

WEYLLAND JOHN MATTHIAS

THE MAN WITH THE
BOOK; OR, THE BIBLE
AMONG THE PEOPLE

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John Matthias Weyland

The Man with the Book; or, The Bible Among the People

INTRODUCTION

TO all who desire to obtain an accurate knowledge of the inner life of London, and probably of all our large towns, and would ascertain, by studying the results of experience, the best mode of grappling with its evils, the following pages will be deeply interesting. They give the history and fruits of many years' labour among the most filthy, destitute, and degraded classes of the whole Metropolis. Yet these classes are by no means the most hopeless. A grand aggressive movement of Christianity against those strongholds of vice, disease, and misery, would end in a larger victory than in one of equal vigour against the obstinacy and self-satisfaction of the great body of the skilled artisans.

The publication of such papers is very important in these days, when inquiry and discussion are busy to discover the true secret of what is required at the present crisis for dealing with the vast masses of the people. So far as I can see, they have as yet reached no other conclusion (whether it be avowed or not) than that all existing arrangements and organizations, singly and collectively,

are inadequate to the task. The Established Church, by itself, is feeble; the Non-conformists still more so. The two, working together in harmony, might attain some happy issues; but, even on the supposition of their cordial union, a new machinery must be devised, as an adjunct to all our actual systems of operation.

It is vain to conceive that bricks and mortar, and the multiplication of churches and chapels, would accomplish the purpose. The sudden exhibition of many places of worship would rather avert than attract the people, who, through our long neglect of them, are full of prejudices and superstitions about such matters. The money laid out on these edifices would be better expended on an increase and maintenance of living agents of every sort and degree, as manifold, as various, and as special, as the wonderful congeries of human beings to whom their efforts would be addressed.

All the several agencies now at work have their merits, and the conductors of them can recite many instances of real success. But there is a lower depth into which we have to descend, and descend, not by fits and starts, but regularly and systematically. It is the steady continuity of the effort, and not its occasional vigour, that will make the profound and lasting impression. And this continuity cannot be kept up by the committees and directors alone. It must draw the main force of its life from the zeal, the fervour, the hearty feeling, and class-experience of the workers themselves. They must be numerous and active, and not a few of them be drawn from the very ranks they are enlisted to assail.

The first movements must be made on individuals, or at most on twos and threes. Every filthy court must be invaded, the dark and terrible retreats be disturbed and enlightened. Such labours may be—nay, will be—oppressive and revolting, but perseverance will drive away discouragement. Doubtless it is a fierce trial to stand day by day, and hour by hour, face to face and hand to hand with the inhabitants of these pestilential and gloomy recesses; but patience for a while, and they may be brought from the private conversation to the cottage lecture, from the lecture to the mission-room, from the mission-room to the church or chapel, from unqualified misery to comparative joy. The condition of their dwellings is an awful impediment; but even this, in many instances, may be partially overcome. The cause is great; and the blessing of God has ever rested on the prayers and labours of those who have sought to comfort and instruct the most suffering and degraded of the children of men.

That such men are to be found, and that their efforts enjoy no small success, is proved by the narratives of this book. These excellent men have established the principle, they have produced the results. It only remains that many should arise to imitate their good example, and extend, far and wide, the operation of this wise and solid benevolence. And why should they not arise, and in sufficient numbers?

It is a remarkable fact—but fact it is—that, by the special mercy and Providence of God, a due supply of agents, able and effective for such a career as this, can ever be found by those who

diligently seek them. Men and women of true hearts, of earnest piety, and of adequate powers, spring in abundance out of the less affluent classes of society, and are trained for the highest and noblest purposes. In what other way can we account for the array of some 450 men of the London City Mission, men with special zeal and special fitness to go among the masses? How else for the peaceful army of Bible-women and Bible-nurses? That such large numbers should answer to the call, and that so few, after trial, should be found unworthy of their vocation, is a positive marvel, and proves that the slow diffusion of what is good and restorative is due, not to the lack of qualified agents, but to the parsimony of those on whom God has bestowed the means of putting His gifts into life and motion.

It is so—for these people, who thus devote themselves to the cause of our Lord, must be fed and clothed with the rest of mankind. "They that preach the gospel, must live of the gospel;" and the rich of the earth should be told that if the first and highest motive be wanting in their hearts, the second one may be deserving of their serious consideration. These agencies tend to the tranquillization of society; and as a tranquillizing influence, they tend to the security of property. Look at the results of the efforts of Miss de Broen among the Communists of Belleville, and it will be seen that by the spread of the gospel among those terrible masses, a beginning has been made more likely to establish a happier order of things than the indefinite multiplication of soldiers and *gendarmes*.

I know not how far these suggestions may recommend themselves to the judgment of the public at large. I offer them simply as the conclusions of long observation, backed by the judgment of many far more experienced than myself. It is at least worth while to make the effort, and try to what extent we may rouse and utilize the dormant qualities of the poorest ranks of society. We may oftentimes discern delicacy of feeling, honesty of character, and vigour of resolution, among these degraded but immortal beings. With many terrible exceptions, their parental affections are strong; and it is touching to observe how even poverty, weariness, and disease, are all, as it were, forgotten in their desperate struggles to maintain their children. Hidden beneath these sentiments there is a mighty engine wherewith to begin the work.

Well, here they are! and here they will remain! Will you leave them alone to fester and to die? But in festering and dying they will breed a moral, and a political, if not a physical, epidemic.

Will you advance on them in their swarming retirements of profligacy and pestilence? Why, then, there is a hopeful promise that the Word of God shall not return unto Him empty; and as the High Priest bore on his turban, "Holiness to the Lord," so may the missionaries—the agents, the men, the women, all who go forth to this great enterprise—bear imprinted on their foreheads, a motto of no inferior power, "*Christo in pauperibus.*"

SHAFTESBURY.

Paris, May 12, 1878.

PREFACE

THIS book was written in detached papers, for *Evening Hours* and other Journals, without any intention to republish them in the form of a volume. Meagre details and want of connection will thus be accounted for. The narrative extends over a period of many years, and is substantially true, although the writer had to depend upon memory aided by a few notes: verbal accuracy cannot therefore be expected. The difficulty of recording the histories of individuals and families in a few paragraphs, without their connecting links, was felt, and this may have given a touch of the wonderful to some incidents, which a more full account would have avoided. The object of the work, even in its detached papers, was to illustrate the mode of Missionary visitation among the very poor and the depraved classes; and to show the power of simple teaching from the Word of God among them.

The kindness of Lord Shaftesbury in writing the Introduction, and of Mrs. Mary Sewell, in decorating each chapter with extracts, is acknowledged with much gratitude. Their assistance has enriched the volume, and the writer has an impression that many will regard it as an indifferent picture beautifully framed. Be this as it may, he commits it to the indulgence of his readers, and to the blessing of *Almighty God*, by the power of whose Word alone the good narrated was accomplished.

St. John's Wood,

December, 1871.

PREFACE TO THE TENTH EDITION

The favour accorded to this book has taken the author by surprise, as the issue of nine editions of a thousand copies rapidly succeeded each other. The truthfulness and simplicity of the narrative has no doubt promoted this result, but the secret of its success is not in the book itself, but in the deep interest taken by Christians generally in effort to evangelize the people of London.

To many the difficulty of uniting disciples of various names in hearty co-operation appeared to be insurmountable; and the gaining of access to and influencing the "lapsed masses," the ungodly and criminal, to religion and virtue seemed all but hopeless.

This simple record of mission work has had its influence in removing such difficulties from the minds of many, and in enlisting the sympathy of persons who were previously uninformed as to a Christian union which is auxiliary and helpful to all the Churches.

At the time the narrative commenced there were only one hundred and twelve city missionaries employed in London; but, through the blessing of Almighty God and the confidence of His people, the increase of their number has been steady and support increasingly generous. The mission staff now numbers

448 effective men with 30 veterans upon the retiring fund; these, with the committee and their officers, examiners of candidates and local superintendents, number upwards of one thousand men, who prayerfully and with great activity seek the spiritual good and general uprising of the poor of the great Metropolis.

Much remains to be done. In many parishes extending to the distant suburbs there are numerous poor districts, inhabited by myriads of perishing souls, to each of which the appointment of "a Man with the Book," charged to read and bring its life-giving power to bear upon each man, woman, and child within his influence, would indeed be a blessing conferred.

Charged with the duty of providing for many of these "waste places" in the east and west of the City, the writer will gladly welcome the friendship and aid of those who, realizing the preciousness of personal salvation, from the abundance of the heart deviseth liberal things.

With the committee there is one strong conviction, and it is this, that their work, which commenced in obscurity and feebleness, by three men without name, influence, or money, but who were strong in faith, prayer, and holy zeal—that the effort though now exceeding large—can only be continued and extended in the same spirit of simple trust and devotion, "glory" being rendered "in the Church by Jesus Christ, unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

London City Mission House,

Bridewell, E.C.

May, 1878.

The Book in the Court:
ITS INTRODUCTION.

"High up a dark and winding stair,
From floor to floor I went,
And heard sometimes a woman swear,
Or beaten child lament.

"Upon the topmost flight I found
A close and wretched room;
Alas, that any human soul
Should call such place a home!

"No fire was burning in the grate,
The walls were damp and bare;
The window-panes were stuffed with rags,
No furniture was there."

Mrs. Sewell.

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION—THE STRANGE VISITOR—
TRANSLATORS—THE CHANTER AND DOG-
NURSE—THIEVES—BEGGARS—PRIZE-FIGHTER
—A WIDOW INDEED—THE POWER OF PRAYER.

The Book in the Court:

ITS INTRODUCTION

"He that hath my Word, let him speak my Word
faithfully."

Jer. xxiii. 28.

WHY the inhabitants called their place of residence Paradise Court was never clearly understood. The parochial authorities substituted for the name of the garden of primeval beauty that of a lovely southern county of old England, and on their official papers styled it Devonshire Place. Many would question the propriety of the Court bearing either name, as it forms the centre of a labyrinth of dirty overcrowded streets. It is not a blind alley, as it is of elbow shape with two entrances connecting streets, though only used by persons of profound local knowledge. The

houses are so ill-shaped and dilapidated as to prejudice the mind against London of the past generation; while the murky atmosphere—the cloud of ragged yellowish garments suspended from the upper windows by pole and line—the narrowness of the passage-way, which increases the thick darkness of night—the constant noise made by the drunken and quarrelsome, render it a place to be avoided by the respectable, however poor.

