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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE RUNAWAY ***



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THE RUNAWAY;

OR, THE

ADVENTURES OF RODNEY ROVERTON.

"He cast his bundle on his back, and went,
He knew not whither, nor for what intent;
So stole our vagrant from his warm retreat,

To rove a prowler, and be deemed a cheat."

CRABBE.

APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

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INTRODUCTION.

A truthful narrative, not a tale of fiction, is presented in the following chapters to our readers. All that the imagination has contributed to it has been the names of the actors,—true names having been withheld, lest, perhaps, friends might be grieved,—the filling up of the dialogues, in which, while thoughts and sentiments have been remembered, the verbiage that clothed them has been forgotten, and, in a few instances, the grouping together of incidents that actually occurred at wider intervals than here represented, for the sake of the unity of the story.

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THE RUNAWAY.

CHAPTER I.

RODNEY UNHAPPY IN A GOOD HOME.



It was a lovely Sabbath morning in May, 1828, when two lads, the elder of whom was about sixteen years old, and the younger about fourteen, were wandering along the banks of a beautiful brook, called the Buttermilk Creek, in the immediate vicinity of the city of Albany, N. Y. Though there is no poetry in the name of this little stream, there is sweet music made by its rippling waters, as they rush rapidly along the shallow channel, fretting at the rocks that obstruct its course, and racing toward a precipice, down which it plunges, some thirty or forty feet, forming a light, feathery cascade; and then, as if exhausted by the leap, creeping sluggishly its little distance toward the broad Hudson. The white spray, churned out by the friction against the air, and flung perpetually upwards, suggested to our sires a name for this miniature Niagara; and, without any regard for romance or euphony, they called it Buttermilk Falls. It was a charming spot, notwithstanding its homely name, before the speculative spirit of progress—stern foe of Nature's beauties—had pushed the borders of the city close upon the tiny cataract, hewed down the pines upon its banks, and opened quarries among its rocks.

It was before this change had passed over the original wilderness, that the lads whom we have mentioned were strolling, in holy time, upon the banks of the little stream, above the falls.

"Rodney," said the elder of the boys, "suppose your mother finds out that you have run away from Sunday-school, this morning; what will she say to you?"

"Why, she will be very likely to punish me," said Rodney; "but you know I am used to it; and, though decidedly unpleasant, it does not grate on my nerves as it did a year or two ago. Van Dyke, my teacher, says I am hardened. But I would rather have a stroll here, and a flogging after it, than be shut up in school and church all day to escape it. I wish, Will, that mother was like your grandfather, and would let me do as I please on Sunday."

"Now that I am an apprentice," replied Will Manton, "and shut up in the shop all the week, it would be rather hard to prevent my having a little sport on Sunday. I think it is necessary to swallow a little fresh air on Sunday, to blow the sawdust out of my throat; and to have a game of

ball occasionally, to keep my joints limber, for they get stiff leaning over the work-bench, shoving the jack-plane, and chiseling out mortices all the week."

"Well, Will, I, too, get very sick of work," replied the younger boy. "I do not think I ever shall like it. When I am roused up early in the morning, and go into the shop, and look at the tools, and think that, all day long, I must stand and pull leather strands, while other boys can go free, and take their sport, and swim, or fish, or hunt, or play, just as they please, it makes me feel like running away. Now, here am I, a little more than fourteen years old; and must I spend seven years in a dirty shop, with the prospect of hard work all my life? It makes my heart sick to think of it."

The boys threw themselves upon the ground, under the shade of a large pine, and, reclining against its trunk, remained some minutes without uttering a word. At length, William Manton, whose thoughts had evidently been running in the channel opened by the last remarks of Rodney, said,

"I have often thought of it."

"Thought of what, Will?"

"Of running away."

"Where could you go? What could you do? How could you live?" were the quick, eager inquiries of Rodney.

"Three questions at once is worse than the catechism," was the laughing response; "but, though I never learned the answers out of a book, yet I have them by heart. I will tell you what I have thought about the matter. You know Captain Ryan?—he was in our shop last week, and was telling how he came to be a sailor. He said that his uncle, with whom he lived when he was a boy, promised him a beating, one day, for some mischief he had done; and, as he had often felt before that his lashes were not light, he ran off, went on board a ship as a cabin-boy, learned to handle sails and ropes, and, after five or six voyages, was made mate of a ship; and now he is a captain. I have been thinking about it ever since. Now, if I could get a place in a ship, I would go in a minute. I am sure travelling over the world must be pleasanter than spending a life in one place; and pulling a rope is easier work than pushing a plane."

Rodney sprang up from his reclining posture, looked straight in his companion's face for a moment, and exclaimed, "That would be glorious! How I should like to go to London, to Canton, to Holland, where the old folks came from,—to travel all over the world! But,"—and he leaned back against the tree again as he spoke,—"but it is of no use to think about it; mother would not consent, and nobody would help me; no ship would take me. I suppose I must pull away at the leather all my life." He spoke bitterly, and leaned his face upon his hands; and, between his fingers, the tears were seen slowly trickling. In truth, he had no taste or inclination for the trade to which he was forced. If the bias of his own mind had been consulted, he might have been contented in some employment adapted to his nature.

"Bah, Rodney, don't be a baby!" was the jeering expostulation of Will Manton, when he saw the tears; "crying never got a fellow out of a scrape. I believe it is easy enough done. If we could only get off to New York, they say that boys are so much wanted on ships, that the captains take them without asking many questions."

"Do you think so?"

"Don't you think it is worth a trial?"

"But I should have to leave my mother, and grandmother, and sister, and all."

"Of course; you would not want to take them with you, would you?"

"But I could not tell them I was going. I should have to steal away without their knowledge."

"You could write to them when you started."

"I might never see them again."

"You are as likely to live and come back as Captain Ryan was."

"But they would feel so much hurt, if I should run away."

Will Manton curled his lip into a sneer, and said, scornfully, "Why, Rodney, I didn't think you was so much of a baby. You are a more faint-hearted chicken than I thought you."

"Well, Will, the thought of it frightens me. I have a good mother and a good grandmother; and, though they make me learn a trade I hate, yet I do not think I should dare to run away."

"Well, you poor mouse-heart, stay at home, then, and tie yourself to your mamma's apron-strings!" was the reply. "Do as you please; but, I tell you,—and I trust the secret to you, and hope you won't *blow* it,—I have made up my mind to go to sea."

"Will you run away?"

"Indeed I will."

"When?"

"Why should I tell you, if you will not go with me?"

"Well, I want to be off with you, but how can I?"

"Easy enough. But I will see you to-morrow night, and we will talk it over. It is time to go home."

"I must see Dick Vanderpool, and find out where the text was, so that I can tell the old folks."

CHAPTER II.

REVOLVING AND RESOLVING.



CONVERSATIONS similar to those recorded in the last chapter, were frequently held between the two lads, during the next month. Will Manton's determination was fixed, and he was making secret preparations to start upon his wild journey. Rodney, though equally desirous to escape the restraints of home, could not yet make up his mind to risk the adventure. He regarded his comrade as a sort of young hero; and he wished he had the courage to be like him.

One Monday morning, in June, as he was returning from his work, he saw Will Manton's old grandfather standing before the door, looking up and down the street; and he noticed that he seemed very uneasy, and much distressed. When he came opposite the house, on the other side of the street, the old gentleman called him over, and asked him, "Rodney, do you know where Will is?"

The boy's heart beat wildly, and his cheek turned pale; for he at once surmised that his comrade had carried out his purpose. He stammered out, in reply,

"I have not seen him since last Friday night."

"It is very strange," said the old man. "He has not been at home since last Sunday, at dinner-time. What has become of him?"

Will Manton was gone!

To the anxious inquiries that were made, his friends discovered that he had left Albany in the evening boat, on Tuesday, for New York. Though a messenger was immediately sent after him, no trace of him could be discovered. A few months after, they received a letter from him, written from Liverpool, where he had gone in a merchant-ship, as a cabin-boy. His friends were very much grieved and distressed, but hoped that he would soon grow weary of a hard and roving life, and return to his home.

