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Title: Eighteen Months' Imprisonment

Author: late captain Donald Shaw

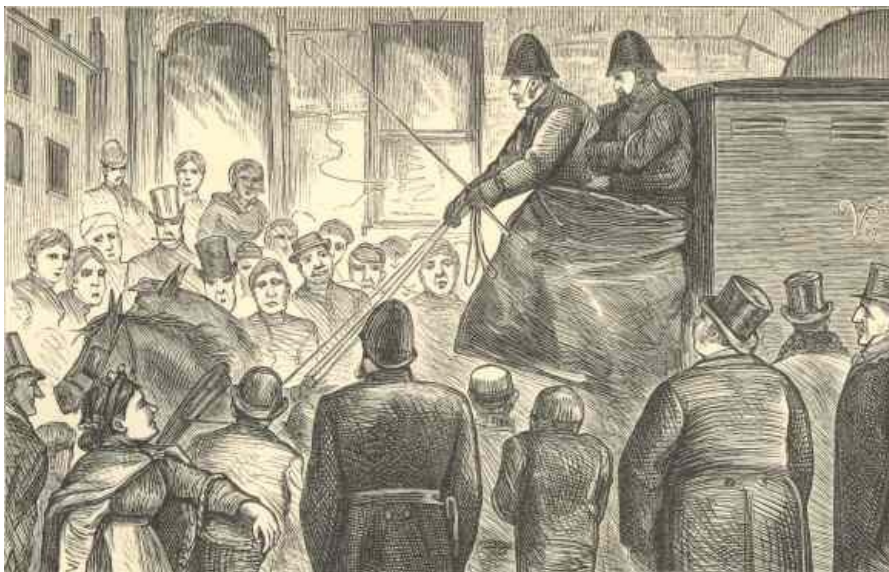
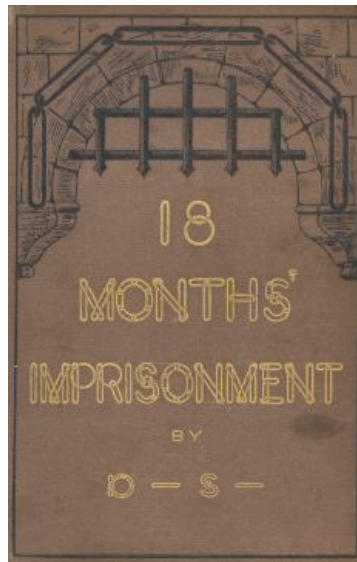
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## EIGHTEEN MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT

(WITH A REMISSION)

BY  
D— S—

LATE CAPTAIN — REGT.

*ILLUSTRATED BY WALLIS MACKAY*

LONDON  
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS  
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL  
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1883

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## CHAPTER I.

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## "MY ARREST."

ON a dreary afternoon in November, cheerless and foggy as befitted the occasion, and accompanied by that gentle rain which we are told "falleth on the just and on the unjust," I suddenly, though hardly unexpectedly, found myself in the hands of the law, as represented by a burly policeman in a waterproof cape and a strong Somersetshire accent. The circumstances that led up to this momentous change can be briefly described. I had gone to the office of a solicitor—one White, with whom I had had previous monetary transactions—with reference to a new loan on a bill of exchange; and it must be distinctly understood that any allusions I may make to this individual's vocations are not to be misinterpreted, for I have the highest respect for his integrity and aptitude for business, legal or otherwise, and cannot but admire (as I'm sure every honest reader will) the horror with which any dishonest act inspired him, which, though it did not deter him from conscientiously completing the transaction as a matter of business, was equally swift in retributive justice, and condemnatory (to use his own expression) of compounding a felony. Mr. White, in short, is a money-lender, who, in addition to the advantages derivable from his legal assistance, is always prepared on undoubted security—such as a bill of sale or a promissory note—to make cash advances at the rate of 240 per cent. I am justified in quoting this as the gentleman's rate of interest, for I paid him £5 for a loan of £45 for fourteen days, a transaction that his cheque on a Holborn bank will testify. The only marvel that suggests itself to my mind is, that a person who is so scrupulous in refusing to "compound a felony," as he termed it when he assisted in involving me in the meshes of the law, should retain the ill-gotten and usurious sum of £5 one moment after he was aware (as he has been for a year) that it was the proceeds of a forgery. But perhaps I am wronging the worthy man; he may have subscribed it towards the Hunt he honours with his patronage, or have paid it as his subscription to the London and Discounty Club, to which, I presume, he belongs. p. 2

At first sight this rate of interest may appear somewhat high, but a moment's reflection will dispel the idea. Here was a gentleman, a member of the honourable profession of the law—one who (as he told me) actually hunted with Her Majesty's hounds, and, for aught I know, may have been honoured with a nod from the Master of the Buckhounds—one, moreover, who occasionally dined with impecunious Irish lords, with whom he had transacted business, and talked of such aristocratic clubs as the "Wanderers" and the "Beaconsfield" with as much *sang-froid* and a degree of familiarity such as you and I, gentle reader, might refer to the "Magpie and Stump" at Holloway, and which to me at the time was truly appalling; here, I say, was a gentleman endowed with all these recommendations actually condescending to minister to one's pecuniary wants; and one would indeed have been unworthy of such advantages had one carped or squabbled over such vulgar trifles as a paltry 240 per cent. There is certainly another point of view from which this "financial" business may be regarded; but if the Master of the Rolls and the "Incorporated Law Society" take no exception to this occupation of one of their members, it is clearly no business of ours to find fault with a gentleman who materially adds to his income by combining the profitable trade of usury with the profitless profession of the law. p. 3

It is a prevalent and very erroneous impression to associate voracity and sharp dealings with the Hebrew race, for I've found from experience (and I'm admittedly an authority) that for meanness, haggling, and exorbitant terms, with a cloak of hypocrisy to cover this multitude of sins, the Hebrew is considerably out-distanced by his Christian *confrère*. I might indeed go a step further, and add, that, barring a repellent manner during the preliminaries of a transaction, but which is purely superficial, the dealings of the children of Israel are based on strictly honourable and considerate grounds. No one has ever heard of a Jew robbing you first and then prosecuting you; they are invariably satisfied with one course or the other. (I may here be permitted a slight digression to note that I intend ere long to publish a list of usurers never before attempted, based on my personal experience of them, including members of almost every trade and profession, and which for completeness and accuracy of detail will put to the blush the hitherto feeble attempts of such society journals as *Town Talk, Truth, &c.*) p. 4

At about four o'clock, then, on this dreary November afternoon I found myself with three or four others in Mr. White's waiting-room. I verily believe one of my companions was a detective, a suspicion that subsequent events tend to confirm. In the frowzy room I found myself waiting for more than an hour, during which time my naturally 'cute disposition, coupled with a consciousness of guilt, convinced me with a "suspeeciun" similar to that of the old lady at the subscription ball at Peebles, "amooning to a positive ceertainty" that something was up. This apprehension was by no means allayed by my distinctly seeing the shadow of the burly policeman, in cape and helmet, on the frosted window, as he ascended the stairs; and had I been so inclined, there was nothing to have prevented me from at once burning the damning document then in my pocket and walking down-stairs. But I was perfectly callous and indifferent to the result; indeed, I can only attribute my feelings at the time to those of a madman who hailed with delight any change that substituted incarceration and an unburthened mind for liberty and an uneasy conscience. The rest of the incidents in this prologue are easily told, and the next ten minutes (which abounded with sayings and doings, however commendable from a moral point of view, sadly out of place in a usurer's parlour) found me in a cab, in company with a policeman, with Mr. White, money-lender, solicitor, and commissioner to administer oaths, on the box, his 'fishy' partner inside, and driving at the rapid rate habitual to the fleetest four-wheelers of three miles an hour en route to Bow Street. Luck now favoured me, and I was fortunate enough to obtain an interview with Mr. Vaughan, who was on the eve of departure, and who, in a few p. 5

hurried and well-chosen words, and in a metallic tone of voice that I can only, with all respect, compare to the vibrations of the telephone, which I heard some years ago in its infancy, conveyed to me the momentous intelligence that I was *remanded* till Tuesday. This was by no means my first appearance at Bow Street Police Court, for though not on so serious a charge as the present, I had on a former occasion made the acquaintance (officially) of the worthy magistrate. The circumstances are briefly these, and though in no way bearing on my present narrative, may be reasonably introduced, as a combination of sweets and bitters, such as one gleans by the advertisements, are to be associated with “chow-chow,” “nabob pickles,” &c., &c. Some four years ago I had the honour of accompanying a well-known but not equally appreciated young baronet, and High Sheriff of an Irish county, notorious for his “Orange” (and orange-bitters with a dash of gin) proclivities, to a low music-hall. The weather was hot, and the evening an exceptionally warm one in June, such an one, indeed, that the most abstemious might have been pardoned for exceeding the bounds of moderation. About midnight we presented ourselves at the portals of that virtuous but defunct institution, and were refused a box on the plea of inebriation. So indignant, however, were both myself and my blue-blooded if not blue-ribboned companion at this monstrous insinuation that we at once proceeded to Bow Street, and laid a formal complaint with the inspector on night duty. The books, and probably that official’s marginal notes, would doubtless place facts and our respective intellectual conditions at the time beyond the shadow of a doubt. For my own part, I confess (with that frankness that has always been my ruin) that if I was not absolutely inebriated, I was decidedly “fresh.” As regards my companion, however, I will not presume to venture an opinion, although High Sheriffs admittedly never get drunk;—is it likely, then, that this one, the pride of his county and an ornament to its Bench, could so far forget himself? Absurd! The sequel, however, has yet to be told; and a few nights afterwards, about 9 P.M., alone, and disguised as a gentleman in evening clothes, I went to the Night House and requested to see the proprietor. A bilious individual hereupon came into the passage, and, supported by a crowd of “chuckers out,” hurled me on to the verandah, where luck and my proximity to the worthy publican enabled me to deal one blow on a face, which eventually turned out to be that of Barnabas Amos; but a member of “the force” happened to be passing, and the gentle Amos, not content with having previously taken the law into his own hands with questionable success, now appealed to the constable, and, in short, gave me in charge for an assault. I will not weary the reader by a description of my detention for twenty minutes in the police station, till I was bailed out by a householder; nor of the proceedings next morning before the magistrate. Suffice it to say that the case was dismissed; that the daily papers honoured me by devoting half a column to a report of the case; that six months after, alone and unaided, I opposed the renewal of the licence for the night-house; that my thirst for revenge was thoroughly satiated; and that I had the gratification of depriving the Amos of a weekly profit of £300, besides about £500 for legal expenses; and that the Middlesex magistrates did their duty and proved themselves worthy of their responsible position by almost unanimously refusing the licence, despite the fervid and well fee’d eloquence of Solicitor-General and voracious barristers, and thus stamped out about as festering a heap of filth and garbage as any that had ever infested this modern Babylon. Mr. Barnabas Amos and I were thenceforth quits, and, barring a chuckle he no doubt had at my subsequent troubles (such as a less magnanimous person than myself might have had at his eventual bankruptcy), I may fairly congratulate myself on having had the best of the little encounter. But another feature of this case suggests itself, and I cannot dismiss this long digression without a few words in conclusion. My quasi friend, the High Sheriff, did not come well out of this matter. We had, as it were, rowed in the same boat on this eventful night, we had both been refused a box on the same grounds, and yet he left me to bear, not only the brunt of the police-court row, but, by a judicious silence, got me the credit of having tried but signally failed to lead him from the paths of rectitude and virtue. I am prepared to make every allowance for a man in his position, lately married to a young and innocent wife, whose ears it was only right should not be polluted with such revelations as a night-house would naturally suggest if associated with her husband’s name; and I was perfectly alive to the necessity of screening him, and willing that my name only (as it did) should appear in the proceedings; nevertheless, there is a right and a wrong way of attaining such an end, and the High Sheriff will, I am convinced, on reflection, admit that he might have attained the same result in a more straightforward manner, and have spared the feelings of his bride and possibly her younger sisters equally as well without leaving a “pal”—to use a vulgar expression—in the lurch without an apology. With this digression I will return (in the spirit) to Bow Street, and close the chapter with a bang such as accompanied the closing of my cell door, and await the arrival of “Black Maria.”

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HOUSE OF DETENTION.

AFTER a delay of about twenty minutes—when for the first time I found myself an inmate of a police cell—a very civil gaoler (with the relative rank of a Police Sergeant) announced to me, with a “Now, Captain,” the arrival of one of Her Majesty’s carriages. One has frequently heard of the Queen’s carriages meeting, and not meeting, distinguished personages, such as Mr. Gladstone, Sir Garnet Wolseley, the King of the Zulus, and German princelings; but the carriage I refer to must not be confused with this type. They are far from comfortable, the accommodation is

limited, and the society questionable; and had it not been for the courteous consideration of the conductor (a Police Sergeant) I should have been considerably puzzled in attempting to squeeze my huge bulk of 19 stone 13 lbs. (as verified a few minutes later in Her Majesty's scales) into a compartment about 16 inches in breadth. As a fact, however, I remained in the passage, and thus obtained a view of streets and well-known haunts under very novel and degrading conditions. Everyone appeared to stare at this van, and everyone seemed to me to particularly catch my eye; but this, of course, was pure fancy, resulting, I presume, from a guilty conscience—for within the dark tunnel of this centre passage it was impossible that anyone in the streets could see, much less distinguish, anyone inside. I discovered a few weeks later that these uncomfortable police vans were infinitely superior and more roomy than those attached to Her Majesty's prisons; in fact, I should say they were the only attempt (as far as I could discover) at making a distinction between an untried, and consequently innocent (vaunted English law—twaddle) person, and a convicted prisoner.

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My experiences at the "House of Detention" and subsequently at "Newgate" convince me that justice demands a great alteration in the rules regarding untried prisoners, who are allowed and disallowed certain newspapers at the caprice of the chaplain, and actually restricted as to the class of eatables their friends may send them. An instance of this occurred in my case. A kind friend one day brought me a hamper containing, as I was informed, a roast fowl and a tongue; the warder at the entrance-gate, however, told him that these were luxuries in the estimation of the Home-office, and therefore less suited to the palate of an untried (and consequently innocent) man than a chop or steak fried in tallow and procured from the usual eating-house; and as my friend had dragged this white elephant of a parcel about with him for some time, he gave it bodily to the turnkey, who consequently reaped the advantage of the intended kindness to me. Next morning I complained to the Governor, who assured me he should have made no objection to the "luxury" of a fowl; in short, I had been the victim of the zeal of an illiterate and astute official, who, putting two and two together, and weighing the probable effect of his veto on an inexperienced inhabitant of the outer world, had arrived at a very happy arrangement whereby I was deprived and he benefited to the extent of a well-selected hamper. I found the Governor a very good sort. His suit of dittos was a little of the "thunder and lightning" pattern; but if his clothes were loud, his manners were not—in short, he was essentially a gentleman, both in appearance and manners, a beau ideal of the heavy dragoon that existed before the Cardwellite era. I purposely refer to his manners being those of a gentleman because it does not always occur that those situated in a similar position possess the higher recommendation.

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The "House of Detention" appeared to me the most awfully depressing place to which my erring footsteps had ever led me. The darkness, the stillness, the novelty of the situation, all tended to this conclusion; and I cannot do better than describe what occurred, and leave the verdict in the hands of the reader. Conceive then a man, who an hour previously was a free citizen, suddenly finding himself stepping out of a police van into a gloomy, white-washed passage, and being inspected and counted with a dozen others by a bumptious turnkey, puffed out with his own importance, addicted, as I have previously mentioned, to cold fowl and tongue, but otherwise oblivious to the veriest rudiments of civilization. Conceive, then, the sensations of a man such as I, finding himself suddenly confronted by such a biped, who, scanning first a paper and then you, begins to drawl out, "What's your name? Your age? Married or single? Protestant or Romanist?" and a volley of such like rubbish, which only tends to exasperate one, and which might well be dispensed with, seeing that all the desired information is on the paper, and, having been supplied by one's self not an hour before, is sure to be corroborated, whether correct or not, and considering, too, that this farce is repeated every time you enter and leave the place, and which in a case of frequent remands might occur twice a day. One can hardly narrate a single item regarding the treatment of an untried prisoner that does not call for redress, *i.e.*, if the absurd theory is still persisted in that an untried man is an innocent one. What right has an innocent man to be debarred the privilege of seeing friends (under reasonable restrictions) as often as he pleases, instead of being limited to one visit of fifteen minutes a day? Why should one be allowed to purchase *Town Talk* and not *Truth*? Why should the *Graphic* be permitted and not the *Dramatic News*? These are anomalies no logic can explain away, and have no right to be left to the caprice of a prison official. The food supply as at present arranged is a cruel system; a prisoner under remand is gratified at hearing that he may procure his own food, and naturally shrinks at the idea of subsisting on prison fare till absolutely compelled. No greater mistake ever was made—the latter is good, clean, and supplied gratis; the former is nasty in the extreme, and scandalously dear. If the doubtful "privilege" is to be continued, it is time the government, in common fairness, controlled the tariff; at present a prisoner is at the mercy of the eating-house keeper, and liable to any charge he may choose to make. I must admit that the caterers for the "House of Detention" were civil and comparatively reasonable, whereas those at Newgate were exactly the opposite. I shall give a detailed account later on of how I was fleeced at the Old Bailey, and I would earnestly warn all prisoners awaiting trial to stick to the prison fare, and carefully to avoid the refreshments supplied from the cat's meat houses in the neighbourhood. With these slight digressions I shall proceed to a description of the routine at the "House of Detention," with its rules and regulations and privileges, and the impressions they conveyed to me; and I cannot do better than impress on the reader that this book makes no pretensions to literary merit, but must be regarded rather as a journal of facts, whose principle claim is based on their having been written by a man who is probably as well known as any in England. I ask no praise, I'm equally oblivious to abuse; criticism I'm absolutely indifferent to, being convinced that either my notoriety, my popularity, my identity, or unpopularity, will procure me readers far in excess of any book of greater merit; and it is a consolation to feel that my friends will be glad that

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I got through some months with a degree of comfort never before paralleled, and my enemies (male and especially female) will be chagrined at discovering that "Imprisonment with Hard Labour" in my case meant kindness from first to last hardly credible, absolutely devoid of any labour at all, and accompanied with luxuries as regards eating and drinking that could not have been surpassed had I been stopping at a first-class hotel and paying thirty shillings a day for board and lodging. Many apparent contradictions may moreover suggest themselves, but taken in the light of a diary, these contradictory views must be regarded as reflecting circumstances as they appeared to me from time to time under various phases. Suffice it to say that I have carefully avoided exaggeration, that everything I narrate can be fully substantiated, and may be unhesitatingly accepted as the experiences of a man endowed with an average amount of brains, who kept his eyes wide open, and who had opportunities given him that no man ever had before, whether higher or lower in the social or criminal scale, of seeing a vast amount of the "dark side of nature." In my innocence I once fancied I had seen a good deal, and knew a lot; but the following narrative will prove that I was a very babe and suckling, before I became a "Government ward." Heaven forbid that anyone should purchase his experience at such a price; nevertheless, on the principle that has guided me through life of trying to see everything and do everything, I can only attempt to justify my escapades by endorsing the theory (slightly altered) of the immortal Voltaire, that a man who would go through what I have is "*un fois un philosophe, mais deux fois un criminel déterminé.*"

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### CHAPTER III. "SETTLING DOWN."

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FRESH arrivals appear to come to this awful place at every hour of the day and night. The police courts belch forth their motley loads on an average about twice a day, and when the Sessions are "on," prisoners arrive as late as nine and ten of a night, and the rumbling of "Black Marias," the shouting of warders, the turning of keys, the slamming of doors, and a hundred other "regulations" that make night hideous, lead one to imagine oneself in a third-class hostelry alongside a railway station. The absence of clocks, too, that strike (for even they are on the silent system), combined with the primitive hour of retiring to rest, bewilders one in arriving at anything like an approximate idea of time between the bell at night and the bell at 6 A.M. After my first interview with Mr. Vaughan, and with the sound of his melodious voice still ringing in my ears, I found myself about 6 P.M. alighting from the police van inside a dismal courtyard. We had just passed through a massive gate, and had been "backed" on to the entrance of a long and uninviting-looking corridor, but beyond that I had not the faintest idea of where I was; and if I had been told that the House of Detention was situated in the centre aisle of the British Museum, I should not have been in a position to dispute it. As we stepped out, carefully assisted by an official actuated apparently rather by precaution than courtesy, and carefully scanned and counted, I found myself with eight or nine others standing in a row on a huge mat. There was an entire absence of "dressing" in this ragged line, and thus destiny placed me between a ragamuffin with a wooden leg and an urchin of about twelve. My bulk, sandwiched between them, formed a charming picture, and filled up the mat, if not the "background." My friend, the police sergeant, with a courtesy that officialism failed to rob him of, handed us over to the "Detentionite" barbarian, who, first inspecting us, and then "righting" us, went through the offensive and unnecessary formula of catechizing us—such as "What is your name?" "Who ga"—I mean, "Your age," &c., &c. This to me was the first and greatest humiliation; the iron entered my very soul, and I realized how awful it all was. Implacable enemies, vindictive tradesmen, revengeful women, chuckle and shout; but time is short, and seventeen days will find me in clover, surrounded by every consideration that is possible, and as happy as circumstances will permit. When we had all been counted and booked, we were escorted downstairs and thrust into very small and separate cells. These cells were literally not more than three feet square, and their only furniture consisted of a block of stone intended for a seat. The turnkey, who showed and carefully locked me in, explained that I should only be there a few minutes, as we were merely awaiting the arrival of the chief warder. After the lapse of a few minutes, we were taken one by one into the office, where a further scrutiny "inside and out" took place. Here, at a desk, sat a warder in front of a ledger; there was, moreover, a weighing-machine and a couple of turnkeys. This constituted the entire furniture! The chief warder, blazing in gold lace and pegtop trousers that filled me with admiration at the time, now appeared, and having come to the conclusion that I was not one of the "unwashed" division, kindly exempted me from the usual bath, the preliminary and very necessary step on these occasions. The chief warder was a very decent and unaffected little man, and comparatively free from the penny-halfpenny bounce that characterizes the chief warder species in general. I here underwent, for the second time, the catechizing process, which being again carefully booked, I was invited in the most dulcet tones to unrobe to the extent of everything except my socks and trousers. With my thoughts wandering to the weighing-machine, "how careful," thought I, "they must be in accurately weighing one;" and my conjecture was in a measure correct, but my inexperience did not prepare me for the accompanying formula that took place. As I divested myself one by one of my coat, hat, boots, vest, shirt, &c., a pair of nimble hands ran over them with lightning rapidity, which in their turn passed them on to another pair of equally nimble or nimbler hands. In the twinkling of an eye, the contents of my pockets were laid on the table—the modest quill toothpick was not even

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exempted; fingers passed over every seam and lining of my clothes, and then the same “delicate touch” was applied to my loins and ankles. I was then requested to get on the machine, and the astounding fact recorded that a mountain of humanity in his shirt and socks weighed 19 stone 13 lbs. I have been particular in accurately relating this fact, for later on I treat on the subject of obesity; and the remarks I there make, and the hints I offer, based on very careful observation and experience, will, I am confident, commend themselves to the corpulent, and, IF ACTED ON, will prove very beneficial to those who really desire to reduce themselves. Every article found on me—money, toothpicks, pocket-book, watch, studs, sleeve-links, &c.—were then carefully booked and neatly tied up, and having resumed my clothing, I proceeded upstairs to my future abode.

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I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without noting the consideration that prompted the warder to give me a couple of bone studs to replace my own, without which I could not have kept my shirt closed. It was a kindly act, and tends to show that, as a rule and with very few exceptions, prison warders are a well-disposed race if properly treated, and desirous of rendering any civility to men of my class. If a prisoner is fool enough to stand on his dignity, he must not be surprised if his conduct is resented. Another peculiarity I observed here for the first time, but which I found to be the invariable rule at “Newgate” and “Coldbath,” was, that on arrival one was always placed in a most uncomfortable cell in the basement or even below, and gradually promoted upwards. I can only suppose it was intended as a kind of purgatory, with the idea of giving one a bird’s-eye view of what might be expected should one’s behaviour make him ineligible for the greater luxuries associated with “apartments on the drawing-room floor.”

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Having dressed, I accompanied a turnkey through innumerable passages abounding in steel gates, which snapped like rat traps as we passed through, till we emerged into what appeared the main passage of the prison. My conductor here handed me over to another warder with a “Here you are; here’s another one;” and I again, and for the third time, had to undergo the “abridged catechism.”

I found this warder a capital fellow. He tried to put matters as cheerfully as he could; and when ushering me into my cell, and noting my horror at its bleak appearance, said in a manner that was kindly meant, “Oh! you’ll be all right when you’ve settled down a bit.”

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“Settled down a bit!” As well ask the guinea-pig that is put into the rattlesnake’s cage to settle down, as to expect a man suddenly deprived of liberty to settle down in such a place. If I had not been of a very sanguine disposition, and one that can nerve himself to submit to anything, I should certainly have broken down, as I verily believe many do. On the contrary, I began to examine the uncomfortable place, read the notices for one’s guidance, and entered into a conversation with my guide and gaoler. He began by telling me that if I wanted supper I must order it sharp; and when I expressed a wish to have something, he kindly promised to order in a chop and a pint of beer. The next thing that attracted my attention was the hammock; and as my only experience of these uncomfortable substitutes for French bedsteads was from a distant view on a troopship, and as the idea of 20 stone suspended in mid air was out of the question, and as the tessellated floor appeared excessively hard, I determined not to risk a fall, for the fall of that house would certainly have been great. I discovered, however, that routine and prison discipline made it absolutely impossible for any exception to be made unless specially granted, and as none but the highest official, such as the Governor (or even the Home Secretary, as I presumed, or perhaps the Queen), could sanction a change of such importance as substituting a cot for a hammock, no time was to be lost in ferreting out some one of sufficient authority to assume the responsibility. At length the doctor was found, and after seeing me and hearing my weight, gave the necessary order, subject to the Governor’s approval in the morning.