There were, however, at the time our narrative commences, respectable visitors to the Court, and foremost among them for intimate acquaintance with the community was that valuable official the Relieving Officer. His approach was by some mysterious means instantaneously known, and produced wonderful effects; unruly sounds were hushed, quite a number of poor creatures were taken suddenly ill, and a most appalling condition of poverty was created. Strange however to say, his exit was marked by a revivifying influence,—low muttering occasionally burst into storms of abuse, but not until he had turned the corner; we may therefore suppose that he was in happy ignorance of the strong feeling which existed against him.

The policeman on duty used to pause, as from professional instinct, when he passed each narrow entrance, and at night had been known suddenly to turn his bull's eye upon persons approaching or leaving the Court. Occasionally a visit was paid by that dreaded person, the Inspector: which event was always unexpected. Intelligent members of the force at a given moment took their position at either end, while the Inspector marched

with several officers to a particular house, and then marched off with the somebody he wanted. Next morning a company of the inhabitants used to return the compliment, by going in a body to the Police Court, and for days after, the subject matter of conversation in the Court was, "How the 'spector got that ere hinformation what he received."

The postman occasionally entered the place, and when he did so he grasped his letters firmly,—while in order to effect a proper delivery he deciphered strange hieroglyphics. Of course those true friends of the poor, the parish and dispensary doctors, were frequently to be seen in the place. They knew it well as a pestilent spot, and, while alleviating suffering, gave many certificates for the burial of the dead. As regards the living there was scanty record: the name of the place being rarely if ever written in the Vestry Register. A few out of the swarm of dirty, shoeless, tattered little heathen (heathen in the sense of being unbaptized and untaught in the Christian religion) were occasionally hunted for by their warm-hearted friend, the Ragged School teacher, who had entered their names in his class book. With two exceptions these were the only respectable visitors to Paradise Court; and the exceptions only came on Black-Monday morning. One was the stern broker-man, who represented the landlord of half the houses, and whose terrible utterance, "Pay the rent, or I will chuck your sticks into the Court," had a money-producing effect. The other Monday visitor was a lady of peculiar style, who entered the place from her suburban residence exactly

at nine o'clock. Though shabby in dress, it was believed by her thirty-four miserable tenants that she was a real lady at home. She was fluent of speech, and gave many reasons why it would be wrong of her to let the rent run on. She had never been known to comprehend an excuse; and it was an established fact that business friendship existed between her and that dreadful broker-man.

To this succession of official and other visitors another was to be added. The Paradise people knew it not; and, if they had, he would not have been received with demonstrations of joy; indeed the few persons who one March morning noticed two men in conversation at the narrow entrance of the Court, were made uncomfortable, as they could not comprehend what was meant. "I wonders if they are a coming down here," observed one woman to another. "They aint mendicities," she replied; and hastened to inform her companion lodgers "that something was up, as two men, one of them an old-un, with a brown coat, and the tother a young-un nearly all black, was a talking and looking down." A rush to the doors and windows took place, but they only saw the two men part company. The eldest walked away and the other entered the open door of the first house.

To remove all mystery,—the old gentleman was the training Superintendent of the London City Mission, and his companion a young Missionary whom he was placing upon the district. They had walked round it together, and stopping at the Court, the Superintendent said to his young friend, "You will find this the

most trying part of the district, as the people are in a bad state, and have never as yet been visited. Enter the first house, make your way to the top back room—visit as you come down, and in this way press through the place. Remember it is your duty to make the acquaintance of every man, woman, and child, for the purpose of bringing them to a knowledge of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, and of doing them good by every means in your power: go, and may the Lord prosper you."

A poet would have called that a sublime moment for the young Missionary: he was in possession of that which had for three years been the desire of his heart—the office of accredited visitor to the poor. For this he had prayed, studied, and passed the required examination; and it was with grateful heart and elastic step, that he made his way up the rickety stair-case, and approached the room to the occupiers of which he was first to deliver his message. A noise,—the beating of leather upon lapstones, required that a second and harder tap should be given at the door. It was suddenly opened by a middle-aged man, of ruffianly appearance, with a long black beard. In his hand was a large flat hammer, and in his mouth a short black pipe. With a sharp look at the stranger, he inquired, "Do you want me, Master?" "I am a Missionary," was the reply, "and am come to make your acquaintance. Will you accept one of these tracts?" The man threw open the door, and said to his companions,—"This is a religious chap, and wants to know me." The visitor stepped in and gave a curious glance round

the room. It was an attic of about ten feet square, with a low roof. In the centre was a heap of old boots and shoes, rubbish of the kind collected from dust heaps; round them were six men of various ages, and offensively dirty; beside each were several rows of restored articles. It was evident that the men were "translators,"—cobblers, who by marvellous skill in their art were turning destroyed shoes into articles fit for use. "If he's religious," exclaimed a man of diminutive stature, "I'm the customer for him;" and facing the visitor, demanded "Do you believe in a Supernatural Being? because," he continued, "if you do, I don't. He is a fool who says in his heart there is no God, and he is a fool who says there is one, because there is no proof." "Nature and the Bible"—replied the Missionary; but he could get no further, as at the mention of the Book exclamations of doubt and of abuse were uttered. He tried to proceed, but was cried down. As he turned away, the man who opened the door, said, with angry looks, "Now mind, Guv'nor, I am master here, and I live in the next room, and my children knows nothing of superstition, and if you come here with your cant I'll pitch you down." There was a momentary pause, which enabled the visitor to exclaim in a clear ringing voice, "This day has salvation come to this house," and he then descended to the next landing.

Upon the back-room door was a rusty old padlock, showing that the lodgers—costermongers—were out; but the front-room door was partly open. "Come in," said a feeble voice; and the visitor, though nearly stopped by the offensiveness of the room,

stepped in, and found it a death chamber. A woman and child were upon the bed in a high state of fever; and stark upon the floor, with face uncovered, lay the body of a boy of six years. The scene so shocked the inexperienced visitor, that he with sorrow expressed his regret at finding them in such a position, and inquired about the husband. "He is a chanter, sir," she replied, "and is out in the streets singing about the man who was hung on Monday morning. He was cut up when Bobby died in the night, and said that he would leave off singing when he had got half-a-crown, and come home." While words of consolation were being read, the "chanter" entered the room: his clothes were threadbare, his face pallid, and his voice husky. The stranger put his hand kindly upon the arm of the poor man, and expressed his sympathy for the bereavement he had suffered, and added, "I have read to your wife from the Bible, and am about to pray: let us kneel down." At the mention of prayer an expression of contempt passed over the man's face, and he hurriedly left the room. Prayer was however offered, and the visitor descended to the parlours: oh, such parlours!

The back was occupied by an aged woman, who no doubt collected bones and rags from the streets, as the floor was nearly covered with them. She was frying fish which was partly putrid, and was so earnest in declaring her poverty (no doubt truthfully) that the visitor had to assure her that he had no temporal relief to bestow. The same plea of poverty was urged by three drunken-looking women who stood at the next door; upon his telling them

that he had no money to give, but that he hoped to make them happy with the true riches, they shut the door in his face; and stepping out he breathed the refreshing air of the Court.

Two more houses were passed through with varied success, and the visitor left for rest and refreshment. Upon his return it was evident that his fame had spread, as there were groups of persons ready to look at him, and in that look there was a hostile expression. True to his instructions, he merely gave tracts to several women who asked for them, and then made his way to the fourth house. Though all the front doors were open, and had the appearance of never being closed night or day, that door was shut and fastened, and peals of laughter could be heard inside, while the Missionary in vain knocked for admission. He went to the next house, but was brought to a pause while ascending the upper stairs by the barking of dogs. The door of the front attic was opened by a woman: at the sight of the stranger she screamed her command for silence, and the brutes became dumb. As she opened the door half way a curious sight presented itself: upon the bed were five or six puppies of various breeds, and chained to the floor was a white bull terrier of savage mien, while an ugly cur raised his nose to the edge of the basket in which he was reposing, and sustained a growl of low note. Bobbing a curtsey, she said in a plaintive tone, "I can't ask you in, sir, as the dogs are werry savage; but though I does try to get a honest living, a ticket is as acceptable to me as to them wretches what has got into the first floor." In answer to the inquiry, "How do you

live?" she replied, "I brings up little dogs for fancy men, and takes in sick uns to nurse, and I earns my money I can tell you: why that ere bull-dog has the mange, and I have to rub him in with doctor's stuff, and if I didn't muzzle him, and pull his chain tight to the floor, he'd tear me to pieces; and then I have to get up in the night to feed the puppies with milk." When the matter of religion was referred to, she in an angry tone said, that she "knowed what was right, and didn't want to be preached at." The sagacious friends of man understood that altered tone of voice, and recommenced growling and barking. As it was hopeless trying to make himself heard at the next room, the visitor descended to make acquaintance with the abused in the first floor.

Both doors were open, and the lodgers were in evident expectation of a visit. In the front room were three men and four women: the men had cotton handkerchiefs of a reddish colour about their necks, their hair being arranged in the peculiar curl round the ear known in their circle as the Newgate cut. One of them, with an air of blandness, offered the visitor a chair, and said, "I am always glad to see a Missionary gent. Where I comes from, near Petticoat Lane, is one of them, maybe you knows him: he's werry good to chaps that gets into trouble. Now this woman has got a boy as is always unlucky: he went a lifting and got nabbed first time, and got a week, as he wasn't known; after that he hopped over a wall for something, and a Bobby was down on him, and for that he got a month; and then he relieved a gent

of his ticker, and for that he's doing four months upon the mill, and I think that he ought to be reformed. He'll be out on Monday, and if you will tell me where you live, I will bring him to you, and you can put him somewhere. If you doesn't he'll be into trouble again, because, as I says, he's unlucky." The reasons given were not likely to stimulate zeal, but the Missionary arranged to see the young thief immediately after his discharge from prison. A friendly conversation, followed, and several young girls and juvenile thieves, who came in from the other room, remained to hear the Bible read. The evil consequences of sin were pointed out to them, and the way of salvation was explained. Deep emotion was expressed by several of these depraved persons, and there was a friendly parting.