There was a romantic interest in all this for young Rodney. In his imagination, Will Manton was a hero. He was scarcely ever out of his thoughts. He would follow him in fancy, bounding over the broad sea, with all the sails of the majestic ship swelling in the favoring breeze, now touching at some island, and looking at the strange dresses and customs of a barbarous people; now meeting a homeward-bound vessel, and exchanging joyful greetings; and now lying to in a calm, and spearing dolphins and harpooning whales. When the storm raged, he almost trembled lest he might be wrecked; but, when it was over, he fancied the noble ship, having weathered the storm, stemming safely the high waves, and careering gracefully on her course. Or, if he was wrecked, he imagined that he must be cast upon some shore where the hospitable inhabitants hurried down to the beach to the relief of the crew, bore them safely through the breakers, and pressed upon them the comforts of their homes. His wild imagination followed him to other lands, and roved with him along the streets of European cities, among the ruins of Grecian temples, over the gardens of Spain and the vineyards of Italy, through the pagodas of India, and the narrow streets of Calcutta and Canton.

"O," thought he, "how delightful must be such a life! How pleasant to be roaming amid scenes that are always new! And how wretched to be tied to such a life as I lead, following the same weary round of miserable drudgery every day!"

But it was Rodney's own fancy that painted this enjoyment of a sailor-boy's life. Will Manton did not find it so pleasant in reality. There was more menial drudgery to the poor cabin-boy on ship-board, than he had ever known in the carpenter's shop. He was sworn at, and thumped, and kicked, and driven from one thing to another, by the captain, and mates, and steward, and crew, all day long. And many a night, when, weary and sore, he crept to his hard, narrow bunk, he lay and cried himself to sleep, thinking of his kind and pleasant home.

When Fancy pictures before the restless mind distant and unknown scenes, she divests them of all the rough realities which a nearer view and a tried experience find in them. The mountain-side looks smooth and pleasant from a distance, but we find it rugged and wearisome when we attempt to climb it.

One idea had now gained almost sole possession of poor Rodney's mind. He must go to sea! He thought of it all day, and dreamed of it at night. He did not dare to speak about it to his mother,

for he knew that she would refuse her consent. He must *run away!* He formed a hundred different plans, and was forced to abandon them. Now Will Manton was gone, there was no one with whom he could consult. He was afraid to speak of it, lest it should reach the ears of his mother. Alone he nursed his resolution, and formed his plans.

He was very unhappy, because he knew that he was purposing wrong. He could not be contented with his employment, and he knew how it would grieve the hearts of those who loved him, if he should persist in his design. Yet, when he pictured to himself the freedom from restraint, the pleasure of roaming from place to place over the world, and the thousand exciting scenes and adventures which he should meet by becoming a sailor, he determined, at all hazards, to make the attempt.

Unhappy boy! He was sowing, for his own reaping, the seeds of a bitter harvest of wretchedness and remorse.

CHAPTER III.

RODNEY IN NEW YORK.



IN a beautiful Sabbath morning in July, Rodney stood in the hall of the old Dutch house in which successive generations of the family had been born, and paused to look the last farewell, he dare not speak, upon those who loved him, and whom, notwithstanding his waywardness, he also loved.

There sat his pious and venerable grandmother, with the little round stand before her, upon which lay the old family Bible, over which she was intently bending, reading and commenting to herself, as was her custom, in half-audible tones. He had often stood behind her, and listened, unobserved, as she read verse after verse, and paused after each, to testify of its truth, or piously apply it to herself and others. And now he thought that, in all probability, he would never see her again, and he half repented his determination. But his preparations were all made, and he could not now hesitate, lest his purpose should be discovered.

He looked at his mother, as she was arranging the dress of a younger and only brother, for the Sabbath-school. As she leaned over him, and smoothed down the collar she had just fastened round his neck, Rodney, with heart and eye, bade farewell to both.

He stood and gazed for a moment upon his only sister, who sat with her baby in her arms, answering the little laughing prattler in a language that sounded like its own, and which certainly none but the two could understand. Some might doubt whether they understood it themselves; but they both seemed highly interested and delighted by the conversation.

That dear sister, amiable and loving, is long since dead. She greeted death with a cheerful welcome, for the messenger released her from a life of domestic unhappiness, and introduced her into that blessed heaven "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

And that prattling infant has become, in his turn, a runaway sailor-boy, flying from an unhappy home to a more wretched destiny, of whose wanderings or existence nothing has been heard for many years.

It was one hasty, intense glance which Rodney cast over these groups, and each beloved figure, as it then appeared, was fixed in his memory forever. He has never forgotten—*he never can forget*—that moment, or the emotions that thrilled his heart as he turned away from them.

He had hidden a little trunk, containing his clothing, in the stable, and thither he hastened; and, throwing his trunk upon his shoulder, he stole out of the back gate, and took his course through bye streets to the dock, where he went on board a steamboat, and in half an hour was sailing down the Hudson towards New York.

He had no money with which to pay his passage. He had left home without a single sixpence. When the captain came to collect the passengers' fare, he told him a wicked, premeditated lie. He said that, in taking his handkerchief from his pocket, he had accidentally drawn out his pocket-book with it, and that it had fallen overboard. Thus one sin prepares the way to the commission of another.

He offered to leave his trunk in pledge for the payment of the passage; and the captain, after finding it full of clothing, ordered it to be locked up until the money was paid. Rodney expected to be able to get a situation in some ship immediately, and to receive a part of his wages in advance, with which he could redeem his clothing.

He slept on board the steamboat, and on Monday morning started in search of a ship that would take him. He wandered along the wharves, and at first was afraid to speak to any one, lest he should be questioned and sent home. At last he made up his mind to ask a sailor, whom he saw sauntering on the dock, if he knew where he could get a place on board a ship.

The sailor looked at him a moment, turned his huge tobacco quid over in his mouth, hitched up

his trowsers, and said:

"Why, you young runaway, do you want to go to sea? What can such a chap as you do on a ship? Go home, and stick by your mammy for five years more, and then you'll have no trouble in shipping."

Rodney was a good deal frightened at such a reply, and walked on for some time, not venturing to ask again. Toward noon he went on board a large vessel, and seeing a man, whom he took for the captain of the ship, asked him if he could give him a place.

"No, my boy," he replied; "we don't sail for three weeks, and we never ship a crew before the time."

All day he wandered about the wharves, and to all his questions received repelling replies, mingled oftentimes with oaths, jeers, and insults. No one seemed to feel the least interest for him.

CHAPTER IV.

RODNEY FINDS A PATRON.



ATE in the afternoon Rodney strolled up the East River wharves. He was hungry, for he had eaten nothing all day. He was very sad, and sat down on a cotton bale, and cried. In what a position had a single day placed him! He had no place where he could lay his head for the night, no bread to eat, and he knew nobody whom he dared to ask for a meal; and so, with a sorrowful heart, he sat down and wept.

He buried his face in his hands, and for a long time sat there motionless. He did not know that a man was standing before him, watching him, until he was startled

by a voice:

"Why, my boy, what is the matter with you?"

He looked up, and saw a tall man in a sailor's dress standing near him.

"I want to get a place on a ship, sir, to go to sea," replied Rodney; "I can't find any place, and I have no money and no friends here."

The man sat down beside him, and asked him, "Where are your friends?"

"In Albany, sir."

"What did you leave them for?"

"Because I wanted to go to sea."

They talked some time together, and Rodney told him truly all about himself and his friends. The man seemed to pity him, and told him that he was a sailor, and had lately been discharged from a United States vessel, where he had served as a marine,—that he had spent almost all his money, and was looking for another ship. He told Rodney to go with him, and he would try what could be done for him. They went into a sailors' boarding-house, and got something to eat.

Then the man,—who said his name was Bill Seegor, and that he must call him Bill, and not Mister, nor sir,—took him with himself into a ball-room. Here he saw a great many sailors and bad women, who danced together, and laughed, and shouted, and cursed, and drank, until long past midnight. Rodney had never witnessed *such* a scene. He had never heard such filthy and blasphemous language, nor seen such indecent behavior.

"Come, my lad," said a bluff sailor to him; "if you mean to be a man, you must learn to toss off your glass. Your white face don't look as if you ever tasted anything stronger than tea. Here is a glass of grog,—down with it!"

And Rodney, who wanted to be a man, drank it with a swaggering air, though it scorched his throat; and then another, until he became very sick;—and the last he remembered was, that the sailors and the women all seemed to be swearing and fighting together.

The next morning he was awaked by Bill Seegor, and found himself in a garret, on a miserable bed, with all his clothes on. How he had ever got there he could not tell. His head ached, and his limbs were stiff and pained him when he moved. His throat was parched and burning, and he felt so wretchedly, that, if he had dared, he would have begged permission to stay there on the bed. But Bill told him that it was time to start and look up a ship, for he had only money enough to last another day. After breakfast they started, and inquired at every place which Bill knew, but without success; no men or boys were wanted.