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I have often wondered in how many quires of foolscap this humane act involved the little man. I only hope he got no wiggling from the Home Office for this assumption of responsibility, for I found him most kind and courteous, and in return I fear I worried him out of his life by applications for sleeping draughts, which he invariably let me have without a murmur. I took this opportunity also of getting his permission to keep my gas burning all night, for I felt that sleep was out of the question; and as I had asked for and been promised the special *Standard*, which invariably contains some paragraphs of interest of a world-renowned General’s, I began to hope that I might “settle down,” as my friend the warder had suggested. But settling down in theory and settling down in practice, especially in the “House of Detention,” are two distinct things. The privilege of keeping my gas burning, too, involved a most unpleasant consequence, diametrically opposed to “settling down.” Anyone whose light is left burning is supposed to be concocting some hideous treachery, and has to be “seen” every fifteen minutes; and thus through this long dreary winter night and every subsequent ten nights of my stay found me being taken stock of every quarter of an hour. I must—without being aware of it—about this time have commenced the “settling down” process, for I could actually bring myself to uttering the feeblest jokes, such as “Ah! how are you, old cockie? Just in time; another minute and I should have burrowed through the ventilator.” These little sallies, I am bound to admit, did not always meet with the reception their pungency merited. Occasionally they extracted a grin or a chaffy reply; at others a grunt and a bang of the trap-door. But I have again wandered from my first entrance into my cell, and demonstrating (what I honestly pleaded) my utter amateurishness in the writing of a book. I must only hope that the tale it unfolds will make up for this defect. A rattle of a tin knife on a pewter vessel, followed by the turning of the key, announced the arrival of my supper; and, oh, shades of Romano, how “my heart beat for thee!”

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## "PRISON FARE."

A GREASY cold chop, smelling as if it had been cooked in "Benzine collas," and with about as much warmth as would be imparted to it by a flat iron, a slice of bread that had evidently been cut in the early part of the day, with salt, mustard, a lump of cheese, and a potato piled up beside it, and a pint of the flattest, blackest, nastiest ale in a yellow jug without a spout, with my name pasted on it and the plate, constituted my meal, and nothing but philosophy and a certain amount of hunger could have induced me to attempt to tackle it. I did, however, and bolted the food and gulped down the liquid, and continued the contemplation of my cell. A few minutes later my warder again appeared with the "special" and removed my "tray;" and the ringing of the most melancholy-toned bell I had ever heard up to then warned me that bed-time had arrived, and I proceeded to turn in for my first night under lock and key. Believe me, reader, there is more in this than my words can convey. Writing as I now am, in a comfortable bed at six in the morning (for my past experience has instilled very early habits into me), with the window open, and the sea within a few yards of me, surrounded by every luxury and comfort that an affectionate mother can think of, and in a genial climate in the South of France, I cannot even now look back without a shudder to that fearful first night of less than a year ago; and the chop and the hammock, and the key turning, and the "settling down" appear as vividly before me as the most hideous nightmare of an hour's previous occurrence.

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At 6 A.M.—and in November this means in the pitch dark—a bell rings; not a heavy tolling bell, but a shrill, sharp hand bell, wrung with all the vigour that a prison warder can impart to it. He walks up and down the long and dreary passages, the noise rising and falling as he approaches and recedes. I sat up on my pallet of horsehair, and took it for granted I had better get up. By the considerate thoughtfulness of our free and enlightened Government every requisite for a (hurried) toilet is here provided, obviating the very slightest necessity for ever leaving one's apartments. A tap and diminutive brass basin, a water-closet (guaranteed, I should say, to produce typhoid in a marvellously short space of time), a piece of yellow soap the size of a postage stamp, and a towel of the solidity of the main sheet of an ironclad, and bearing unmistakable "marks of the beasts" that had been my immediate predecessors, were all at hand, leaving no excuse for the most whimsical for abstaining from a thorough good (official) wash. I found, as my experience increased, that the two things most neglected in Her Majesty's prisons are cleanliness and godliness. A terrible make-believe distinguishes them both; but if you only burnish up the outside of the cup and the platter, the inside may, figuratively speaking, be full of dead men's bones. I shall adduce very good reasons for these assertions when time and my destiny have "settled me down" in Coldbath Fields.

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After a delay of half-an-hour the counting process began, which consisted of a whole cloud of turnkeys passing rapidly in front of the various cell doors. A little further delay, and I was invited to "exercise." I went out once and only once, for as a philosopher one must pocket one's foolish likes and dislikes, and endeavour to see everything; but the penance was so fearful that I had a word with the doctor, and obtained exemption from that date. Conceive, then, a large and bleak courtyard, flagged and partially gravelled, bounded on three sides by the prison walls, and on the fourth by high railings and a still higher wall beyond it; conceive, too, a couple of hundred of the scum of London, the halt and the lame, the black chutnee seller and the mendicant newsvendor, with here and there some unfortunate devil like myself in the garb of a gentleman; add to this a warder standing on a pedestal at each corner, and another roaming round in the centre, and then cap this awful picture by watching this frowsy tag-rag mass walking round in a circle about a yard apart, and you may possibly form some slight notion of my feelings. When I got to the outer door that led into the yard, I hesitated for a moment, and I told a warder that I really did not think I could face the ordeal; but he advised me, in what was kindly meant, to have a try, and that if I walked round no one would take a bit of notice of me. I found this assurance was hardly strictly correct, for my huge size and evident superiority (in clothes if not in morals) drew notice on me; and many a scoundrel as he limped by asked me, in a gin-and-water voice, what I was "in for," and whether it was the "first" time. I, however, ignored their delicate overtures towards sociability, and longed for daylight and its accompanying breakfast. The hour's exercise eventually passed by, and I returned to my den, where shortly afterwards my breakfast appeared. This came from the eating-house over the way, and a nastier, colder, or more revolting conglomeration of roll sliced and buttered, a fried egg, and a piece of bacon that must have spent the night in a rat-trap, and a pint of chicory in a yellow jug, I never saw. I ventured to draw the warder's attention to the proximity that existed between these various delicacies, but he explained that mine was only one of some seventy other breakfasts of "privileged" prisoners, and that they had been in the passage for over an hour. Assuming, therefore, that my *déjeûner* had probably been sandwiched between a burglar's tripe and onions and some other brother malefactor's tea and shrimps, I held my breath and "laid on," and was surprised what a hole I had made in all the good things in an incredibly short period. But time (especially in Houses of Detention) waits for no man, and in a twinkling my breakfast things were removed, and a bell summoned us to chapel. I now found myself in church, and after a ten minutes' farce, which embraced every modern religious improvement—such as singing, a sermon, and a chaplain in a white surplice—we were again escorted back, and awaited the visit of the Governor.

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The chaplain at the "House of Detention" was, I should say, rather a good sort; he and I had

frequent conversations, and as he was the man who had once put a spoke into Bignell's "Argyll" wheel, and as I was the humble instrument that had "smashed, defeated, and utterly pulverized" Barnabas Amos and his night-house, a bond of mutual interest at once sprang up between us as enemies of immorality in general, and Bignell and Amos in particular. This reverend gentleman was, I should say, decidedly High Church; he wore all day (and for aught I know all night) a black skull-cap and gown, and possessing an enormous red beard, that came down to his waist, he invariably inspired me with much the same amount and sort of reverence that I entertain when contemplating stained-glass likenesses of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. His manner at first was a little pompous, especially when he was telling me of the sort of books he would permit and not permit me to order in; he was, however, despite these peculiarities, unmistakably a gentleman, both in manner and appearance—two qualifications I subsequently discovered were sadly deficient in more than one of his species. And now the door was opened with a terrific bang, and I was told by a turnkey with bated breath and evidently suffering from excessive mental excitement, that "the Governor" was coming round, and before I had time to shake myself together, and rise to receive him, the great man was in my cell. Captain — was the beau ideal of a plunger, and had served many years in the K.D.G.'s. He eventually exchanged from soldiering to "prisoning," and had served his time as "Deputy" of Exeter and Cold Bath Fields prisons. I was told at this latter retreat that he was in those days excessively zealous in the matter of dust, and that his great height enabled him to extract infinitesimal atoms of this irrepressible commodity from shelves and ventilators that men more of the "Zachæus" type would never have noticed. Like most men, however, time had blunted his zeal for these trifles, and when I saw him he had grown out of these absurdities of his novitiate, and appeared as one who had an unpleasant duty to perform, and who was anxious to do it as pleasantly as possible. He accosted me as one might expect a gentleman would, and asked me if there was anything he could do to ameliorate my condition? I mentioned certain things, and he at once gave the necessary orders for my being permitted newspapers, pen, ink, and paper, my gas at night, and exemption from chapel and exercise. All this brought it to near twelve o'clock, when dinners commenced being "served;" and without detailing all the horrors I ate, suffice it to say that another plateful of offal, such as a hyæna would jib at, duly made its appearance, and was as duly demolished, more or less. The first day in this terrible place is perhaps more awful than any subsequent one; for, irrespective of the novelty of the situation and not having "settled down," it must be taken into consideration that one has barely had time to communicate with friends and solicitors, and thus the day passes wearily away, affording ample time for reflection and the realisation of the fact that one may be in the heart of London and yet as far away from friends and relatives as if in the middle of the Desert of Sahara. The above sketch will pretty accurately convey an idea of a day's routine in the House of Detention, excepting perhaps a visit from a friend daily, a restriction that is as iniquitous as it is illogical, and which I trust the authorities will consider worthy of alteration. Visits from solicitors constitute another feature of this existence. Visits from friends are made as uncomfortable as can well be conceived; the drop window in the cell door, 12 inches by 8, and carefully covered with zinc netting, is opened, and with the visitor on the one side in the cold and dark passage, and the prisoner on the other in his cell, it is really difficult to hear all that is said, for the echo and shouting that is going on throughout requires a very practised ear to catch the muffled sounds. If any reader has ever put his head into a sack (which I haven't) and tried to talk, or heard the ghost speak at a transpontine theatre, some idea of the extraordinary hollow change in the voice may be imagined. A more inconsiderate system could hardly be adopted, and absolutely debars respectable persons from submitting to the ordeal entailed by such visits. The visits of solicitors are, however, far better managed, and permitted with a degree of comfort that quite surprised me. A private room is placed at your disposal, where you can say (and, as I found, do) pretty much what you please without let or hindrance; and beyond having a badge temporarily placed on your arm to indicate the number of your cell, and having the door carefully locked, you might fancy yourself having a *tête-à-tête* on a rainy day in the second class refreshment-room of the Crystal Palace. Only two unusual circumstances occurred to vary the monotony of my daily life; the one was the being served with a writ by a foolish tailor in Pall Mall, or rather his executors, for poor old Morris had long since paid the penalty of affluence and good feeding. That any men of the world, such as I supposed them to be, should have lent themselves to anything so childish as to serve a man with a "writ" who was awaiting his trial on a charge that might involve a seclusion "for years or may be for ever" passes my comprehension. I often felt I owed an apology to the unhappy deputy of these irrepressible snips, for he must have found it cold and very miserable whilst awaiting my arrival in that cheerless corridor, and I registered a vow, when the opportunity occurred, to express my regret for the scant comfort and apparent want of courtesy he received at my hands; but I was the victim of cruel circumstances over which I had no control. Another event that intruded itself on the even tenor of my ways was a letter from "Georgina"; and as the narration will involve a certain essential digression to make matters clear, I must again ask the reader's indulgence.

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## CHAPTER V. GEORGINA.

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WHO has not heard of Georgina? Ask Gounod, ask Monsieur Riviere, ask Mr. Vaughan, ask me, ask yourself, indulgent reader. I made this lady's acquaintance some five years ago, about eleven

P.M., outside Covent Garden Theatre, when she was apparently being supported by her seconds and spongeholders, after her third or fourth round (I forget which) with the "Leicester Square Pet" or the "Regent Street Chicken," or both. I was not an eye-witness of this revival of the good old days of the ring, so my statement as to details must not be implicitly accepted. I, however, made one of an excited and surging mob, and gleaned that the cause was the fair Georgina, who had lately been "removed" from inside the theatre. In a thoughtless moment, and with an eye to business, and with the hope of turning an honest penny by taking this amiable creature into the provinces (for I dabbled in things theatrical in those days) I entered into conversation with one of her satellites, which ripened into an intimacy of the most deplorable and expensive nature, and ended in the climax that procured me a most abusive and threatening letter whilst in the House of Detention, and subsequently a visit from her on my second appearance at Bow-street, where she occupied a prominent position in the front row. Immediately, then, after this lady's notoriety connected with the above *contretemps*, it struck me that she could not fail to "draw" in the provinces, if not on her merits as a vocalist, at least on account of her other amiable accomplishments. A series of visits to her residence ended in my securing the professional services of this inestimable treasure; and though the terms and conditions with which she hampered her agreement to accompany me on a six weeks' tour were sufficient to have made a more experienced man hesitate, I at length consented to all she proposed, and our agreement was virtually completed. Georgina is, I should say, an implacable foe; she is also, I should fancy, a good friend until a row—an inevitable consequence—takes place. This latter characteristic showed itself on this occasion; she made it a *sine quâ non*, and refused to budge an inch unless I agreed to permit her to be accompanied by a huge French woman whom she called her companion, and a sickly youth whom she designated her secretary. I was not only to cart this worthy couple about first-class, but to pay for their board and lodgings. As the French person was as voracious as a cormorant, and as the secretary was apparently suffering from some complaint that impelled him to eat inordinately three or four times a day, and as provincial hotels are proverbially expensive when the ordinary routine is in the least deviated from, and as nothing but the best and most *recherché menu* was considered good enough for this worthy trio, my bill and my feelings after a three days' experience may be easier imagined than described; added to all this, Georgina's delicate health precluded her from abstaining from food for any length of time, and thus when we journeyed from one town to another a hamper of prog had to be invariably made up for sustaining nature in the transit. Good heavens! such appetites would have eaten one out of house and home, even if any profits had been made; but when the takings were absolutely "nil," and the working expenses about £100 a week, it will not surprise the reader to learn that I lost £400 in less than a fortnight, and returned to London a sadder and a wiser man. I cannot omit one absurd feature in this "starring" tour which occurred in a town very far north, and which happily brought my disastrous tour to an abrupt and unexpected conclusion. The hour that the concert was to commence was eight; the audience had been respectfully solicited to be in their places by that hour—a request, I am bound to admit, the entire audience present considerably complied with—everything, in short, was done by visiting, puffing, advertising, and personally canvassing, that ingenuity and activity on my part could suggest; and at a quarter before eight I awaited behind the curtain (seeing, but unseen), with throbbing heart, the arrival of the vast crowds that I confidently expected. The fair and amiable one was seated on a fauteuil, radiant with smiles, and attired in a matchless robe of white water silk and ruffles—a kind of mixture between the "Marie Antoinette" and the "Gorgonzola" styles, or what the cross would be, if such styles do or ever have existed—(should any lady read this description she will, I trust, pardon any imperfections of detail.)

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The female cormorant was administering some light stimulant, for Georgina is subject to fits of nervousness, incredible as this may appear. The emaciated one was in front assisting in looking after the money-taker; and I feel thankful to Providence on his account, if not on my own, that this was far from an arduous task, for the poor fellow was evidently delicate and physically incapable of lifting a heavy cash-box, and so, with all my faults, blood-guiltiness cannot be laid to my charge. Time meanwhile was rapidly passing, and a huge clock pointed to three minutes to eight, then two minutes, then one, and then eight o'clock struck, and, oh horror of horrors! the *sole* occupant of the enormous building was the critic of the local paper. Decency forbade our opening the concert to this solitary unhappy man; it appeared to me to be cowardly to attack him alone, and to pit him single-handed against the invincible Georgina, who had demolished a conductor and his manager a week previously, and who now showed symptoms of "annoyance" that nothing but my soothing powers prevented bursting into a flame. My plan of action was immediately taken; to hesitate a moment was to be lost. I at once sent for the "secretary," and first thought of telling him to make a short speech from the stage to our solitary audience; but reflection decided me in approaching him myself. I apologised for the unusual occurrence (it had in reality happened wherever we had been, though not to the extent of less than seven or eight); I offered to return him his money, for I was well aware his was a complimentary ticket, and verily believe that the united purses of the entire company could not have scraped together five shillings. He muttered something I tried not to hear, and next day repaid my intended courtesy by a flaming smashing article that would effectually have ruined us had we moved elsewhere. But events were occurring at the same time which put it out of my power to continue this disastrous tour. About eleven o'clock the landlord of the hotel presented himself at my room, said the lady and her friends had left, and politely but firmly intimated that he could not permit me to remove my luggage till a little bill of £8 was settled. The rest is soon told. I hurried back to London, remitted the £8, and abandoned the tour. I had not, however, heard the last of my musical *bête noire*; she and the "secretary" both dunned me for their railway fares, which I of course ignored, and I heard no more of her till she dug me out at the House of Detention, when

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she threatened me with legal proceedings for detaining, as she alleged, her photographs—the real fact being that, after our last stampede, her photographs that were displayed were seized by some indignant creditor in expectation of a ransom. For my part I hope I have really heard the last of this irrepressible creature.

## CHAPTER VI. BOW STREET.

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AN eventful day was now approaching, and on the morrow I was to appear at Bow Street for the first time after my formal remand of the previous Friday. I felt an instinctive conviction that my appearance (even though it had not appeared up to that time in the newspapers) would be generally known, and draw together a crowd actuated by motives either of like, dislike, or curiosity; nor was I wrong in my surmise. An official at the police court informed me that numbers of inquiries had been made as to the time of my probable appearance; and as the appointed hour drew near fresh arrivals and those that had been waiting since 10 A.M. combined in making up a crowd that literally crammed the court. It was, I admit, a very trying ordeal, for I had been pretty accurately informed what persons were in the court and waiting to see the “fun.” I did, however, the best (though, I fear, a very foolish) thing under the circumstances, and primed myself with liquor, which certain friends, by dint of great ingenuity, managed to convey to me, for the gaoler, though a most civil and obliging man, was a terrible disciplinarian, and one that was not to be “squared.” Had I not taken these repeated nips—and I’m afraid to say how much I imbibed—I firmly believe I could never have gone through the examination with the *sang froid* I displayed.

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About 12 o’clock a hurrying of feet approaching my cell announced to me that my turn was come; and after a momentary pause in the passage I found myself escorted by a constable and in the dock. I can never forget that terrible moment. In front, on each side, and behind me was a dense throng, representing every class of persons I had ever had dealings with. One expected a certain amount of hostility from the side of the prosecution, but the array of faces I then saw opened up in me a new train of thoughts. Here was a room thronged with people I had befriended and people I had never injured; men I had stood dinners to when their funds were lower than mine; lodging-house keepers that had fleeced me, and waiters I had tipped beyond their deserts; nameless attorneys from the slums of the City, courting daylight and publicity in the hopeless endeavour to get their names into print by the gratuitous offer of their valuable but hitherto unappreciated services—all craning their necks to stare at and exult over a poor devil, who, whatever his faults, was now at a disadvantage. It was the old adage of “hitting a man when he is down;” and I’m thankful for the experience that has enabled me to form a just estimate of the worthlessness of such professions of friendship. On the other hand, I heard of many persons—to their honour, be it said—who abstained from being present through feelings of generous consideration. My *quasi*-friend Georgina occupied a conspicuous place in the front row. I verily believe she never took her eyes off me, but her offensive stare had no charm for me; I had more serious matters to occupy my mind. A mountain of flesh that I was once on terms of intimacy with was also present, panting with excitement, but, like the Levite of old, “he passed over on the other side.” I will not weary the reader with details that repeat themselves almost daily in the police reports; suffice it to say that I was again remanded for another week, and then formally committed for trial at the next sessions of the Central Criminal Court.

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On my two previous remands to the House of Detention I had always managed to remain at Bow Street till the 5 o’clock van took its load of victims. It was, at all events, a change, and infinitely more agreeable than the depressing atmosphere of Clerkenwell. On the day, however, of my committal to Newgate I was informed that I could not, as before, wait till 5 P.M., but must be ready to start at 2. The rope was clearly getting “tauter”; discipline was gradually assuming its sway, the circles around me smaller and smaller. The other occupants of the “Black Maria” were, like myself, all committed for trial; and as we drove along I was much surprised at the marvellous knowledge they appeared to have gained of me and my affairs. I was, as before, standing in the passage and not in a compartment, and consequently could hear all that passed between the various passengers. My case was the sole subject of conversation; occasionally I was the object of a little mirthful sally. Thus, a man who had been sentenced to three months’ imprisonment in default of paying a fine, said, “Ah, Capting, you might give us two of them quids to pay my fine”—referring to some money that had been alluded to in the court as having been in my possession at the time of my arrest. Another hinted that I “Best take a good look at the streets, ’cos all wud be changed like afore I cum out agin.” Another assured me that the warm baths in Newgate “wus fine but ’ot.” A lady, too, graced our party; she was tawdry, I admit, and lived in the Dials. Her misfortune was that she had mistaken someone’s purse for her own. She was howling over her ill-luck for the first part of the journey, but before we arrived at our destination had quite recovered her usual spirits. She told me she was an actress—an assertion I am not in a position to dispute, though I found her conversation quite as intellectual as that of the usual ballet-girl class; and as she was the last “lady” I was likely to see or hear for some time, I paid great respect to her conversation. All these familiarities were terribly grating to me; they were more difficult to bear than any of my previous humiliations. They were, as it were, the first instalments of being addressed as an equal by inferiors who had hitherto recognised me as a superior; and as

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we drove along, past objects as familiar to me as my own face, I felt the lump rising in my throat, and I dread to think what weakness I might have been guilty of had not a sharp turn brought us in front of Newgate, and the opening of a huge gate on its creaking hinges recalled me to a sense of my unenviable position. The van, having crossed the courtyard, was backed against the door, where a string of warders formally received us; and after again submitting to the painful ordeal of being catechized, I found myself traversing a dismal and nearly dark corridor; and then the hideous conviction forced itself on me for the first time that I was actually a prisoner and securely lodged in Newgate.

## CHAPTER VII. NEWGATE.

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So much has been written about this national Bastille, and so many have gone over the building, that one feels as if writing about "a tale that is told." Nevertheless, I trust my narrative may describe things never before alluded to, and be found to contain matters of interest that came under my personal observation. The first thing at Newgate that a fresh arrival has to submit to is the indispensable bath, accompanied by a very minute and simultaneous search. I was at once ushered downstairs and into a very roomy and luxurious bath room, quite as good as any supplied for eighteenpence at West End establishments, and being invited to undress and get into the bath, had the gratification of observing my clothes undergo, one by one, a very thorough overhauling. Each item was severally manipulated, and I am convinced not a pin could have escaped detection. Meanwhile I was splashing and thoroughly enjoying myself, much as one has seen a duck that has been cooped up for a week when suddenly turned into a pond. I had not had such a revel for ten days, and in the ecstasy of the moment I felt as if it was almost worth the journey to Newgate for such a luxury. This periodical bath is one of the greatest "infections" the average prisoner has to submit to, and numerous instances came under my observation at a later period, of ingenuity displayed by frowzy malefactors to evade this regulation. Twenty minutes found me again "clothed and in my right mind," and I was ushered into a cell on the same subterraneous floor. This cell was certainly the most empty I had ever seen; its entire furniture literally consisted of a camp stool and a thermometer, and this latter instrument caused me considerable annoyance, for I am not exaggerating when I assert that an absurd make-believe display of anxiety for one's welfare involved a visit and calculation of the temperature every half-hour through the night. I utterly failed to fathom this custom, the more so as the turnkey who made the calculation probably understood as much about it as he did of astronomy, and can only attribute it to the inherent politeness developed in the officials who periodically have lodgers whom they begin by feeding up, and eventually end by launching into eternity with a hand shake, if we are to believe the papers. This idea is not my own, but was suggested to me by a terrible scamp and fellow lodger whom I shall presently introduce to the reader. An absurd habit that prevailed at Newgate, and which contrasted strangely with the other customs, was that of the chief warder as he finally counted us at night. This official, having glared at you with an expression such as the rattlesnake may be presumed to give the guinea-pig just before dinner, invariably said "Good night!" I was so struck by this unique and time-honoured custom that I asked my friend and valet—for he cleaned out my cell and did other jobs for me—Mr. Mike Rose what it meant. "Well," he said, "they gets into a sort of perlite way like, 'cos whenever a cove swings they nigh allus shakes hands with 'im, and maybe this is 'ow they gits perlite like." There was something so original in this logic that I could not but be impressed by it, and though I failed to discover the connection between the two circumstances, still I had realized that Mr. Mike Rose was a bit of a character and worth cultivation. Very shortly after my incarceration in the thermometer-furnished cell I was visited by the surgeon, and having obtained his permission to have a bed instead of a hammock, a wooden tressel was brought in with sheets, bolster, and blankets. I at once proceeded to make my couch, deeming bed the best place on such a cold and cheerless afternoon; and 6 o'clock P.M. found me in bed, vainly endeavouring to get warm, with my eye fixed on the thermometer, and muffled up to the chin with sheets and blankets, all of which were stamped in letters three inches long with the ominous words "NEWGATE PRISON." I really believed that my first night's experience at the "House of Detention" was sufficiently awful, but it was nothing to my sensations here. The associations of the place, the idea that many a murderer had probably occupied this very cell, and possibly slept in these identical bed-coverings, all forced themselves upon me. The bells of the numerous churches which abound round Newgate also seemed desirous of adding to one's misery by joyful peals; they were practising their weekly bell-ringing, and one chime was repeating over and over again—in mockery of me, as it were—Haydn's "Hymn of the Creation," and "The Heavens are telling" kept floating into my ears through granite walls and iron bars; and though I tried very hard to stifle sound by burying myself under the "broad-arrowed" bed-clothing, all my efforts were futile, till sleep, kind sleep, took pity on me, and I wandered in my dreams far away from my dreadful abode, only to be recalled to the hideous reality by the mournful prison bell, and—

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"Sorrow returned with the light of the morn,  
And the voice in my dreaming ear melted away."