Upon the ground floor a fragrance redolent of sea-weeds filled the air, and was a pleasant relief from the state of the atmosphere upstairs. The cause of this strange perfume was apparent upon the door of the back room being opened by an old man, who appeared as if he was undergoing a salivating process. The floor was covered with baskets and trays with piles of whelks upon them, some of which were cooked and some were not. As the man was rather deaf, it was difficult to make him understand the object of the visit; but when he did so, he asked the stranger in. He refused an offered tract, with the remark, "I ain't got no larning, Mister, and I burns every bit of paper I gits, so it 'ould be smoke if you comed for it. I cooks these whelks for chaps and women as stands with stalls, and gets a penny a kettleful." When

told "that at his age the great matter was not his business, but his fitness for a better world," he laughed and said, "All I want is to die easy, so I moves the things, and puts my mattress the right way, as we never knows what may be, and they says as it's hard to die the cross-way of boards." He was told that "to pray to the great God in the name of Jesus for pardon and His Holy Spirit, was the way for old people to be made happy, and to die easy." But he looked vacant, as though the subjects of pardon and immortality were strange to him. Upon his saying that cooking was over early in the evening, the visitor showed him the Bible, and said, "This was written by the good Father in heaven, and I will come some evening and read out of it." He looked pleased as he approached his fish-kettle, and the visitor was then glad to make his escape from a kind of warm sea-fog.

The next house was filled with beggars. The rooms were filthy; and upon entering them in succession, the women and children commenced in the cadgers' whine to beg. "Why don't you wash your children?" was inquired of a mother, whose four little ones were as black as sweeps. "We haven't a penny," was the reply, "to buy soap with, and the little dears are so uncomfortable like when they wakes up, until they rubs their faces well with their hands, which freshens them up." Their hard begging prevented religious conversation. In the front parlour a man, clothed in filthy raiment, was smoking his pipe, while the wife was engaged in sweeping with an almost hairless broom. An attempt to speak to them upon the Gospel message provoked an outburst of low

abuse from them both: the woman, who was evidently from the Emerald Isle, followed the visitor to the door, giving a long sweep with her broom; and then flourishing it over his head as he stepped into the Court, exclaimed, "Och, and sure and that's the way I sweep out rubbish!" After failing to convey religious instruction to the people at the next house, where the woman and youth abused, and the children yelled as he passed out, the young Missionary left the place in a state of mind exactly opposite to that in which he had entered it in the morning. A sense of inefficiency, of utter disqualification for the work, had taken possession of his mind and damped his zeal. To have instructed the respectable poor—to have removed the difficulties of men in error, would have been a pleasure; but to evangelize such a people as the dwellers in Paradise Court and its surroundings seemed hopeless. Besides the offensiveness of the work—the thought of spending six or more hours daily in those wretched dwellings, subjected to risk of contagion, insult, and personal violence, and that with such feeble hope of benefiting the people, produced a sense of regret that the effort had been made. So powerfully did these reasons act, that the Missionary availed himself of the consideration that Saturday would be an inconvenient day for the people, and stayed away; but on Sunday afternoon, about three o'clock, he approached the Court with a faint heart, and a bundle of tracts in his hand.

At the entrance a group of about fifteen roughs were talking together. Tracts were offered to each. One of them, a man of

heavy frame and unprepossessing countenance, arising from the circumstance that it was deeply scarred, and had the bridge of the nose broken, approached the Missionary. With a smile more awe-inspiring than ordinary frowns, he inquired, "Are you the chap what's coming to all our rooms to make us religious?" To so direct a question only one reply could be given, which was hopefully in the affirmative. "Then," he continued, that dreadful smile deepening into an expression of malice, as he raised his huge fist, "then don't come to my room; which is good advice, cos I does three things at once when I'm up. I'm known in the ring as a hard hitter, and I've fixed the ring stakes for lots of battles,—and this is what I does: I deposits my fist on the top of the nose, which leaves a mark, and shuts up both peepers for a week or two." "Well, but members of the prize ring are honourable in this," was the prompt reply: "they never strike men who cannot box." The man seemed pleased with the compliment, but his companions gave an incredulous look, as much as to say, "We, alas, know better!"

Friendly words were spoken, and tracts given to persons standing at their doors. While thus engaged the Missionary was stayed by a sound which proceeded from an upper room. It fell so strangely upon the ear that he stood still and gazed up at the windows, with the exclamation upon his lips—"Surely the Lord has His hidden ones in this place." An effort was evidently being made in one of the rooms to sing a song of praise. A cracked female voice was trying to lead other voices, not one of which

had been attuned to melody, in singing the hymn—

"Come ye that love the Lord,
And let your joys be known."

A woman at one of the windows, seeing the astonishment of the visitor, said, "It's Widow Peters, Master having a meeting: she lives here in the first back. She's a good un: the dear old soul is like a mother to us." The visitor approached the room, and as the singing ceased, opened the door. He saw at a glance that the company consisted of five very poor women. Four were seated upon the frame of the bedstead, and another at the table, upon which lay an open Bible and Hymn-book. "This is he," exclaimed one of the women. "This is the tract man, who is coming to read to us out of the blessed Book." Upon this the widow rose, her countenance beaming with holy joy, and with that graceful dignity which religious life often confers upon the poor, offered her hand to the Missionary, exclaiming, "Come in, sir, come in, and let us praise the Lord together. I have pleaded with Him for poor souls in this place, and now He has sent His messenger with glad tidings. May the Lord bless you to many." This welcome was given with such genuine feeling that the "messenger" was overpowered. The speaker was aged; quite seventy years had whitened her few remaining hairs and given a decrepit appearance to her slender frame; but under the influence of strong religious feeling she stood erect, and the feebleness of

her voice gave peculiar force to words which entered the soul. The poor women felt it as they stood with tearful eyes; and the young Missionary felt it, for his only answer was an affectionate holding of that withered hand in his, and a reverential gazing into the face of the old disciple.

The meeting was soon brought to a close, but the aged woman and the young man remained in earnest conversation, as though they had enjoyed years of friendship. How strong is that cord of love in the spirit, which binds believers together because of union with the living Jesus! "The poor creatures down here are in dreadful darkness, and many are awfully wicked," observed the widow; "and my heart leapt for joy when I was told that a tract man was trying to speak with people in their rooms: it was such a faithful answer to prayer." "And who prayed for my coming?" was inquired. "I had heard of missionary gentlemen visiting other places," she replied, "and about two months ago it was laid on my heart to pray for my perishing neighbours, and I cried day and night unto the Lord."

"About that time," observed the visitor, "a few believers met in the house of a Tunbridge Wells tradesman, to pray for a blessing upon the poor of London. They then agreed to raise support for a Missionary to one of the most necessitous districts, and wrote a letter to the Committee of the London City Mission to that effect. While the gentlemen were considering the matter they had their attention drawn to this neighbourhood through the opening of an Infidel Hall just by. At that time, after much prayer, I

made application to be received as one of their agents. They approved of me and sent me here. But how strange it was, that in this place prayer should at that time have been offered for the same object." "Oh, no! that was not strange," she replied; "for the same Spirit dwells in all the disciples, and according to the Divine Mind and Will, teaches them what to pray for, and now we must plead for souls and these dry bones shall live." "After spending Friday at the other end of the place," observed the Missionary, "I was led to despair of doing any good here, as the people are so ignorant, hardened, and offensive. I have thought that an experienced visitor ought to come here in my stead." With a look of sorrow and reproof the old Christian exclaimed: "The Lord has sent you here with the Gospel plough, and don't look back. Go on, dear friend, and He will bless His faithful servant." In answer to the inquiry, "How long she had known the Lord, and why she was living in that place?" she replied, "I am the widow of a soldier: thirty-six years ago I was abroad with the regiment, and was converted at a soldiers' prayer-meeting. I then joined the Wesleyans, and have met in class ever since. I had a daughter, who was married to a bricklayer who took to drinking and used her badly. He brought her down here, and then I took a room in the same house to look after her. She died two years ago. I have three shillings weekly from the parish, and I make up by doing a little washing for young people at a draper's. I stop here now, as no one would rob or injure me; and many a poor creature will let me nurse them a little when they are ill, and then

I speak to them about Jesus, and pray for their poor souls. Now you have come they must all hear the truth. Don't, sir, leave the poor perishing souls." At parting each offered prayer. The aged widow with tremulous voice and holy earnestness pleaded with God for the young messenger, and for the sinners around her, mentioning several by name. Her language was that of one who for years had had free access to the Holy Place, and to whom power had been given to wrestle with God and to prevail.

That prayer was blessed to the young Missionary. As he stepped into the Court he felt that the coward spirit had left him, and that he had received power to intercede with the Almighty for perishing souls. His heart was too full to speak to the people; but, as he passed their doors, a cry of holy desire for their salvation (that best preparation for the work of an Evangelist) ascended to where Jesus the Mediator is seated at the right hand of God.

The Book in the Court:
ITS INFLUENCE.

"You are needed, brave hearts, that are facing the toil,
And bearing unnoticed the wearisome toil
That presses on every day;
We want the great souls that will suffer and dare,
And all the inglorious martyrdom bear
Of poverty's dreary decay."

Mrs. Sewell.

CHAPTER II

A FIGHT BETWEEN WOMEN—TURNING THE
FEVER OUT—SPEECH FROM A BARROW—
DRUNKEN SAMMY—A WONDERFUL TEAPOT—
DUST-MAN AND SCAVENGER—LADY-POWER.

The Book in the Court:

ITS INFLUENCE

"The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." Ps. cxix. 130.

MONDAY morning cast its usual gloom over Paradise Court in the persons of the rent collectors. Many of the men and women had gone out upon various callings, and others, whose supply of ready cash fell short of the required amount, absented themselves, leaving messages with the children, in some cases with, and in others without, part payment. The Court therefore had the appearance of quietness and moral respectability as the Missionary passed down. His step was firm, and his countenance wore an expression of decision. He had realized the difficulties of the position; and in calm reliance upon the help of Almighty

God, had come to the prayerful decision that he would faithfully discharge the duties of his office. That day and many others of toil passed before each room had been visited. As the people became familiar with their new friend, the spirit of opposition, with a few exceptions, gave way to one of utter indifference. Three months passed before the statistics of the place were taken, and then the startling discovery was made that in that block of buildings there were one hundred and ninety-four rooms, occupied by two hundred and sixteen families, as several let corners of their rooms to lodgers. The population consisted of three hundred and eighty-six adult persons, with more than double that number of children. Only nine Bibles could be found in the place, and upon the morning of the Lord's day only two persons left its precincts to worship God in His temple. As month after month of stair-treading and of effort to secure attention passed away, the Missionary became discouraged, from the seeming impossibility of effecting any good in that valley of spiritual death. The children, to be sure, had been won by looks and words of kindness. They gathered round him out of doors, and looked for his smile as he approached the rooms. And then the people had become familiar with the pocket Bible, and cast glances at it as the reader held it in his hand, as though they had some mysterious interest in its contents. But this was all. No reformation had been wrought, no inquiry for salvation had been made; and despair of blessing was overclouding the soul of the Missionary, when a circumstance occurred which caused hope,

like a day star, to dispel the darkness. That circumstance was a fight in the Court.