In the afternoon, Rodney was terribly frightened at seeing his brother-in-law walking along the wharves. He knew in a moment that he had come to New York to search for him; and he darted round a corner into an alley, and hid himself behind some barrels, till he had passed by. He afterwards learned that his brother-in-law had been looking for him all day, and that he had

found and taken his trunk, and had been several times at places which he had just left. O! if he had then abandoned his foolish and wicked course, and gone home with his brother, how much misery he would have escaped! But he contrived to keep out of his way.

That evening Bill said to him, as they were eating their supper in a cellar—

"Rodney, to-morrow morning we must start for Philadelphia."

"But how shall we get there?"

"We shall have to tramp it."

"How far is it?"

"About a hundred miles."

"How long will it take?"

"Four or five days."

"But how shall we get anything to eat, or any place to sleep on the road?"

"Tell a good story to the farmers, and sleep on the hay-mows."

Rodney began to find out that "*the way of the transgressor is hard.*"

That night they went to the theatre. Bill had given Rodney a dirk, which he carried in his bosom. They went up into the third tier of boxes, which was filled with the most wicked and debased men and women. While the rest were laughing, and talking, and cursing, Rodney sat down on the front seat to see the play; but they made so much confusion behind him that he could not hear, so he turned round, and said, rather angrily: "I wish you wouldn't make so much noise."

"Who are you talking to?" shouted a rough, bully-looking man behind him, with a terrible oath; "I'll pitch you into the pit, if you open your head again."

He rushed towards him, but, quick as thought, Rodney snatched the dirk from his breast, drew his arm back over his head, and told the bully to keep off. The man stopped, and in an instant the whole theatre was in confusion. The play on the stage ceased; and there, in full view, leaning over the front of the box, stood the boy, with the weapon in his hand, gleaming in the eyes of the whole audience.

Bill Seegor rushed to him, pulled him back toward the lobby, and took the dagger from his hand. The bully then aimed a tremendous blow at the boy's face, which fortunately was warded off by one of the women. Just then a police-officer came up, and, taking Rodney by the collar, led him down stairs. Half a dozen men, who were Bill's friends, followed; and when they got into the street, they dashed against the officer, and broke his hold, when Bill caught Rodney by the arm and told him to run. They turned quickly through several streets, and escaped pursuit.

Do you think that Rodney was happy amid such scenes? Ah! no; he was alarmed at himself. He felt degraded and guilty; he felt that he was taking sudden and rapid strides in the path of debasement and vice. He thought of his home and its sweet influences. He knew how deep would be the grief of those who loved him, should they hear of his course. His conscience condemned him, and he thought of what he was becoming with horror. But he seemed to be drawn on by his wild desires, and felt scarcely a disposition to escape the meshes of the net that was winding around him.

The sailors praised him, and patted him on the back; told him that he was a brave fellow,—that he was beginning right, and that there was good stuff in him. And Rodney laughed, tickled by such praises, and drank what they offered, and tried to stifle his conscience and harden himself in sin. Yet often, when he was alone, did he shrink from himself, and writhe under the lashings of conscience; and the remembrance of home, and thoughts of his conduct, rendered him very wretched.

CHAPTER V.

RODNEY IN PHILADELPHIA.



YOUNG Rodney was prepared for an early start on the following morning; and, in company with Bill Seegor, he crossed the ferry to Jersey City just as the sun rose, and together they commenced their journey to Philadelphia. They were soon beyond the pavements of the town, and in the open country. It was a lovely morning, and the bright summer developed its beauties, and dispensed its fragrance along their path. The birds sang sweetly, and darted on swift wing around them. The cattle roamed lazily over the fields, and the busy farmers were everywhere industriously toiling. All nature seemed joyously reflecting the serene smile of a benevolent God.

Even the wicked hearts of the wanderers seemed lightened by the influence of the glorious

morning, and cheerily, with many a jocund song and homely jest, they pressed on their way. Even guilt can sometimes forget its baseness, and enjoy the bounties of the kind Creator, for which it expresses no thankfulness and feels no gratitude.

At noon they stopped at a farmer's house, and Bill told the honest old man that they belonged to a ship which had sailed round to Philadelphia; that it had left New York unexpectedly, without their knowledge, and taken their chests and clothes which had been placed on board; and that, being without money, they were compelled to walk across to Philadelphia to meet it.

The farmer believed the falsehood, and charitably gave them a good dinner. They walked on till after sunset, and then crossed over a field, and climbed up into a rack filled with hay, where they slept all night.

In the morning they started forward very hungry, for they had eaten nothing, since the noon before, except a few green apples. They stopped at the first farm-house on the road, and, by telling the same falsehood that had procured them a meal the day before, excited the pity of the farmer and obtained a good breakfast.

Thus did they go on, lying and begging their way along.

On the third day there were heavy showers, accompanied by fierce lightnings and crashing thunders. They were as thoroughly soaked as if they had been thrown into the river, and at night had to sleep on a haystack, in the open field, in their wet clothes. Rodney's feet, too, had become very sore, and he walked in great and constant pain.

In the afternoon of the fourth day they stopped on the banks of the Delaware, five or six miles from Philadelphia, to wash their clothes, which had become filthy in travelling through the dust and mud. As they had no clothing but what they wore, there was nothing else to be done but to strip, wash out their soiled garments, and lay them out on the bank to dry, while they swam about the river, or waited on the shore, with what patience they could summon.

A little after sunset they reached the suburbs of the great city; and now the sore feet and wearied limbs of the boy could scarcely sustain him over the hard pavements. Yet Bill urged him onward with many an impatient oath, on past the ship-yards of Kensington,—on, past the factories, and markets, and farmers' taverns, and shops of the Northern Liberties,—on, through the crowded thoroughfares, and by the brilliant stores of the city,—on, into the most degraded section of Southwark, in Plumb-street, where Bill said a friend of his lived. This friend was an abandoned woman, who lived in a miserable frame cabin, crowded with wicked and degraded wretches, who seemed the well-known and fitting companions of Rodney's patron. The woman for whom he inquired was at a dance in the neighborhood, and there Bill took the boy in search of her.

They went up a dark alley, and were admitted into a large room filled with men and women, black and white, the dregs and outcasts of society.

A few dripping candles, placed in tin sconces along the bare walls, threw a dim and sickly glare over the motley throng. A couple of negro men, sitting on barrels at the head of the room, were drawing discordant notes from a pair of cracked, patched, and greasy fiddles. And there were men, whose red and bloated faces gave faithful witness of their habitual intemperance; and men, whose threadbare and ragged garments betokened sloth and poverty; and men, whose vulgar and ostentatious display of showy clothing, and gaudy chains, and rings and breast-pins, which they did not know how to wear, indicated dishonest pursuits; and men, whose blue jackets and bluff, brown faces showed them to be sailors; and men, whose scowling brows and fiendlike countenances marked them as villains of the blackest and lowest type. And there were women, too, some old—at least, they looked so—and haggard; some young, but with wretched-looking faces, and dressed in tawdry garments, yet generally faded, some torn and some patched, and all seeming to be brought from the pawnbroker's dusty shop for the occasion.

In a little filthy side-room was a bar covered with bottles and glasses, behind which stood a large, red-faced man, with a big nose, and little ferret, fiery eyes, now grinning like a satyr, now scowling like a demon, dealing out burning liquors to his miserable customers.

A man fell beastly drunk from a bench upon the floor. "Take him up stairs," said the man at the bar. Rodney followed the two men who carried him up, and looked into the sleeping apartment. The floor was covered with dirty straw, where lodgers were accommodated for three cents a night. Here the poor wretches were huddled together every night, to get what sleep they could in the only home they had on earth.

Thus does vice humble, and degrade, and scourge those who are taken in its toils. From the threshold of the house of guilty pleasure there may issue the song and laugh of boisterous mirth; but those who enter within shall find disgrace and infamy, woe and death.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PUNISHMENT BEGINS.

ILL Seegor found the woman he sought, and soon they returned to her house. Here the bottle



was brought out and passed round; and, after much blasphemous and ribaldrous conversation, a straw bed was made up on the floor, and Rodney laid down. Before he went to sleep, he heard Bill tell the woman that he was entirely out of money, and beg her to lend him five dollars for a few days. After some hesitation she consented, and drew out from under the bed an old trunk, which she unlocked, and from which she took five dollars in silver and gave it to him. Bill, looking over her shoulder, saw that she took it from a little pile of silver that lay in the corner

of the trunk.