The daily routine is somewhat different to that of the "House of Detention." One official only counts the prisoners of a morning, and asks you at the time if you wish to see the doctor during

the day. I was once tempted to express this wish with a view of procuring a sleeping draught. He questioned me as to my symptoms in an apparently interested manner, and eventually ordered me a dose of "No. 2." No. 2, I may here state, is a ready-made article, and is baled out of a huge jar into a dirty tin cup. I took my dose, and, without further detailing the result, am extremely grateful I had not been prescribed No. 1. If I had, it is very doubtful whether this narrative would ever have been written. The first day is occupied with details to which considerable importance appear to be attached—namely, your description—every particular of which is carefully booked by the head of each department, and a more senseless, harassing ordeal can hardly be conceived. Surely one inspection and general description (this was my third within ten days) ought to suffice, and might without much trouble be forwarded from one prison to another. It is idle to deny that half the questions put to you are absolutely unnecessary, and the conviction is forced on you that you are being pumped from sheer curiosity. Thus the Chaplain, in the blandest manner, only to be acquired by constant attendance on murderers previous to execution, asked me questions that appeared most impertinent—as to where I lived, and if I had any relatives, and where they lived. I at once told him I considered all this quite unnecessary, and declined to enlighten him. Immediately after breakfast on the first morning the prisoners are taken in packs of about twenty before the Governor. This man is what is known in the army as a "Ranker"—that is, one who by merit has raised himself from the rank and file to his present position—and had apparently brought with him many of those habits which, however commendable in a turnkey, are beneath the dignity of a Governor and lower the position he ought to occupy. Acting on the habits associated with his youth, this Governor commenced a minute examination of one's physiognomy. Seizing you by the nose or ear (I forget which), and scowling hard, he began, "Eyes grey, complexion fresh, mole on neck, &c.;" and having further personally superintended your being measured and weighed, you were filtered through, as it were, into the presence of the Chaplain, who tried to pump you as before described, and who, in his turn, passed you on to the doctor, who appeared to have a kind of roving commission to endeavour to extract any crumbs of information omitted by his two *confrères*.

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The whole style and system at Newgate was excessively low. I was moreover very much struck by the resemblance that appeared to exist between the officials from the highest to the lowest. Every one had the same unpleasant expression that suggested the idea that they lived in gloomy streets, where the drainage was bad. I attribute this in a measure to a commendable desire on the part of the subordinates to imitate their chief, who had not a pleasant expression, and shows how necessary it is that Government should select a gentleman by birth and manners—irrespective of every other recommendation—for a position of such delicacy as that of a prison Governor. The next ordeal one had to submit to was "Chapel," and, barring the novelty of the scene, I can hardly conceive a more absurd farce. The pumping Chaplain was here metamorphosed into the surpliced cleric, and it is difficult to decide in which character he was most objectionable. In justice I must commend him for the brevity of his remarks, for from find to finish—from "When the wicked man" to the end of the sermon—was all compressed into fifteen minutes, and away we again trudged, like Alice in Wonderland, in search of further novelty. The Chapel of Newgate is a very awful place; anything more calculated to banish reverential feeling and inspire horror can hardly be conceived. On each side is a huge cage, different from anything I had ever seen, except, perhaps, the elephant house at the Zoological. In these, prisoners convicted and prisoners awaiting trial are severally placed, thus effectually dividing the Scotland Yard sheep from the Scotland Yard goats. Above, protected by small red curtains, were diminutive balconies, capable of holding three persons at most; these were for the accommodation of murderers, from whence they receive the consolations of religion (official) whilst awaiting strangulation. The vibration of a curtain led me to the conclusion that one of these mortuaries was daily occupied, a suspicion that was confirmed by events which I subsequently heard and saw. I discovered, indeed, that a gentleman who had cut the throats of half his family, and who eventually benefited by the religious consolation of the Chaplain and the

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delicate attentions of Mr. Marwood, was a fellow-lodger at the same time as myself. I saw the poor wretch every day passing and repassing, and later on "assisted" at certain preliminaries in his honour. I moreover had a bird's-eye view of his last appearance in public, facts that I shall duly narrate hereafter.

"Exercise" was an indispensable feature of life in Newgate, and nothing, I believe, could have exempted one from this ordeal. It answered, indeed, more purposes than one. Health was doubtless essential; identification, however, was considerably more important. Three times a week, and before starting on our circus-like walk, all the prisoners awaiting trial, amounting to over two hundred, were ranged shoulder to shoulder round the walls, a preliminary that at first puzzled me considerably. I was not, however, left long in ignorance.

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A little way off, and apparently approaching, I heard the measured tramp of an advancing crowd, and suddenly there appeared a long string of men in single file; these were the detectives, some seventy or eighty in number, bent on a mission of recognition. Slowly they passed before us, each one staring and occasionally stopping and addressing a prisoner, or whispering to one of their companions. These preliminary enquiries often led to minuter inspections; and if they expressed the wish, a prisoner was afterwards honoured by a private view, and carefully compared with photographs and police descriptions. This, no doubt, is a very essential proceeding, and many a man "wanted" for an undiscovered crime in another part of the kingdom, and committed months or years previously, is recognized by this salutary custom. As may be supposed, this inspection had absolutely no personal interest to me. Still the ordeal, degrading in the extreme, never failed to inspire me with horror; and I dreaded the mornings when the "detecs," as they were lovingly termed, made their appearance. There was something so weird and uncanny in the whole thing—the distant tramp, the solemn march past, the offensive leer, the familiar stare, all combined to make a horrible impression. A more repulsive body of men than these "detecs" can hardly be conceived, got up as they were in every kind of costume—men in pot hats and slap-bang coats, others in shabby-genteel frock coats and tall hats; some in fustians and others in waterproofs and leggings, but all with the same unmistakable expression. I hope the authorities are not under the impression that these individuals are unknown to the law-breaking community, for no greater fallacy can possibly exist. I never missed an opportunity hereafter of asking habitual criminals this question, and am satisfied that their appearances, their beats, and their daily routine are known to every habitual criminal in London. I'll prove this hereafter.

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Meanwhile, one has only to look about in the streets, and he cannot fail to observe a civilian frequently talking to a policeman. This man is not asking his way, but is in nineteen cases out of twenty a "recogniser"; nor can it be wondered at if their foolish actions and evident unwillingness to conceal their vocation makes them as distinguishable as they are. I will confidently assert that every pickpocket and every "unfortunate" knows each and every one of these detectives; and as they invariably frequent the same beat, and pursue the same tactics at the same time every day, it can hardly be wondered at. I know—and it will hardly be asserted that I could know it except by having heard it from others—that a detective is "due" daily at King's Cross Metropolitan Station about two P.M., and remains about an hour, and that on race-days he is there before the return from the meeting. If this is true—as I believe it to be—it is natural to suppose that other facts are equally well known. I could adduce a hundred instances of this sort, for I made burglars my particular study, and will disclose hereafter my ideas of the many fallacies that at present exist on this subject, and the causes that lead to burglaries, and how they are easiest avoided. I never lost the opportunity of questioning a burglar or a pickpocket, and during the next few months I saw some very fair specimens of these respective species. My remarks must not be taken as referring to the higher Scotland-yard detectives, than whom no cleverer body exists, but to these trumpery plainclothes men, or "recognisers," that may be seen at every corner, and who, I verily believe, do more to impede than further justice.

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## CHAPTER VIII. THE SCAFFOLD.

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IN the corner of the yard where I daily exercised stood an unpretending looking shed, with slate roof and large folding doors, and resembling a coach-house more than anything I can compare it to. This building always puzzled me, and I enquired of my friend and fellow-lodger, Mr. Mike Rose, what it was. I then discovered it was the scaffold, that grim limb of the law on which so many wretches have periodically suffered within three weeks of their sentence at the Old Bailey Sessions, or, as they are familiarly known, "The C. C. C." I was most anxious to have a minute examination of this masterpiece of Marwood's, for it is admitted that that eminent manipulator of the carotid artery has brought his genius to bear on the grim subject with such success that drop, knot, and platform have all arrived at the highest possible degree of perfection. It was the custom to utilise the services of certain prisoners every day in general cleaning and helping about the prison, and as I was convinced that "the scaffold" would, like every other prison institution, require a periodical clean up, I suggested to my turnkey that if the chance occurred he should select me to assist in this cheerful and instructive duty. He laughed at the idea of *my* doing such work, and added that they only selected men whose antecedents had habituated them to scrubbing and cleaning; but I explained to him that if Mike and I were selected, that Mike would do all the washing, and that I would exercise a sort of moral effect and general supervision that could not possibly make the slightest difference to him, and was based on an agreement between Mike and myself, whereby for a consideration of bread and butter, and my leavings generally, he was to clean out my cell daily and make himself useful to me, and on my behalf. This warder was a very good sort—indeed, about the only one that had not that offensive "bad drainage" expression I had noticed in the others. So he promised compliance, and one day after dinner I found myself in company with Mike, crossing the yard—I with a duster and he with a mop and pail *en route* to the scaffold. There is something horrible in this idea, and many readers will probably consider my act and desire to participate in such a task as in the worst possible taste, but I felt I should *never* have such a chance again, and being, moreover, a philosopher, and actuated, even at that early stage, with a determination of some day writing my experiences, I lost no opportunity from the first day of my incarceration to the last to see *everything* by hook or by crook. I can fairly say I attained my object, and saw *more* than any other man has ever done before, and that too under such favourable circumstances as something more than chance enabled me to. It may not here be out of place to say that I have read every book, sensational or realistic, that purports to describe prison life, and have invariably come to the conclusion that the writers never really wrote from personal observation, or, if they did, had failed signally in giving a correct description of what actually exists. Many were well-written books, but they were NOT prison life. This narrative (to use an advertising phrase) supplies a want long felt, and if it abounds with faults of composition—as I readily confess it does—it compensates in a measure for its shortcomings by the accuracy of its details. It is written in a vein, moreover, more likely—as I hope—to meet public approval than that snivelling, sanctimonious style adopted by its predecessors, and which, even if sincere, would nevertheless be palling, but where indulged in by some scheming, anonymous, rascally jail-bird, is as impertinent as it is nauseous. I have no faith in converted burglars. The entire scaffold is a most unpretending construction, and situated in any other yard but Old Bailey might pass observation as a highly-polished and tidy out-house. The floor is level with the outer yard, so that the chief actor is spared the painful necessity of trying to ascend a flight of steps with quaking knees and an air of assumed levity. A few steps, quite unobservable whilst standing on the "drop," lead down from the back of the flooring into a bricked pit below, and a long bolt, worked by a wheel, enables this apparently solid flooring to split from the centre and to launch the victim in mid-air into the centre of this truly "bottomless pit." I minutely examined all this, and (as its thorough dusting necessitated) rubbed and burnished every portion I could think of. My *confrère*, meanwhile, was on his hands and knees, scrubbing away like grim death, and preparing the floor for the ceremony that was to take place a few days hence. Mike all this time was giving me the benefit of his vast experience; and as he appeared to hear everything that was going on, he led me to understand that eight A.M. on Monday next would witness one of those dreadful private executions that periodically take place, witnessed by none but prison officials, and associated, I verily believe, in many instances by circumstances of brutality that would not admit of publicity. He added that we might by luck get a view of the procession, or at least hear a little, for, as he considerably pointed out, our cells actually overlooked the yard. I was most anxious to hear how we might attain to this unusual excitement, and listened attentively whilst Mike enlightened me in something of the following style:—"Yer see, they'll begin to fake the cove about eight—ah, afore that, and none of us, see, will be allowed out that morning, you bet; so if we can get a bit of glass out of the windey—see—and plug it round wi' bread, why none on 'em wud be none the wiser, and we might see a rare lot; never you mind, leave it to me, and to-morrow when I cleans your cell, I'll fix it for yer." This was indeed something to look forward to, and next morning when Mike appeared he led me to understand, by the most hideous grimaces, that he had succeeded on his own window, and prepared to do the same by mine; so leaving him to himself, I withdrew into another cell, for it is a peculiarity of prison system that if two men are together, or even near one another, they are invariably watched, but if alone they are comparatively unobserved, and free to prosecute any undertaking without the least risk of detection. Mike's gestures, accompanied by a rolling of his eyes in the direction of the window, convinced me on my return that he had succeeded in his undertaking, and having the highest opinion of his constructive and destructive capabilities, I determined not to approach the window nor to test his work till the supreme moment arrived. Mike was one of those individuals who undergo imprisonment as a matter of course, and with considerably greater advantage than most men. I do not here include myself, for mine was an exceptional case; he had benefited by the experience of years, and though only a young man, appeared to be intimate with every prison in the kingdom; he was, moreover, a most willing and respectful man and a capital worker, and, as such, a favourite with the warders, who knew they

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could always depend on a job being well done by him; he was, consequently, all day employed on odd jobs, which carried with them privileges that enabled him to roam about and give the uninitiated—such as myself—the benefit of his profound and varied experience. Mike, I fear, was a terrible ruffian; he was now awaiting his trial for burglary and personal violence, and though he assured me it was a mere nothing, and a grossly exaggerated and trumped-up charge, I gleaned from the facts that came out at his trial that he had rifled the contents of a small shop in the City Road, and that when the old woman who lived on the premises had ventured to remonstrate, that Mike had marked his sense of such an unjustifiable proceeding by half throttling her, and eventually making away “for a little season.” He assured me, however, it was “nothing,” adding, however, that as it was his fourth conviction, he quite expected penal servitude. He informed me also that he had written an elaborate defence, which he proposed reading to the judge and jury. This defence he insisted on showing me, and I am bound to say that a more damning document, or one more capable of hanging a man, I never saw; but luck and circumstances happily (for him) prevented him carrying out his intention of reading it, and Mike by the omission got off with two years’ hard labour. Mr. Rose, who was about four-feet-four in his stockings, communicated to me, amongst other interesting facts, that he was a volunteer, and I could not help realising on various occasions after he had been performing violent exercise in my cell, that there was some truth in the adage that “a Rose by any name would smell as sweet.” Mike, in short, was a character, and whether in chapel, where he apparently led the choir and knew every response by heart, or in the prison, where he appeared *au courant* with everything and everybody, I found him a most useful neighbour, invariably obliging and respectful, and willing to turn his hand to anything.

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## CHAPTER IX. A PRIVATE EXECUTION.

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THE eventful day at length dawned when the scaffold was to be brought into requisition. “The condemned sermon” of the day before, to say nothing of the evident bustle that was going on, had sufficiently prepared our minds for what was about to happen; and the getting our breakfasts half an hour earlier, and the omission of the usual passage cleaning, all clearly pointed to some unusual occurrence. My friend the warder, too, kept me thoroughly *au courant* with what was passing, and when giving me my breakfast added, “Well, I sha’n’t be back just yet, as I’ve got to assist at a little business down below that will take about an hour.” After, therefore, he had left me, I mounted my stool, and having contemplated Mike’s handiwork with considerable satisfaction, removed the pane of glass and awaited the procession with very much the same sensation that I have looked out for the passing of the Lord Mayor’s Show or Mr. Hengler’s circus. The view I anticipated can hardly be said to have been obtained under the most favourable circumstances. Perched on a stool, and liable, if detected, of getting into a very serious scrape, was in itself sufficient to infuse a certain amount of alloy into the transaction; but when to all this must be added my own feelings—that here was I, ONE prisoner actually confined within the same walls, and watching the execution of ANOTHER prisoner—it will readily be conceived that a piquancy was introduced into the proceeding such as seldom or ever has fallen to the lot of an individual in my position. I could not have had long to wait, though the discomfort of my position and the anxiety attending it made it appear a matter of hours; and no twenty stone of humanity ever suffered more torture than I did whilst with craned neck and squinting through a crevice I awaited the advent of this hideous procession. The dismal toll of St. Sepulchre’s bell and the distant tramp of advancing footsteps, however, announced that the “time had come.” I could distinctly hear the “Ordinary” repeating in very ordinary tones portions of the Burial Service as the weird procession passed below me; a dense fog made it very indistinct, but there it was almost beneath me—the warders first, then the Governor, and then the condemned man trussed like a turkey, supported by Marwood, and immediately preceded by the chaplain. I could have dropped a biscuit amongst the party, so near were they, as they passed through a wicket and were lost to sight. A solemn silence now ensued, followed after a few moments that appeared like hours by a terrible thud; and I pictured to myself the lately scrubbed floor giving way, and my fellow-prisoner suspended mid-air in that dark and bottomless pit. The closing of the outer shed doors recalled me to my senses, and the approaching sound of footsteps, as the “small and early party” dispersed, some to breakfast and some to the morning paper, but all to reassemble an hour hence for the inquest, the quicklime, the thrusting into a hole, and the general obliteration of the morning’s work, suggested to me the advisability of at once restoring my apartment to its normal condition. So with one piece of bread jammed into the window, and another jammed into my mouth, I resumed my breakfast as if perfectly oblivious of the terrible drama that had just taken place. A few hours later we were exercising in the identical yard, and the modest coach-house with its closed doors looked as disused as the portals of a swimming-bath on Christmas Day.

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The scene just enacted and the *débris* of my breakfast forcibly recalled to my mind an execution I witnessed many years ago from, as I believe, the identical eating-house that had just supplied me with my breakfast. It was in ‘65, as near as I can recollect, that myself and three or four others engaged a room on the first floor with two windows to witness the execution of Müller for the murder of Mr. Briggs. A public hanging has been so often and so graphically described that I hesitate to attempt to add anything that is not already known. On the night before (Sunday) we

agreed to rendezvous at 10 o'clock at the Raleigh Club. It was raining in torrents, and it was a question in our minds whether or no we should brave the elements; but an empty four-wheeler standing outside settled the point, and we proceeded on our ghastly journey. As it turned out, the deluge was all in our favour, for had it been fine we should never have got near the place, and would assuredly have shared the fate of a cab-load of young Guardsmen who had preceded us about an hour, and who unluckily arrived between the showers and never got beyond Newgate Lane; at this point they were politely but firmly invited to descend, stripped to their shirts, and then asked where the cabman should drive them to. We, however, were more fortunate. In a sheet of water that even the stoutest burglar found to be irresistible, we alighted in a comparatively deserted street in front of our unpretending coffee-house; and a few minutes found us in a cosy room with a blazing fire, and a servant who had preceded us laying out the contents of a hamper of prog. The scene on the night previous to a public execution afforded a study of the dark side of nature, not to be obtained under any other conditions. The lowest scum of London appeared to be here collected in dense masses, which, as the hour of execution approached, amounted, according to the *Times*, to at least 100,000 people. The front of Newgate was strongly barricaded, huge barriers of stout beams traversing the street in all directions; they were intended as a precaution against the pressure of the crowd; they, however, answered another purpose, not wholly anticipated by the authorities. As the crowd increased, so wholesale highway robberies were of momentary occurrence; and victims in the hands of some two or three desperate ruffians were as far from help as though divided by a continent from the battalions of police that surrounded the scaffold.

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The scene that met our view as we pulled up the windows and looked out on the black night and its still blacker accompanists baffles description. A surging mass, with here and there a flickering torch, rolled and roared before us; above this weird scene arose the voices of men and women shouting, singing, blaspheming; and as night advanced, and the liquor gained firmer mastery, it seemed as if hell had delivered up its victims. To approach the window was a matter of danger; volleys of mud immediately saluted us, accompanied by more blasphemy and shouts of defiance. It was difficult to believe we were in the centre of a civilised capital that vaunted its religion and yet meted out justice in such a form.

The first step towards the morning's work was the appearance of workmen about 4 A.M.; this was immediately followed by a rumbling sound, and we realized that the scaffold was being dragged round. A grim, square, box-like apparatus was now indistinctly visible, as it was slowly backed against the "debtors' door." Lights now flickered about the scaffold; it was the workmen fixing the crossbeams and uprights. Every stroke of the hammer must have vibrated through the condemned cells, and warned the wakeful occupant that his time was nearly come. These cells are situated at the corner nearest Holborn, and passed by thousands daily who little know how much misery that bleak white wall divides them from. Gradually as day dawned the scene became more animated, and battalions of police marched down and surrounded the scaffold. Meanwhile a little unpretending door was gently opened; this is the "debtors' door," and leads direct through the kitchen on to the scaffold. The kitchen on these occasions is turned into a temporary mausoleum, and draped with tawdry black hangings, which conceal the pots and pans, and produce an effect supposed to be more in keeping with the solemn occasion. From our standpoint everything was visible inside the kitchen and on the scaffold; to the surging mass in the streets below this bird's-eye view was, however, denied. Presently an old and decrepit man made his appearance, and cautiously "tested" the drop; but a foolish impulse of curiosity led him to peep over the drapery, and a yell of execration saluted him. This was Calcraft, the hangman, hoary-headed and tottering and utterly past his work.

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The tolling of St. Sepulchre's about 7.30 A.M. announced the approach of the hour of execution; meanwhile a steady rain was falling, which, however, in no way decreased the ever-increasing crowd. As far as the eye could reach was a sea of human faces. Roofs, windows, church rails, and empty vans—all were pressed into the service, and tightly packed with human beings eager to catch a glimpse of a fellow-creature on the last stage of life's journey. The rain by this time had made the drop slippery, and necessitated precautions on behalf of the living if not on those appointed to die; so sand was thrown over a portion (not of the drop—that would have been superfluous), but on the side, the only portion that was not to give way. It was suggestive of the pitfalls used for trapping wild beasts—a few twigs and a handful of earth, and below a gaping chasm. Here, however, all was reversed; there was no need to deceive the chief actor by resorting to such a subterfuge: he was to expiate his crime with all the publicity a humane government could devise. The sand was for the benefit of the "ordinary," the minister of religion, who was to offer dying consolation at 8 and breakfast at 9 A.M.

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The procession now appeared, winding its way through the kitchen, and in the centre of the group walked Müller, a sickly, delicate-looking lad, securely pinioned and literally as white as marble. As he reached the platform, he looked up, and placed himself immediately under the hanging chain. At the end of this chain was a hook, which was eventually attached to the hemp round the poor wretch's neck. The concluding ceremonies did not take long, considering how feeble the aged hangman was. A white cap was first placed over his face, then his ankles were strapped together, and finally the fatal noose was put round his neck, the end of which was then attached to the hook. I fancy I can see Calcraft now, laying the "slack" of the rope that was to give the fall lightly on the doomed man's shoulder, so as to preclude the possibility of a hitch, and then stepping on tiptoe down the steps and disappearing below. The silence now was truly awful. I felt my heart in my mouth; it was the most terrific suspense I had ever realized. I felt myself involuntarily saying, "He could be saved YET, YET, YET;" and then a thud, that vibrated

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through the street, announced that Müller was launched into eternity. My eyes were literally glued to the spot. I was fascinated by the awful sight; not a detail escaped me. Calcraft meanwhile, apparently not satisfied with his handiwork, seized hold of the wretch's feet and pressed on them for some seconds with all his weight, and with a last approving look shambled back into the prison. Meanwhile the white cap was getting tighter and tighter, until it looked ready to burst; and a faint blue speck that had almost immediately appeared on the carotid artery after the drop fell gradually became more livid till it assumed the appearance of a huge black bruise. Death, I should say, must have been instantaneous, for he never stirred a muscle, and the only movement that was visible was that from the gradually stretching rope as the body kept slowly swinging round and round. The hanging of the body for an hour constituted part of the sentence, an interval that was not lost upon the multitude below. The drunken again took up their ribald songs, conspicuous amongst which was one that had done duty pretty well through the night, and ended with, "Müller, Müller, he's the man"; but the pickpockets and the highwaymen reaped the greatest benefit. It can hardly be credited that respectable old City men on their way to business, with watch-chains and scarf-pins, in clean white shirt-fronts, and with unmistakable signs of having spent the night in bed, should have had the foolhardiness to venture into such a crowd, but there they were in dozens. They had not long to wait for the reward of their temerity. Gangs of ruffians at once surrounded them; and whilst one held them by each arm, another was rifling their pockets. Watches, chains, and scarf-pins passed from hand to hand with the rapidity of an eel; meanwhile their piteous shouts of "Murder!" "Help!" "Police!" were utterly unavailing. The barriers were doing their duty too well, and the hundreds of constables within a few yards were perfectly powerless to get through the living rampart.

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From our window I saw an interesting case of mistaken identity, and I was glad to have the opportunity of saving an innocent man from arrest. The incident was referred to in the next day's papers, and was briefly this. A well-dressed old man had had his scarf-pin pulled out, and a policeman by this time being luckily near, a lad standing by was taxed with the theft. We, however, from our vantage ground had seen the whole affair, and recognized the real culprit, who was standing coolly by whilst the innocent man was being marched off. By shouting and hammering with our sticks, we eventually succeeded in attracting the notice of the constable, and pointed out the real culprit, and the pin was then and there found on him.

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Whilst these incidents were going on, 9 o'clock was gradually approaching, the hour when the body was to be cut down. A few minutes previously two prisoners had brought out the shell—a common deal one, perforated with holes. I remember remarking at the time how small it looked; and my conjecture proved correct, for it was with difficulty that the body could be squeezed in. It showed with what consummate skill and regard to economy the exact size of the body must have been calculated. With its clothes on, the corpse was too big for the shell; divested of them, however, there was doubtless ample room, not only for it, but for the layers of quicklime that enveloped it. And now Calcraft again appeared, and producing a clasp-knife, with one arm he hugged the body and with the other severed the rope. It required two slashes of the feeble old arm to complete this final ceremony, and then the head fell with a flop on the old man's breast, who, staggering under the weight, jammed it into the shell. The two prisoners then carried it into the prison, the debtors' door closed till again required to open for a similar tragedy, and the crowd meanwhile having sufficiently decreased, enabled us to go home to bed, and to dream of the horrors of the past twelve hours.

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## CHAPTER X. "NEWGATE ETIQUETTE."

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VISITS at Newgate are made under great disadvantage, and have not even the recommendation of privacy. A few of the more respectable (as regards clothes) prisoners, such as myself, were allowed to see our daily visitors in a portion of the enclosure a little removed, but still so near the regular place that it was almost impossible to hear what was said on account of the terrible roar made by the united lungs of a hundred malefactors and their demonstrative friends. Visits are only permitted between two and four o'clock, and as everybody comes about the same hour, the babel that ensues may be readily conceived. As, moreover, we are untried, and consequently innocent, people, these restrictions as to time and numbers are clearly unjust, and merit alteration. Solicitors are permitted to consult with their clients in glass boxes, where all can be seen but nothing heard. These cases are situated in the direct route through which sight-seers are conducted. An amusing incident occurred to me on one occasion. I was in deep consultation with an eminent solicitor of Gray's Inn Square, as a herd of some ten country bumpkins, male and female, were being piloted about, and I distinctly saw their conductor make a motion that evidently referred to me. I cannot, of course, say what that communication was, but it was evidently enough to raise the desire on the part of one of the females to have a closer inspection of me. With a light step, such as a sack of coals might make on a skating rink, the biped cautiously stalked me, and deliberately flattened her "tip-tilted," turn-up nose against the window. Without a moment's warning, I bounded from my chair and shouted out, "Sixpence extra for the chamber of horrors." The fair creature jumped as if shot from a catapult, and I fancy I can now see her black stockings and frowzy petticoat as she flew towards her party. Hemma Hann had been taught a lesson!