One afternoon he was praying with a sick man in an upper room when his voice was drowned by screams, shouts, and yells in the Court below. Rising from his knees, he opened the window, and shuddered at the revolting scene which presented itself. Two women, whose vile language had several times repelled him from their doors, had quarrelled and been ejected from a neighbouring gin-bar. Upon reaching home they commenced fighting; and being inflamed with liquor, they had torn each other's clothes, and their faces were bleeding. In their fury they had seized each other by the hair, and lay struggling on the ground. A number of men and women had formed a ring, and were urging them on to the brutal conflict; while the people crowded to their windows, and shouted advice according to the side they took. It was a shocking display of rage and blood and blasphemy; but it was brought to a sudden close. Some one looked up and raised the cry, "The Bible-man is there!" Every face was turned up, and then the people drew in their heads and closed the windows. The crowd in the Court dispersed, many running like rabbits in at their doors. The sudden silence caused the wretched women to disengage themselves and to look up. They caught the steady gaze of the man who had spoken to them of God and judgment, and one of them with a bound sprang into her dwelling; while the other covered her lacerated face with her apron, and staggered into her door-way. A few minutes after,

when the Missionary passed out of the Court, all was silence,—not a being was to be seen; but upon the pavement were spots of blood and pieces of hair. Though saddened, he felt thankful for the influence he had obtained. It would have taken several policemen to have quelled that disturbance; but to have subdued it by moral, or rather religious force, was indeed a triumph and earnest of future good.

About a month after this event a sudden outbreak of scarlet and typhoid fever brought distress into fourteen families, but resulted in much good to the inhabitants. The parish doctor had ordered the removal of a woman to the infirmary, and two old workhouse men came with a covered stretcher for that purpose. The lodgers had noticed spots upon the patient, and raised a report of black fever. They were in a state of panic, and no person but the widow would approach the room. She found the Missionary, who was visiting in other houses, and told him that she had prepared the poor woman for her removal; but that the old men were not strong enough to carry her, and none of the neighbours would assist them. Upon this he followed her to the room, and taking the poor fever-stricken creature in his arms, carried her down and laid her gently on the stretcher. The people stood afar off; but, as their visitor left by the side of the stretcher, he caught a murmur of thankfulness. Upon his return from the workhouse he was received with a demonstration of gratitude; and seizing the opportunity, he said, "Tell the men that I want to speak to them, and that they will do me a kindness by being

here this evening at seven o'clock. I want them to help me turn the fever out: not a man must be absent."

When at the appointed time the Missionary turned the corner, he was surprised to see the place crowded. It was evident that the men had rallied in their strength, and they began to cheer. The visitor sprang on to a costermonger's barrow, and waving his hand, exclaimed, "Many of our neighbours are ill, and we must for their sakes, poor things, be quiet. I thank you for mustering so strong; it shows that you have a good feeling toward me, and as I have a good feeling toward you, why, we are friends. Now, as a true friend, I am going to speak to you plainly, as we can't turn out the fever unless we work together. I expected this fever to come (murmurs); and this is why. You have not enough air and water down here, and you don't make the best use of what you have. If a man drinks poison he is killed by it, and if he breathes poisoned air he is killed in a slower way by getting weak, or having illnesses like the fever. Many of you sleep six or ten in a room, and always keep the windows shut. This poisons the air. And now about the water. To-morrow morning every butt must be cleansed; and let each person, when the flow is on, throw a pailfull down their yard and another into the Court. Mind two pailfulls for each person. And then you must wash yourselves more frequently. There are sensible women here who wash their children every day; there are others that do not. Now let the sensible women do a kind thing: let them give the dirty children a good scrubbing on the sly. (Laughter, and cries of 'We will.') And mind, all the rooms

and stairs must be scrubbed. That's for the women: now for the men. You must whitewash your rooms. ('Let the landlords do it.') If you wait until they do it, some of you will be in your graves first. ('That's right.') Do it yourselves. A pail of whitewash is only the price of a pot of beer. ('That's it.') When you have done it, I will ask the collectors to allow you back the half-pence. ('Thank'ee, sir,' etc.) Another thing shall be done: I will see the officer of health, and, if necessary, the vestry gentlemen, and ask them to improve your drainage and water supply." (Here the fighting man raised his fist and exclaimed, "If they don't!" as though his system of deposit would of a certainty influence the local parliament.) "And then," the speaker continued, "we must keep sober. The fever is fond of drunkards, with their horrid breath and weak bodies, and lays hold of them first. (Sensation.) Now, to turn the fever out, you must promise me three things: say Yes, after each of them. Good use of air and water ('Yes, yes'); every room to be whitewashed ('Yes, yes'); and a sober Saturday night." (Murmurs.) The speaker repeated the last sentence in a tone of firm command: "A sober Saturday night!" and received a shout of "Yes, yes, yes!" Then, taking the Bible from his pocket, he held it up, and in a subdued voice continued, "There is a great Father up there, who loves us all; but you don't pray Him to take care of you and your children. On Sunday morning you hear the bells ring; but none of you go to church. This is wrong of you. Remember He has had it written down in His Holy Book that 'the curse of the Lord is in the house (the room) of the wicked;

but He blesseth the habitation of the just.'" There was a solemn pause, and the speaker sprang from his uncomfortable stand and passed out at the short end of the place.

One man had evidently absented himself from the sanitary meeting. This was plain, as Drunken Sammy approached, followed by an admiring crowd of boys and low people. This old man had been a drunkard for many years, and his neighbours used to say that he had become worse since he had had "something" upon his mind; this "something" being the fact that his wife was made ill by one of his beatings when drunk, and only lived two months after. He was a slop tailor, and used at times to work hard and remain sober for days together. During several of these intervals he had listened to the Christian teacher, and promised reformation; but he had lost the power of moral control. His habit was to stand in a gin-bar from early in the morning; when his money was spent he would take his coat to a neighbouring dolly or leaving-shop. Soon after he would return and leave his waistcoat and shoes. When the proceeds of these were spent, he was of course ejected. Upon this he commenced vagaries of the most comical kind; gesticulating and tumbling, while shouting lines from comic songs. His rule was to enter the Court by attempting a leapfrog over the posts at the corner; and he often fell with terrible force upon the pavement, to the great diversion of the public. He was always received by his neighbours with roars of laughter as they rushed to see the fun. On this occasion, however, he met with an altered reception. The

presence of the Missionary, who had returned, at his side, and the subduing influence of the meeting, had its effect. "Here's that fool of a Sammy," exclaimed one of the women who had engaged in the fight we have narrated: while others looked at him with contempt,—all with indifference. It was much for her to call a drunkard "a fool," and for her friends to acknowledge the fact. As the woman lived in the same house with the drunkard, the visitor looked at her and said, "Take care of this poor man for me, and don't let him out until I call tomorrow afternoon." "We won't let him out!" exclaimed several voices: and the woman seized his arm and thrust him into the house. A smile played over the anxious face of the Missionary, for well he knew that the woman would keep her word, and that poor Sammy was *in durance vile*. What for him availed the British Constitution,—Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and all the legal apparatus which in these fair isles of liberty protect the subject? He is under arrest. Let us hope that it will be for his good.

Next morning, on his way to the Court House, the Missionary had occasion to call upon an "elect lady," who was then the daughter, and who is now the widow of a general officer. He told her about the soldier's widow,—her deep piety, and her love for souls, and her poverty; and while he did so, the full sympathy of another Christian heart was drawn out in behalf of his poor people. Upon his leaving, the lady said, "I will pay the widow's rent, and will supply her with comforts during the coming winter. Let her call upon me to-morrow, as I may through her take a

deeper interest in your mission." The day had far advanced before the pleasant message could be delivered: the bearer of it had obtained an interview with the vestry clerk, which resulted in his introduction to the parochial officer of health, who was so kind as to accompany him to the district. As they entered the place, its cleanly appearance, the result of a deluge of water, and the healthy smell of lime which pervaded the air, took the medical gentleman by surprise. This was so opposite to the account he had received, that the visitor, for his veracity's sake, had to acquaint him with the events of the day before, and to give an account of the speech from the barrow. "A division of labour," he said drily: "and you are welcome thus to usurp my duties for the whole parish. As regards this place, I will make such a report that the drainage shall be set right." As they repassed a door, a rough woman, who was standing as on guard, said to the Missionary, "Sammy has been obstreperous, sir, but I wouldn't let him out; and now he is quiet, as the widow has gone into his room with her teapot." As she mentioned the teapot her eyes twinkled with that expression of good humour which lit up all the eyes in Paradise Court when that valuable article was referred to. No remarks were ever ventured, though much was understood. We however will break the spell, and though the officer of health is present, will vote the matter urgent, and narrate its fame.