For a long time Rodney could not sleep. The scenes of the last eventful week were vividly recalled to his mind, and, in spite of his fatigue, kept him awake. He tried to make himself believe that it was a glorious life he had begun to lead,—that now he was free from restraint, and entering upon the flowery paths of independence and enjoyment. Though he had met with some difficulties at the start, he thought that they were now nearly passed, and that soon he should be upon the blue water, and in foreign countries, a happy sailor boy.

But conscience would interpose its reproaches and warnings, and remind him of the horrible company into which he had been cast,—of the scenes of sin which he had witnessed, and in which he had participated; and he could not but shudder when he thought of the probable termination of such a life.

But he felt that, having forsaken his home,—and he was not even yet sorry that he had done so,—he was now in the current, and that there was no way of reaching the shore, even had he been disposed to try; and that he must continue to float along the stream, leaving his destination to be determined by circumstances.

It is very easy to find the paths of sin. It is easy, and, for a season, may seem pleasant, to travel in them. The entrance is inviting, the way is broad, companions are numerous and gay. But when the disappointed and alarmed traveller, terrified at the thought of its termination, seeks to escape, and hunts for the narrow path of virtue, he finds obstacles and entanglements which he cannot climb over nor break. It requires an Omnipotent arm to help him then.

Rodney fell asleep.

How long he had slept he knew not; but he was awakened by a violent shaking and by terrible oaths. The side-door leading into the yard was open, and three or four wretched-looking women were scolding and swearing angrily about him. He was confused, bewildered, but soon perceived that something unusual had happened; and he became very much frightened as he at last learned the truth from the excited women.

Bill Seeger was gone. He had got up quietly when all were asleep, and, drawing the woman's trunk from under her bed, had carried it out into the yard, pried open the lock, stolen the money, and escaped.

The woman was in a terrible passion, and her raving curses were fearful to hear. Rodney pitied her, though she cursed him. He was indignant at his companion's rascality, and offered to go with her and try to find him. It was two o'clock in the morning. He looked round for his hat, collar, and handkerchief; but they were gone. The thief had taken them with him. Taking Bill's old hat, he went out with the woman, and looked into the oyster-cellars and grog-shops, some of which they found still open; but they could find no trace of Bill Seeger.

The woman met a watchman, and made inquiries, and told him of the robbery.

"And this boy came with the man last night, did he?" inquired the watchman.

"He did," said the woman.

"Do you know the boy?"

"I never saw him before."

"Well, I guess he knows where he is, or where he can be found to-morrow."

Rodney protested that he knew nothing about him, that his own hat, collar, and handkerchief had been stolen, and that he had had nothing to do with the robbery. He even told him where he had met with Bill, and how he came to be in his company.

"All very fine, my lad," said the watchman; "but you must go with me. This must be examined into to-morrow."

And he took Rodney by the arm, and led him to the watch-house.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WATCH-HOUSE.

OR poor Rodney there was no more sleep that night, even had they placed him on a bed of roses. But they locked him up in a little square room, with an iron-barred window, into which a dim light



struggled from a lamp hung outside in the entry, showing a wooden bench, fastened against the wall. There were four men in the room.

One, whose clothes looked fine and fashionable, but all covered with dirt, lay on the floor. A hat, that seemed new, but crushed out of all shape, was under his head for a pillow. His face was bruised and bloody. He was entirely stupefied, and Rodney saw at a glance that he was intoxicated.

On the bench, stretched out at full length, was a short, stout negro, fast asleep. On another part of the bench lay a white man, who seemed about fifty years old, with a sneering, malicious face, and wrapped up in a shaggy black coat. The remaining occupant of the cell sat in one corner, with his head down on his knees, and his hat slouched over his face.

Rodney stood for a few moments in the middle of the cell, and, in sickening dismay, looked round him. Here he was with felons and rioters, locked up in a dungeon! True, he had committed no crime against the law; but yet he felt that he deserved it all; and the hot tears rolled from his eyes as he thought of his mother and his home.

Hearing his sobs, the man in the corner raised his head, looked at him for a moment, and said:

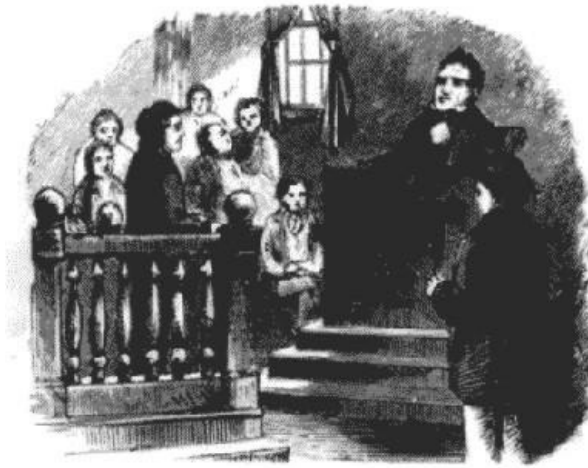
"Why, you blubbering boy, what have you been about? Are you the pal of these cracksmen, or have you been on a lay on your own hook?"

Rodney did not know what he meant, and he said so.

"I mean," said the man, in the same low, thieves' jargon, "have you been helping these fellows crack a crib?"

"Doing what?" said Rodney.

"Breaking into a house, you dumb-head."



The boy shuddered at the thought of being taken for an accomplice of house-breakers; and told him he knew nothing about them. He had read that boys are sometimes employed by house-breakers to climb in through windows or broken pannels, to open the door on the inside; and now he was thought to be such a one himself.

It was a dismal night for him.

Early in the morning the prisoners were all taken before a magistrate.

The drunkard, who claimed to be a gentleman, and who had been taken to the watch-house for assaulting the barkeeper of a tavern, was fined five dollars, and dismissed.

The negro and the old white man had been caught in the attempt to break into a house, and were sent to prison, to await their trial for burglary; and the other white man was also sent to prison, until he could be tried, for stealing a pocket-book in an auction store.

Rodney was then called forward. The watchman told how and why he had taken him; and the boy was asked to give an account of himself. He told his story truthfully and tearfully, while the magistrate looked coldly at him.

"A very good story," said the magistrate; "it seems to be well studied. I suspect you are an artful fellow, notwithstanding your innocent face. I shall bind you over for trial, my lad. I think such boys as you should be stopped in time; and a few years in some penitentiary would do you good."

What could Rodney say? What could he do? He was among strangers. He could send for no one to testify of his good character, or to become bail for him. And, if his friends had been near, he felt that he had rather die than that they should know of his disgrace.

The magistrate gave an officer a paper—a commitment—and told him to take the boy to the Arch-street jail. The constable took him by the arm, and led him out.

As they walked along the street, Rodney looked around him to see if there was no way of escape. If he could only get a chance to run! As they came to the corner of a little alley, he asked the constable to let him tie his shoe, the string of which was loose. The man nodded, and Rodney placed his foot upon a door-step, sheering round beyond the reach of the officer's hand, and towards the alley. Rodney, as he rose, made one spring, and in a moment was gone down the alley. The officer rushed after him, and shouted, "Stop thief! stop thief!"

"O, that I should ever be chased for a thief!" groaned Rodney, clenching his teeth together, and running at his best speed.

That terrible cry, "*Stop thief!*" rung after him, and soon seemed to be echoed by a hundred voices, as the boy dashed along Ninth street and down Market street; and, from behind him, and from doors and windows, and from the opposite side of the street, and at length from before him, the very welkin rung with the cries of "Stop thief! stop thief!" A hundred eyes were strained to catch a glimpse of the culprit; but Rodney dashed on, the crowd never thinking that *he* was the hunted fox, but only one of the hounds in pursuit, eager to be "in at the death." At the corner of Fifth and Market-streets, a porter was standing by his wheelbarrow. He saw the chase coming down, and truly scented the victim; and, as Rodney neared the corner, he suddenly pushed out his barrow across the pavement. Rodney could not avoid it; he stumbled, fell across it, and was captured.

"You young scoundrel! is this one of your tricks?" said the constable, as he came up; "I'll teach you one of mine;" and he struck him a blow on the side of the head, that knocked the poor boy senseless on the pavement.

Those who stood by cried, "Shame! shame!" and the officer glared furiously around him; but, seeing that the numbers were against him, he raised the boy from the ground. Rodney soon recovered; and the constable, grasping him firmly by the wrist of his coat, and, drawing his arm tightly under his own, led him, followed by a crowd of hooting boys, up Fifth, and through Arch-street, toward the old jail.

What a walk was that to poor Rodney! The officer, stern and angry, held him with so firm a grip as to convince him of the uselessness of a second attempt.