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There are certain abuses that call for immediate and rigorous suppression at Newgate, the more so as it is a place where prisoners are, as it were, in transit, and thus many things that might be made real advantages are (or were a year ago) gross injustices. I refer specially to the "privilege" of procuring your own food. Men awaiting trial are naturally ignorant of the system and its details, and I cannot do better than state what occurred to me, and the absolute injustice I was subject to; for my case is only similar to that of many others, who have not perhaps the same advantage as I have of ventilating the grievance.

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I was asked on the first day what I would like to order, and deeming it safest to avoid mistakes I gave one order to hold good daily. I ordered a pint of milk and a plate of bread and butter for breakfast; a plate of meat and a pint of ale for dinner; and for supper a pint of milk and a plate of bread and butter. Now I ask any unprejudiced reader what ought such food to have cost, supplied to a prisoner from a common coffee-house in such a district?

I have been at the trouble of enquiring at this and similar eating-houses, and find that their prices for the above articles are, for a pint of milk, 4d.; bread and butter, 3d.; a plate of meat and vegetables, 8d.; bread, 1d.; and a pint of ale, 4d.; total, 2s. 3d. But a free citizen and a caged prisoner are two different things, for which there are two different prices. For the above homely fare I was charged 3s. 6d. a day, and as my money was in the hands of the prison authorities, I had absolutely no redress. No notice was ever taken of a complaint, though I made a dozen. Often my beer did not come, but I was charged all the same; my milk was frequently forgotten, and eventually appeared an hour after in a boiled state—and yet this scandalous charge was paid daily. I ask any humane government, is not this a shame? What is the only inference that can possibly be drawn? Surely it is within the bounds of possibility that these officials, badly paid and half fed, supplement their day's food at the expense of the prisoner; if they do not, would they permit the coffee-house keeper to reap such profits? Common sense suggests there must be collusion. I am fortified in this opinion by what I've lately seen. During the past few weeks I've been round this grimy district, and seen the turnkeys running in and out from the wicket opposite into certain of these houses that I could indicate, and the honorary membership that appears to exist leaves no room for any interpretation but the one suggested. I sincerely hope this matter may not be deemed too trivial to be looked into, and that it will be the means of introducing an improvement of the system, whereby a prisoner can procure articles at fixed prices, and that this tariff is hung up in every cell. My treatment was so glaringly unjust that I cannot lose the opportunity of giving publicity to the sequel. On the eve of my departure to "Cold Bath Fields," I was asked to sign the usual paper which purported to show how my money, £1 5s. 4d., had been expended, and as a proof of my being satisfied with it. This I distinctly declined to do; and one would have supposed that in an establishment where "justice" plays so prominent a part, my refusal would at least have elicited an enquiry. On the contrary, however, pressure was actually brought to bear on me, and even the Governor lowered himself by making it a personal matter. The man, as I said before, was not a gentleman by birth, but I was hardly prepared for such violent partizanship on his part. "So I hear you decline to sign the receipt for your money. Very well; I shall retain the money, and report your conduct to the Governor of Cold Bath Fields." This was the dignified speech that greeted me next morning. In reply, I assured him that I certainly should not sign, and he might report me to whomsoever he pleased. Thus ended our squabble; and it might as well have been spared, for I found on my arrival at Cold Bath Fields that only 4s. 5½d. had been sent with me, and that consequently the eating-house man had been paid £1 0s. 10½d. by his patron the Governor on my behalf, and despite my protest. With the abolition of Newgate as a prison, except during the sessions, it is sincerely to be hoped that these crying scandals have been abolished too.

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One thing that struck me particularly was the small number of warders in comparison to the prisoners. Seven or eight, from the Governor to the lowest turnkey, comprised the entire staff, and were responsible for the safety of some two hundred prisoners. Such a number was clearly inadequate, and the risk they ran, however remote, was forcibly brought to my notice by a conversation I once overheard. Amongst others awaiting trial was a desperate-looking ruffian of low stature, with bull head and black shaggy eyebrows—a man who had undergone more than one sentence of penal servitude, and who, to judge by his appearance, was capable of any atrocity. This ruffian was pointing out one morning how easy it would be to make a dash at the warders, and then, without the possibility of opposition, simply to walk out. The plan certainly seems feasible, especially during chapel, where four or five warders are absolutely at the mercy of two hundred prisoners. One can only suppose that a moral restraint exists, and on which the authorities rely, that would prevent many from joining in such a mutiny, and who, if a choice had to be made, would prefer to join issue with the warders rather than with their unsavoury opponents. During the sessions the regular staff is augmented by five or six additional hands, for the most part feeble old men, suggestive of sandwich men out of employment. I was much amused by one of these patriarchs who was left in absolute and sole charge, and daily superintended the exercise of some fifty or sixty prisoners. I never lost an opportunity of having a chat with him, as he stood shivering in a threadbare ulster, with a dew-drop on his nose, a ragged comforter round his neck, and his poor old gums rattling in the drafty yard. I found, however, that he was not devoid of official dignity, and had a very high conception of the position and importance of "officers," as every turnkey likes to be styled. I remember saying to the poor old chap one day, "You officers must have a very difficult duty to perform, what between maintaining your dignity and doing your duty strictly." A leer, such as one might associate with a magpie looking down a marrow-bone, was all he vouchsafed in reply for a moment, and I feared he suspected I was pulling his leg; but I was eventually reassured by his replying, "Yis, there's no responsibler dooty than an officer's." "Yes," I replied, "but I've always heard that you officers

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are sad dogs;" and as I moved away I heard the old gums clatter as if pleased at the compliment, and if I had had a shilling in my pocket I should certainly have given it to the old "officer." The first day of the sessions had now arrived, and I rose with mingled feelings of anxiety and pleasure; anxiety for what the day might bring forth, and pleasure at the thought that anything was better than the uncertainty that at present involved my future, and hailing with delight the prospect of knowing the worst. I never expected, however, that my case would be tried on the first day, and was therefore considerably taken back when, about 3 P.M., my door was suddenly opened, and with a "Come along, you're wanted in the Court," a warder made his appearance. The awful reality now burst on me for the first time that I was on the point of appearing in a criminal dock to answer a charge of forgery, and uttering forged bills. I won't weary the reader by saying more than that I pleaded guilty to the uttering, but denied the forging, as I still do, and ever shall; but being informed that the two acts were considered synonymous, my plea was registered as "guilty," and I was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment with hard labour. I am now entering on a phase of my career which may be considered as the commencement proper of my narrative, and one that I expected, from the steps that led up to it, would consist of harshness and brutality, such as one reads of in stories of the Bastille and other prisons; whereas, on the contrary, I was leaving all that behind, and about to experience a kindness and consideration I can never adequately describe or be sufficiently grateful for. But a word or two is necessary before we leave Newgate to enable me to describe the Old Bailey Court House and its sombre approaches, its subterraneous passages, and dingy cells. I must also make a digression to narrate the heart-breaking story of a poor wretch which he himself told me, and which I've reason to believe is strictly true, and to which his position as a man of title—I shall refrain from giving his name—imparts a considerable degree of interest. It is a tale which demonstrates to what a contemptible state a man can bring himself by the excessive use of stimulants, and how that degradation is augmented when wedded to immorality, culminating in the inevitable shipwreck that waits on bright prospects and a long rent roll when drink and prostitution appear at the altar, only to be divorced, as in the present case, by a term of penal servitude.

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## CHAPTER XI. THE TITLED CONVICT.

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ON the morning after my arrival at Newgate it was with considerable surprise that I saw a man in convict dress, who was apparently the object of special watch and guard. My curiosity was considerably increased from the circumstance of his being the only individual out of some two hundred in this conspicuous attire; he was moreover clearly not a novice, but wore the dreadful suit with the apparent ease of a man to whom it was by no means a novelty. He looked horribly ill, and a terrible eruption that showed itself on his neck, face, and hands gave unmistakable evidence that the unhappy wretch was literally rotten; added to this, however, there was a something about him, a "*je ne sais quoi*," that marked the gentleman and asserted the blue blood, despite the convict dress, the loathsome disease, and the degrading surroundings. A fixed melancholy seemed never to desert him. When he moved, it was with eyes cast down, and nothing appeared to interest him; it was the motions of a human machine, bowed down with grief or shame, or meditating some awful vengeance. I was so struck with all this that I determined to lose no opportunity of scraping an acquaintance with the mysterious stranger. I enquired of a warder, but all he knew or pretended to know was that he was undergoing a sentence of 20 years' penal servitude, and had lately been drafted there from a convict prison; that he had only been there a few days, and would in all probability be moved elsewhere very shortly. Chance favoured my desire to make his acquaintance. It was on a Saturday afternoon, a time devoted to a very general and extra clean up, and when almost everyone is put on a job. My warder—like a brick—had put me, at my urgent request, to "dusting" the rails, a duty, I had observed, at which the convict was frequently employed. I got as near as discretion would permit, and ventured to ask him who and what he was. He looked at me at first with a mingled expression of surprise and distrust, but being apparently reassured by either my manner or my dress, began in short, jerky sentences in something of the following style: "You ask me who I am. That's a question I haven't heard for six long years. Since that time I've been an unit, 4016 of Portland, and praying night and day that death would release me." I was alarmed at his excited manner; his eyes flashed, he quivered like a maniac, and I begged him to be calm. This appeal seemed to touch some long dried-up spring; kind words evidently sounded strange to him, and a tear trickled down his seamed and hollow cheeks. The weakness, however, was but momentary, and wiping his eyes with his coarse blue handkerchief, he began in a melancholy voice the following sad story:—

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"You ask me who I am, or rather who I was. Know, then, that six years ago I was known as —." I started at the name, for it was a well-known and titled one. "At an early age my parents died, leaving me the possessor (under guardians) of £20,000 a year, an estate in England, and another in Ireland, a house in London, and an ancient title. My uncle and guardian, alas! was actuated by no affection for me, but considered that if he placed me under a good tutor, insured me a liberal education, and sent me to see the world, he was fairly earning the handsome salary allowed him by the Court of Chancery, whose ward I was. At the age of 18 I started with my tutor on a three years' tour, it having been decided that I should thus have seen everything, and made a fitting termination to the education of a man with the bright prospects I so confidently considered were in store for me. Would to God I had been born a navy; I should never then have become what

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you now see me. The eventful era in my life at length arrived. After seeing everything and going half over the world, I found myself in England again, and on the eve of being invested with the absolute control of my huge estates. I will not insult you, nor deceive myself, by concealing any of my blemishes. Know, then, I was a drunkard, a confirmed sot at 21, too weak to resist the dram bottle, and capable of every folly, every crime, when under the influence of its fatal spell. I moreover hated the society of gentlemen, and was never happy except in low company. In London, whither I came after taking possession of my estates, I did not know a soul; the few respectable friends or relatives of my father I studiously avoided. Pleasure for me was only to be attained by herding with cads and prostitutes. My position, my title, my wealth, made this an easy task, and I soon became acquainted with a number of that voracious, threadbare class. My most intimate friends were broken-down gentlemen and spendthrifts of shady reputation; fighting men and banjo men, and blood-suckers of every type, who flattered my vanity, and led me as it were, with the one hand, whilst they rifled my pockets with the other. They ate at my expense, they drank at my expense; I paid their debts in many instances, and any rascal had only to recount to me a tissue of lies for me to at once offer him consolation by the 'loan' of a cheque. 'What matters it,' thought I; 'was I not —, and had I not more money than I could possibly spend in a century?' I was passionately fond of theatres, not respectable ones where I should have had to behave decently, but low East-end and transpontine ones, where I was a very swan amongst the geese, and where my title and wealth obtained me the inestimable privilege of going behind the scenes, and throwing money about in handfuls. On these almost nightly visits I was invariably dunned and asked for aid by every designing knave; they saw I was a fool, and usually drunk, and what I mistook for homage was in reality the treatment that only a contemptible drunkard with money, such as I, ever gets. Every scene-shifter had a harrowing tale, or an imaginary subscription list, to all of whom I administered bounteous monetary consolation; and any varlet with a whole hand, and a greasy rag round it, at once received a 'fiver' as a mark of sympathy for his painful accident. In short, I was a fool, looked on as only fit to be fleeced, and simply tolerated for the sake of my money. Would to God I had confined myself to these contemptible but otherwise harmless follies!

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"It was on a dull foggy night—a night I can never forget—that some half-dozen of my boon companions had been dining with me at a celebrated restaurant. The *débris* of the dessert had not been removed, and they were sipping their coffee whilst I was settling the bill, when a suggestion was made that we should go to the 'Sussex.' The 'Sussex' was a very disreputable theatre, situated somewhere over the water, and supported entirely by the lowest classes and a few golden calves, such as myself, who were serving their apprenticeship, and who were permitted the inestimable privilege of going behind the scenes—entering the green-room, or indeed any room, and paying ten shillings a bottle for as much fluid of an effervescent nature in champagne bottles as anybody and everybody chose to call for. On these occasions we were ushered into the sacred precincts, with a certain amount of implied caution similar to and about as necessary as that assumed by a ragamuffin in the streets when asking you to buy a spurious edition of the *Fruits of Philosophy*. This, however, in my ignorance, only enhanced the pleasure. We were, as I believed, participating in some illegal transaction, permitted only to the most fortunate. As a fact, we were violating no law; and if the Lord Chamberlain did not object, Scotland Yard certainly didn't. Etiquette on these occasions demanded that we should be formally introduced to the various 'ladies' that frequented the green-room—a custom I considered highly commendable, for in my ignorance I believed that not the slightest difference existed between the highest exponent of tragedy and the frowsiest ballet-girl in worsted tights and spangles.

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"On this particular night, as I was watching the transformation scene being 'set,' and listening to the sallies of the tawdry 'fairies' that crowded the wings, my attention was attracted by a tall woman, who was gnawing a bone with a gusto that conveyed to me the impression she hadn't eaten for a month. I felt for the poor creature, and went and stood near her. I thought at the time (for I was very drunk) that she was the most beautiful being I had ever seen; her pink-and-white complexion (it was in reality dabs of paint) appeared to me to be comparable only to a beautiful shell. I was spellbound by the sight, and instantaneously and hopelessly in love. It would have been a mercy—may God forgive me!—if that bone had choked her. That woman eventually became 'her ladyship.' But I'm anticipating."

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The poor fellow here became so affected that I begged him to pause; it was, however, useless.

"The sight of her in a measure sobered me, and I asked her who and what she was. She told me a harrowing tale of how she was the eldest of seven children; that her mother was bed-ridden and her father blind; and how she toiled at a sewing-machine all day and at the theatre all night, and then only earned a miserable pittance, barely sufficient to keep a roof over their heads. The recital affected me considerably (drunken people are easily moved to tears), as she went on to tell me how she had been in the theatre since 11 that morning (for it was the pantomime season, and there had been a morning performance), and how she had not tasted food until a carpenter had kindly given her the remains of his supper. I lost no time in procuring a bottle of champagne, and felt happier than I had for years as she placed a tumblerful to her parched lips and drank it off at a gulp. A few moments later I saw 'little Rosie' (for so she told me her blind parent loved to call her) being lashed to an 'iron,' and posing as an angel for the great transformation scene in course of preparation. I subsequently discovered—though, alas! too late—that 'little Rosie' was nightly to be seen outside the 'Criterion' and in front of the 'Raleigh,' and was known as 'big Rose.' But my mind has again got in advance of my story. Oh, dear! oh, dear! where am I?"

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At this stage I really got alarmed, for his excitement was evidently increasing. Happily, however, a passing official necessitated silence, and he eventually resumed with comparative composure.

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"I will not weary you with unnecessary details; suffice it to say that within a month we were married, and the vows that were made 'till death should us part' were eventually broken by the living death that consigned me to penal servitude. After our marriage 'little Rosie's' nature gradually began to change; and the frankness and *naïveté* that had so captivated me gradually gave way to habits and sentiments that astonished and alarmed me. I verily believe that, had I found in her the woman I hoped and believed her to be, I should truly have reformed, and given up that vile curse, drink. Instead of that, however, I found at my elbow one who was always ready to encourage me in the vice. Port was her favourite tippie, and though my own state seldom permitted me to judge of her consumption, still in my lucid intervals of sobriety I was astonished at the amount she consumed. Gradually we began to turn night into day, and nights of debauch regularly followed the few hours of daylight we seldom or ever saw. Even yet I had not abandoned all hope of reform. My conscience smote me when I was sober enough to heed it, and in hopes of avoiding temptation I hurried with my wife to Ireland; but even here she could not rest quiet. The cloven foot persisted in showing itself, and we were tabooed by the whole county. In this I found further cause for mortification—I who might have been looked up to and sought after. I tried to spare my wife's feelings by concealing the real cause of our existence being ignored; but, fool that I was, I gave way to her importunings, and actually called on those who had avoided us. The well-merited reward of my temerity was not long in coming. Some of the county families returned our cards by post, whilst others sent them back by a servant; and at a subscription ball that took place not long after we received the cut dead. This filled up the cup of my humiliation, and I rushed back to London. I had realised the fact that virtue won't herd with vice.

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"A cousin about this time made his appearance, and gradually became a daily visitor; and had my muddled faculties been more capable of forming an opinion, I might have been puzzled how a well-dressed and apparently gentlemanly man could be the nephew of either the blind father or the bed-ridden mother. Gradually, however, my suspicions were aroused, and I employed a detective to watch them both. He fulfilled his duty, alas! too well, and I received incontestable proof that my wife was a —, and that the 'cousin' was a man with whom she had lived for years. A sickly child, too, that frequently came to the house, and whom she often told me, with tears in her eyes, was her 'dead sister's,' I had reason to suspect was a much nearer relative. But my feelings outstride my discretion. I'm again going too fast, and surely you've heard enough?"

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I begged him to continue, for I was deeply interested in his tale.

"My wife now began to display reckless extravagance; nothing was good enough for her; the handsome settlement I had made on her failed to meet a fraction of her expenses, and she became so degraded as to borrow money of my very servants. Love, they say, is blind, and in my case, I fear, was frequently blind drunk. On these occasions I would agree to anything, and gradually signed away first one thing, and then another, till I found myself divested of house, estates, everything, and a pensioner on my wife's bounty. It may seem incredible that anything should be capable of bringing the blush of shame to such as I—I who for six long years have worn this dreadful dress—but, believe me, my cheeks tingle even now when I think of it all. I was at length compelled to resort to the pawnbroker's, and watch, chain, ring, everything, found their way to an establishment in — Road. My credit, once good, was entirely gone; tradesmen to whom I owed money began to dun me; others refused me the smallest credit; servants, washerwomen, butchers, and bakers all were creditors; writs and County Court summonses were of daily occurrence; and the family mansion that my ancestors had never disgraced was in the hands of the bailiffs. How I cried out in my anguish will never be known. Relations I had none to whom I could apply for sympathy or advice. My only friend was 'drink,' and in my misery I turned to it with redoubled energy. I have not much more to tell; the climax which brought me here was very near at hand. One afternoon I had returned to our lodgings (we were then in apartments at 28, — Place) rather sooner than expected from a fruitless endeavour to borrow a few pounds. I had stopped at every public-house, and gulped down a dram of cheap spirits, in hopes of lightening my sorrow; I was, I believe, almost mad with misery and drink. As I entered the room the first thing that met my gaze was the hated 'Cousin.' To seize a loaded pistol that always hung over the mantel-piece was the work of a second, and, without aim, without deliberation, I fired. The report and my wife's screams alarmed a policeman who happened to be passing by; he entered and found her swooning on the ground, but happily uninjured. Thank God! I'm free of that crime—and the tell-tale bullet lodged in the wall. Concealment was hopeless. I was there and then arrested, and eventually sentenced, on the evidence of my wife and her paramour, to 'twenty years' penal servitude."

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His excited state alarmed me. I feared we should be observed, but it was hopeless to attempt to check him as, with eyes starting, and the tears flowing fast, he added, pointing to his seamed and blotchy face: "The worst has yet to be told; look at these scars that I shall carry with me to the grave. Can you suspect what they are? My —."

"Hush!" I said, "they have noticed us."

I never saw him again, but heard, months after, that the unhappy man had died, and that the bright expectations accruing from youth, birth, and fortune, that had been formed six short years ago, lie buried in a nameless convict's grave.

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Not long ago I walked round to the pawn shop in — Road, with the morbid desire of testing the

truth of some of his assertions, and found that the watch, chain, and ring were still there. I informed the worthy pawnbroker of the real name and sad fate of his former customer, and was almost tempted to purchase the cat's-eye as a souvenir of my quasi-friend; but more prudent counsels prevailed, and I relegated them to the auction-room, to go forth with their crests and monograms, a sad memento of fallen greatness.

## CHAPTER XII. THE CENTRAL CRIMINAL COURT.

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AFTER my sudden summons to attend the Court I found myself in the yard below, where, in company with some twenty others, I was placed in rotation according to a list the Governor and chief warder were "checking." This formula being completed, we proceeded in single file, preceded by an "officer" and followed by a patriarch, along the subterraneous passages that connect the prison with the Old Bailey Court-house. These passages are the last remnants of the old prison, and demonstrate the change that has taken place in the accepted notions of insuring the safety of prisoners. Every few yards a massive iron door some inches thick, with huge bolts and a ponderous key, bars the passage. Having passed through all these, we came to a halt in a dark recess, partially lighted by gas, on each side of which were arched cells, suggestive of those of the Adelphi. Into each of these five or six of us were conducted, for by the prison system prisoners before trial may be herded together; after conviction, however, all that ceases, and one is "supposed" henceforth to be isolated. After a delay of some twenty minutes, and during which I was initiated into the style of society I might expect for the future, my name was called and I was conducted up a wooden stair. The hum of voices—for I could see nothing—indicated to me that I was in the vicinity of the Court and on the stair leading into the dock—one of those mysterious boxes I had often seen from the opposite side, where criminals popped up and popped down so suddenly and so mysteriously.

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I had seen many murderers sentenced to death from that very dock, and was often puzzled at the geography of the place; all this, however, was now made perfectly clear. It was with mingled feelings of astonishment and bewilderment that I found myself, suddenly and without warning, the observed of all observers. The crowded Court, the forest of well-known faces—vindictive prosecutors, reluctant witnesses, quasi-friends come to gloat over my misfortune, and one or two real sympathisers—all appeared glued together to my bewildered gaze. Beyond, and seated against the wall, were innumerable figures robed in flowing scarlet gowns, and presenting to my senses so ghastly and weird a picture that I can compare it to nothing but that impressive trial scene in "The Bells," to which Mr. Irving imparts such terrible reality. It only required the mesmerist to complete the resemblance; and he must have been there, although invisible, for I was mesmerized, or at least completely dazed. By degrees, however, I recovered my senses, and embracing the whole scene, summed up the vanity of human sympathy and the value to be attached to friendship, as it is called. Reader, whoever you are, take the word of a man who has been rich and surrounded by every luxury. Friends will cluster round you in your prosperity as they did round me, and when they have eaten you out of house and home, and robbed you by fair means or foul, by card playing and racing, you must not be surprised if you discover that the most vindictive and uncompromising are those you least expected. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it—neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me; but it was a man, mine equal, my guide, and my acquaintance—yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread—hath lifted up his heel against me."

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The ordeal at length had been gone through, and I was on my return journey to the prison as a "convicted prisoner." A prisoner after sentence consists of only two classes, the "convict" and the "convicted prisoner," and it is marvellous how soon the difference shows itself. The "convicted prisoner" finds absolutely no change beyond being deprived of the questionable privilege of procuring his own food at an exorbitant rate. With the "convict," however, things are very different. Immediately after sentence he is stripped of all his clothes, his hair and beard are cropped as close as scissors can do it, and he is metamorphosized by the assumption of the coarse brown and black striped convict dress. The change is so marvellous that it is difficult at first to recognize a man. One poor fellow I saw, a gentlemanly-looking man from the Post-office, that I frequently spoke to, was so changed when I saw him next morning in Chapel that I could not for the moment recognize the poor wretch who kept grinning at me with an air of levity as assumed as it was painful. I am not ashamed to admit that I thanked Providence I had escaped that fearful doom. It is not generally known that two years' imprisonment is the limit of a sentence of hard labour, after which the next higher punishment involves five years' penal servitude. There is a vast deal of ignorance displayed on this subject, even by those who might be supposed to know better. It is generally believed that imprisonment with hard labour is a severer punishment than penal servitude. No greater fallacy ever existed. I base my assertion, not so much on personal experience (for I was exceptionally fortunate), as on what I saw of the treatment of others; and I confidently assert—and my opinion would be corroborated by every respectable prisoner (if such an anomaly can exist)—that two years' "hard labour" is an infinitely lighter punishment than even two years of penal servitude would be; and I can only attribute the general acceptance of this error to the fact that convicts get a little more food than convicted

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prisoners, and prisoners as a rule will do anything for “grub.”

I have now brought my experiences of Newgate to a close, and shall briefly describe our departure to our final and respective destinations. An unusual bustle one morning indicated that something out of the ordinary was about to happen, and though we received no actual warning, it was generally buzzed about that we were to make a start after breakfast. At breakfast-time the warder told me to put my things together, and half an hour later found me and sixteen others marshalled in the corridor, where, being carefully compared with our respective descriptions, we were formally handed over to a detachment of warders from Coldbath Fields. Other parties were being simultaneously paraded for Holloway and Pentonville, the latter all in convict dress and as pitiable a looking set as can well be conceived. I discovered, both now and subsequently, that a human being is invariably referred to as if he were a parcel. Thus, on arrival, one is said to be “received,” and one’s departure is described as being “sent out.” This is not intended in an offensive sense, but may be taken rather as a figure of speech. In the adjoining yard were half a dozen vans—indeed, I had never before seen such a formidable array, except, perhaps, a meet of the four-in-hand club on a rainy day—and into one of these I was politely conducted, with a degree of precaution as unnecessary as it was absurd.