That old brown teapot was bought at the wayside, and only cost threepence, as there was a chip upon the spout. It had however by association with its owner, acquired a value and a

charm. In addition to the wonder of the inexhaustible bottle, it had certain high qualities. The very sick, and poor mothers with young infants, were each convinced that they had the first of the brew, and "that such a delicious cup of tea as that never was." And when the owner had refreshed herself, they were many who had a reversionary interest in its contents. There was a power of moral elevation about the article. Many a hard face assumed for the moment a benign expression, and many a knitted brow relaxed as the widow stepped from the door, threw her white apron over the teapot, and with an almost girlish trip passed into the room of some neighbour, who to equal poverty added sickness or some distress. And then an influence of sympathy attended the outpouring of its contents. Her supply of milk usually cost one farthing, and this she economised by pouring part of it in with the tea. In her pocket she carried a few pieces of lump sugar screwed up in a piece of paper, and thus the opportunity to be courteous was given, as each person had it sweetened to their liking. And, oh, who can tell how many words of motherly advice and Christian counsel were uttered over that old teapot? As the gentlemen stood at the door they heard a feeble voice uttering mighty truths; and stepping softly into the passage, caught the end of the conversation. "I know that I must have killed her," groaned drunken Sammy, "as I beat her so hard; and if the jury didn't say so, the coroner went on at me afterwards, and I'm so miserable that I wish I was dead." "You are a poor sinner, Sammy," said the widow; "but the blessed Lord died for you, and

you musn't look so much into yourself. Now you feel how bad you are, you must look to the dear *Jesus*. One drop of His blood makes you clean and happy. Do, Sammy, let me pray with you." The listeners stepped out gently; and the sanitary officer, with ill-concealed emotion inquired about the strange couple, and then he said, "Send the old woman to my house, and I will give her some medicine for that drunken fellow which will stay his craving for spirits, and so assist your effort for his reformation."

Upon leaving the Place the visitors stopped to speak with a group of four men who were standing at the entrance. One of them wore a fantail cap, and held a shovel and dust-basket. Another was an unmistakable scavenger, as he had a scoop-shovel, and was bespattered with mud. The others were so dirty as to make the impression that they were close friends, if not near relations of the former. "You have knocked off early," observed the Missionary, looking with kindness into the face of the dustman. "No we ain't, mister," replied that worthy: "we are a-goin' to clean out all through. We split the luck (money given to dustmen) last night, and I didn't wash the dust down, as we says, and I'm givin' summut to these chaps what's going to help; and the carts are comin'." "That's the right thing for you to do," was the encouraging remark. "An' if we be in the muck," observed the scavenger, "we can be good, as you speachified." "The dirt of your business is outside," was the reply, "but it's the dirt inside that is bad; and this will be taken away, if like a king we read about in the Bible, we pray, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God.'"

I will call at your rooms very soon."

"To influence such people to act for themselves in these matters is the solution of the sanitary question," observed the official. "The putting of pure thoughts into their minds," replied the visitor, "is the secret, and this is a Bible work, for the saying of the wise man is true of us all: 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.'"

The bearer of the message which was to gladden the widow's heart that evening, retraced his steps and found her in her room. She had fixed her spectacles, and was intent upon finding a suitable Scripture for the poor distressed drunkard she had just left. Some minutes passed before she could realize the good that had befallen her, and then she turned rapidly to the hundred and third Psalm, and repeated rather than read the words, "Bless the Lord, O, my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." She then said calmly, "It's the Lord's doings. He knows how feeble I am getting, and how hard it is for me to do the little bit of work, so He is crowning my days with mercy, and blessed be His name."

Next morning the widow called upon her lady, and from that time a sweet expression of peace settled upon her countenance. Her scanty raiment gave place to a thick warm dress; and it was plain that a gracious hand had bestowed the woollen shawl upon her shoulders, because a judge of such articles would tell at a glance that it had been wrought by delicate fingers. And from that time her tea-pot became invested with a new charm,

as its contents never deteriorated in quality. A new influence was also felt by her neighbours. The sweep, who lived in the corner house, once said bitterly, "Down here we are all by God and man forsaken." This was no longer the case. The man with the Book, acquainted them with the tender mercies of the *Most High*, and the entrance of that Word which gives light was leading one and another to call Him "*Abba—Father*." And then the expression of sweet sympathy in their trials and sufferings, though it came from an unknown source, softened hard hearts and prepared them for the reception of the Gospel. The chanter was subdued by the food given to his only child when again ill, and the warm covering for its bed was among the influences which led him to acknowledge God, and to bend his stubborn knee. A young labourer who had been long out of employment was saved from the first step in crime by a pick-axe and shovel being provided for him when he received the offer of work as a navvy, while several basket-women and others who lived by street trading were helped by small loans and gifts of money to recover their position, when some misfortune or difficulty had deprived them of their means of support. This kindness was to them strange, because altogether out of their experience, and it exerted a daily and increasing influence for good upon many of them. The sick were often relieved from the intense misery which cold and hunger and family wants bring to them; while mothers, who had become brutalized through separation from all that was holy and elevating, were won and uplifted by acts of kindness shown to

their children by the stranger-friend. That mighty force in the up-raising of the debased and depraved, which we will venture to call lady-power, was evidently at work in Paradise Court; and to this must be ascribed very much of the good which resulted. Oh, ye handmaidens of the Lord, successors of the holy women who ministered to His wants, and who followed Him even to Calvary, it is your high privilege, like Him, to stoop to those of low estate; and to minister of your wealth, for charity well bestowed upon the poor is regarded as given to Him who is worthy to receive riches; of your refinement, for sweetness of expression and kindness can reach the hearts of the vile, and produce a first emotion of love to the Lord you copy; of your prayerfulness, for it must be well pleasing to Him, who paid the full ransom for every soul, to have those who are "afar off" brought by your pleadings within the influences of sovereign grace!

The Book in the Court:

ITS POWER.

"The soul has dealings with its God:
In such an hour we may not write,—
When all His grace is shed abroad,
And darkness melts in floods of light

"Thus, even now, that mercy came,
And righteous retribution slept,
The man could trust a Saviour's name,
And like a little child he wept."

Mrs. Sewell.

CHAPTER III

BLACK POLL—NIGGERS—RESCUED—TOM
AND BESS—COSTERMONGER'S WEDDING—A
BAPTISM—PLEDGE TAKEN—THE PRISON GATE
—THE BIBLE ON THE HOUSETOP—THE
CONVICT'S WIDOW AND SON.

The Book in the Court:

ITS POWER

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Ps.
xix. 7.

"PIONEERS are required in my parish," said the Rector to the Missionary, at the time of his appointment. "In these densely populated parts of London the people have outgrown the influence of the Church. I, for instance, have upwards of 16,000 poor, and very few of the better classes. Not twenty of these poor attend church, and the dissenters draw very few. The sad truth is, that through neglect of religious duties the people are fast losing the knowledge of God; and their close contact with the depraved and criminal, is demoralizing them with the

heaven of wickedness. Several of my curates have attempted to grapple with the evil, but its magnitude has overpowered us. In addition to over-crowding, the migratory habits of the people increase the difficulty. I am assured that in several of the streets the inhabitants are changed once or twice a year, and in the courts there are often monthly changes in the rooms. As soon therefore as good is done some of the people leave, and fresh comers require the work to be done over again. This difficulty can only be met by an order of men with special qualifications for the work, and sufficiently numerous to cover all the bad neighbourhoods; so that the people wherever they move to may be brought under Christian influences. Your society has an aggressive element of simple Christianity, which is calculated to accomplish this, and to keep your agents down to their work, and I therefore give you a hearty welcome, and the assurance of my sympathy in your labours."

The Pioneer soon found that the Rector's statements as regards the moving habits of the people were correct. After short intervals between visits he frequently found persons in whom he had become interested gone, and not a trace of them remaining, their places being occupied by others. This was the case one afternoon in a house round the corner,—one of the houses included in the block, and which we for weighty reasons have regarded as part of the Court. The visitor was walking upstairs, when he met a new arrival of so strange a type that he was arrested as by an apparition. It was evidently a little girl

of meagre form and aged expression of countenance, but here the likeness to our species grew doubtful. Her ethnology was not clearly developed as she stood with bare shoulders of raven blackness, her lank light hair being tied up in a bunch with pieces of rag, while the face and hands were of a yellowish, dirty hue. The object was startled at meeting the stranger, and was about to retreat, when he stopped her by asking a question. She answered in a sharp, precocious manner, and the following dialogue took place.

"My good child, who are you?"

"Black Poll: that me. And I goes to the gaff, and I does the changes, and jumps 'Jim Crow;' and when I ain't black I sings 'Charming Judy O'Calligan.' That me!"

"Do your father and mother live here?"

"What a stunner! cos I ain't got no mother: she died of cholera. Dusty, what does the bones, is my uncle. He took me out of the workus, and I earns him lots,—ten shills a week."

"How many of you are there?"

"Oh, a lot! We ain't together. Billy Mutton is our guv'nor; and Dusty has took that ere sky-parlour, and they all comes here to be blacked up."

The Missionary approached the door indicated, and of necessity gave a loud knock, as men were conversing inside. To the inquiry, "What are you thumping there for?" he opened the door and stepped in. The man who confronted him was of short stature, and of the most dismal of black complexions.

His attire was of light tweed, with broad green stripes. Upon his knee rested a fiddle, and its stick was in his right hand ready for practice. The table was placed near the window, and in addition to its other uses it evidently served for purposes of the toilet. Two cheap looking-glasses were upon it, and two tallow candles, placed in bottles, were burning, though it was full daylight. The men were evidently burning pieces of cork, adding tallow and a black powder, and then rubbing the precious composition over their hands and faces. Two of the men had completed the beautifying process, and one of them was tying on an immense white handkerchief, while the other with an adhesive composition was fixing a nasal organ of extraordinary shape and proportion. All this was seen while the stranger was making his office known, though but few words were necessary, as the tracts in his hand indicated his business. It was evident that the man with the fiddle understood him, as he without delay commenced playing "Drops of Brandy," and continued a medley of comic tunes, ogling his eyes and gesticulating in a humorous manner. He received occasional assistance from his companions, who struck up choruses or attitudinized with mirthful effect. Judging from his hearty laugh the stranger fully appreciated their efforts, and instead of leaving, as they no doubt expected, took a seat. Before the last scrape of the fiddle had died away he remarked coolly, "That's more than I could do, because I have not your ability. Why, were I to attempt a tune upon that fiddle, I should make such a discord as to startle and perhaps drive you all out

of the room. The day is however coming when I shall hope to be a musician."

To an expression of inquiry the speaker produced his pocket Bible, and observed: "You may not know it, but very much in this Book was written for and has been set to music, and the song I mean to sing is here, and something about the instrument I hope to play. Now there are instruments mentioned here which you could never play, and some which you have not even heard of, such as the sackbut and dulcimer; but you all know the harp?"

"I can play it a bit," exclaimed a man at the glass.

"That's the instrument," continued the stranger; "and all Christians will play it when they get to heaven, for it is written here, 'And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sang as it were a new song,' and the singers were '*redeemed* from the earth.'" The meaning of the beautiful word "redemption" was then explained to them, and their attention directed to the Redeemer.