Fatigued, and nearly fainting as he was from the race and the blow, he was compelled almost to run, to keep up with the long strides of the constable. A crowd of boys pressed around, to get a glimpse of his face.

"What has he done?" one would ask of another.

"Broke open a trunk, and stole money," would be the reply.

Rodney pulled Bill Seegor's old hat over his face, and hung his head, in bitter anguish of soul, as he heard himself denounced as a thief at every step; and as he heard doors dashed open, and windows thrown up, similar questions and replies smote his heart. He knew that he was innocent of such a crime; his soul scorned it; he felt that he was incapable of theft; but he felt that he had been too guilty, too disobedient and too ungrateful, to dare to hold up his head, or utter a word in his own defence. It seemed as though that long and terrible walk with the constable would never end, and he felt relieved when he reached the heavy door of the jail, amid two files of staring boys, who had ran before him, and arranged themselves by the gate, to watch him as he entered. He was rudely thrust in, the bolt shot back upon the closed door, and he was delivered over to the keeping of the jailer, with the assurance of the policeman, that "he was a sharp miscreant, and needed to be watched."

CHAPTER VIII.

RODNEY IN JAIL.



Such are the rewards which sin gives to its votaries; full of soft words and tempting promises in the beginning, they find, in the end, that "it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Thoughts like these passed through Rodney's mind, as the jailer led him to a room in which were confined three other lads, all older than himself. At that time, the system of solitary confinement had not been adopted in Pennsylvania, and prisoners were allowed to associate together; but it was deemed best to keep the boys from associating with older and more hardened culprits, whose conversation might still more corrupt them, and they were therefore confined together, apart from the mass of the criminals.

At first Rodney suffered the most intense anguish. A sense of shame and degradation overwhelmed him. He staggered to a corner of the room, threw himself on the floor, and, for a long time, sobbed and wept as though his very heart would break. For a while the boys seemed to respect his grief, and left him in silence. At last one of them went to him, and said,

"Come, there's no use in this; we are all here together, and we may as well make the best of it!"

Rodney sat up, and looked at them, as they gathered around him.

They were ragged in dress, and pale from their confinement, and Rodney involuntarily shrank from the idea of associating with them, regarding them as criminals in jail. But he soon remembered his own position,—that he was now one of them,—and he thought he would take their advice, and "make the best of it."

"Well, what did they squeeze you into this jug for, my covey?" asked the eldest boy.

Rodney told them his story, and protested that he was innocent of any crime.

The boy put his thumb to the end of his nose, and twirled his fingers, saying, "You can't gammon us, my buck; come, out with it, for we never *peach* on one another."

Rodney was very angry at this mode of treating his story. But, in spite of himself, he gradually became familiar with the companions thus forced upon him, and, in a day or two, began to engage with them in their various sports, to while away the weary hours. Sometimes they sat and told stories, to amuse one another; and thus Rodney heard tales of wickedness and depredation and cunning, that almost led him to doubt whether there was any honesty among men. They talked of celebrated thieves and robbers, burglars and pirates, as if they were the models by which they meant to mould their own lives; and, instead of detesting their crimes, Rodney began to admire the skill and success with which they were perpetrated. The excitement and freedom, and wild, frenzied enjoyment of such a life, as depicted by the young knaves, began to fascinate and charm his mind. Something seemed to whisper in his ear, "As you are now disgraced, without any fault of your own, why not carry it out, and make the most of it? They have put you into jail, this time, for nothing; if they ever do it again, let them have some reason for it." Who knows what might have been the result of such temptations and influences, had these associations been long continued, and not counteracted by the interposition of God?

But then the instructions of childhood, the lessons of home and of the Sabbath-school, were brought back to his memory, and he said to himself, "What, be a thief! Make myself despised and hated by all good people! Live a life of wickedness and dread,—perhaps die in the penitentiary, and then, in all probability, lose my soul, and be cast into hell! No, never! I shall never dare to steal, or to break into houses; and as for killing anybody for money, I shudder even at the thought!"

So did the bad and the good struggle together in the heart of the poor boy. How many there are who, at the first, feel and think about crime as he did, but who, in the end, become familiar with vice, lose their sense of fear and shame and guilt, become bold and reckless in sin, having their consciences seared as with a hot iron, and violating all laws, human and divine, without compunction, and without a thought save that of impunity and success!

All the elements of a life of crime were in the heart of this wayward boy; and had it not been for the instructions of his childhood, which counteracted these evil influences, and the providence and grace of God, which restrained him, he would have become a miserable outcast from society, leading a wretched life of shame and guilt.

"I wish we had a pack of cards here," said one of the boys, one weary afternoon.

"Can't we make a pack?" inquired another.

And then the lads set their wits to work, and soon manufactured a substitute for a pack of cards. They had a couple of old newspapers, which they folded and cut into small, regular pieces, and marked each piece with the spots that are found on playing cards, making rude shapes of faces, and writing "*Jack*," "*King*," "*Knave*," &c., under them. With these, they used to spend hours shuffling and dealing and playing, until Rodney understood the pernicious game as well as the rest.

"Joe," said Rodney, one day, to the oldest boy, "what did they put you in here for?"

"Well," said he, "I'll tell you. Sam and I run with the Moyamensing Hose Company. Many a jolly time we have had of it, running to fires, and many a good drink of liquor we have had, too; for when the people about the fires treated the firemen, we boys used to come in for our share of the treat. There was a standing quarrel between us and the 'Franklin' boys, and we used to have a fight whenever we could get at them. I heard one of the men say, one day, that if there was only a fire down Twelfth or Thirteenth-street, and the 'Franklin' should come up in that direction, we could get them foul, and give them a good drubbing. Well, there *was* a fire down Twelfth-street the next night! I don't mean to say who kindled it; but a watchman saw Sam and me about the stable, and then running away from it as fast as we could. The fellow marked us, and as we were going back to the fire with the machine, he nabbed us, and walked us off to the watch-house, and the next day we were stuck into this hole."

"But *did* you set fire to the stable?"

"What would you give to know? I make no confessions; and if you ever tell out of doors what I have said here, I'll knock your teeth down your throat, if I ever catch you."

These two boys had actually been guilty of the dreadful crime of setting fire to a stable. It was used by two or three poor men for their horses and carts, which was the only means they had of making an honest living; and yet these wicked boys had tried to burn it down, just for the fun of going to a fire, and getting up a fight! There are other boys, in large cities, who will commit similar acts; but such young villains are ripe for almost any crime, and must, in all human

probability, come to some dreadful end.

"Hank," said Rodney to another boy,—his real name was Henry, but Hank was his prison name,—"tell us now what you have done."

"I'll tell you nothing about it."

"What is your last name, Hank?" inquired Sam, after a few moments' pause.

"Johnson," said Hank.

"Ah! I know now what you did. I read it in the paper, just before I came in, and, somehow, I thought you was one of the larks as soon as I clapped eyes on you.

"You see, Hank and some of his gang, watching about, saw a house in Arch-street, and noticed that it was empty. The family, I suppose, had all gone to the country, and it was shut up. So, one Sunday afternoon, four of them climbed over the back gate into the yard, pried open a window-shutter, got in, and helped themselves to whatever they could lay their hands on. After dark they sneaked out at the back gate with their plunder. One of them was caught, trying to sell some of the things, and he peached, and they jugged them all. Isn't that the fact, Hank?"

"Well, it's no use lying; it was pretty much so."

"What became of the other fellows, Hank?"

"Why, their fathers or friends bailed them out, and I have no father, or anybody who cares for me. But"—and he swore a fearful oath—"if ever I catch that white-livered Jim Hulsey, who was the ringleader in the whole scheme, and got me into the scrape, and then blowed me, to save himself, I'll beat him to a mummy, I will."

And *these* were the companions with whom Rodney was compelled to associate! Sometimes he shrank from them with loathing; and sometimes he almost envied the hardihood with which they boasted of their crimes. Had he remained in their company much longer, who can tell to what an extent he would have been contaminated, and how rapidly prepared for utter moral degradation and eternal ruin?

What afterwards became of them, Rodney never knew; but they are probably either dead,—God having said, "The wicked shall not live out half their days,"—or else preying upon society by the commission of more dreadful crimes, or perhaps spending long years of life in the penitentiary, confined to hard labor and prison fare.

One day, after he had been about two weeks in jail, Rodney took the basin in which they had washed, and threw the water out of the window. The grated bars prevented his seeing whether there was any one below. He had often done so before. It had not been forbidden. He did not intend to do any wrong.