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No reader can accuse me of rounding the points of this ungarnished story, or endeavouring to conceal any incident, however unpleasant. As, however, my subsequent experiences may discover a treatment so kind and exceptional as to appear almost incredible, I must only ask the reader to credit me with the veracity that my previous frankness entitles me to expect. My anxiety on this point is considerably enhanced by the contradiction it will bear to other narratives I have read, and which, purporting to describe prison life, invariably represent it as a hot-bed of cruelty, where prisoners are starved and otherwise ill-treated, all of which I emphatically deny, and cause me to doubt whether one single specimen of these so-called personal narratives is anything else but an “idle tale,” written with a view of enlisting sympathy, and possibly turning an honest penny. If these writers and these prisoners had seen as much as I have (from outside) of prisons on the Continent, in Morocco, and in China, they would think themselves very fortunate in their present quarters. I—who have seen prisoners starving in prisons in Morocco, and absolutely “unfed,” except by the charity of visitors, who usually scramble a few shillings’ worth of bread amongst them; and who, for a dollar to the jailor, have seen a Chinaman at Shanghai brought out, made to kneel down and have his head sliced off like a water-melon—have no patience with these well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed rascals. I would send all these discontented burglars and their “converted” biographers to China or Morocco, and omit to supply them with return tickets. I have lately read a book connected with penal servitude, by an anonymous writer, in which this innocent lamb is whining throughout of his hardship in being compelled to herd with criminals; and it says a great deal for his imitative capacity that he should so naturally and so thoroughly have adopted the almost universal “injured innocence” tactics of the habitual criminal. One great nuisance at all prisons is the almost universal habit that prisoners have of protesting their innocence; they protest it so often to everybody on every possible occasion, that they eventually begin to believe that they really are innocent. I found these guileless creatures great bores; indeed I am (I am convinced) well within the mark when I assert that there were only about three-and-twenty guilty persons besides myself amongst the fifteen hundred prisoners in Coldbath Fields. This compulsory herding with innocent burglars is a great trial, and one that never enters into the calculation of a judge.

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A short drive at a good pace on this early December morning brought us to the gates of Coldbath Fields Prison; and as I stepped out, I could not help recalling Dante’s famous line—

“All hope abandon ye who enter here.”

It only proves how apt one is to form erroneous ideas from first impressions. I was never more mistaken in my life.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### “CORPULENCY.”

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From my birth up to within the past twelve months I have had the misfortune to be afflicted with one of the most dreadful diseases that flesh is heir to. It is one that entails suffering both to body and mind, and from which a vast proportion of humanity suffers in a more or less aggravated form. It is a slow and insidious disease that never decreases of its own accord, but on the contrary develops itself with one’s increasing years as surely as the most virulent cancer. It has this advantage, however, over this latter dreadful complaint—that it invariably yields to treatment conscientiously applied; but it has also this disadvantage, that, whereas other afflictions invariably enlist the sympathy of our fellow-creatures, this one never fails to be jeered and hooted at and turned into ridicule by the coarse and vulgar of our species. This complaint, surprising as it may appear, is held in contempt by most of the faculty, and I doubt whether it has ever received baptism in the English or any other pharmacopoeia. I will therefore without further preamble state, for the benefit of afflicted humanity, that it is called “obesity.” In the course of my remarks I may be led into the use of what may appear strong expressions; and if I should unwittingly offend the susceptibilities of any fat reader, he or she will, I trust, forgive it, as

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coming from one who has, as it were, gone through the mill, and been subjected to the like ridicule and the like temptations as themselves.

For thirty-eight years I've been a martyr to obesity. At my birth, as I am credibly informed, I was enormous—a freak of nature that was clearly intended for twins. As I developed into boyhood I still maintained the same pronounced pattern; and when I entered the Army as an ensign, it was said, with a certain amount of truth, that I was eighteen years of age and 18 stone in weight. I am particular in giving these otherwise uninteresting details, for I am aware from experience how fat people catch at every straw to evade a "regimen," and invariably say as I did, "Nothing will make me thin," "I've tried everything," "It's natural in our family," "My father weighed nineteen stone," &c., &c. I say to these people, "This is rubbish. I don't care if your father weighed forty and your grandmother fifty stone; I'll GUARANTEE to REDUCE you perceptibly and with PERFECT SAFETY if you'll guarantee to follow my instructions."

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For the past fifteen years I've tried every remedy, with, however, the invariable result—that they did me no good, or at least so little that I came to the conclusion that the result did not repay the inconvenience. It must here be understood that when I refer to "remedies," I do not speak of some that aspire to that title, which, if they don't kill, don't certainly cure; nor of others which will assuredly first cure and then as certainly kill—though I confess to have given even these a trial, and swallowed ingredients that don't come well out of analysis. I would warn all zealous fat people to be careful of these concoctions, and at least consult a physician before saturating their systems with poisons. I do not even refer to other "remedies," admittedly and which I have found safe, though before concluding my hints I shall have a word to say about them, and give my opinion of their respective titles to merit, on the principle that "a wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse." In support of my claim to credence I may state that my appearance was known to almost everybody, many of whom have since seen me as I now am; and though I cannot produce testimonials from a corpulent clergyman in Australia who weighed 40 stone and now only 14, and never felt better in his life, nor from the fat Countess del Quackador, of Buenos Ayres, who attributes her recovery to the sole use of —, still I can produce myself, and seeing is usually admitted to be half way to believing. My theory is based on that of that excellent man and apostle of corpulency, the late Mr. Banting—a theory which, as propounded by him, was in a crude state, but, like all great discoveries, is capable of improvement based on experience. In short, I agree with him as a whole, but differ on many essential points. I felt, whilst practising his treatment, that something was wanting, and my experience has since discovered what that something is. Others like myself may have found the Banting theory deficient beyond a certain point. I would ask these to give mine a fair trial for three months.

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Anyone who has waded through my narrative will observe that the dietary I subsisted on for some months of my life was in itself incapable of reducing a man; and it was thanks to the liberal margin I had to work upon, and the facilities I enjoyed for not only weighing myself, but also my food, that I attribute in a great measure the perfecting of my theory, and the reliance that may be placed on it. Banting lays down as a principle that "quantity may fairly be left to the natural appetite, provided the quality is rigidly adhered to." In this I disagree with him, but on the contrary confidently assert that until the subject is reduced to its proper size, it is absolutely imperative to limit the quantity as well as the quality. The quantity, however, is a liberal one, both as regards solid and fluid. At the same time it must be remembered that great ignorance exists as to the weight of the commonest articles of dietary, and to form an estimate of their weight by their appearance can only be attained by experience. One often hears of persons that "don't eat more than a bird," and stout people are invariably accredited with being small eaters. It would astonish these persons to find that they consume in blissful ignorance three or four pounds a day. I would recommend every corpulent person to purchase a set of cheap scales capable of weighing accurately one, two, four, and eight ounces (an ounce is a word that conveys a diminutive impression, yet eight of them constitute half a pound); these can be procured at any ironmonger's at a cost of two or three shillings. I would also suggest a half-pint measure; this involves an outlay of about twopence. Without these two articles no corpulent person's house can be considered properly furnished. Before commencing the experiment it is indispensable to be accurately weighed, taking care to weigh *all* you have on (separately and at another time), so that your exact weight can be arrived at, whether attired in summer or winter clothing. By degrees this weekly weighing becomes an amusement, and one that increases as your weight decreases.

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The following table may be accepted as fairly accurate, and shows what the respective natural weights of persons ought to be. I do not lay down a hard and fast rule, that in no case ought it to be exceeded. On the contrary, my theory, based on personal experience, convinces me that every person has his own peculiar weight and dimensions as intended by Nature, and when he has found his "bearings"—which he will have no difficulty in doing, as I shall explain hereafter, by unmistakable symptoms—any further reduction is attended with difficulty, and is, indeed, unnecessary. Taken, however, as something to work upon, the following scale, obtained from a leading insurance company, may be studied with advantage; and when the corpulent reader has arrived within half a stone of the specified weight—a generous concession surely—he may then, but not till then, begin to take occasional liberties, both as regards quantity and quality. I am offering these remarks to those only who conscientiously intend to give my theory a fair trial. To those lukewarm disciples who would like to be thin, without possessing the self-denial necessary for this most simple remedy, I cannot do better than apply the views I once heard expressed by a piper to a cockney officer in a Highland regiment who asked him to play the "Mabel" valse—that "it would only be making a fool of the tune and a fool of the pipes."

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Average weight for a person		High	
Stones	Pounds	Feet	Inches
8	2 or 3	5	0
8	8 - 9	5	1
9	1 - 2	5	2
9	8 - 9	5	3
9	11 - 12	5	4
10	3 - 4	5	5
10	6 - 7	5	6
10	9 - 10	5	7
11	2 - 3	5	8
11	9 - 10	5	9
12	4 - 5	5	10
12	10 - 12	5	11
13	0	6	0

When the reader has attained to within half a stone of these figures, he will have the game in his own hands, and can regulate his system with as much accuracy as a clock. On November 25th, 1881, I weighed the enormous weight of 19 stone 13 lbs. On October 1st, 1882, I weighed 12 stone 4 lbs., and with a loss of 18 inches in girth—*i.e.*, a reduction of 7 stone 9 lbs.; and as this can be verified, my opinion is at least worthy of attention. I consider it absolutely necessary that one should at first limit one's self to 2 pounds solid and 3 pints fluid daily; and I cannot do better than give the dietary I have pursued for the past five or six months in the south of France:—

*At 6 A.M.*—I take half-a-pint of black coffee and one ounce of coarse *brown* bread or biscuit.

*At 9 A.M.*—I breakfast off four ounces of lean meat, three ounces of brown bread or biscuit, and half-a-pint of black coffee.

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*At 2 P.M.*—I have six ounces lean meat, three ounces brown bread or biscuit, six ounces green vegetables, and half-a-pint of any fluid except ale, effervescing wines, or aerated waters.

*After Dinner*—I take half-a-pint of coffee.

*At 6 P.M.*—I take half-a-pint of coffee.

*At Supper*—I have two ounces brown bread or biscuit, and a couple of glasses of sherry or claret.

Independently of this I eat fruit *ad lib*. I find as a broad rule that all vegetables that grow above ground, such as cauliflower, artichokes, sprouts, &c. (except peas and rice), are conducive to health; whereas all that grow underground, such as potatoes, carrots, beet-root, &c., are fat persons' poison. It is immaterial what meat one eats, whether fish, flesh—except pork—or fowl, but it is necessary to avoid the fat. Stout persons will find, as I did, an inclination to smuggle in a little, but they must flee from the temptation. A severe trial at first is confining one's self to this quantity and quality, whilst others are indulging to a greater extent at the same table; but the feeling soon wears off, and must be looked on as the penalty attached to Pharaoh's fat kine. Fat people never consider that if they were suffering from a cancer they would not hesitate to submit to amputation—and amputation is not unattended with pain—to prolong life; and yet they waver regarding the treatment of corpulency—an equally certain enemy to life—with a painless remedy! Do they invariably also, in other paths of life, return good for evil, and heap coals of fire on an enemy's head? And yet here is a hideous, ungainly, deadly foe pampered and fattened at the cost of life, comfort, and appearance. And then the ridicule! I ask you, amiable fat reader, is that agreeable? I would, in fact, make obesity penal, as calling for special legislation, whereby the police would be justified in arresting oleaginous pedestrians, clapping them into the scales at the nearest police-station, and if they exceeded a certain number of feet in circumference, or weight, at once procure their summary imprisonment, without the option of a fine. The streets would thus be cleared of these fleshy obstructions; besides which, if the law recognises attempted suicide as a crime in one way, why not in another? The dietary I have suggested is conducive to constipation, a result that brown bread remedies considerably, if not entirely removes. There are brown breads and brown breads, however, and after trying a good many, I have come to the conclusion that the "whole meal bread" made by Messrs. Hill and Son, of 60, Bishopsgate Street Within, and 3, Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, is admirably adapted to the requirements of the corpulent. It keeps the bowels open, is delicious in flavour, and entirely free from the alum that finds its way into many other kinds. Some six months ago I had an interview with a member of this firm, and explained my views of the advantages that would attend a biscuit made of the same meal. I have lately tasted some made by them, that are apparently specially adapted for the consumption of the corpulent; and as they have agents in every part of the kingdom, the regular supply is within the reach of all. I strongly commend these to all my readers. There is one more item to which I attach great importance, namely, the taking at bed-time of one teaspoonful of liquorice-powder (German Pharmacopoeia) in half a tumbler of water.

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This quantity may be gradually increased, as circumstances seem to require; and as a good deal depends on the purity and freshness of this drug, the advisability of going to a good chemist cannot be too strongly urged. I have often been told that smoking is injurious to the corpulent, but this I consider sheer nonsense. I smoke from morning to night, and, on the contrary, believe it makes up for the larger amount of food one had previously been in the habit of consuming. In America, where I spent many happy years, I was never without "a smoke," a habit I still continue, though with the disadvantage of having to substitute British for the fragrant Oronoko and Perique tobaccos. This latter is, in my estimation, whether used as cigar, cigarette, or in a pipe, the finest tobacco in the world. I have discovered, beyond doubt, that a person afflicted with obesity is affected by the smallest transgression of the strict *regimen*. I have for experiment taken one lump of sugar in my coffee at meals, and found that this single innovation has produced an increase of a pound in my weight in a week; indeed, a person disposed to this affliction is as sensitive as an aneroid. It was in May last that I first determined to reap at least one benefit from my late incarceration, and, by a careful regard to quantity and quality, to test effects that my position and the time at my disposal offered great facilities for, and thus reduce corpulency to a science, and its reduction to a certainty. A reference to other portions of this narrative will put it beyond a doubt that the unlimited amount of food at my disposal made this an easy task. I will not here go into these particulars, as a detailed account necessary for the unbroken interest in my narrative will be found elsewhere, but will confine myself to giving a table of the reduction I made in myself by my own free-will and determination.

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	I weighed	
	stone	pounds
1881.		
November 25th	19	13
December 7th	19	9
„ 19th	18	12
1882.		
January 10th	18	1
„ 31st	17	12
March 20th	16	10
May 18th	16	4
June 6th	15	12
„ 20th to July 2nd	15	8
July 15th	15	4
„ 29th	14	10
September 2nd	13	2
„ 9th	12	10
„ 23rd	12	6
October 1st	12	4

Making a total loss of 107 lbs. (7 stone 9 lbs.) in 318 days. This loss was not obtained without great determination and self denial, but was it not worth it? If any corpulent reader could see my photograph of November, 1881, and November, 1882, he would, I think, admit it was, and receive a stimulus to persevere as I did. A reference to the above table will show no diminution between June 20th and July 2nd. I attribute this to my having found what I call my "bearings," for though continuing in the same course, I could not get away from 15 stone 8 lbs. I persisted, however, and eventually succeeded; and the next date shows a steady decline. I would recommend no experimentalist to transgress this bound, and when they find that after a fortnight's continuance of the strict system they have obtained no perceptible diminution of weight they should stop; they have found their "bearings," and any further perseverance is attended with unnecessary inconvenience. The time, however, has then come for most careful watch and guard, and the slightest liberty is accompanied by a proportionate increase. Yielding to the kindly meant advice of friends, I some months ago took new milk and other fattening luxuries, with the result of increasing a stone in six weeks. I had, however, the remedy in my own hands, and can now play fast and loose with an amusing degree of certainty. I can, without an effort, reduce or increase my weight three or four pounds in a week, and having attained the comfortable weight of 13 stone 10 lbs, I am determined never again to turn the scale beyond 14 stone. I allow this margin as the legitimate perquisite of advancing years.

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In conclusion, I guarantee reduction with perfect safety to all who will honestly try the following *regimen* in its integrity for three months:—

*Breakfast*—Eight ounces coarse brown bread (yesterday's baking); four ounces lean meat; one pint coffee or other fluid.

*Dinner*.—Four and a-half ounces brown bread; six ounces any lean meat (or, if preferred as an occasional substitute, half-pint of soup—ten ounces); six ounces green vegetables; one pint fluid.

*Tea.*—One and a-half ounces brown bread; half a pint of coffee.

*Supper.*—One or two glasses of wine, or a glass of spirit and water (except rum); and two ounces biscuit.

*Total.*—Two pounds solid and three pints fluid.

*Bed-time.*—One teaspoonful liquorice powder (German pharmacopoeia) in half a tumbler of water.

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I have parcelled the above out into meals to meet the ordinary taste, though it is quite immaterial how or when the quantity is taken. It is, moreover, a matter of perfect indifference whether tea (no sugar or milk), claret, or, in fact, any other fluid (except ale and aërated or effervescing drinks), is substituted for coffee.

The principal points on which I differ from the so-called "Banting" system are:—

(a) The limiting of the quantity till a proper reduction has taken place.

(b) The occasional substituting (if desired) of soup for meat, which I have found attended with no inconvenience.

(c) The substitution of brown bread or brown biscuit for toast or rusk—thereby obviating constipation.

(d) The taking of liquorice powder at bed-time in lieu of the alkaline on rising.

To the uninitiated the above may appear trifles; their advantage can only be estimated by those who have tried both systems.

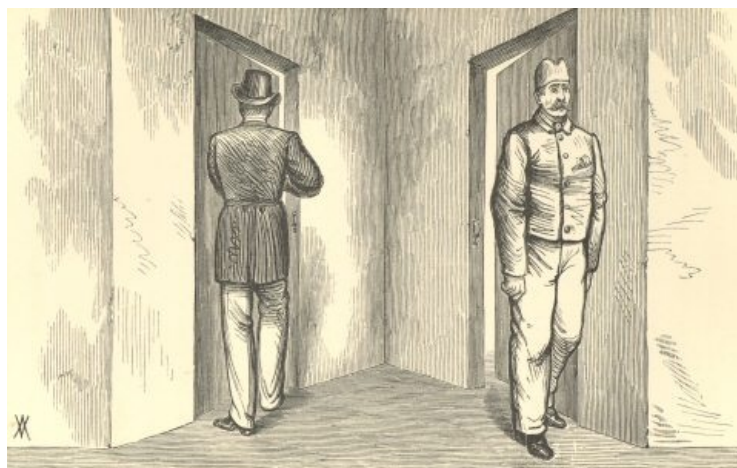
## CHAPTER XIV. COLDBATH FIELDS.

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As the key turned in the ponderous door, and I found myself, with sixteen others, standing on a huge mat in a dismal corridor, I realised that I had arrived "home," or at what I might consider as such, for—as I imagined—the next eighteen months. I had already passed one week in Newgate, and really thought, in the sanguineness of my heart, that I had made a considerable hole in my sentence, and that the remaining seventy-seven weeks would soon slip by. My first intimation that the place was inhabited, except by mutes, was hearing a metallic voice saying, *pro bono publico*, "You'll find that talking is not permitted here—you mustn't talk." By peering into the gloom I discovered that the voice belonged to a bald head, and the bald head to a venerable head warder. The poor old man was super-annuated shortly after, and evidently meant to show the recruits he was not to be trifled with, and that there was life in the old dog yet. We were next taken through endless corridors to the "Reception Room." Can any name be more suggestive of satire, except perhaps "Mount Pleasant," the hill so called on which the prison stands, bounded at each corner by a public-house, and a "pop-shop" here and there sandwiched in between! The reception we received in the Reception Room was far from a cordial one; it was, indeed, as cold as the weather outside. The Reception Room is octagon shape, with benches arranged over the entire floor; on these we were directed to sit down, about a yard apart. In front was a large desk and a high stool, on which a turnkey was perched, whose sole duty was to prevent the least intercourse between the prisoners; in fact, the entire room and its fittings conveyed the impression of being connected with a charity school for mutes. The Reception Room is the first and last place a prisoner passes through; it is here that, on his arrival, he is transformed into the Queen's livery, and again on his departure reverts to citizen's clothing—it is, in fact, the filter through which the dregs of London have to pass before becoming sufficiently purified to be again permitted to mingle with the pure stream outside. The silence of the grave is its normal condition, where the novice receives a foretaste of the "silent system."

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We must have sat thus silently for at least an hour, when a door from outside was unlocked, and a warder, accompanied by two prisoners carrying sacks, made their appearance. The contents of these, being thrown on the floor, were discovered to be boots, not new ones, or even pairs, but very old and dirty, mended and patched with lumps of leather on the soles, on the heels, and, in fact, anywhere. We were now invited to “fit” ourselves, and a scramble ensued amongst a section of the prisoners. I selected a nondescript pair, tied by a cord, as unsuited a couple as ever were united, the right foot of which would have fitted an elephant, and the left have been tight for a cork leg. With this unsavoury acquisition on my lap I resumed my seat. It is the custom, as I before hinted, to show one the worst of everything at first, and the rule that applied to the cells was clearly in force regarding the boots. I found, however, that after the general “fit,” and when a comparative lull ensued, that some of the more fortunate ones had better ones supplied, and I shortly after received a new pair in exchange for my “fit.” The next thing that made its appearance was a basket full of caps and stocks. Here I was less fortunate, and the size of my head precluded the possibility of a fit. The basket was followed by a bundle of wooden labels, on each of which our various names were inscribed; with these in our hands, we were told to “Come along.” My label considerably puzzled me. We now found ourselves in the corridor devoted to baths, where each man received a bundle of clothing. The object of the label now manifested itself; it was to attach to our clothes—not likely to be wanted for some time. The bundles consisted of a pair of blue worsted socks, a blue striped shirt, a blue pocket-handkerchief the thickness of a tile, a towel as coarse as a nutmeg-grater, and a suit of clothes. The clothes, when new, are really very good, and by no means objectionable. There is nothing of that conspicuous, degrading appearance about them that distinguishes the convict dress. On the contrary, the trousers and vest are well cut, and made of good warm mole-skin; the jacket is a capital material, and were it not for painful associations, and the possibility of unpleasant attentions from zealous policemen, I would gladly have a suit of the jacket material. The otherwise agreeable effect is somewhat marred by the broad-arrow Government mark, which appears to be applied regardless of all symmetry and indeed of all expense. No general rule apparently exists as to the marking of this cloth, which one must conclude is left entirely to the discretion and good taste of the individual armed with the paint-pot. This want of uniformity thus lends an agreeable variety to the different appearances of individuals; for my part, I always felt that I resembled the “Seven of Spades.” The Baths are, as I found them at Newgate, in themselves excellent, and if one could forget one’s probable predecessor, the enjoyment would be considerably enhanced. They were, I daresay, perfectly clean, though I always fancied I detected a Seven-Dials mouse-trap flavour in the atmosphere, and in the water. The bath, as an institution, admirably fulfils its twofold function; it insures a thorough wash, and removes the last trace of one’s former self. Entering the apartment with the bundle under my arm, I proceeded to divest myself of my clothing. I had not, however, been many seconds submerged before an eye was applied to the peephole, followed by the entrance of a turnkey, and all my clothing was carefully removed. The process of re-dressing was not an easy one; nothing came within a foot of my size except the socks; the overalls declined to do anything like meeting, and a piece of twine was pressed into the service. The waistcoat was another trial, necessitating the turnkey calling for the “corpulent waistcoat.” Trussed up in this fashion, I patiently awaited the “corpulent” waistcoat, a marvel of tailoring. The chest measurement could not have exceeded thirty-six; whilst the waist (?) must have been one hundred. From the “corpulent” one only reaching half-way down my chest, I concluded that its original owner must have been about five-foot-nothing. But the warder very good-naturedly said “he’d make it all right,” and not long after I was measured, and within twenty-four hours possessed a brand-new suit. My enormous size also necessitated special shirts; a couple were made in an incredibly short space of time, and all through my career I experienced the benefit of wearing linen that had never been contaminated by contact with “baser metal.” The warder to whom I was indebted for these delicate attentions was one of the best in the prison, and though I never came much in contact with him, I understood he was a great favourite. He was connected with the stores, and could get more done in an hour than one of the blustering kind in a week. Before leaving the baths, I would wish to draw attention to a custom that calls for immediate alteration. The system at present in vogue is for all prisoners to have a bath immediately on arrival, *after* which they undergo medical examination. At these examinations, as is well known, many creatures are found, not only to be alive with vermin, but suffering from itch. With these facts, that are not to be gainsaid, common sense surely suggests a medical examination *before* instead of *after* the bath, an arrangement which, however disagreeable to the surgeons, would be a considerable benefit to the prison inmates generally. It is a common occurrence for men who have been in prison three, and even six months, to be found to be suffering from itch, and it is equally certain that they caught it in these baths, which are *pro bono publico* once a fortnight. I thank God I was spared any of these “plagues,” though I never took my periodical dip without finding my thoughts wandering to Scotland and the Argyll (not Bignell’s).

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Having joined my companions we were reconducted to the reception-room, which by this time was crowded by contributions from the various Police-courts. My Newgate friend Mike was now thoroughly in his element; he appeared to take a pride in showing his intimacy with the etiquette of the place, and seemed quite hurt if a warder didn’t recognize him as an old acquaintance. As I looked down the benches now fully occupied, I fancied I could have distinguished every new comer from the *habitué* by the way they wore their caps. The new hands put them on in such a manner that they resembled a quartern loaf, whilst the more experienced—such as Mike—cocked them with a jaunty air as if proud of the effect. At a later period I observed that a great deal of vanity existed on the subject of toilet amongst the regular jail-birds: they plastered down their hair—as I know—with the greasy skimmings of their soup, or applications of suet pudding; and

many—incredible as it may appear—shaved regularly with their tin knives and the back of a plate for a mirror. Hair-cutting now commenced, and anyone whose hair was too long was effectually operated on. It is a mistake to suppose that prisoners' hair is cut in the barbarous manner that is applied to convicts; nothing is done to them beyond what a soldier has to submit to—namely, having his hair and beard of moderate length. As I have all through life kept what I have as close as possible, the hair-cutting in my case was dispensed with, and through the subsequent few months I had always to ask for the services of the barber, and invariably received the same reply—"Surely, yours is short enough!" There was one item in the crop I was never subjected to—probably because my moustache was small—but which I certainly should not have liked; it was the habit of clipping the ends square to the lip. I've often seen men in London and elsewhere with this distinctive crop, which I should now invariably associate with prison life; and if I met a Bishop who affected this style it would be difficult to convince me that I had not met him "elsewhere." The next person that intruded himself was—as I was informed—a chaplain. His attire was far from clerical, and consisted of a billycock hat—not a good, honest, disreputable one, but one of your shabby-genteels, so infinitely more fatal—a coat that suggested Crosse and Blackwell's cut, and boots suspiciously resembling the prison make. He interrogated me in my turn, though I fear his curiosity was far from satisfied. His mania was the ceremony of "confirmation," and when he discovered I had omitted that essential form, I at once passed into his black books. Happily, I was perfectly indifferent to his displeasure or his patronage—indeed the latter would have been the most unbearable. He never forgave me, however, as a discreditable tiff we had long after conclusively proved. As I got to see more of this shining light I began to suspect that he must have been a Jesuit, he did so much to make Protestantism obnoxious.