As the child entered to have her toilet completed the speaker said, "I will tell you more about that another time. I really came in to ask you about this child. She looks ill and overdone with work. I suppose that she stays until very late at the gaff?" The man with the bones, who had mounted a naval cocked-hat, replied, "I took her out of the workus, guv'nor, to make a woman on her; but bless yer, her voice has gone, and she can't keep up with her clump shoes for twenty minutes; and as we are a-going werry soon to the seaside, we means to leave her with Mother Dell, down the

Court."

The men were startled as the Missionary inquired sternly, "Do you men believe that there is a God in heaven?"

Upon several answering "Yes!" he continued: "He is the great Father of us all, and it is not His will that even this little one should perish. You know that that woman is vile and drunken, and has juvenile thieves and depraved people in her house, and yet you would expose this poor child to a life of crime. This shall not be, as I will take her, in the name of the Redeemer, and place her in a home."

"Glad to get rid on her," was the heartless reply. But as the Missionary left, a dissipated-looking man, who had partly completed the blacking process, sprung from his glass, and following him to the stairs, said with emotion, "Thank you sir. I am a wicked backslider; but do take care of poor little Polly." This request was accompanied with a grasp of the hand which left a mark so black that hard washing was required to erase the stain; that however did not matter, as it was the grasp of gratitude.

Next morning a lady and the Missionary entered the niggers' room. The child, whose complexion had by scrubbing been reduced from black to a whitey-brown, looked worn and ill; but her eyes brightened as the lady took hold of her little hand, and said, "If you are good in the new home, I will always be kind to you." The act of condescension, and the sweet tone of that educated voice, had its influence with the niggers, for they murmured their thanks, and gave the child an affectionate

farewell; Dusty's voice being the last heard from the top of the stairs, exhorting her to "be a good un, and a credit to yer uncle."

That afternoon another kindness was done, though only in the way of good advice, for a daughter of the Court. Her parents were old inhabitants, they had lived there for many years, and sustained the respectability of the costermonger's calling.

"Should like to have a say with you, mister, if you ain't a-going," said the head of the family to the Missionary, as he was leaving the place; and when with the good wife they were seated in the little parlour, surrounded with partly decayed vegetables, he continued as follows: "You know my Bess: as good a girl as ever was, she is, and a fortune to any coster what gets her. Why she took to the trade quite natural like. When only as high as them baskets we sent her out with cat's meat, and she did wonderful. Such a girl to cut up a piece of horseflesh never was; and then you should have seen how she skewered it! Why she made lots of it, and all of them thought they had thumping hap'orths; howsomever the cats all got their bones through their furs, and then they diskivered what a girl our Bess was."

After a pause for consideration he proceeded. "May be you doesn't know Tom, who sold lots of cowcumbers last summer and put a sov in the bank, as he doesn't put his hand to his mouth unnecessary, as he's teetotal. His father and I has known each other always, cos we was both born in Short's Court, Whitechapel, which was a curious circumstance, and we always has a pint when we meets. Now his Tom has a new silk round his

neck, and looks handsome, as he always is. So he gets near my barrow when Bess is there, and helps her knock off trade quick, and he pushes home hisself. Well on Sunday he comes the swell, and wanted to walk Bess out, and says he to me, 'My father's a coming to have a pint with you over this job, as you was both born in that ere Court; and I wouldn't let your Bess push that ere barrow, cos I've three sovs, and I'd buy her a pretty donkey. That's me. And I wants Bess to be my lawful wedded wife.'" Here he looked at the mother, who was in tears, and inquired, "What would you do, master, if you was us?"

The visitor felt the importance of his position, and at once rose to the dignity of the friend of the family: for what can be a greater proof of friendship than to be consulted about matrimonial alliances, their settlements and prospects?

As arranged, the parties concerned met the following Sunday afternoon for consultation, and to receive the advice of their friend. He however found upon his arrival that other considerations than his advice had settled the business. The elders of Short's Court had agreed to cement a life-long friendship by becoming relations. The mothers were in close consultation about the new home to be established in the Place; and as for the young people, they were in an ecstatic state of mutual admiration. Her affection to her parents and high costermongering qualities had been enlarged upon to Tom's delight, and his sobriety and promise of the donkey had filled her cup of happiness to the brim. There was only one difficulty,

and Tom considered it a real one, for he said gravely, "How is the banns to be got up? for it looks so for a coster to go into a church to speak to the parson."

"The clergyman is coming down with me during the week," said the Missionary, "as he wishes to know you all: and I will bring him in here; and if you like to invite me I will attend the wedding." A hearty welcome, words of Christian counsel, and much shaking of hands followed, and then the affianced and their friends were left as happy as princes and nobles are supposed to be on such occasions.

For three Sundays the banns were read and the free seats occupied with awkward worshippers, as a wedding was a strange event in the Court, and not a few of its inhabitants went to hear "Bess asked;" and then the third Monday, like all appointed days, arrived quickly, and brought excitement and joy into the Place. A party of East-end barrow-men arrived early, and for that day fraternized with the costers of the West, and young urchins were quarrelling over sundry old tin kettles and saucepans, which they had provided for the rough music of the evening. The doors and windows were thronged, and a crowd was waiting at the end of the Place to accompany the bride to church. At length a shout was raised, and the bride stepped forth, leaning upon the arm of the bridegroom. Her light cotton dress, pink shawl, and white cotton gloves, were admired by all; while the blue bonnet, with large red rose and white strings, was the envy as well as the admiration of the female portion of the crowd. The bridegroom was sensibly

dressed in a new business suit, his happy face being surmounted with a beaver which the trade pronounced to be "nobby." The relations followed in a group behind, a mob bringing up the rear.

Those who entered the church were reverential during the solemnity, the officiating minister was most kind to the bridal party, the happy pair made their marks in the register, the clerk filled in particulars, and the party left the church; the Missionary joined the group, and all marched back to the Court as merry as wedding bells. The widow, like another Martha, had been busy about many things, as the saveloys, shrimps, cake, and coffee were all ready, and she received the bride with a kiss of motherly affection. The simple breakfast was soon over, and their friend then opened his Bible and read about the marriage in Cana of Galilee, spoke kindly to the young people about dedication to God being the secret of a happy married life, and he then commended them in prayer to the blessing of the Almighty.

Thus ended the wedding; but its influence was felt among the people, and from that time a higher moral tone was developed. Family secrets indeed were discovered, and the kind Rector often remitted fees, as a proof of his interest in the people, that none should wilfully live in transgression. On one morning alone the lay agent gave away three wives, and this led to the baptism of an aged woman and six children. The woman rented one of the houses, and went to the marriage of her lodger; she had attended the little mission meeting, and had become anxious about her salvation; without telling the cause, she had suffered

deep spiritual distress. Upon leaving the church she expressed desire to speak to the clergyman, and upon being taken into the vestry told him that "she had not been baptized, as her parents lived in Holborn Rents, and did not care about religion; that she passed as a widow, and had grown-up children, but had not been married, which now made her miserable." She was exhorted to repent truly, and promised that upon expressing repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, she should be baptized.

About a month after, a scene of solemn interest took place at the font. The Rector, who was himself nearly seventy, placed the water of baptism upon the brow of the woman of seventy-five years, the young Missionary pronouncing her name. That evening a prayer-meeting was held in the Court, to seek a blessing upon the newly baptized, and the attendance was very large; unlikely persons were there, including two of the translators, the woman of the dogs, and a rough. The passage itself was crowded, and to those who engaged in prayer there were indications of spiritual blessing,—of an aroused state of feeling, as though the voice had said, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." The hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood," was sung, and the fifth chapter of the 2nd Corinthians read. The Evangelist then spoke simply and clearly of judgment and of mercy, and besought his hearers to be reconciled to God.

After the meeting several remained behind to be prayed with.

One of these was a fishwoman of hard features and vile tongue. She was quite forty years of age, and had removed into the Place from a neighbouring street which had no thoroughfare, and was called by the people "Little Hell." Bad as the inhabitants in the Court were, they conceived a dislike to this woman, which made her life uncomfortable. She was indeed hateful to many. When addressed kindly at her door, and told of "goodness and mercy," she was subdued at once; and communicated the secret of her debased condition. She said, "I was a pretty little village girl, and when I comed up to London I got hawful wicked, and now I am obleged to be a fish-fag: and you make me think of the parson lady as made us kneel along the church and say them prayers." It was plain that the good impressions made in the village church so many years before were being revived, and she was invited to the meeting, and that with blessed result.

Proof was also given that the blessing was not transient but real, and the minister of the neighbouring Baptist chapel became deeply interested in the Place. When the Missionary, at his request, called upon him, he said, "I am glad to know and to encourage you in the Lord's work; and then I want to speak to you about an old man. You may have heard that twice a week I have temperance meetings under my chapel. For some time past this old man has been constant in his attendance, and I am told that he has for years been a pest in the neighbourhood, and is called Drunken Sammy. When invited he signed the pledge, and since then some of my people have got him to attend the services.

One Sunday I sent for him into the vestry, and he spoke of you and a widow as his friends, and of his promise to keep sober. He is evidently under deep religious convictions, and as he is very shy I have told the pew opener to keep a seat for him near the door. Of this I am convinced, that he will not break the pledge, as he speaks with anger of the cursed drink. Besides him, two women out of the same place are usually at chapel, and say that 'the man who reads the Bible has made them feel that they are not Christians, and that they want to be happy;' so we are getting them here to a week-night service."

This was pleasant but not strange news, because the Missionary knew that the acting of conscience, enlightened by the Word of God and the emotions of the new life, were felt by many; and that as the result, they were pressing into the various churches and chapels. The work indeed became overpowering; and it was impossible for him to speak with all who now desired his visits, as many in their distress kept him a long time. Strength equal to the day was however given; and almost nightly meetings in the widow's room made up for lost visits.

Among those who received marked benefit was the sewerman, who occupied a back "parlour" for his family and the yard for rats which he caught in the "shores" (sewers) and brought home in a bag attached to the inside of his coat. The smell of rats was always strong upon him, and as he had a blinking peering look he was far from popular with his neighbours. When, however, in his earnestness to hear, he pressed forward into the meeting room,

several smiled pleasure at seeing him, and he was motioned to a seat. After this he was constant in his attendance, and a gradual change of appearance was noticed. That he washed himself in right good earnest was evident, and the lighting up of his countenance, with effort to join in the singing, proved that his soul also was stirred by the glad and to him new tidings of the Saviour's mercy. He avoided conversation upon his spiritual state, as he knew not how to express his feelings, and nothing could induce him to attend with respectable people at public worship (he may have considered himself offensive), but he got to love the little meeting, and it became evident that he had attained to peace in believing.