But it happened that one of the keepers was walking under the window, and the water fell upon his head.

He came to the door, in a great rage, and asked who had thrown that water out. Rodney at once said that he had done it, but that he did not know that he had done any harm.

The man took him roughly by the arm, and, telling him he must come with him, led him through a long corridor to another part of the prison, and thrust him into a small, dark dungeon.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUNGEON.



HE room was very small,—a mere closet,—lighted only by a narrow window over the door, which admitted just light enough from the corridor to enable Rodney to see the walls. There was some scribbling on the walls, but there was not light enough, even after his eyes became accustomed to the place, to distinguish a letter.

There was neither chair nor bench, not even a blanket, on which to lie. The bare walls and floor were unrelieved by a single article of comfort. Here, for four long days and nights, Rodney was confined. There was nothing by which he could relieve the dreadful wearisome time. He heard no voice save that of the surly jailer, once a day, bringing him a rough jug of water and half a loaf of black bread. He had no books with which to while away the long, tedious hours, nor was there light enough to read, had there been a whole library in the cell.

The first emotions of the boy, when the door was locked upon him, were those of indignation and anger. "Why," said he to himself, "am I treated in this way? They are brutes! I have done nothing to deserve this barbarity. I am no felon or thief, that I should be used in this way. I have broken no rule that was made known to me, since I have been in this place. The heartless wretch of a jailer thrust me into this hole, to gratify his own spite. He knows that I couldn't have thrown water on him purposely, for I couldn't see down into the yard. He never told me what I was to do

with the dirty water, and there was no other place to throw it. He deserves being shut up in this den himself! O, I wish I had him in my power for a week! I would give him a lesson that he would remember as long as he lived.

"Was there ever such an unlucky boy as I am? Everything goes against me. There is no chance for me to do anything, or to enjoy anything, in this world. I wish I was dead!"

A bitter flood of tears burst from him, which seemed, as it were, to quench his anger, and gradually his heart became open to more salutary reflections.

"Do you not deserve all this?" whispered his conscience. "Have you not brought it upon yourself by your own wickedness and disobedience? You had a good home and kind friends; and if you had to work every day, it was no more than all have to do in one form or another. Blame yourself, then, for your own idle, reckless disposition, that would not be satisfied with your lot. You are only finding out the truth of the text you have often repeated,—'The way of the transgressor is hard.'"

He thought of his home, as he lay upon that hard floor. The forms of his pious old grandmother, and of his mother and sister, all seemed to stand before him, and to look down upon him reproachfully. He remembered now their kindness and good counsel. He groaned in bitterness, "O! this *would* break their hearts, if they knew it! I have disgraced myself, and I have disgraced them." He had leisure for reflection, and his mind recalled, most painfully, the scenes of the past. He thought of the Sabbath-school, of his kind teacher, and of the instructions that had been so affectionately imparted. How much better for him would it have been, had he regarded those instructions!

And then he thought of God! He remembered that His *all-seeing eye* had followed all his wanderings, and noted all his guilt. He had sinned against God, and some of the bitterness of punishment had already overtaken him. The idea that God was angry with him, and that *He* was visiting his sins with the rod of chastisement, took possession of his soul. Now he ceased to blame others for his sufferings, and acknowledged to himself that all was deserved. Again he wept, but it was in terror at the thought of God's anger, and in grief that he had sinned so ungratefully against his Maker.

He tried to pray; but the words of the prayers he had been taught in his childhood did not seem to be appropriate to his present condition. Those prayers were associated with days and scenes of comparative innocence and happiness. He now felt guilty and wretched, and felt deeply that other forms of petition were necessary for him. But he could not frame words into a prayer that would soothe and relieve his soul. "God will not hear me," was his bitter thought. "I do not deserve to be heard. O! if God would have mercy upon me, and deliver me from this trouble, I think I would try to serve and obey Him as long as I lived."

He kneeled down upon the hard floor, and raised his clasped hands and streaming eyes toward heaven; but he could find no utterance for his emotions, save in sobs and tears. Prayer would not come in words. Again and again he tried to pray, but in vain; he felt that he could not pray; and, almost in despair, he paced the narrow cell, and was ready to believe that God's favor was forever withdrawn from his soul,—that there was no ear to listen, and no arm to save, and that nothing was left for him in the future but a life of misery, a death of shame, and an eternity of woe!

On the third morning, he awoke from a troubled sleep, and, as he rose with aching bones from the bare planks, his limbs trembled and tottered beneath him. Finding that he could not stand, he sat down in the corner of the dungeon, and leaned against the wall. His head was hot, and his throat parched, and the blood beat in throbs through his veins. A sort of delirious excitement began to creep over him, and his mind was filled with strange reveries.

He saw, or fancied he saw, great spiders crawling over the wall, and serpents, lizards, and indescribable reptiles, creeping about on the floor; and he shouted at them, and kicked at them, as they seemed to come near him. Soon they were viewed without dread or terror. He laughed at their motions, and thought he should have companions and pets in his loneliness; still he did not wish them to come too near.

Then there seemed to be other shapes in his cell. His old grandmother sat in one corner, reading, through her familiar spectacles, the well-worn family Bible. His sister sat there, playing with her baby, and his mother was singing as she sewed. And he laughed and talked to them, but could get no answer. Occasionally he felt a half-consciousness that it was all a delusion,—a mere vision of the brain; and yet their fancied presence made him happy, and he laughed and talked incessantly, as if they heard him, and were wondering at his own strange emotions.

And then the gruff voice of the jailer scared away his visions, and roused him for a moment from his reveries.

"You are merry, my boy, and you make too much noise," said the keeper.

The interruption made his head swim, and he attempted to rise; but he was very weak and faint, and fell back again. He turned to say, "I believe I am sick;" but before the words found utterance, the man had set down his pitcher and bread, and was gone.

There was an interval of dreary, blank darkness, and then there were other visions, too wild and strange to describe, and soon the darkness of annihilation settled upon his soul. How long a time

elapsed while in this state of insensibility, he could not say; but he was at length half-aroused by voices near him, and he was conscious that some hand was feeling for his pulse, and that men were carrying him out of the dungeon. He afterwards learned that it was the jailer and the physician.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOSPITAL.



UPON a narrow cot, in the Hospital apartment of the jail, they laid Rodney, and immediately prepared the medicines suited to his case. The medicines were at length administered, and, with a pleasant consciousness of comfort and attention, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, it was evening; he was perfectly conscious, and felt better; but it was a long time before he could recall his thoughts, and understand where he was, and how he had come thither. He looked around him, and saw a line of cots on each side of him. About a dozen of them were occupied by sick men. A large case of medicines, placed on a writing-desk, stood at one end of the room. Two or three men, who acted as nurses, were sitting near it, talking and laughing together. In another part of the room, by a grated window, looking out upon the pleasant sunset, were two of the convalescent prisoners, pale and thin, conversing softly and sadly. There was not a face he knew,—none that seemed to feel the slightest interest for him; and the wicked scenes of the past two months, and the unhappy circumstances of the present hour, flashed through his mind, and he hid his face in his pillow and wept.

He heard steps softly approach his cot, and knew that some one was standing beside him. But he could not stifle his sobs, and he did not dare to look up.

"I am glad to see that you are better, though I am sorry to see you so much troubled, my poor boy," said a soft, kind voice.

It was long since he had been spoken to in a kind tone, and he only wept the more bitterly, and convulsively pressed his face closer to the pillow. Presently he felt an arm passed slowly under the pillow, which wound around his neck, and gently drew his head toward the stranger.

"Come, come," said the same soft voice, "don't give way to such grief; look up, and talk to me. Let me be a friend to you."

Rodney yielded to the encircling arm, and turned his tearful eyes to the man who spoke to him.

He was a tall, slender man, pale from sickness, decently dressed, and with an intelligent, benevolent countenance. He was one of those whom Rodney had observed looking out of the window.

"What is the matter?" said he; "what has brought you into this horrible place?"

The confidence of the boy was easily won. He had felt an inexpressible desire to talk to some one, and now he was ready to lay open his whole heart at the first intimation of sympathy.

"I ran away from home," was the frank and truthful reply.

"But they do not put boys in jail for running away; you must have done something else."

"I was charged with something else; but indeed, indeed, I am innocent!"

"That is very possible," said he, with a sigh; "but what did they charge you with doing?"

And Rodney moved closer to him, and leaned his head upon his breast, and told him all. There was such an evident sincerity, such consistency, such tones of truth in the simple narrative, that he saw he was believed, and the sympathizing words and looks of the listener inspired him with trust, as though he was talking to a well-known friend.

