friends of my resolve.

With as much equanimity as I could command, I took part in our school treat, played games with the children, as was my wont on such occasions, and in the scrimmage lost a very valuable keep-

sake; which I remember made a deep impression on my mind, in the midst of my not unnatural anxiety as to the issue of my adventure.

Stealing quietly away from the field about four o'clock in the afternoon, I made my way to the race-course, determined to protest against the continuance of the races in such near proximity, and under such free conditions.

I reached the spot as the bell was ringing for the last race, and waited quietly in the outskirts of the crowd as the horses swept by. For the first time in my life, I found myself surrounded by the extraordinary medley of people, and scenes, and spectacles, that converge to a race-course—like refuse to the bottom of the vat. The gypsies with the cocoa-nuts and Aunt Sallies; the coarse, hoarse-shouting professionals offering the odds; the mixture of vehicles, from that in which the fashionably-dressed woman was drinking champagne, to the costermonger's cart; the evident habitué, and the innocent-faced novice; the unceasing roar of human voices; the strained excitement until the winner was declared—all these made an impression on my mind which it is sufficient to have received once, and which one can never forget.

When the race was over, I pushed my way into the inclosure, not without having been recognized by several, who seemed utterly at a loss to un-

derstand my business there, and so to the entrance to the stand. Climbing the staircase, I found myself at the end of a long corridor that ran from end to end of the building; on the left were a number of doors entering into spacious rooms, which in turn opened on the galleries and verandas, from which views were to be obtained of the course. These were thronged with showily-dressed people—women in the gayest of costumes, the men in light dust-coats. There was a good deal of eating and drinking going forward, and loud talking, and general excitement.

I felt very sensible that I could do very little by myself, in face of the strong current which I knew was running against me. And yet I was conscious that God was asking of me a protest, which in the fewest words I was determined to try and give.

By this time the broad course in front of the stand was crowded with thousands of people, and I pushed my way forward to the front, and gave in my card to the gentleman who seemed to be in charge. A number crowded around me—young swells in sporting-coats asking who I was, and why I had come, and what I wanted. I told them, and aroused such a storm of indignation as threatened to sweep me before it. They shouted, gesticulated, swore at me; some said, "Let him speak," others threatened to throw me over; but

somehow I was pushed to the front, and there, looking down on the immense crowd, was speedily recognized, and my appearance was the signal for so great an uproar that it would have been impossible, even if my voice had been four times as strong as it is, to obtain an audience.

On finding this, and being uncomfortably aware that I had no base of operations, and that the gentlemen behind me were saying some very uncomplimentary things, and planning worse, I thought that discretion was the best part of valor, and prepared to beat a retreat; but on turning to do so was confronted with such a vision of human passion as would have filled me with terror had I not been so confident in the sincerity of my motive, and in the presence of God.

And I never can tell what would have happened, if at this moment a well-known shopkeeper, much given to drink, but who was a kind-hearted man in his sober moments, and who was a companion of many whom I had helped at the prison gate, had not come forward, and placed himself between the vehement crowd and myself, saying: "Gentlemen, you shall not touch him—he is kind to those who have got into trouble in the jail; let him go!"

He then constituted himself my protector, and led me down that corridor, which I remember seemed interminable, and which was now lined

on either side by a crowd who, if they dared, would no doubt have torn my clothes to shreds, as by their words they tried to do my character.

But I got safely out, and made my way to the house of a friend, who was rather scared by my white looks; for indeed I felt as if I had expended the whole of my nervous energy.

After a cup of tea, I set to work and wrote the protest that I had intended to deliver; and it was published in the *Leicester Daily Post* the following morning, with an account of the occurrence, which the reporter described as "a very extraordinary proceeding on the part of the reverend gentleman."

Of course, I do not pretend for a moment to say that that protest led to the discontinuance of the meetings on that site; but it attracted attention to the evils of the system, and it certainly was a very remarkable thing—which I can only attribute to the direct agency of God—that, contrary to every appearance, the races were discontinued. And the beautiful spot is now turned into a public park, where boys play cricket and children roam at large. It is one of the lungs of that great town in which I spent some of the happiest years of my life.

Wherever races are held, they are an unmitigated nuisance and source of temptation. For a month after this annual carnival we had to deal

with its wreckage, in the miserable men and women that issued from the jail, and were glad enough of our help. Boys who had plundered the till for money to make their bets or pay their losses; disreputable women locked up for being drunk and disorderly; a *rara avis* of a book-maker; and many of the same class.

It is impossible to disassociate the turf from betting; and the words of Kingsley are not a whit too strong, when he says: "Of all habits, gambling is the most intrinsically savage; morally it is unchivalrous and unchristian; the devil is the only father of it." Let the Church of Christ lead the crusade against this gigantic evil—by discouraging all appeals to chance; by ousting every form of gambling from bazaars; and by refusing to court the patronage of any, however highly-born and illustrious, who use their influence to foster a system which, in the words of the late Lord Beaconsfield, is "a vast engine of national demoralization."

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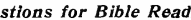

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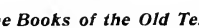

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