To the Missionary and his helpers this was a time for rejoicing; but they had also their discouragements and anxieties. A folded letter, for instance, of strange shape, and bearing the impression, "Dartmoor Convict Establishment," was delivered at one of the meetings; and upon opening it the following printed instructions met the eye: "In writing to the convict, direct to No. 2484 (*a.* 1, 2)." This was evidently the number of the young thief whose companion had asked the Missionary to reform him upon his first visit to the Court, on the ground of his being "unlucky." That effort had been made in earnest; for the mother and the Missionary upon the next discharge morning took their stand at the iron-barred gate of Coldbath Field's prison, and waited until the heavy lock was opened and the ponderous bolt withdrawn. Then the jail-birds issued out helter-skelter, looking

well, and rejoicing in their liberty as if bent on pleasure. Some were received by their "pals," unmistakable members of the criminal class, and were conducted in a sort of triumph to their former dens, with the prospect of a little wild pleasure, another crime, and then a longer term of imprisonment. Our bird, a sharp-looking, well grown youth of seventeen years, was seized by his mother, and hastily informed "that this ere gent had come to reform him." A keen glance at the reformer and a movement of the eyelid, understood by such people as "the knowing wink," expressed his reluctance to undergo the process. He then, in a surly way, said to his mother, "I wants some bacca and some beer: that's what I wants; and I'll have it!" As he glanced at a group of persons who had hurried from the prison-gate to the public-house, the mother evidently felt that the required refreshment was the only means of keeping her son. She therefore whispered to her friend, "He'll bolt, yer honour; so I'll treat him, and then he will be a lamb, the dear will!" And then they also passed over to the public-house, leaving the reformer outside, and in a perplexity as to what he ought to do. The long walk with that strange-looking woman had been almost a punishment, for everybody turned round to look at her. She noticed the annoyance, and volunteered this explanation: "You see, yer honour, I must wear this ere large cap, as I should get rheumatics in my poor head; and it's now seventeen years since I ever wore a bonnet or shawl, cos of my oath. My husband was a good chap to me, and had only once got into trouble. Well,

he went out with a fool what peached, and they lifted a lot of bonnets and a box of the beautifulest shawls as ever was; and he was collared in the place where they was, and he got fourteen years over the sea. I then goes down on my knees, and swears that I would never wear bonnet or shawl till he come back. He never saw our Eddy, as he was born the week after he had gone, and he died very soon at Van Diemen's; and I tried to bring up Eddy respectable like, but he's like his poor father. Now if people tells you that I receives, tell them that they lies; cos I lives honest, and does pawning for women what has got modesty, and doesn't like to be seen going to their Uncle's; and then I gets more on anything, and picks up what I can: but I'm an honest woman!"

This "honest woman" and her son only remained a few minutes in the public-house; and as they came toward him, the heart of the Missionary yearned for their salvation. That fine youthful countenance had already the lines of viciousness upon it; and he was not improved by the short cut hair and the long pipe he was smoking. Poor fellow, he was but one of thousands of the youth of this great city who are as much brought up to live lives of crime as heathen children who are taught to pray to gods of wood and stone. Now it surely must be true that Christian sympathy has power to penetrate the souls of the depraved: for as the three pursued their homeward journey there was between them confidence and good fellowship; and though the would-be reformer was disappointed, he felt that an influence had been gained over the depraved youth.

The offer of a refuge was refused, but the young thief promised to attend a class at the Ragged School which the Missionary was forming, and in which he himself intended to teach. He did attend, with eight other unruly natives of the Court, and received instruction so readily, and made such progress, that hope was entertained of his reformation. He obtained work at the side of the Canal, to unload boats, and had kept to it for several weeks, when a circumstance occurred which crushed his high spirit. The members of a gang of "Sneaks and Mudlarks," with which he had been associated, were annoyed at his forsaking their company. Several of these one day crossed over the bridge and saw him at work. They called to the other workmen, and told them "that that fellow was a known thief, and had had four months on the mill." That evening the foreman made inquiries of the police, and in the morning when the poor youth went to work he was spurned from the gate. The mother incited him to take vengeance, and he severely beat two of the youths who, as he said, had ruined him.

When the friend and teacher heard of his trouble he called to see him, and the youth opened the door; but instead of speaking he ran upstairs. He was followed: but he vanished at the upper landing. As he absented himself from the class, other efforts to reach him were made, but he always disappeared at the top of the stairs. One afternoon the teacher saw his pupil enter the house, and followed him in. He sprang forward, his friend after him, and as he disappeared the teacher thought that he heard the trap-

door of the roof close down. He at once placed his right foot upon the old handrail, and pushing the trap-door open sprang out upon the roof of the house; and there, before the chimney-stack, beside his pigeon-house, sat the vanished one. He looked unhappy, but joined in a hearty laugh as the Missionary took his seat between the next pair of chimney pots. The novelty of their position was soon forgotten as the poor lad spoke of his persecutions and troubles. The pocket Bible was produced, and the narrative was read of Peter praying upon the house-top, and his seeing the vision of a great sheet, knit at the four corners, let down from heaven, containing all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth. From the words, "God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean," the Gospel was made plain to him, and the ease with which grace enables us to resist temptation and to bear troubles. Tears started into the eyes of the poor youth, as he said, almost in a whisper, "I ortent to have done it, sir; but I thinks that I am done for now. I was a fool to bolt from you." And then he glanced along the roof so anxiously, that a detective would have suspected a thief's trail to another trap-door. An angry voice called a "lazy varmint" to come to tea, and then the trap opened and the Missionary made his descent. He was received by the strange mother with a scream of surprise, and the announcement "that it was dreadful to see him a-coming down there."

That call to tea was the last which the convict's widow gave to her son. In the midst of it stealthy steps were heard upon the

stairs, but the youth made no effort to escape. Two policemen in plain clothes entered the room, and one of them, seizing him by the arm, said, "We want you upon a charge of burglary, with violence to the person, committed last night at Hampstead." The prisoner burst into tears, and his mother, throwing her arms around him, gave a deep cry of anguish. There was but short delay, for he was hurried down stairs, and on to the station. Next morning he appeared in the dock at the police court, and a clear case was made out against him. His companions were taken upon the spot, and though he escaped, his face had been seen by the police and two other persons. At his trial he pleaded guilty, and his companions, who were well-known thieves, were sentenced to ten years' transportation, and himself to seven. His teacher visited him at the House of Detention, and then in the cell at Newgate. He appeared to be truly penitent, and promised to send him his first letter; and this accounts for the epistle from the convict establishment. When the Missionary read it to the wretched mother, she acknowledged that her sins had separated her from her God, her husband, and her son; and then, for the first time, she knelt down, and sobbed again while Divine mercy was implored on her behalf. There is some hope in her case and for her son also, as the Chaplain wrote a private note to the Missionary, asking for particulars concerning the convict, and telling him that the prisoner showed contrition, and spoke with feeling about a conversation upon the house-top. We must therefore leave convict 2484 (*a.* 1, 2), to endure the penalty of

his crime, and show what kindness we can to his mother.

The Book in the Court:
ITS AUTHORITY.

"I am going there now!"—
There was light on his brow:
Then up to the skies
He lifted his eyes,
With a bright sweet smile
On his face the while.
One struggling breath,
And the hand of death
Had broken the chain
Of his grief and pain;
And the soul had fled
From the silent dead,
And free as the lark,
And above the dark,
And above the cloud
And the toiling crowd,
Had entered the rest
Of the good and blest."

Mrs. Sewell.

CHAPTER IV

A BLACKLEG—MINIATURE ALTAR—THE
PEACEMAKER—THE WAFER—AN ANIMATED
SANDWICH—SAVED FROM ERROR—THE
TRAVELLING TINKER—THE DYING CHILD.

The Book in the Court:

ITS AUTHORITY

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. viii. 20.

IF the crew of a man of war may be regarded as a "little world," the densely-packed hundreds of our Court could certainly claim the same distinction. In addition to the miserable shelter which conferred upon them the few joys of home and the associations of their life-struggles, there were many links to the large outer world. All, without exception, had to do battle with keen, cold poverty; and in the morning as they left their dwellings it was amusing to contemplate the nature of their various pursuits, as fifty-six different callings were professed

by them. The costermongers might be seen pushing out their barrows of vegetables, fruit, and coarse fish. The hucksters and the itinerant herbalist with their boxes. The sweep with his machine, and the Punch and Judy man with his show upon his shoulders, and red-coated dog Toby at his heels. Professed beggars, confirmed thieves, and the fortune-telling women, left at more genteel hours; while the workers with the needle, both men and women, might at all times be seen hurrying off to shops with the work they had accomplished in "poverty, hunger, and dirt." And then, strange as it may seem, there were inhabitants in that obscure place which linked it to the upper classes. In a first-floor front lived two aged women, one of them a lady of eighty-four years. Though very feeble and careless as regarded present comforts, she had a vivid recollection of persons and of events connected with the beginning of the century. She was the daughter of a physician, and had been governess to the children of a Duke, and received a pension of £30 a year, which was her living. Her delight was to untie bundles of letters with crested seals and arms upon them, to show the autographs, and to relate anecdotes of her great friends who had long passed away, but several of whose names live in their country's records. Her companion was the widow of a mechanic, with an allowance from the parish. She always treated the lady with respect, and a close friendship had for many years existed between them. In death they were scarcely divided, as she only survived the lady for a few weeks.

The blackleg who for some months shared a room with two news-boys, had the unmistakable bearing of a gentleman, and though a master of slang he could not divest his tongue of its College culture. At a time of compunction he told the visitor that he was the brother of a Baronet, but that dissipation and gambling had reduced him to want bread. "I bear an alias," he continued, "that the family name may not be disgraced, but I will never humble myself to relations. I am now out of luck, and have to act as billiard-marker in a low flash house, but I have nicely hedged my book for the Derby, and if fortune smiles I shall have sufficient cash to establish myself in Canada, where I may rise to my proper position." At the time of the Derby he was absent from his lodgings for a week; one morning he returned well dressed, paid up his lodging, gave the news-boys ten shillings each, as "nest eggs" for the savings-bank, left a note for the Missionary, expressing his sincere thanks for his kind interest in him; and after that was not heard of again.