For several days, they were constantly together; the stranger waited upon Rodney, and gave him his medicine, and helped him from his cot, talked with him, and manifested for him the kindness of a brother. From several conversations, Rodney gleaned from him the following history.

Lewis Warren,—so will we call him—(indeed, Rodney never knew his true name),—was born and had lived most of his life in a New England village. He was the son of a farmer; a pious man, and deacon of a church, by whose help he received a liberal education. Soon after he had graduated at — College, he came on to Philadelphia, with the expectation of getting into some business. At the hotel where he stopped, he became acquainted with a man of very gentlemanly appearance and address, who said that he, too, was a stranger in the city, and proposed to accompany him to some places of amusement. Warren went with him to the theatre, and, on succeeding evenings, to various places of amusement. As they were one evening strolling up Chestnut-street, this friend, Mr. Sharpe, stopped at the well-lighted vestibule of a stately building, that had the air of a private house, although it was thrown open, and proposed that they should go in, and see what

was going on there. Warren consented, and, after ascending to the second floor, and passing through a hall, they entered a large, brilliantly-lighted billiard saloon. Around several tables were gathered gentlemanly-looking men, knocking about little ivory balls, with long, slender wands or cues, and seeming, evidently, engrossed in their respective games. After looking around for a while, Sharpe proposed going up stairs into the third story. They ascended to the upper rooms. In the upper passage stood a stout, short negro-man, who glanced at Sharpe, stepped one side, and permitted them to pass unquestioned. They entered another smaller room,—for the third story was divided into several rooms,—and found other games than those exhibited below. After walking through some of the rooms, and observing the different games, most of which were new to Warren, his companion said to him:

"Do you understand anything about cards?"

"Not a great deal; I have occasionally played a game of whist or sledge."

"Well, that is about the sum of my knowledge. Suppose we while away a half-an-hour at one of these vacant tables."

Warren consented, and they sat down. After playing a game or two, Sharpe proposed having a bottle of wine, and, said he, laughingly, "Whoever loses the next game, shall pay for it."

"Agreed," said Warren; and the wine was brought, and he won the game.

"Well, that is your good luck; but I'll bet you the price of another bottle you can't do it again."

Warren won again.

They tried a third, and that Sharpe won; a fourth, and Warren rose the winner.

The next evening found them, somehow, without much talk about it, at the same place. They played with varied success; but when they left, Warren had lost ten dollars.

He wanted to win it back, and himself proposed the visit for the third night. He became excited by the game, and lost seventy dollars.

Still his eyes were not open; he did not dream that he was in the hands of a professed gambler, and, hoping to get back what he had lost, and what he felt he really could not spare from his small amount of funds, he went again.

"There!" said he, after they had been about an hour at the table, "there is my last fifty-dollar bill; change that, and I'll try once more."

"Well," said Sharpe, "here is the change; but the luck seems against you. We had better stop for to-night."

But Warren insisted upon continuing, and he won thirty dollars in addition to the fifty which Sharpe had changed for him. The gambler then rose, and told him that he would give him a chance to win all back another time, as fortune seemed to be again propitious to him.

Warren never saw him after that night. The next morning he determined to seek a more private boarding house, and economize his remaining funds, and seek more assiduously some business situation. He stepped to the bar to pay his board, handing the clerk one of the notes he had received in change for his last fifty-dollar bill. The clerk examined it a moment, and passed it back, saying, "That is a counterfeit note, sir." He took it back, amazed, and offered another.

"This is worse still," said the clerk. "I think we had better take care of you, sir. You will please go with me before a magistrate."

"But I did not know—!"

"You can tell that to the squire."

"You have no right to take me," said Warren; "you have no warrant."

"No; but I can keep you here till I send for one, which I shall certainly do, unless you consent to go willingly."

And Warren, conscious of his own innocence in this respect, and never thinking of the difficulty of proving it, went to a magistrate's office with the clerk at once.

The clerk entered his complaint, and, besides swearing to the offer of the notes, swore that he had seen him, for several days past, in the company of a notorious gambler.

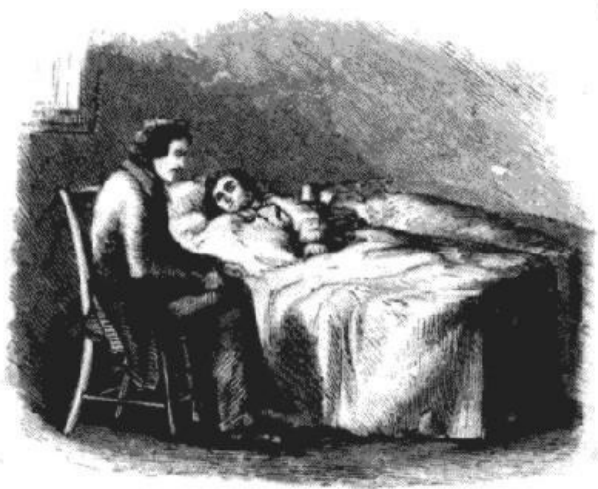
Warren was stunned, overwhelmed, by this declaration. No representation that he made was believed. His pockets were searched, and all the money he had, except some small change, was found to be counterfeit. A commitment was at once made out against him, and he was sent to jail, to await his trial on the charge of passing counterfeit money.

This is one of the methods by which professional gamblers "pluck young pigeons." No young man is safe who allows himself to play with cards, or to handle dice.

Rodney believed that Warren had told him the truth, and fellowship in misfortune drew the hearts of the duped man and the wronged boy towards each other; for though both had been very much to blame, yet duped and wronged they had been by knaves more cunning and wicked than

themselves.

They had many serious conversations together, for both had been piously instructed, and Warren, who seemed truly penitent for his wanderings, as he sat by the bed-side of the sick boy, encouraged him in his resolutions to lead a different life,—to seek the forgiveness and grace of God through a merciful Redeemer. Seldom has a poor prisoner received sweeter sympathy, or more salutary counsel, than was given to Rodney within the walls of that old Arch-street jail, by his fellow-prisoner.



"Rodney," said Warren to him one day,—it was the first day that he had left his cot,—“I shall soon leave this place; I have written to my father, and he will be here at the trial with such evidences in my favor, from the whole course of my life, as cannot fail to secure me an acquittal. I feel no doubt that this stain upon my character will be wiped away. And I believe that I shall have reason to thank God, as long as I live, for having permitted this trouble. It is a very hard lesson, but I trust it will be a salutary one. Since I have been here, I have prayed earnestly to God for the pardon of my sins. I have resolved, in sincerity of soul, to consecrate my affections and my life to his service. I have had a severe struggle; but I believe, I *feel*, that God has heard my prayers, forgiven my iniquities, and the last few days in this jail have been the happiest of my life. I feel that I hate the sins of which my heart has been so full, and that I love God even for the severe providences that have checked my course of impenitence. I feel like a new man; and if I am not deceiving myself,—and I pray that I may not be,—I have experienced that regeneration of heart of which I have so often heard, but which I could never before comprehend.

"I hope that you, too, will try and seek the Saviour, pray to him for forgiveness, and beg the guidance of His Holy Spirit for your future life. If we both do this sincerely, we shall have reason forever to bless God for the way in which he has led us."

"Pray for me," said Rodney; while tears rolled down his pale cheeks. "I want to be a Christian, and I hope that God will have mercy upon me, and guide me, for the future, in the right path."

A few days after, Warren was called into court to take his trial; and, to Rodney's great delight,—for he had learned to love him like a brother,—he heard from one of the nurses that he had been honorably acquitted.

During the same week, the case of Rodney was called up, and he was conducted by an officer to the court-house.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIAL.



JUSTICE was now to be administered, and Rodney was brought into the crowded court-room for trial. The officer led him to the prisoner's narrow dock, an enclosed bench, at each end of which sat a constable, with a long staff in his hand. There were five or six other prisoners sitting in the dock with him. Next to him was a woman, her garments ragged, her hair matted, and her face red and bloated. Next to her sat a squalid negro, who seemed totally indifferent to the scenes that were passing around him. On the other side of him was a young man, apparently about twenty years old, of thin, spare form, with a red flush at intervals coloring his cheek, and a hollow cough that sounded like an echo from the grave. He was evidently in a deep consumption, and had been already several months in prison. And he leaned his head upon the railing, as though he would hide himself from every eye. He had been tried a few days before, for having been associated with others in a burglary, and found guilty, and he was now present to hear his sentence.