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I was next passed on to a schoolmaster—a gradual improvement in accordance with the system is here apparent—who amused me by inquiring if I could read, how I spelt "oxen," if I could write, and if I thought I could "write a letter?" This latter question was very conclusively set at rest a week later by an incident that occurred in which I was the chief culprit, and which necessitated the collective wisdom of the Home Office and a full bench of the Visiting Justices to adjudicate upon. Meanwhile, I had "passed" this scorching examination, and had to sit quietly by and listen to illiterate costermongers and rascally pickpockets being severally questioned. It had its amusing features, although I felt how degrading it was for a public school-boy and a gentleman by birth and education to be compelled under any combination of circumstances to submit to be catechized by such a trio. The next person to appear was the doctor—the dearest, kindest old gentleman I ever met. His manner to all was alike considerate and kind; one, moreover, who seemed to be aware that the position of a gentleman (unless usurped by a cad) loses nothing of its dignity by a courteous bearing towards inferiors or men placed in a painful position—a manner that inspired respect and yet precluded the possibility of a liberty, a refreshing contrast to a nondescript that had preceded him, and the beau idéal of a fine old English gentleman. Stripped to the waist and behind a screen, we were one by one subjected to a minute examination. A schemer had a very sorry look-out with this eminent physician; no dodge could possibly avail, for he was intimate with every "ailment" that criminal flesh is heir to. It was amusing, after hearing some rascal relate the numerous complaints from which he was suffering, to hear the surgeon quietly say with a smile, "Oh, you'll soon be all right," and to see the hospital warder write down, "Fit, hard labour." This short and apparently informal ceremony is the most momentous in one's future career, and though unaware of it at the time, I was not surprised later on at the importance attached to it by the experienced criminal. By it one's future treatment is entirely guided, and the class of labour is carefully selected in accordance with its decision. A card, then and there signed by the surgeon, and which is always fixed on one's cell door, decides one's future vocation; and "Hard labour," or "Light labour and bed," bear a significance incredible to the uninitiated. As I stood before the kind old man stripped to the waist (or rather to where my waist now is) I was amused by his astonishment at my enormous proportions. I satisfied him I was not deceiving him by a reference to an operation I had once undergone; and this, coupled with my unnatural size, decided him I was incapable of hard labour, and the words, "Light labour and bed," were recorded on my card. Before many hours had passed I realized the benefit of those magic words. These preliminaries, as is always the case in well-constructed dramas or farces, only led up to the event of the day—the inspection by the Governor. In Her Majesty's prisons these individuals are clothed in attributes something more than mortal, and receive an amount of homage sufficient to turn the head of a fool or a snob. In this instance the Governor was neither, and though a strict disciplinarian, was the justest and "straightest" man I ever met. Prisoners and warders were equally amenable to his discipline, and the slightest dereliction of duty brought him down on you like a load of bricks. There was no abuse or verbosity accompanying this discipline, and though he was feared, I believe he was equally liked and respected by every man in the prison. The advent of such a personage naturally involved a proportionate amount of preparation, and everything received an overhaul. Men who wore Her Majesty's livery for the first time, and were mere babes in the mysteries of its graceful adjustment, were told to put their stocks "square on," or button this button and not that of their vests and jackets; lumps of coal that had burned crooked were carefully straightened, and even the coal-box got a lick of whitewash at the last moment. We were then rehearsed in a sort of drill: every man was informed that when "attention" was called he was at once to "spring" up smartly and remain standing—an old vagrant, aged 100 to judge by his appearance, "sprang" with so much zeal that I really thought he had cricked his neck. When all the preparations were considered complete, and we had attained an efficiency worthy the reputation of the "North Corks," and as some minutes had yet to elapse before the great man's arrival, it was deemed advisable to fix our thoughts in the same reverential groove by reading certain rules for our

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future guidance. The following notice is one of the half-dozen that hang up in every cell—all of which I shall produce hereafter. They can hardly be considered as light reading, or such as one would select unless absolutely compelled; nevertheless, they afforded me a certain amount of occupation by learning them by heart during the many solitary hours I spent hereafter:—

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## ABSTRACT OF THE REGULATIONS

RELATING TO THE

### TREATMENT AND CONDUCT OF CONVICTED CRIMINAL PRISONERS.

1. Prisoners shall not disobey the orders of the Governor or of any officer of the prison, nor treat them with disrespect.
2. They shall preserve silence, and are not to cause annoyance or disturbance by making unnecessary noise.
3. They shall not communicate or attempt to do so with one another, or with any strangers or others who may visit the prison.
4. They shall not disfigure any part of their cells or damage any property, or deface, erase, destroy, or pull down any rules or other papers hung up therein, or commit any nuisance, or have in their cells or possession any article not sanctioned by the orders and regulations.
5. They shall not be idle, nor feign sickness to evade their work.
6. They shall not be guilty of profane language, of indecent or irreverent conduct, nor shall they use threats towards or commit assaults upon officers or one another.
7. They shall obey such regulations as regards washing, bathing, hair-cutting, and shaving as may from time to time be established, with a view to the proper maintenance of health and cleanliness.
8. They shall keep their cells, utensils, clothing, and bedding clean and neatly arranged, and shall when required clean and sweep the yards, passages, and other parts of the prison.
9. If any prisoner has any complaint to make regarding the diet, it must be made immediately after a meal is served and before any portion of it is eaten. Frivolous and groundless complaints, repeatedly made, will be dealt with as a breach of prison discipline.
10. A prisoner may, if required for the purposes of justice, be photographed.
11. Prisoners shall attend divine service on Sundays, and on other days when such service is performed, unless they receive permission to be absent. No prisoner shall be compelled to attend the religious service of a church to which he does not belong.
12. The following offences committed by male prisoners convicted of felony or sentenced to hard labour will render them liable to corporal punishment:—
  - 1st. Mutiny or open incitement to mutiny in the prison, personal violence to any officer of the prison, aggravated or repeated assaults on a fellow-prisoner, repetition of insulting or threatening language to any officer or prisoner.
  - 2nd. Wilfully and maliciously breaking the prison windows, or otherwise destroying the prison property.
  - 3rd. When under punishment, wilfully making a disturbance tending to interrupt the order and discipline of the prison, and any other act of gross misconduct or insubordination requiring to be suppressed by extraordinary means.
13. A prisoner committing a breach of any of the regulations is liable to be sentenced to confinement in a punishment cell, and such dietary and other punishments as the rules allow.
14. Any gratuity granted to a prisoner may be paid to him through a Prisoners' Aid Society, or in such way as the Commissioners may direct.
15. Prisoners may, if they desire it, have an interview with the Governor or superior authority to make complaints or prefer requests; and the Governor shall redress any grievance or take such steps as may seem necessary.
16. Any prisoner wishing to see a member of the Visiting Committee shall be allowed to do so on the occasion of his next occurring visit to the prison.

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A slamming of doors and turning of keys, and a perfect Babel of voices shouting "Attention!" heralded the Governor's approach. I can only compare the discord to that which invariably accompanies the progress of an African tribe through a friendly village. A few pop-guns and a tom-tom or two would certainly make the resemblance more complete, though they would probably be objected to by the Home Office on the plea of want of precedent.

The halo of veneration that surrounds a prison governor is by no means confined to himself, but obliquely and in a modified form imparts itself to the humblest of his followers. A miserable door-slammer that usually accompanied him, and combined with this important duty the occasional distribution of letters, amused me on one occasion when I ventured to ask him if he had a letter for me. Such a liberty "from the likes of me to the likes of him" was hardly to be tolerated; and he had the cheek to send me a message that "he objected to be spoken to when accompanying the Governor."

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The door at length opened, and the great man was in the room. "Attention!" was shrieked out as only sycophants can do, and duly responded to; and the halt and the maim, "Old Hundred," myself, burglars, and pickpockets, presented one uninterrupted, swerving, rickety line. As a spectacle, it must have been truly imposing, during which the Governor sat down. Our names were then respectively called out, and we crossed from one bench to another to show, as it were, our action. Not a muscle of the inspecting officer's face moved during these scenes in the arena; and it might have been the Sphinx inspecting the army of Pharaoh, so little attention did he apparently pay to us. Nothing, however, had escaped him; and I learnt to believe there was some truth in the assertion that he had eyes in his boots, if not in his pockets also.

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As may be supposed, these various inspections took a considerable time, and the day was drawing in before they were all ended. We were thereupon informed that we should occupy temporary cells for "this night only," and that our final allotment to various parts of the prison would be postponed till the morrow. The cell I now found myself in was indeed a small one—evidently only used as a half-way house, and fitted as sparingly as the thermometer one at Newgate. A notice posted up warned us not to go to bed till the bell rang at eight; and not wishing to break a rule before I had been in the place a day, I foolishly complied with the order.

Meanwhile it was getting dark, and though a gaspipe was fitted into the wall, there was not the slightest indication of its being likely to be lit. Mike, who had frequently been here before, intimated his intention of turning in, and, "order be blown!" strongly advised us to do the same. I only regret I was weak enough not to. The gloom gradually increased till we were left in outer darkness. To find the bed-clothing would now have been a difficulty; to make any resemblance to a bed an absolute impossibility. Still, on the strength of the notice, I waited through many dark and cold hours, until a brute with a human voice shouted out from somewhere, "You chaps will get no light to-night, so you can turn in when you please." I was informed afterwards this was a favourite and utterly unauthorized assumption of authority on the part of this bully, and I trust it has only to be noticed to preclude the possibility of its continuance. It was a barbarous and cowardly act, and strictly opposed to the usual system of the prison. How I got through that cold night I cannot tell, for bed, bedding and light were all strangers to me; but night, more merciful than man, threw its mantle over me, and I slept as sound as only the weary can.

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## **CHAPTER XV.**

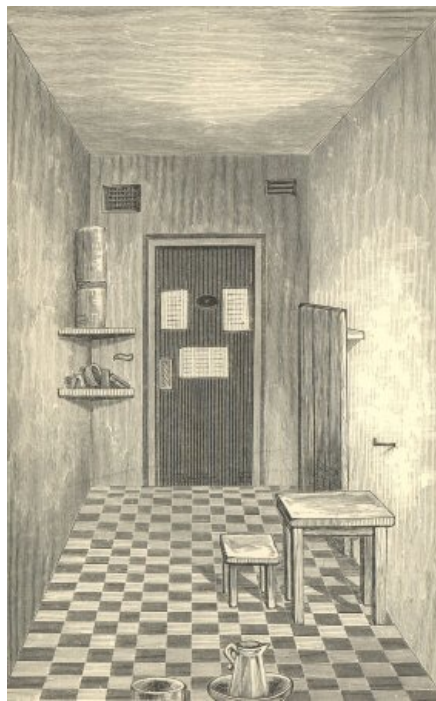
### **"OAKUM" LET US SING.**

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NEXT morning after breakfast we were drafted to our various localities, and, incredible as it may appear, and to show how efficient is the isolation system, men with whom I parted company that morning I never saw again, though I knew they were in the same building. Our various destinations were indicated in a somewhat primitive style—a huge chalk-mark on our backs. As I threaded my way through various wards with a C scrawled on my back, a smell of tar indicated our approach to what might under altered circumstances have been presumed to be a ship-chandler's; it was, however, only the oakum district. We were here received by the warder in command, and I was assigned to the fifth storey. I was further presented with my official number—594, on a brass plate.

I now discovered the benefit of "light labour and bed." This particular ward, together with the two in its immediate vicinity, is principally devoted to fresh arrivals; bed is the exception and oakum is the rule. It is absolutely impossible for any accident to exempt you from commencing your career for one month in these wards; it rests, however, with yourself whether you pick oakum or find a substitute. I decided on the latter course. The system of prison life is such a contemptible one, and the espionage, jealousy, currying favour, and tale-bearing so general between the officials from the highest to the lowest, that this portion of my task is a very delicate one. Whatever I write will be carefully sifted; and if I give the slightest clue capable of being followed up, I should probably injure some warder, assistant warder, or prisoner who did me incalculable services at great personal risk; and as this is the last thing I have the smallest intention of doing, I wish to state, once for all, that all names and dates I give are intentionally altered, and that any official who ever befriended me has nothing to fear from my revelations.

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As I ascended the spiral staircase a shout of "Coming up!" intimated to the attics that a fresh victim was approaching, and I was formally received and conducted to my cell. The first impression of my permanent address was not encouraging. On a shelf was a Bible and prayer-book, a tin plate, a tin mug, and a tin knife, a wooden spoon, a box of salt, and a piece of soap, producing a combination such as may be seen in any of the illustrated papers during a small war, and supposed to illustrate, as circumstances require, the utensils in daily use amongst Zulus, Ashantis or whatever savages we may happen to be slaughtering at the time. In another corner was a diminutive basin the size of a saucepan, a slop-pail, and a can of water. On a shelf was a rug and two blankets; bed or bedstead was conspicuous by its absence; and on the table was a lump of rope. My turnkey, having examined my card, ordered in a bed and bedstead, and explained that the rope was to be converted into oakum. A few words and we understood one another; in short, he was a man after my own heart. I have no scruple in mentioning this, for I regret to say the man was dismissed shortly after—through no fault of mine, though indirectly connected with me. I can never forgive myself when I reflect that I had any share in the transaction, though it is a consolation to know that, had he been as careful as he ought, nothing could have brought the offence home to him. In the first instance, he was the victim of as foul a piece of treachery as ever disgraced humanity, and then he lost his head, and compromised himself when absolute silence would have cleared him. I shall narrate the particulars later on. In addition to the above-named furniture, the walls were decorated with a number of printed notices describing your duties, diet, &c., and a prayer (!); a wooden—so much a dozen—effort, supposed to be specially adapted to the requirements of "awakening burglars." I learnt all these by heart by way of amusement, and will give them for the benefit of the reader. I take especial pleasure in reproducing them, as I believe they've never seen daylight before.

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### **SYSTEM OF PROGRESSIVE STAGES FOR MALE PRISONERS SENTENCED TO HARD LABOUR.**

1. A prisoner shall be able to earn on each weekday 8, 7, or 6 marks, according to the degree of his industry; and on Sunday he shall be awarded marks according to the degree of his industry during the previous week.
2. There shall be four stages, and every prisoner shall pass through them or through so much of them as the term of his imprisonment admits.
3. He shall commence in the first stage, and shall remain in the first stage until he has earned  $28 \times 8$ , or 224 marks; in the second stage until he has earned 224 more marks, or 448 in the whole; in the third stage until he has earned 224 more marks, or 672 in the whole; in the fourth stage during the remainder of his sentence.
4. A prisoner whose term of imprisonment is twenty-eight days or less shall serve the whole of his term in the first stage.
5. A prisoner who is idle, or who misconducts himself, or is inattentive to instruction, shall be liable
  - (1) To forfeit gratuity earned or to be earned, or
  - (2) To forfeit any other stage privileges.
  - (3) To detention in the stage in which he is until he shall have earned in that stage an additional number of marks.

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(4) To degradation to any lower stage (whether such stage is next below the one in which he is or otherwise) until he has earned in such lower stage a stated number of marks.

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As soon as the prisoner has earned the stated number, then, unless he has in the meantime incurred further punishment, he shall be restored to the stage from which he was degraded, and be credited with the number of marks he had previously earned therein.

6. None of the foregoing punishments shall exempt a prisoner from any other punishment to which he would be liable for conduct constituting a breach of prison regulations.

7. A prisoner in the first stage will

(a) Be employed ten hours daily in strict separation on first class hard labour, of which six to eight hours will be on crank, tread-wheel, or work of a similar nature.

(b) Sleep on a plank-bed without a mattress.

(c) Earn no gratuity.

8. A prisoner in the second stage will

(a) Be employed as in the first stage until he has completed one month of imprisonment, and afterwards on hard labour of the second class.

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(b) Sleep on a plank-bed without a mattress two nights weekly and have a mattress on the other nights.

(c) Receive school instruction.

(d) Have school books in his cell.

(e) Have exercise on Sunday.

(f) Be able to earn a gratuity not exceeding 1s.

(g) The gratuity to a prisoner in this stage, whose sentence is not long enough for him to earn 224 marks in it, may be calculated at 1d. for every 20 marks earned.

9. A prisoner in the third stage will—

(a) Be employed on second class hard labour.

(b) Sleep on a plank-bed without a mattress one night weekly, and have a mattress on other nights.

(c) Receive school instruction.

(d) Have school books in his cell.

(e) Have library books in his cell.

(f) Have exercise on Sunday.

(g) Be able to earn a gratuity not exceeding 1s. 6d.

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(h) The gratuity to a prisoner in this stage, whose sentence is not long enough for him to earn 224 marks in it, may be calculated at 1d. for every 12 marks earned.

10. A prisoner in the fourth stage will—

(a) Be eligible for employment of trust in the service of the prison.

(b) Sleep on a Mattress every night.

(c) Receive school instruction.

(d) Have school books in his cell.

(e) Have library books in his cell.

(f) Have exercise on Sunday.

(g) Be allowed to receive and write a letter and receive a visit of twenty minutes; and in every three months afterwards to receive and write a letter, and receive a visit of half-an-hour.

(h) Be able to earn a gratuity not exceeding 2s.

(i) The gratuity to a prisoner in this stage, whose sentence is not long enough for him to earn 224 marks in it, may be calculated at 1d. for every 10 marks earned.

(j) The gratuity to a prisoner in this stage, whose sentence is long enough to enable him to earn more than 896 marks, may be calculated at the same rate, provided that it shall not in any case exceed 10s.

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The composition of this abstract, alternating as it does between threats of punishment and hopes of "employments of trust," clearly stamps it as intended to appeal to the feelings and adapt itself to the capacities of the lowest classes. That any man of education could be roused to any degree of ambition by such "trust" as would be likely to be placed in him, is to suppose an impossible absurdity. The "system" throttles any such contingency, and leads—as all short-sighted policies do—to men believing in no such thing as good faith, and having no inward restraining motive for abstaining from deception. Why will not the Chief Commissioner of Prisons see that the brute power at their disposal is wholly inadequate to prevent a man with a modicum of brains and a few sovereigns from doing as he pleases? Let them try the "confidence trick" in a modified form with the better class of prisoners, and if it is found to fail, revert to the hard and fast rule. A discretionary power in the hands of such a man as the Governor of Coldbath Fields would thoroughly test the experiment.

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What trash "employment of trust" sounds to a man who knows that from first to last—however exemplary his behaviour—he is suspected, and never supposed to be lost sight of!

Personally, I felt I'd as lief be in the punishment cells as in any "employment of trust"; they are both birds of the same feather, recognizing no code but brute force, distrust, and degrees of punishment. I can only compare the prison system to a huge machine, capable of crushing a man body and soul, or handling him so lightly that nothing but the "idea" and its moral obligations remain to remind him of its hideous proximity. If any further proof is required of the truth of my deductions, my personal experience will amply provide it.

### SHORT PRAYERS FOR MORNING AND EVENING.

#### *Morning.*

O GOD and Holy Father, Thou hast in mercy watched over me through the night; in Thy tender love keep me this day from evil. I have greatly sinned against Thee. Do Thou turn me from all my evil ways; wash me in the blood of Jesus, and let Thy Spirit lead me that I may hate sin and love what is right. Let Thy grace preserve me amidst all trials, that I may be made truly a servant of Jesus Christ and ever love and serve my God and Saviour. Amen.

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#### *Evening.*

O GOD, Thou hast safely brought me to the close of another day. May Thy goodness lead me to repentance that I may give Thee my heart. Forgive all my evil thoughts, and words, and deeds. What good thoughts I have had from Thee do Thou strengthen, that I may love Thee more and serve Thee better. Keep me, O God, and all whom I love, from danger or sin this night, and so preserve us by Thy grace that at last we may sleep in Jesus and be for ever with the Lord. Amen.

This hypocritical effusion hangs over one's table, and is supposed to be admirably adapted for "awakening" burglars, and turning pickpockets from the error of their ways. As a literary composition it is beneath criticism, and would disgrace a "National School" boy in a proclaimed district. I don't know who is the inspired author, nor how they are sold by the dozen.

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### NOTICE.

"Prisoners who desire assistance from the agent of the Discharged Prisoners' Relief Committee, in finding employment on discharge, should apply to the Governor fourteen days before they go out, when their cases will be investigated. Wilfully false statements as to antecedents, &c., will disqualify a prisoner from assistance, as will also misconduct in prison."

There is no institution I heard so much abused as the above, and although I cannot speak from personal knowledge, I should say that a thorough enquiry into its working (not its profession) might possibly be attended with benefit. Beyond seeing a fly-blown old man waddling about the prison, who, I was informed, was the agent, I know nothing, and care less, about this doubtless admirable institution.

### DIETARY FOR CONVICTED PRISONERS.

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No. 1. MEN, WOMEN, AND BOYS UNDER SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE, WITH AND WITHOUT HARD LABOUR.		
Breakfast	Daily	8 ounces bread.
Dinner	Daily	1½ pint <i>stirabout</i> (containing 3 ounces Indian meal and 3 ounces oatmeal).

Supper	Daily	8 ounces bread.
No. 2. MEN WITH HARD LABOUR.		
Breakfast	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	Sunday and Wednesday	6 ounces bread, 8 ounces suet pudding.
	Monday and Friday	6 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes.
	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	6 ounces bread, ½ pint soup.
Supper	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
MEN WITHOUT HARD LABOUR, WOMEN, AND BOYS UNDER SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE.		
Breakfast	Daily	5 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	Sunday and Wednesday	5 ounces bread, 6 ounces suet pudding.
	Monday and Friday	5 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes.
	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	5 ounces bread, ½ pint soup.
Supper	Daily	5 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
No. 3. MEN WITH HARD LABOUR.		
Breakfast	Daily	8 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	Sunday and Wednesday	4 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 8 ounces suet pudding.
	Monday and Friday	8 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 3 ounces cooked beef (without bone).
	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	8 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, ¾ pint soup.
Supper	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
MEN WITHOUT HARD LABOUR, WOMEN, AND BOYS UNDER SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE.		
Breakfast	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	Sunday and Wednesday	4 ounces bread, 6 ounces potatoes, 6 ounces suet pudding.
	Monday and Friday	6 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 3 ounces cooked beef (without bone).
	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	6 ounces bread, 6 ounces potatoes, ¾ pint soup.
Supper	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
No. 4. MEN WITH HARD LABOUR.		
Breakfast.	Daily	8 ounces bread, 1 pint porridge.
Dinner	Sunday and Wednesday	6 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 12 ounces suet pudding.
	Monday and Friday	8 ounces bread, 12 ounces potatoes, 4 ounces cooked beef (without bone).
	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	8 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 1 pint soup.
Supper	Daily	8 ounces bread, 1 pint porridge.
MEN WITHOUT HARD LABOUR, WOMEN, AND BOYS UNDER SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE.		
Breakfast	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.
Dinner	Sunday and Wednesday	4 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 10 ounces suet pudding.
	Monday and Friday	6 ounces bread, 10 ounces potatoes, 3 ounces cooked beef (without bone).
	Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday	6 ounces bread, 8 ounces potatoes, 1 pint soup.
Supper	Daily	6 ounces bread, 1 pint gruel.

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On Mondays beans and fat bacon may be substituted for beef. At the expiration of nine months

one pint of cocoa, with two ounces extra bread, may be given at breakfast three days in the week, in lieu of one pint of porridge, or gruel, if preferred.

The following will be the terms to which the above diets will be applied:—

Prisoners sentenced to seven days and under, No. 1 diet for the whole time.

Prisoners sentenced to more than seven days, and not more than one month, No. 1 diet for seven days, and No. 2 diet for remainder of term.

Prisoners sentenced to more than one month, and not more than four months, No. 2 diet for one month, and No. 3 diet for remainder of term.

Prisoners sentenced to more than four months, No. 3 diet for four months, and No. 4 diet for remainder of term.

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## TABLE OF SUBSTITUTES

For cooked English beef or potatoes, which may be issued, if deemed necessary, by the authorities.

In lieu of four ounces cooked English beef:

Five ounces Colonial beef or mutton, preserved by heat (served cold); nine ounces beans, one ounce fat bacon, four ounces American or other foreign beef, preserved by cold (weighed after cooking), eight ounces cooked fresh fish; six ounces cooked salt meat; twelve ounces cooked salt fish.

In lieu of three ounces cooked English beef:

Three-and-three-quarter ounces Colonial beef or mutton, preserved by heat (served cold); seven ounces beans, three-quarters of an ounce fat bacon; three ounces American or other foreign beef, preserved by cold (weighed after cooking); six ounces cooked fresh fish; four-and-a-half ounces cooked salt meat; nine ounces cooked salt fish.

In lieu of twelve ounces potatoes:

Eight ounces cabbage or turnip-tops; twelve ounces parsnips, turnips, or carrots; twelve ounces preserved (dried) potatoes; eight ounces leeks; twelve ounces rice (steamed till tender).

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In lieu of ten ounces potatoes:

Seven ounces cabbage or turnip-tops; ten ounces parsnips, turnips, or carrots; ten ounces preserved (dried) potatoes; seven ounces leeks; ten ounces rice (steamed till tender).

In lieu of eight ounces potatoes:

Six ounces cabbage or turnip-tops; eight ounces parsnips, turnips, or carrots; eight ounces preserved (dried) potatoes; six ounces leeks; eight ounces rice (steamed till tender).

In lieu of six ounces potatoes:

Four ounces cabbage or turnip-tops; six ounces parsnips, turnips, or carrots; six ounces preserved (dried) potatoes; four ounces leeks; six ounces rice (steamed till tender).