In our little world there were also those who had defined religious and political opinions, and the people were not always free from the excitement which on some subjects disturbs the outer world. There were barber's shop and taproom politicians, as well as "anti-theologians," and several, who through ignorance of the truth, were the victims of superstition. The great body of the men were of Republican and Communist opinions, and belonged to what are justly called "the dangerous classes," while the principles of pure and undefiled religion were only beginning

to exert their influence in forming public opinion in our Court. Just at this time new occupants entered the back parlour of No. 11, and a short account of them and their proceedings will help to show the mind of the people.

The family consisted of an Irishwoman and her two sons. She was employed at a Roman Catholic Chapel, and her two sons served at the altar. At home they showed their devotion by placing a miniature altar upon a table opposite their door, which was usually open. It was prettily arranged, with its sacred place high in the centre, and its covering of silk with finely wrought cross and sprigs of flowers. On one side was a little font-like vessel containing holy water, and on the other an image of "the Virgin," with a bunch of artificial flowers at her feet. At times the room was darkened and several small candles were lit upon the altar. The effect was striking, and as the lodgers passed they looked with a kind of awe at the woman and her sons when prostrate before it. As other Romanists went into the room to perform their devotions, and as they commenced circulating little books, the family became a trial to the Missionary. The enemy was sowing tares, but a circumstance occurred which neutralized the bad influence.

If this was an effort at proselytism, they fixed upon a bad position for the purpose, as the next room was occupied by a young man who styled himself a "positive religionist." He was a shoemaker, but by self-culture had educated himself above his fellows. He was well read in infidel literature, and being

of a reflective, philosophical order of mind, had worked out a system of opposition to Divine revelation. The infidels of the neighbourhood regarded him as their "coming man," and his fame was spreading, as he was clever in argument and powerful in debate. The Missionary, upon his first visit, felt so powerless in meeting his objections, that he commenced a course of reading, with the one object of leading him into the way of truth. This man became interested in the religious observances of the lodgers in the next room, and often conversed with them. One morning the youth opened the sacred place, and taking out a sacramental "wafer," told the infidel that he had brought it from the chapel; that it was only a wafer then, but that if a priest pronounced the words of consecration over it, it would immediately be changed into the Lord Jesus Christ. To confirm this he gave him a catechism containing the Creed of Pius IV., and pointed out the words, "In this Sacrament are contained not only the true body of Christ, and all the constituents of a true body, as *bones* and *sinews*, but also *Christ whole and entire*." The infidel read this, and again asked to see the wonderful wafer. As the youth held it in his palm, the infidel struck the under part of the hand, and caught the wafer as it fell. It was broken into several pieces, but he rushed into his room, and pasted it together upon a piece of brown paper.

About ten days after, the visitor noticed several of the Irish residents and the youth in an excited conversation. Upon inquiring the cause, they told him that the young man had taken

the blessed wafer round to infidel meetings, where they had made fun of and pretended to pray to it. "Och, an' shure," exclaimed a labourer, "an' his riverence never altered it at all, at all; but howan'iver he says 'twas took by Mick, and 'twasn't given, and it's himself to do penance!" And then he declared with a bitter oath, that he would take it back to the priest. As the man had a pick in his hand, and raised it in a threatening manner, and a crowd, chiefly of his own countrymen, were assembling, the Missionary felt it to be his duty to act as peacemaker, and therefore exclaimed with a smile, "Try reason before the shillelagh: the youth and one of you had better go with me and ask them to give it back to him!" This was agreed to, and they made their way to the room of the six "translators," to which place the young man had fled with his prize when he saw the storm brewing. The men had pinned the wafer to the wall, and a filthy object it looked. They were evidently prepared to defend it, but were embarrassed by the presence of the Missionary, who addressing the young man, said, "I heard you called a thief; now as positive morality is a part of positive religion, I have come to ask you to restore the stolen wafer." "Not I!" he replied, with a merry laugh, in which his companions joined. "I shall rather try and find a priest, and get him to conjure it into the Man of Nazareth, to the benefit of my paste as well as the dough, and then we shall look upon and pray to—" Here, with profane words, he uttered that name which is high above every name that is named in heaven and in earth. A shout of derision from the group

of infidels was silenced by the visitor, who said firmly, "This is really bad of you, to defend an immoral act by an outrage upon my feelings. That wafer is not, and never can become the Saviour of the world. To believe that, is no part of the Christian religion, that belief is a horrid corruption added to the Christian system. Listen while I read from this book, the standard of Christian faith, Christ's institution of His holy sacrament, which the wafer-god profanes: 'The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me; for as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.'" And then, raising his voice, the reader said, "Be it known to you that the perpetuity of this sacrament is one of the many external evidences which support a truth in which each of you has a present and eternal interest; that the Lord Jesus, after accomplishing death for your salvation, rose from the dead, and is now alive, and is seated at God's right hand, a Prince and a Saviour." As he ceased speaking the infidels conferred among themselves; and then the young man unpinned the wafer from the wall, and handing it to the youth, said, "There, take it back, as it ain't moral for us to keep it, though it's not worth so much as one of our bristles, of which we get a lot for a penny; but we never take one without asking each other for it."

The youth seized the dirty object, and, with his friend, hurried downstairs, while the reader stood with the sword of the Spirit in his hand, ready to do conflict with the King's enemies.

Poor wafer! but for the accident of a youth taking thee instead of another, thou wouldest have been the object of an imposing ceremonial: placed upon a high altar and surrounded by lighted candles, before thee incense would have been burned, and priests in gorgeous raiment would have prostrated themselves, while a congregation of worshippers would have adored thee as the Lord who had redeemed them. Instead of this, thou wast the cause of His blessed name being blasphemed, and, as the embodiment of a lie, made to hinder the salvation of wicked men.

From the time the miniature altar was set up, it was noticed that two Sisters of Mercy, with their dismal clothing and large baskets, frequently made their appearance in the Court, and the Widow observed three children of a poor English family, who lived in the house, returning from the convent school with the Irish children. Upon speaking to the mother upon the subject, she said, that "the Sisters came in to see her and gave her nice things, and asked her to send the children to their school; and, as one religion was as good as another, she should do as she liked." The children, when spoken to about their school, repeated a prayer which they said they "had been taught to say to a great dolly with a baby in its arms." Upon hearing this, the Missionary decided upon speaking to the father upon the matter, and in the evening went for that purpose.

This man was an "animated sandwich," and as he shuffled into the Court with his worn out shoes and crushed hat, clothing to match being partly concealed by boards covered with flaming placards, he appeared a deplorable object. His haggard, careworn expression of face led one to believe his saying, that "he was a chap as had been smashed up." Little did he think, as the Missionary followed him upstairs, that he had been the subject of much thought, and that the visitor he welcomed was as desirous for his favour as though he had been one of the great of the earth. The poor man was in a communicative state of mind, and in reply to inquiries respecting his health and business prospects, made the following statement.

"You see, master, as how sandwiches never can get on, cos we're a broke-down lot. Why you should see us afore we starts with our boards, all a-rubbin' our rheumatisms or a-coughin', so as it is wonderful how we gets on. But lots of us are respectable though we ain't always honest, as we get into a public instead of crawling, and there we enjoys our pipes and talks. Why one on us is a queer old man what had a good business in the muffin line, and it udd make you stare if you heard the poetry he makes up, and then you would laugh, and then your eyes would water like. Well, to-day he brings in a new song all by hisself, and it all ends with what is called—

"'The man what walks the gutters.'

"And it's a correct account of how we are looked down on, and shows that none of our old pals will shake our paws, as it's awkward like when your harms pop out of your side like serampores at the railway; and then it shows that it's no good to police the men what gets drunk, and fine 'em five shillings, the correct thing being to make 'em sandwiches for a week with 'vertisements about them teetotal meetings. And then nobs would mayhaps have to do the boards, which would helewate the perfession, as all what they does helewates. Howsomever a chap what's a wagabon offered me his fist, and I kicked his shins; and affor that I never killed a fly, as my 'art is tender-like. That wagabon ruined us. My wife was a 'ousemaid, and I was a cabby; and she had twenty-three sovereigns, and I had ten on 'em. So we made a match, and I took a stable and borrowed a 'orse, and bought an old cab and did it up, and we was a-doing first-rate. So that man comes one morning, and says he to me, 'You're good natured, and if you'll oblige me, I will oblige you; and I wants to buy a 'orse, and if you'll write across a paper what's a bill, I'll have the money and will stand treat.' Well, that made me feel as I was a gent to get money with writing, and I does it; and the treat I had wasn't no good. Well, three months arter that, a chap comes to my stable with a paper nearly all print, which said I was to pay that fifteen pounds I signed on the paper; and I couldn't and I wouldn't, and I got drunk lots of times, and they hexecuted in the stable, and then I hadn't a cab; and then I frets, and was werry ill in the hospital; and then I thought a lot, and says I to

myself, says I, 'I ortent to have writ on that paper, and I ortent to have took to the drink, and I ortent to have been 'ard with the wife, as I made the trouble. And now I'm a sandwich I brings her the little bit of money I gets."

"You did wrong," said the Missionary, "in signing that paper without consulting your wife and your Bible. She might have seen the danger and prevented it; if not the good Book would have said to you, 'Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?' I have called in because I find that you are making another mistake, a very serious one, as regards your children, by allowing them to go to the convent school. The Sisters have been kind to your wife, and have persuaded her that there is no difference between their religion and that which is true; they have however caused your children to kneel before images, though God in the commandment has said, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or bow down thyself to them.' Besides this, they will be taught other things which are not true, and must therefore injure them. Poor as you are, you are responsible to God for your children, and you sin by allowing them to be brought up in a false religion. Bear bravely with your troubles, and brighter days may come, but do right to your children by allowing me to take them to a proper school." After a feeble resistance from the mother this was agreed to, and the visit ended in a reading from the Bible; after which the family knelt together at the throne of grace. Next

morning the Missionary called for the children and took them to the National School. During the day the Sisters called upon the mother, and after a short visit left the Court with a quick tread. The week after, several of the Romanists, including the family with the miniature altar, left; eleven of the catechisms they had circulated were exchanged for good books, and so the effort to Romanize in Paradise Court was stayed.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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