After the formal opening of the court, this young man was the first called upon, and, with

trembling limbs, he rose to hear the sentence of the judge. After some remarks upon the enormity of his crime, and the clear evidence upon which he had been convicted, the judge sentenced him to five years' imprisonment in the penitentiary. When those words, *five years*, reached him, he dropped back upon the seat, as if struck with a bullet, and then raising his face to the judge, with an expression of profound anguish, said, "Half the time would be more than enough, your honor; I shall be in the grave before one year is past."

The case of the negro-man was immediately called up, but Rodney heard nothing of it. He hid his face in his hands, and wept. A sense of his terrible position flashed upon him, and he could not keep back his tears, or stifle his sobs. He wept aloud, and *felt*, though he might not see, that all eyes were turned upon him. His whole frame shook with the anguish of his soul.

Presently a hand was laid upon his, and a head was bent over the bar near him, and a voice addressed him kindly: "Be calm, my boy; there is no good in crying; who is your counsel?"

Rodney looked up, and saw a young man, well dressed, and with an affable and winning countenance, standing before him. His face looked kind and benevolent, at least in Rodney's eyes, for he had spoken to him gently and encouragingly.

He replied to his question, "I have no counsel, sir; I have no money."

"Well, I will try what I can do for you," said the young lawyer. "Come out here, and sit by me, and tell me what you are here for."

He led him out of the disgraceful dock, gave him a seat directly in front of the jury, sat down beside him, and asked him to tell him the truth about all the circumstances that led to his imprisonment and trial. Rodney told him truly all that happened from the time of his running away to his arrest. He told him, too, who he was, and who were his relatives in the neighborhood of Philadelphia. He had never spoken of these before.

"Well," said the lawyer, "I don't see that they can bring anything out to hurt you, if that is the true statement of the case. And now, my boy, you may cry as much as you wish."

Rodney looked up, surprised, wondering what on earth he wanted him to cry for. He thought afterwards that the advice was probably given that his weeping might affect the sympathies of the jury, before whose eyes he was sitting. But he could scarcely have shed a tear then if his liberty had depended upon it. He felt as though he had a friend, and his consciousness of innocence of any violation of human law, and his confidence that his new friend could show that he was guiltless, set his perturbed heart at rest, and he felt sure that he should be acquitted.

When the court adjourned, the lawyer took out a card, and, giving it to Rodney, said, "If your case should be called up before I get here this afternoon, just tell them that I am your counsel, and they will put it off till I come. Here is my name."

There was but one word on the card, and Rodney kept it long as a grateful memento of the disinterested kindness that had been shown him in the hour of his bitter trial. The name on the card was

WATMOUGH.^[A]

[A] This is not a fictitious but the real name of the gentleman whose kindness it commemorates.

That young lawyer never knew the gratitude with which his name was remembered for long, long years, and the thrill of emotion which its utterance always excited in the heart of that befriended boy. An act of kindness is never lost, and many a one which the benefactor may have forgotten, has won for him the prayers and blessings of a grateful heart.

During the recess, Rodney was conducted across Independence-square to the old Walnut-street prison. He ate his scanty prison dinner that day with a light and hopeful heart; and though he trembled at the idea of the coming trial, yet he did not for a moment doubt that the result must be his acquittal. He believed that the law was framed to punish the guilty, and to do justice to the innocent; and he could scarcely conceive that the guiltless could be made to suffer by its administration.

Immediately after the opening of the court, in the afternoon, the case was called up. The woman in whose house the robbery was committed, and one other, were witnesses; but not one word was said by either, in any way implicating Rodney in the robbery, beyond the fact that he had come to the house in company with the robber.

His friend made a very brief speech, demanding his acquittal; the judge said a few words to the jury, who consulted together for a moment, when the foreman arose, and pronounced the happy words, "*Not Guilty*."

And now the tears again rained down the cheeks of Rodney, as he came out of the infamous dock, —but they were tears of joy.

A few kind questions were asked him by the judge; and a small sum of money, contributed by him and by several of the members of the bar, furnished Rodney the means of returning to his friends.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.



ASTENING to the end of our narrative, we pass by several intervening months, and witness again another Sabbath morning in May.

Some twenty miles from the city of Philadelphia, a sparkling little brook passes through the meadow of a beautiful farm, losing itself in a thick wood that divides the contiguous estates.

On that lovely May morning,—that serene Sabbath,—there might have been seen,—there was seen by the Omniscient eye,—a lad, some fifteen years old, walking thoughtfully along the margin of that little stream, and penetrating into the thickest part of the wood. He carried a book in his hand, and sat down close by the stream, under the shade of an old beech tree. And as he read, the tears streamed from his eyes, and his sighs indicated a burdened spirit. Indeed, his heart was very sad. He was oppressed by the consciousness of the great sinfulness of his life and heart against the holy and benevolent God. He remembered the early instructions he had received at home and in the Sabbath-school. He recalled the precious privileges he had enjoyed, and he remembered, with anguish and shame, how wickedly he had disregarded all these instructions, abused all these privileges, and sinned against his own knowledge of right, against his conscience and his God. He had long been burdened with these distressing emotions; he had often prayed, but had found little relief of his anguish, even in prayer. And now, even on this calm and beautiful Sabbath morning, there seemed to his heart a gloom in the landscape. There was a smile, he knew, upon the face of nature, but he felt that it beamed not for him. The carol of wild birds rung out sweetly around him; but the music saddened his heart yet more, for there was no inward response of gratitude and joy. The bright green of the Spring foliage and of the waving grass seemed dark and gloomy, as he gazed upon it through tearful eyes. His mourning spirit gave its own sombre interpretation to all the lovely scenes of nature. He deeply felt that he was a wretched sinner against God, and he could not see how God could be merciful to one who had so grievously transgressed. He scarcely dared to hope for the pardon of his iniquities, and was in almost utter despair of ever obtaining mercy.

The book he had taken with him in his morning walk, was "Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." He read, carefully, the twelfth chapter in that excellent work, entitled, "The invitation to Christ of the sinner overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness of his sins." He was convinced that Jesus Christ was *able* to save even *him*; and the strong assurances of his *willingness* to save, "even to the uttermost," furnished in the promises of the gospel, began to dawn upon his mind as he read what seemed like a new revelation to his soul. When he read these words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,"—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,"—though he had read, or heard them read, a thousand times before, it seemed now as though they had been written expressly for him. There seemed a freshness, a force, a glorious personal adaptation in them which he had never seen before.

He turned over the leaves of the book, and the chapter on "Self Dedication" caught his eye. He read it; and when he came to the prayer with which that chapter closes, he knelt down, with the book open before him, and solemnly, and with his whole heart, repeated that fervent prayer. It seemed to have been written on purpose to express his emotions and desires. When he had concluded, he closed the book, and remained still upon his knees, and tried, in his own language, to repeat the sentiments of that solemn act of Dedication. Never was a boy more sincere and earnest than he.

How long he prayed he did not know; but when he rose and looked round him, the sun had long passed its meridian, and the shadows of the trees were cast towards the east.

There was a delicious, joyful calm in his soul. All doubts of God's willingness to pardon and receive him had gone. A veil seemed to have been removed from the character of God. He thought of God as he had never thought before,—not as a stern and unrelenting Judge, but as a forgiving, loving Father. He saw, as he had never seen before, how sinners could be adopted as children of God, for the sake of the sufferings and sacrifice of Jesus.

His spirit was very calm, but O, how happy! He had solemnly given himself to God, pleading the merits of Jesus as the reason for his acceptance, and he believed that God had received him, pardoned his transgressions, and accepted him as one of his own children. Again and again did he throw himself on the greensward, and pour out his soul in gratitude and in prayer. It was the happiest day his life had ever known.

The whole aspect of nature seemed changed in his eyes. The gloomy shroud, that seemed to envelop it in the morning, had passed away. The smile of God seemed reflected from every sunbeam that played upon the green leaves and danced over the distant waving meadow. There

was sweet melody now in the songs of the birds, in the rippling of the brook, in the hum of the bees, and in the sighing of the soft breeze. All seemed to sing of the goodness and grace of the adorable Creator. "Old things had passed away, behold all things had become *new*."

That lad was the RODNEY ROVERTON of this little volume. That change was wrought by the regenerating grace of God. It was the "peace of God, that passeth all understanding," diffused through all his soul. Where "sin had abounded, grace did much more abound."

Rodney Roverton yet lives. He has been, for many years, a professed disciple of Jesus Christ, and an honored and successful minister of the Gospel.

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