All the meats to be weighed without bone.

All vegetables to be weighed after cooking.

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*Printed at H.M. Convict Prison, Millbank.*

A careful perusal of Dietary 4 will convince the reader that it is sufficiently generous to obviate any loss of weight, and yet, as a rule, prisoners fall away on it, (There are some extraordinary exceptions to this rule, and one man, a gentleman by birth, and an ex-officer in the army, increased two stone in a few months; the absolute half-starved vagrant also, of course, fattens on it.) I can only attribute it to the voracious way they bolt their food. It is stated of that eminent projector, the late Mr. Rumford, that he once submitted to the then Elector of Saxony a scheme whereby he might reduce the expense of maintaining his army, without impairing its efficiency, by a very simple method, namely, to reduce the amount, but compel his soldiers to masticate their food. I cannot say if the suggestion was acted on, but I am thoroughly convinced that if prisoners received less, and were compelled to eat slower, a considerable saving to the state and an improvement in the appearance of the men would be effected. Personally I found during the very few weeks I subsisted on this diet that it was more than I could possibly eat, and withal good. The gruel, I confess, is an acquired taste, and I was almost immediately permitted to substitute cocoa. The porridge was also a sad disappointment. I innocently hoped to have found the delicious composition associated with the land of cakes and immortal Burns, and could have burst into tears in recognising it as intensified gruel. Its nourishing powers, however, are not to

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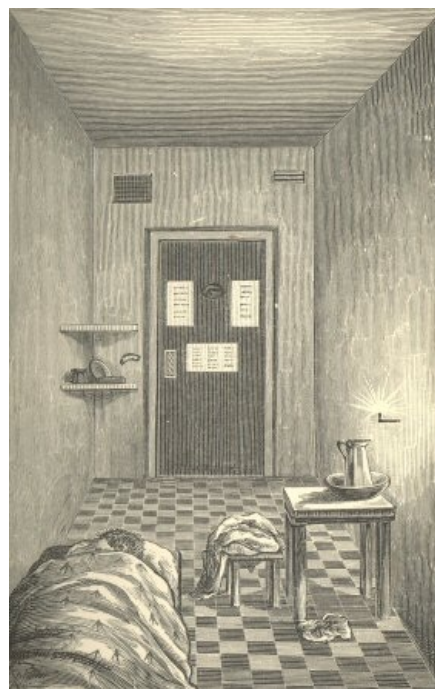
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be gainsaid; and to see malefactors shovelling it away, as I have, one would suppose they enjoyed it. The recitation of the substitutes for cooked beef I am compelled to characterise an official quibble. During the few months I spent at Coldbath I never heard—as I certainly should—of any beef being issued at all, the invariable substitute being Colonial meat served cold, except on one occasion, when salt fish was supplied. On the merits of this last item I cannot speak personally, for long before that I was on a daily diet of mutton and mutton broth, as I describe hereafter. For the preserved Colonial meat, however, I have nothing but praise. “Served,” as it was, under every disadvantage, I found it excellent; and as it can be purchased for seven-pence a pound, the marvel is that the poorer classes, who seldom or never taste butcher’s meat, do not patronise it more largely. I can only suppose its merits are unknown.

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The bedstead, or “plank-bed,” as it is termed, is the hardest couch I ever felt; with a mattress on it I could feel every grain in the wood, and shuddered to think of my companions, all of whom had to submit for a month to the board “pure and simple.” It is only raised three inches from the floor, and is two feet in breadth—a tight fit for twenty stone. I had now fairly settled down in my final destination for a month, and will describe the routine of the day:—

6 A.M.	—Rise.
6.30 „	—Breakfast.
7 „	—Take down the day’s work, and receive a fresh supply.
8 to 9 „	—Exercise.
9 „	—Chapel (three times a week).
12 noon	—Dinner.
5 P.M.	—Supper.
8 „	—Bed.
8.30 „	—Lights out.



A slight difference existed between the regulation here and at Newgate on the subject of “lights out.” At Coldbath it was a serious offence to retire before 8 P.M. At Newgate it was, however, optional, though hampered with an absurd condition. One evening, at this latter awful place, I had determined on a comfortable read; with this object I undressed about 7 P.M., and, pulling my bed under the lamp, abandoned myself to the perusal of *Chambers’ Magazine*, for 1878. Barely, however, had I commenced, when “in a moment all was dark.” I ascertained next morning that it was a rule to put out the gas as soon as a man got into bed; whether from economical motives or as an extra mode of annoyance, I never troubled to ask.

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The brown bread, which was often warm from the oven, was as good as any I have ever tasted, and the quantity enough to satisfy anyone; and yet the ordinary prisoner would devour his and gratefully accept as much as anyone else would give him. I found that prisoners would do anything for food, and through my entire career I bartered it in exchange for soap, etc. Amongst other recipients of my bounty was a German Jew who lived near me. He spoke very little English, and as I speak German fluently, I often had a word with him. He told me the usual story about being sentenced for nothing; and though I did not believe a word of it, it led to his being put on my free list. A more voracious appetite I never met with, and the way he bolted half a pound of bread and three or four potatoes was truly appalling; indeed, so unsatisfactory was it, that I transferred my patronage after a week; one might as well have tried to fill Nelson’s monument. Giving away food is strictly prohibited—a regulation that necessitates certain precautions,

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commendable for their suitability rather than their cleanliness. The usual mode is for the donor to stuff bread, potatoes, or a lump of suet down his stocking or inside his shirt, and when time and circumstance permit, to transfer it to the recipient of his bounty, who in his turn first shoves it up his back or into his cap, to be transferred at leisure into the mouth or elsewhere. This manipulation never commended itself to me; and my rule, though not much more refined, had at least the advantage of avoiding any personal contact with the greasy dainties. I placed all my food in my pocket-handkerchief, and transferred it bodily in exchange for the others'. This rule only applied to the clean linen day, when I was enabled without delay to get rid of my brother-reprobate's *mouchoir*. On other occasions I received their pocket-handkerchiefs clean, and returned them later on full of good things. I let it be understood that I never took a handkerchief unless it was clean; and so perfect did the system become, that I had only to say *en passant*, "Your handkerchief to-morrow," and it was duly handed to me washed and perfectly clean. I only once was offered a treat of this kind. It was a poor black man (I often see him about). I watched him fumbling in his chest and eventually produce a crust; this he secreted for some minutes in his fist, and then said, "Here, master," and held it out to me. I can see his look of surprise that followed my refusal; but it was kindly meant, and though I declined the emetic, I wouldn't have hurt his feelings for the world. Soup that I didn't consume I usually placed outside the door, hoping that my regular "cleaner" would reach it in time. In this, however, I was often disappointed, for my custom having got known, a raid was frequently made on it by others—a practice I determined to try and circumvent.

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I was suffering at this time from liver complaint, and had on my shelf a concoction of taraxacum and podophyllin. Of this I poured one day about two doses into my mutton broth; and as it was somewhat discoloured by the process, I added half a cup of soapsuds and a handful of salt. Not long after the two thieves arrived, and I could distinctly hear their long gulps as they swallowed the savoury concoction. My commendable endeavour to break them of pilfering was, however, a complete failure; and the only remark I overheard was, "I say, Bill, it's damned salt, ain't it?"

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The soap one received had to last a fortnight, and was not sufficient for a thorough wash daily and the periodical bath, and I experienced great inconvenience at first by having to economize; but when it had got mooted about that there "was a swell as was mug enough to swap grub for soap," my market became literally glutted, and I was enabled to revel in a bath every morning.

Washing one's cell floor was not an agreeable duty. At first I puffed and blew like a grampus, but it soon became a very simple affair, and I became a perfect adept at the charwoman business. I heard whilst here, from a reliable source, of some man who after leaving the prison was staying at a West-end hotel, and who, seeing a servant shirking her duty whilst scrubbing the doorstep, and unable to resist the force of habit, very kindly gave her the benefit of his experience, and stripping off his coat, proceeded to lay-to assiduously. I should not hesitate to do the same under certain circumstances. This "doing" one's own apartment was the only derogatory duty I had ever to perform; and as it was a private show, and clearly for one's own benefit, I never had the slightest objection to it; the more so as the taking of my morning bath (the saucepan on the floor) had half completed the process.

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Oakum-picking cannot be called an intellectual employment. I should say, too, it was decidedly monotonous, though I can hardly speak from personal experience. I tried the experiment of unravelling the rope, but it was so intensely provoking that I turned my thoughts to evading the necessity. My turnkey and I were friends within twenty-four hours, and I consulted him about getting a substitute. As turnkey and prisoner had both left before I had, I may say, without injuring anyone, that for a weekly consideration my task was picked daily. Of a morning a bundle was mysteriously thrown into my cell, and a few moments later I proudly descended with "my work," and dropped the unused rope on the stair. The usual task that prisoners have to pick is three pounds a day, but being a light-labour man I was only assigned one pound. I invariably returned a portion of this modified amount unpicked, thereby lulling the suspicions of a dense but offensively-inclined taskmaster. Oakum is one of the most tell-tale commodities I ever came across. If merely unravelled, it remains black and juicy; but the more it is picked and pulled the paler it gets, till it is capable of assuming the appearance of Turkish tobacco. An experienced eye can at once detect the amount of labour bestowed on it, and some of the huge bundles I saw my *confrères* carrying down were works of art as regards finish. The man who actually picked my oakum was the "cleaner," a privileged individual with a roving commission. His duties frequently brought him to my cell, and he told me he was a "racing man." I discovered, however, as we became better acquainted, that the designation is capable of considerable expansion, and that his peculiar talent was the "three-card trick." He knew every racecourse in England as well as every prison, and never failed of a morning to inquire how I had slept, adding, that he always slept badly the first few nights in a strange prison; and my reply that I was not affected in a "similar way" appeared to cause him considerable surprise. In my unravelling process I one day chanced to come across a bit of cane. It was certainly moist from proximity to the tar, but I carefully dried and subsequently smoked it. I can hardly say the pleasure was unalloyed, for it bore such a resemblance to the fragrant British Havanna that I got alarmed, and put it out. It was the only smoke I had for months.

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Exercise at Coldbath was an important institution, and considering it was the only fresh air I at first experienced in the day, I always looked forward to it. An hour is the regulation time, but seldom is the boon of that duration; and if the warder is otherwise engaged, the exercise has to give way, and thus the prisoner is deprived of a healthy occupation to meet the convenience of a selfish turnkey. Overlooking the exercise-yard attached to C ward were a row of houses, and I



often wondered what the lookers-on thought of the moving mass of misery that circled round below them. To me, with my limited facilities, there was ample room for reflection; and I often marvelled how such various types of humanity could have been collected, or indeed that they ever existed.

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One feeble old man particularly attracted my notice. He was almost unable to walk round from sheer old age, and appeared altogether incapable of having qualified in any way for lodgings at Coldbath. I asked a warder what on earth he had done.

"Well," he said, "they say he's a bad 'un. He's here for violently assaulting the police, and got six months."

"But," I added, "he don't look as if he would last so long; he must be at least a hundred!"

"Very likely," was the reply. "The fact is, a new rule has come in lately, and pauper prisoners are buried in the prison; so they sent him here in hopes of starting our new cemetery."

Another peculiarity that struck me forcibly was the apparently universal obstruction that appeared to exist in the criminal throat. It was absolutely epidemic, and the sounds—such as are made by an over-wound moderator lamp—that accompanied their fruitless endeavours to obtain relief were excessively revolting. This and the like are the worst features of coming in contact with these dirty wretches. Many habits usually looked upon as filthy were freely indulged in, and anyone who instinctively abstained from participating was looked upon as an outsider. A foolish habit I had contracted in my youth of applying my pocket-handkerchief to its natural use was, I fancy, specially resented. I could never shake off these feelings, and though with them, was never "one of them." I always kept them at arms' length, and invariably received some implied recognition of my superiority. The better class of prisoners for the most part addressed me as "Capting," or "Sir"; and even the lowest, if they spoke—which I never encouraged—did so with some small degree of reserve. The neighbourhood abounds with street-organs; indeed, it is the head-quarters where the instrumentalists for the most part live, the consequence being that, like the lady of Bambury Cross, we had music wherever we "goed." About this time a certain popular air was much in vogue, and evidently much admired by the criminal classes. I enquired the name of this vile music-hall ditty, but without effect; and can only describe it by the fact that no sooner did it commence than the whole mob appeared to cheer up, and took up a sort of gin-and-water refrain which they buzzed out—"Ho moy littul tarling, 'ow are yew?" The wretch who composed it deserves a month. It is impossible to describe the monotony of these days without occupation—for my deputy did my task—and without books. The religious tract, as a leaflet was officially styled, had to last a fortnight; and I knew by heart all about "The Sweet Recollections of a Sweep," and "The Converted Charwoman of Goswell Road." "What Pickest Thou, you Wretch?" and "How are your Poor Fingers, you Blackguard?" were also works contained in this religious repertoire, and altogether of a more thrilling description. They were generally understood to have been the work of a local divine, as indeed their style suggested. The library books are a very sorry lot, though probably well adapted to the capacities of their readers. The rule, too, that permits their change only once a fortnight is in itself a species of torture unworthy of the system that sanctions them at all. The type for the most part is large, and such as an educated man can read in a day. Why, then, spoil a gracious act by limiting its very innocent scope. Such, too, is the reckless supervision of these literary treasures that I received no less than seven school histories of England during my career. I felt this as almost a reflection on the Dean of W— and my classical education generally.

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There was, however, a reserve library for the special benefit of the "serious" minded, and men of education with strict Episcopalian proclivities. This issue, and its attendant patronage, is vested entirely in the hands of the chaplain—a custom it is high time to alter—and considering I had never been confirmed, it is a marvel how I was ever included in its favoured ranks. The blessing was not, however, an entirely unmitigated one; and "Locke's Essay on the Mind," "The Theory of Sturm," and such light reading usually fell to my share. Happily I was independent of it all, although an amusing and undignified squabble some months later deprived me of even this modified clerical patronage.

I must mention one incident connected with my "three card" acquaintance before leaving the oakum district. It was after chapel, and he was in my cell, when, after sundry enquiries as to how I liked the service, etc., he said—

"I calls it bad, very bad taste, the way they goes on, even in chapel, at a chap about his work. Didn't you hear this morning about the oakum?"

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"Oakum," I said; "I don't remember any allusion to it."

"O yes you do," he replied. "D'you mind my nudging you?" and then I recollected receiving a dig in the ribs, which I failed to understand at the time, as they began to sing, "O Come, let us sing," etc. The racing man had made a mistake in the spelling, and very properly resented the allusion.

My transfer from this hateful district was, however, nearer than I supposed, and an unexpected occurrence a few days after my arrival brought about this welcome change. My door was one day suddenly opened, and my friend the turnkey appeared in breathless agitation.

"Summat's up," he jerked out; "mind you tells em nothink. You're going to be transferred at once."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE VISITING JUSTICES.

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SOMETHING was indeed up; a letter, in fact, that I had clandestinely written had been intercepted. Personally I was indifferent to the result; the worst had been done to me when I found myself in prison. Degrees of punishment had no terrors for me, and I was equally callous as to whether employed in a "situation of trust" or languishing in a punishment cell. To me all appeared tarred with the same brush, and I loathed the privileges and punishments, the indulgences and deprivations, the spiritual comforts, and every other contingency with the same intensity. As regards the turnkey, however, my sympathy was enlisted. Here was a poor man, with a wife and family, liable to dismissal, and even imprisonment, if convicted of carrying letters. At the time I was at a loss to understand how the traffic could possibly have been discovered. I was confident I had not been observed writing, and had seen the letters securely secreted in the warder's pouch. Unless, then, he had been guilty of some indiscretion, the discovery seemed impossible. Such a contingency as foul play from without never entered my head, and yet, alas, such a thing had actually occurred. A servant in the family of one of my correspondents had lately been detected in a series of systematic thefts from her employers, extending over many months. The discovery naturally involved her immediate dismissal, and by way of gratitude for their refraining from prosecuting her, she purloined my letter, and assuming a position of authority, called at the prison and produced the document. Her motive was clearly revenge, but the truth (as it always does) eventually came out, and the mystery that shrouded the transaction for months has happily been dispelled, and the temporary doubt (almost excusable) that associated the act with very dear friends has given way to a regret that I could ever have doubted their honour. As to the thieving, sneaking wretch, she decamped with her spoils; and though her photograph has been freely distributed in the "three ball" quarter, she has hitherto evaded discovery. For my part I would gladly subscribe a trifle for the present address of Mrs. Smith. With the mystery that surrounded everything that occurred in the place, I tried in vain to ascertain whether anything had really been discovered, but day after day passed, and the affair had apparently blown over. This, however, was an erroneous impression; it was only the lull that precedes the storm, and not a stone was being left unturned to sift the matter. The turnkey, at the time only suspected of complicity in the matter, was carefully watched. When he left of an evening his every footstep was dogged, and a nightly report of his rambles duly made. A letter, too, that he foolishly posted in a neighbouring pillar-box pointed indirectly to his connivance, and subsequent inquiries at the district receiving office made matters possibly clearer. A close relationship exists between such Government institutions as post-offices, prisons, and police-stations, which affords greater facilities to constituted authorities for unearthing mysteries than to ordinary mortals. I was ignorant in those days of this affinity, and an easy prey to such trumpety contingencies; but I eventually reduced the trafficking to a science impossible of detection, and unailing in its results. Can it be wondered at—surrounded as one is by underpaid officials, who begin at twenty-one shillings and twenty-three shillings a week, with a gradual increase, after years of toil, to a possible twenty-eight shillings, and with a prospect, after twenty years' service, of receiving a pension of ten shillings a week—can it be wondered at, I ask, that these worthy men are unable to resist a bribe? I should regret to have to prove my words, but if I was in the position again, I think I could undertake to be in daily communication with the outer world, despite bolts and bars and the "special" observation I was always subject to. This is no idle boast, as subsequent events will prove; and the authorities have only themselves to thank for exercising no discretionary power in their treatment of prisoners, when the facts I mention prove conclusively that a great difference does exist and always will between the vagrant and the gentleman, even in prison, in more ways than one. The underpaid turnkey is still more unfairly handicapped, and it resolves itself into his choosing between my £5 and the Government £1. What more natural than that he should elect the former, when the most ordinary precaution will guard against detection. I don't think the authorities ought to begrudge the so-called gentleman this solitary advantage. No one can deny that six months to a man of education is an infinitely severer trial than eighteen to a costermonger. The one has to battle with the mind, conscience, remorse, shattered prospects, loss of caste, a blighted future, food, clothing, surroundings, all inferior to what he has been accustomed to; to submit, moreover, to be addressed by inferiors in a tone of authority, besides a hundred-and-one other humiliations impossible to remember: the other finds himself amongst friends, loses nothing by his incarceration, is better clothed, fed, and housed than if he were at home, and, in the case of an artizan, reverts to his every-day employment; and yet this is seldom taken into consideration, and justice is ladled out to gentleman and vagrant alike. I cannot assert this as my own experience, for justice was indeed tempered with mercy to me, and I am fully sensible of the consideration I received, both at my trial and hereafter. Under ordinary circumstances one would be accused of ingratitude for breaking rules and deceiving those in authority who had treated one well, but I never took this personal view of it. I was fighting a system that I despised, not individuals that I respected. So I looked on it as a game of "brag," a kind of "French and English," a question of bolts and bars *versus* brains, where the latter had apparently the worst of it, where undue importance was attached to watching and spying, and nothing left to one's parole. About a week after my transfer (I was now in the needlework ward, and being initiated into the mysteries of darning stockings) I received a summons to appear before the Governor. I knew now that the letter-writing had been discovered, or, as my friend the turnkey had expressed it, "Summat was up." He told me, in a few words, that it had come to his knowledge that I had been sending out

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clandestine letters, and requested me to inform him if that was the case, and who had been my channel of communication, adding that he was prepared to take down any statements I might feel disposed to make. The idea of denying it never entered my head—I was perfectly indifferent as to what might happen; I thereupon informed him that I had written, as he alleged, three letters, and that I was quite prepared to bear the consequences. I, however, respectfully declined to give him any information as to my *employé*. I was then requested to wait outside, and the order was given to send for Mr. B—. “Well,” I thought, “if poor old B— tells them as much as I have he need not fear being identified as my brother conspirator.” A moment later, and I was recalled: a glance at the unhappy B— convinced me that fear had robbed him of his self-possession, and that he had not observed the salutary advice he had given me as to “telling ’em nothink.” His face was the colour of a boiled turkey, and the keys at his side (a sorry burlesque on authority) were rattling from tremour. The Governor then said, “Mr. B— has admitted that he took a letter for you, so I presume you have now no objection to admit it.” In courtesy to the nervous donkey I asked him if that was correct, and on his replying in the affirmative, I at once made a clean breast of it. The poor man was thereupon suspended from duty, and a week later summarily dismissed. I tried to make him every reparation in my power, and shortly after I procured him a billet at thirty shillings a week, but when I sent to his lodgings I found he had left. I heard afterwards he had gone into the country, where I hope by this time he has recovered his position. My case had yet to be dealt with, and as the Governor was not qualified to adjudicate on such a serious offence as this is considered, I was remanded to appear before the Visiting Justices. I heard terrible rumours of these avenging Solons, and of the floggings, solitary confinements, and other barbarities that followed in the wake of their fortnightly visits, and was prepared—but perfectly indifferent—for the worst. My information for the most part was derived from brother malefactors, and consequently likely to be considerably exaggerated. I found, indeed, that this was the case, and when the eventful day—Black Wednesday—arrived, I discovered that the dreaded justices were a full bench of Middlesex magistrates, my old friends who had smashed, pulverized, and otherwise annihilated Barnabas Amos on my representations, and who I hoped and believed were gentlemen capable of weighing the pros and cons of my peculiar case. My expectations were more than verified. The punishment cells, as I had had them described, and of which I hereafter got a bird’s-eye view—from *outside*—were not inviting abodes. There are twelve of them, fitted with double doors, warranted to preclude all sound from penetrating beyond. They contain no furniture, except a plank and a stool, both fixed to the floor, and the two blankets and rug that constitute the entire bed and bedding are issued every night and removed every morning. Water is supplied three times a day, and the food is stirabout and dry bread, administered on homoeopathic principles. Books there are none—indeed, the subdued light would make them superfluous; the occupants, moreover, have no employment, the distraction of oakum-picking even being fiendishly denied them. Men who had undergone this punishment told me that the effect was indescribable, this combination of gloom, idleness, and profound silence, and their wasted appearance after a fortnight’s incarceration fully confirmed their assertions. The penalty, as I was credibly informed, for sending a letter out was ten days at least in the punishment cells; and a preliminary I underwent of being carefully weighed on the morning of the eventful day raised the betting in my estimation to six to four on the cells. A kind friend expressed great sympathy for me, but feared I must make up my mind to this degrading punishment. But he was wrong; the weighing was superfluous, and I got off with a reprimand.

The Middlesex magistrates having heard the case, which was put before them in the kindest light by the Governor, and taking into consideration the dastardly act, whereby the offence was in a measure discovered, informed me through the chairman that they knew my position and were sorry for it, pointed out the gravity of my offence, and finished with an admonition—a treatment that only gentlemen could have accorded to such as I. This generosity induced me to register a mental vow that I would not abuse their kindness. I felt indeed as if I were on my parole; but the foolish act of an illiterate jailor—instigated, I suspect, by a vindictive snob—a few days after, armed with the authority, but incapable of discriminating between the treatment most likely to be deterrent to a man like myself and that desirable with a costermonger, turned me from my good resolutions. I saw it was a question of the “best man wins,” that confidence was a thing that never entered their heads, and that I had nothing to gain by passive submission. For the first and only time in my career I felt insulted, and determined henceforth to double my precautions, to evade every regulation, and to lose no opportunity of bribing everything and everybody with whom I came in contact. The act that decided me in this course was being formally searched. A few days after my admonition I was unexpectedly visited by two warders, and ordered to change everything I had on for a fresh supply, which they brought in. Meanwhile my cell was turned upside down. The salt was capsized into the plate; my bed minutely examined; the table and stool tapped and shaken; and matches struck and poked down the ventilators; and when they discovered I had neither pencil nor paper, I was left to readjust my apartment. As I said to them at the time, nobody in his senses would have supposed that a man who had so lately escaped a severe punishment would be such a fool as to incur the risk of possessing contraband articles. As a fact, I had got rid of all my combustibles a few days before; and if any of the officials can remember a stoppage in a certain drain about that time, they can make a pretty shrewd guess at what became of them. The above incident may, I hope, attract the notice of someone in authority, and be the means of giving a discretionary power to governors of prisons as regards the treatment of a certain class of prisoners. Sauce for the goose is not always sauce for the gander, and it’s for the authorities to decide whether certain results cannot be attained by tact that can never be assured by brutality.

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## PRISON TRADES.

A GREAT variety of trades are represented in Coldbath Fields—such as tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, worsted-workers, laundrymen, bakers, needlemen, basket-makers, mat-makers, printers, bookbinders, carpenters, plumbers, and glaziers. Of these mat-making and laundry-work are considered the hardest. The men selected for following any of the above vocations are looked upon as privileged individuals, and infinitely better off than the ordinary oakum-picker—a task that everyone has to submit to for one month, although many never get beyond it and its accompanying isolation during the two years of their imprisonment. A good deal of the comfort or otherwise with which these trades are followed depends on the warders in charge. If the warder is a brute, the prisoners become demoralized, crime is rampant, and reports and punishment the natural consequence. If he happens to be reasonable and just in his dealings, contentment reigns, the work is well done, and insubordination is unknown. I saw and heard a great deal in support of this assertion, and during my few months' retirement managed to poke my nose into a good many queer corners. The laundry bears an unenviable notoriety, both on account of the excessive hard labour and the brutality with which it is enforced. There are about sixty men employed in this department, who have severally to wash one or other of the following quantities daily:—30 shirts, 80 sheets, 200 towels, 500 pocket-handkerchiefs, 18 blankets, 250 pairs of socks. Such quantities would tax the capacity of an expert washerwoman; but when a novice—probably a clerk or respectable tradesman—is put to the task, its magnitude is at first insurmountable. Instead of 30 shirts, the poor wretch finds he cannot manage more than 5, which next day he succeeds in bringing up to 15. Meanwhile his hands become chafed and sore, and he sees the doctor in hopes of getting relief; but the doctor is powerless. A cut finger is not a serious complaint though probably a very painful one; and he has no alternative but to send him back. This in itself is considered as malingering; and the poor devil is brought before the Governor for idleness and feigning sickness, and is sentenced to one day's bread and water as a first offence. Should this "crime" be repeated, he gets an increased punishment, and is either flogged or sent to the punishment cells. This is no overcoloured description. A prisoner in such a case has neither justice nor any means of proving the injustice. Any report, however garbled, is necessarily believed; and if corroboration is necessary, a dozen turnkeys, from every part of the prison, will come forward, and emphatically endorse their comrade's charge. The prisoner meanwhile is not allowed to speak, and if he did would not be believed, and, as often happens with the lower classes, is actuated by fear, which only increases his apparent guilt.

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It is not the prison authorities that can be held responsible for this burlesque on justice, for more humane, honourable, and just men than the Governor and Surgeon of Coldbath Fields do not exist. It is the vile system that gives no discretionary power to these officials, and considers that a man once overtaken in a fault ought forthwith to be treated like a dog; and, not satisfied with this inhuman conclusion, deposes the carrying out of their system to a set of ignorant, cringing, underpaid warders and turnkeys—in many cases ill-conditioned by nature, and brutal, eye-serving, and untrustworthy by habit.

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One victim of this cruel system, that was undergoing fifteen months' imprisonment, worn out by work, constant reports, punishment, and illness, and who was refused permission to revert to oakum-picking in preference to remaining in the laundry, went back to his solitary cell one Saturday night, and in sheer desperation hanged himself; and Sunday morning found him suspended by his bed-straps from the bell-handle, cold and stone dead. Another lad of 18, who had been reported for talking, and sentenced to bread and water, took it so much to heart that on his cell door being opened about 2 P.M. he rushed past the turnkey, and threw himself over the railings. He was picked up insensible and taken to the hospital, when, incredible as it may appear, he was found to be absolutely uninjured, although he had jumped from a fifth storey and landed on a stone floor. On his dinner tin the unhappy youth had scratched, "Dear father and mother, brothers and sisters I wish you all good-bye and have 3 days cells and 3 days bread and water and pushed about. From A. Burke." The lad was thereupon brought before the visiting justices, and in consideration of his youth only got seven days in the punishment cells.

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It cannot be denied that great malingering and deception are practised by prisoners, which necessitates the greatest vigilance on the part of the officials. Nothing is commoner than for them to pretend attempted suicide; and instances are of frequent occurrence where a man, having calculated the time to a nicety, proceeds to hang himself as his door is being opened. These gentlemen are almost invariably flogged.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that justice is not meted out in the disposal of everyday offences. Discipline demands that the warders must be supported; and even if they are known to be lying or grossly exaggerating, "the system" necessitates their being believed. If, therefore, this humble stratum of humanity is supposed to be entitled to a particle of fair play, it calls for the immediate attention of Sir Edmund Du Cane. I would suggest the advisability of an experienced *ex parte* official being daily present at these orderly-room farces, who could watch the cases and weigh the evidence. Until this is done a prisoner has about as much prospect of justice as had Arabi before the arrival of Mr. Broadley. In this *résumé* of justice as administered at Coldbath Fields I must be permitted to disown all reflections on the Governor, for whom I have the profoundest respect. It is the system that I blame, and sympathize with a conscientious man being compelled by regulation to conform to its usages.

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About eighty men are employed as tailors; of these the best workmen are employed in the shop, the remainder doing piecework in their respective cells. They make the entire clothing for officers and prisoners for this and many other prisons. The work is exceptionally good—a fact not to be wondered at, considering they count amongst their ranks journeymen and cutters from many of the principal West-end houses. The basket-making is exceptionally good, and to a great extent made to the order of the leading shops; and the specimens of neat work I have seen quite surprised me. Mat-making is a severe type of hard labour. The daily task is one yard, and men who have been employed at it have assured me that it is very hard work. The mat-room is fitted with twelve looms for the make of the best doormats. The Government has a contract with Treloar, a shopkeeper in Ludgate; and as he is supposed to have a large connection, it may be assumed that reputedly honest feet are constantly being brought into contact with the work of dishonest hands.

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The bakery is worth a visit, if only to see the mountains of bread in course of preparation. In this place about twenty-four men are constantly employed putting in or taking out loaves from two huge ovens. All the bread, whether white or brown, is made in separate loaves of the average size of a penny roll; and when it is added that some 4000 of these are consumed daily, representing a gross weight of over half a ton, in Coldbath Fields alone (to say nothing of Holloway Gaol and the House of Detention, which are also supplied from here), some idea of the proportions of "our bakery" may be arrived at. The kitchen is, if anything, still more interesting. I have never seen anything to approach the size of the vats and utensils, unless, perhaps, in a pantomime scene representing Gorgeybuster the giant's *cuisine*. Everything is here cooked by steam, and excellent the cookery is. The soup, which is supplied three times a week, is exceptionally good. It finds its way from the kitchen in enormous tubs, and on arrival at the various wards is transferred into greasy, half-washed tins; still it does not lose its excellence, and I invariably enjoyed the soup. The usual amount made on soup days is about 200 gallons, and the daily quantity of potatoes consumed about 7 cwt. As may be supposed, certain farces and abuses have crept into this department. Specimens of the cookery are daily laid out for the inspection of the surgeon and Governor. If they should, however, omit this essential form, it is amply compensated for by the voracity of some of the head warders, who frequently sacrifice inclination at the shrine of duty and make a substantial meal during the tasting process. Beef-tea for the use of the patients is also made here—a brew that would be considerably strengthened by being doctored in the hospital kitchen instead of where it is. A pound of beef is the liberal allowance for each pint of beef-tea. The usual custom that prevails, however, is for the beef to be eaten, by those who ought to know better, and for Colonial meat to be substituted for it. I assert this advisedly, and offer it as the possible solution of the knotty problem of why complaints are of such frequent occurrence. Home Office papers, please copy! Despite all the assertions to the contrary, I freely confess I never found fault with the prison fare; and if one could keep one's thoughts from wandering to "Bignon's" or the "Café Helder," one could thoroughly enjoy the liberal fare. I experienced this dietary, pure and simple, for two or three months, so may be fairly considered capable of forming an opinion.

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The carpenters' and smiths' shops call for no special notice beyond the custom in vogue, whereby all men are carefully searched before returning to their cells. This is, no doubt, an essential ceremony, as turnkeys' scalping-knives, in the shape of chisels, might occasionally go astray, not forgetting the modest pencil, the most treasured possession of Her Majesty's prisoners.

The oakum shed finds employment for about a dozen men. In it piles of old rope are being continually chopped up, weighed, and tied into bundles varying from one to three pounds in weight. I have often seen van loads of this apparently worthless rope discharging cargo at this shed, and was surprised to see the same though quite unrecognisable rope leaving the prison a week or two after converted into the finest oakum, to be again utilized for the manufacture of rope.

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The paper room is the most original and interesting of the various institutions in this original and interesting place. I do not know if it lies in the route through which visitors are conducted, but if it does it will repay a minute inspection. Into this room the sweepings of the Houses of Parliament and the various Government Offices in the United Kingdom find their way. All old telegrams, after being kept six months at the General Post Office, are sent here to be destroyed,

to say nothing of old ledgers, directories, blue books, almanacks, etc.; in short, a heterogeneous mass of things useful and things useless, all higgledy-piggledy, to be sorted and torn into small pieces, and eventually converted into paper by Alderman Waterlow and his sons (these last named individuals do their share of the work at home). Amongst this pile the most valuable discoveries are of daily occurrence; and articles priceless in the estimation of a prisoner, such as pen-knives, boxes of cigarettes, butt-ends of cigars, writing paper, envelopes, novels, coins, pencils, and postage stamps, are hourly exhumed. About 200 men are employed in this department, whose duty is to tear up into small atoms a certain amount of waste paper daily. Of the above number some 20 of the most trustworthy (*i.e.*, those who are the greatest adepts in the art of secreting property about their persons) are employed in overhauling the supply, and delivering up contraband goods—that they may not require—before passing it to be manipulated by their less trustworthy *confrères*. Great precautions are supposed to be taken against the possibility of a prisoner appropriating any of this “treasure trove,” and they are each and all subjected to a minute examination before returning to their cells. That this search meets all the requirements of the case may be gleaned from the quantities of things that find their way into the prison. I was never without a capital pen-knife, and when I lost mine (or when it was stolen), as I did on more than one occasion, I never had any difficulty in procuring another. The stationery that I used for my “private” correspondence was invariably House of Commons paper, and, excepting perhaps being almost imperceptibly soiled, was as good as new. The traffic in tobacco through this agency is by no means inconsiderable, and before I had made my personal arrangements for a weekly supply I have frequently exchanged food for cigarettes; but they were far from satisfactory, and I found them infinitely better adapted for choking than chewing. Butt-ends of cigars, too, find a ready market; but at this point I invariably drew the line, and preferred—inventerated smoker though I am—to forego the luxury of chewing a cigar that had been half-masticated by some scorbutic quill-driver. The special trade that I was put to was worsted work. I was officially described as a “needleman,” a title I had more claim to than may appear at first sight. Needlemen are employed either in knitting stockings, making shirts, or darning blankets, shirts, or socks. I had the choice of any of these delectable pursuits, and selected the latter as the most easy of evasion. Darning burglars’ stockings, I admit, sounds a humble and unsavoury vocation; but considering they are boiled for about three days before passing into the needlemen’s hands, any antipathy on the subject must be attributed to sheer prejudice. Other motives also influenced me; it was far the lightest and most elastic job, and a reserve bundle I always kept in stock did me good service on the thimble rig principle. The allotted task was 15 pair a day *at least*, but thanks to my “reserve” (a far greater success than Mr. Cardwell’s), and “auxiliaries” of other kinds, I found that two pair and sometimes three a day met all the “requirements of the service.” The nature of my work amusingly exemplified Locke’s theory of the “Association of Ideas,” and I never took up a stocking without having vividly presented to my mind the scene in “Faust,” where Marguerite is bound to lame the wearer. I speak from personal knowledge, for one afternoon I experimentalized with one of my specimen repairs and blistered my foot for a month. I often had qualms of conscience as I saw the numerous men that were limping round at exercise—the number of whom appeared to increase in proportion to the quantity of stockings I darned—and I could not help feeling that I was the unintentional cause of all this misery. My deplorable incapacity in the Berlin wool and fancy line was once nearly getting me into a terrible scrape. Amongst the pedestrians that exercised at the same time as myself was an ex-convict and desperado, who prided himself on the recital of his past experiences, and who had undergone penal servitude in Australia and England almost without interruption during the past 20 years. He was a Hercules in appearance, addicted to the use of his fists on the slightest provocation, and about the last man whose susceptibilities one would care to offend. On his arrival some twelve months previously he had laid down some wholesome rules for the guidance of those whom it might concern. “I don’t want any ‘umbug as long as I’m ‘ere”—this was the burthen of his instructions. “I’ll do my work as well as I’m able, and you’ll allus find me willing and respec’ful-like; but if any of you attempts to bully or ‘umbug me I’ll cut your throats from ear to ear.” Conceive, then, my feelings on seeing this amiable creature one morning struggling with his stocking. A glance convinced me it was my handiwork. With a terrible oath, and livid with rage, he expressed a wish that he only knew the chap that had “fixed” his stocking. With an equally fervent but inaudible prayer I sincerely hoped he never would.

## CHAPTER XVIII. “THE OUTER WORLD.”

THE unfortunate *contretemps* that had indirectly associated me with the dismissal of a warder caused me to be looked upon for some time by his *confrères* with considerable distrust; it was generally understood, however, that I was not a man that could be bullied with impunity, and would unhesitatingly have reported any attempt of the kind. I attribute this diagnosis of my character to my bearing from the first. I made it a rule to be scrupulously courteous to the humblest turnkey if he showed an inclination to treat me civilly, whilst I ignored the position of those who attempted to hector over me, and convinced them by my manner that I looked on them as my inferiors. When I reflect on the bearing of the various officials towards other prisoners, I am at a loss to understand how I was permitted the latitude I was. I can only attribute it to that

moral and indefinable effect certain men of birth and education, and naturally arrogant in disposition, do and always will exercise, no matter how temporarily circumstanced, over their inferiors. This bearing asserted itself without my knowledge, and I had my likes and dislikes from the highest to the lowest. Thus I liked and respected the Governor, and ignored his deputy; I liked one chaplain, and cordially despised the other; I liked and venerated the kind old surgeon, which would be exaggerating my feelings regarding his assistant. None of my antipathies could probably instance any absolute case against me, yet they were respectively aware of my estimate of their merits. To remove this feeling of distrust amongst the turnkeys was by no means easy. I had to watch my opportunity to get into conversation, and then carefully to smuggle in "a word in season." This necessary formula was not unattended with risk, and I had to discover the disposition of my man and not say the wrong word in the wrong place. My knowledge of human nature gave me a considerable advantage in these negotiations; it was like playing blind-man's-buff with one eye exposed, and I soon had the measure of every official in the prison. Some nuts I admit to have found very difficult to crack, but they eventually yielded to treatment; others were hopeless cases, and some I labelled "dangerous" and carefully avoided. I had, however, attained my object; and wherever I went, or wherever I was located, I was always within "measurable distance" of one ministering angel, and often two. The principal cause of my unbroken success may be attributed to my having no confidants—my right hand literally knew not what my left was doing; and Jones, the turnkey, who lived in fear and trembling that Brown would suspect his trafficking with me, was a source of hourly anxiety to Brown, who dreaded Jones getting wind of his kindly interest in my affairs. I always assured these respective worthies that they had nothing to fear from me if they would only exercise ordinary discretion on their own parts, and as I was above the weakness of carrying about a fagot of pencils or cigars, it is hardly to be wondered at that diplomacy triumphed. Through one channel or another I heard everything that was going on, and was on more than one occasion amused by having repeated to me the special cautions that were issued regarding me. The Deputy Governor was no friend of mine; indeed I should be doing him an injustice if I omitted to state that he disliked me as cordially as I did him. He was of that pronounced military type associated in my mind with the Fifth West Indian Regiment, and suggested the idea of having been promoted from the adjutantcy of that distinguished corps to a company in a non-purchase regiment during the Cardwellite era. A switch, and an almost brimless pot hat, worn on one side, completed the picture of this typical sabreur. He apparently took a considerable interest in my affairs, and frequently asked questions, and gave wholesome advice to the turnkeys regarding their intercourse with me. "Have nothing to do with that man" was the burthen of his song, all of which was invariably repeated to me. His duties assimilated very much with those of a garrison Quarter-master, and he was supposed to poke about and discover dirt in impossible places; occasionally, however, they resembled those of a boatswain in H.M. navy; as, for example, at the flogging of garrotters, and the birching of little boys, when he counted the strokes. I had to be careful of this individual, for I am confident he had his suspicions about my little games; but it was the old story of the ironclad charging the outrigger, and with all the facilities at his disposal he was no match for me in a matter of finesse. To such a state of perfection had I now brought my arrangements, that everything of interest was at once known to me; and the hanging of Dr. Lamson, Prince Leopold's wedding, and the bombardment of Alexandria, all assisted in their turn to relieve the monotony of my existence. Nor was my system confined to gloomy Clerkenwell; but penetrated into the sanctity of the more fashionable Belgravia; and conversations of peculiar interest to me, that took place at table or in the privacy of the closet, and that I had a motive for hearing, were repeated to me within a day with a minuteness of detail that would astonish the gossipers. This is no idle boast, as documents and dates in my possession can and may testify. In short I was in telephonic communication with the outer world (registered number 594). But a master hand was required to keep this huge machinery in order, which, no sooner was it removed, than it crumbled to pieces. Within a week after my final departure, papers began to be picked up, and a scientific elaboration, incapable of detection, was degraded to the level and shared the same fate as the commonest pickpocket's ruse. The moral that is to be gleaned from all this is: If you wish a thing done *well*, do it yourself. I trust the sequel to my departure above narrated may afford a melancholy satisfaction to those interested, and convince them that no extra precautions are necessary to prevent the repetition of these innovations; the rules in force are amply sufficient for the ordinary prisoner. But my constitution, suffering from this severe strain, and assisted considerably by fever and ague, began to give way, and led to a change in my everyday life. In short I was ill, and admitted into hospital. As I ascended the stairs that led from the worsted wards I had the consolation of feeling I should not be forgotten. I had indeed left my mark; I had crippled half the prison.

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There are many abuses that might be changed with advantage, and which I cannot do better than point out, in hopes that somebody in authority will read, mark, and inwardly digest them. On each cell door is a card setting forth your name, sentence, and full particulars. This placarding of one's name is surely useless, as one is never called by it, and the only object it appears to serve is to enable prisoners to discover all about one another. My cell was once situated on the high road to the chapel, and every malefactor *en route* to worship made it his business to master my history. This surely is unfair, and hardly contemplated by the authorities. If it is absolutely essential that one's name is to be placarded, why not inside instead of outside the door, as was the custom before the Government took over the prisons?

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Too much at present is left to the turnkeys. They are, indeed, the channel of communication and the only official with whom the ordinary prisoner comes in contact. The chief warder deposes details to the principal warders of divisions, who in their turn confide them to the warders of

wards, who again leave the carrying out to the turnkeys of flights. It is not fair that so much should be left to these assistants—which, despite any assertion to the contrary, is the case—and who, though counting in their ranks many highly respectable men, have also some desperate rascals—vindictive, deceitful, and utterly unfit for any discretionary powers, and who would stick at no degree of brutality if capable of being indulged in with impunity.

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The use of the same baths by prisoners and men previous to medical examination cannot be too strongly deprecated. That a clean man should be compelled to risk contagion with one suffering from itch or covered with vermin is as filthy as it is disgraceful. With all the space at their disposal the wonder is a swimming bath has never commended itself.

Every warder in charge of a ward has a prisoner allotted to him, who performs such necessary duties as cleaning his office and assisting him in his multifarious returns. These men are generally selected from the clerk or tradesman class, and have great facilities for knowing everything that passes through the office. I have found, indeed, that they know and hear a great deal too much.

Thus a descriptive return containing every particular about one from one's youth up, and supposed to be a confidential document, is carefully studied by these cleaners, and facts likely to be of general interest—especially about "celebrities"—go the round of the prison. These documents should either *not* be in the warders' charge, or if so, should be carefully locked up. In my opinion they would be more appropriately assigned to the care of the principal warders of divisions. These cleaners, if dishonestly or greedily inclined, appropriate considerably more than their share of the daily rations. In one ward I seldom, or ever, got my supply of Monday bacon, which had either been filched or bitten in half; and as the original supply does not exceed the proportions of a postage stamp, it can ill afford this wholesale reduction.

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I cannot leave the subject of "warders" without bearing my testimony to their excellency as a class—I specially refer to those in charge of wards, and not to their washerwomen and plumbers and glaziers *confrères*. The multiplicity of returns they have to render daily, the alterations, however trivial, that are constantly occurring and have to be noted, and the serious consequences attending the slightest error or omission, all combine to make their duties and responsibilities more arduous than any class of men I have seen. Their pay for this, moreover, is so small—29s. a week, with a gradual rise—that many otherwise excellent men shrink from accepting promotion. The colour-sergeants of the army might learn a lesson from these warders, and if the "descriptive return" in use, and which supplies every information, was substituted for the ponderous ledgers, small books, defaulter sheets, etc., as used in the army, it would come like the Waverley pen—

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As a blessing and boon to sergeants and men.

## CHAPTER XIX. "THE CONVALESCENT WARD."

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ON my admission into hospital I was at first sent to the convalescent ward, a huge room devoted to light and unpronounced cases. It accommodates 40 patients, and the entire furniture may be roughly estimated as consisting of 40 beds, 40 tables, 40 chairs, one shovel and tongs, and one thermometer. The beds are ranged round the entire room, the tables and chairs a yard apart forming two rows down the centre; the thermometer is suspended from a beam, the shovel is chained to one fire-place, and the tongs to the other. A high desk and a still higher stool complete the furniture of this singular room. The fixtures are of a more unique kind; at one end are the cabinets, at the other the lavatories. These are simply boarded partitions, extending only about three feet from the ground—so constructed as to make it absolutely impossible to conceal more than one-third of the body, however engaged; thus admirably adapted for observation, but utterly regardless of privacy or decency, and revolting in their proximity to a room devoted to convalescents. Along the walls here and there are chains hanging. These are the alarm bells for communicating with the outer yard in case of fire, mutiny, or other emergency. At each corner are the padded cells—grim, sombre constructions—admirably adapted for deadening sound, and fitted with every appliance for the restraint of violent and demented criminals. The proximity of these cells is very awful, and the shrieks that occasionally emanate from them, and the sights I have seen, would have filled me with horror six months previously. The treatment of convalescents is as original as can well be conceived. The day is mapped out into the following portions, which are observed with a punctuality seldom attained except by chronometers:—

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6 A.M.	Rise, and roll up your bed.
6.30 ,,	Breakfast.
11 ,,	Visit by surgeon.
12 (noon)	Dinner.
3 to 4 P.M.	Exercise.
5 ,,	Supper.

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The dietary is the simple prison fare, although many (I amongst others) are on what is known as ordinary diet—*i.e.*, cocoa, mutton broth, and a chop—and others on low diet, consisting of tea, bread-and-butter, beef-tea, rice pudding, etc. Discipline is little or nothing relaxed here; indeed the general system is evidently based on what is considered applicable to confirmed patients not suffering from any acute disease, and lunatics real and pretended. Shortly after rising a shout of “Physic!” causes a rush to get the first pull at one’s respective medicines; and as the same mug does duty for everything, and as time is an object, it has been found that a dose of hop mixture is not improved if augmented by the dregs of the black draught left by one’s predecessor. Being always up and washed whilst my brother-reprobates were still dozing, I was invariably the first to benefit by a clean mug, and devoted the next few minutes to watching the frowsy cluster of depravity, half dressed, half awake, and just out of bed, drink or throw away their doses as opportunity permitted. Although strictly prohibited, many of these wretches usually turned in with their stockings on, and in some instances with their trowsers; and on rising, having previously assumed boots and vest, proceeded to wash. I minutely watched this ceremony, and seldom detected the slightest desire to do more than make clean the extreme outer rim of their cups and platters, extending—humanly speaking—from the hand to the elbow, and from the chin to the ear. Although in many respects preferable to the prison proper, this convalescent ward was one of the severest ordeals I had to undergo. I would not have missed it for the world, nevertheless, to sleep, live, move, and have one’s being amongst thirty or forty pickpockets, idiots, burglars, and lunatics, implies an experience that baffles description. At 6.30 the advent of two wash-tubs, containing respectively cocoa and gruel, announces breakfast, which, being carefully measured into tins, is consumed in an incredibly short time, and devoured with the voracity never to be seen except in menageries or prisons. It must be remembered that the room contains specimens of some of the sharpest pickpockets in London, and experts at every dodge for the deceiving of their fellows, compelled by circumstances to be huddled together, and relieved from the isolation of separate cells that makes them comparatively powerless for mischief. It cannot be wondered at, then, that the rules require, if anything, to be more stringent; but all the vigilance of the sharpest warder is powerless, and no two eyes capable of seeing or preventing the wholesale exchange of food that now begins. If the warder is looking this way, a loaf will change hands for a mug of gruel in the twinkling of an eye; if he suddenly turns round, advantage is taken of it to swap something on the other side; and at dinner hour especially, I have seen bread, potatoes, and lumps of meat flying about with a rapidity, precision of aim, and a profound silence, only disturbed by the “flop, flop,” as they reached the various hands, that would have done credit to the most expert Oriental-Whitechapel juggler. After breakfast everyone is supposed to remain at his table without interruption the entire day, except during exercise, and time is only to be beguiled by reading such wholesome literature as “The Converted Burglar, and how he did it,” as the chaplain may be graciously pleased to supply. At the side of each table is considerably placed a handful of fibre, which is purely optional whether picked or no. I attribute its presence indeed to the association that invariably exists in official minds between hospitals, chapels, and mortuaries, and only capable of being dealt with on the principle that a certain old gentleman “finds some mischief still for convalescent hands to do.”

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Happily no one really is ill in the convalescent ward (he would then be removed to the hospital), or it would be absolutely impossible to bear the incessant fuss from officials and filth from the prisoners that never cease day or night. Not twenty minutes elapse during the twenty-four hours that someone is not passing through; and as every approach is barricaded and double locked, the rattle of keys, the hobnailed boots of head warders pounding over the floor, and the shouting and yelling, and the necessity of “sitting up” to your table as they pass through, make it almost unbearable for even a convalescent. In addition to this is the absolute necessity of keeping one’s eye on one’s next-tabled neighbour. If you turn round during a meal, a piece of food disappears, and any trifle you may happen to possess cannot be considered your own from one moment to another. I had a worsted needle that I prized considerably; it fulfilled the duties of a toothpick, and had been my constant companion and comforter for weeks. It was, indeed, my most cherished possession. I usually kept it inside my cap, and my cap outside my head; here at least it was safe, but one day, in a fit of absence, I crossed over the room. On my return I discovered that my cap had been rifled and the needle gone.

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An old man (though only one of many) added considerably to my burthen. He took a great fancy to me—or my food—and seldom lost a chance of persecuting me. He was never without a pocket-handkerchief stuffed full of crusts, chop bones, suet pudding, or any garbage he could find, firmly clutched by day, and placed under his pillow at night. He was by way of being a gentleman, and said, with some degree of truth, that he was a general officer (he was at present undergoing three months’ retirement for stealing a sovereign from a sixpenny lodging-house keeper). He approached one with the blandest smile, hoped you were not seriously ill, and asked how your appetite was. This, indeed, was the burthen of his song:—If you told him it was bad, he begged you to kindly reserve your fragments for him; if you said it was good, he stole what he could. The result was consequently the same; and so to get rid of him I promised to help him when I could. This nasty old man slept two beds from me, and often during the night, “when everything was still,” I have watched him unpack his treasure, and, selecting certain of the stalest pieces for immediate use, carefully tie up and restore the bundle to beneath his pillow or mattress.

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This hoarding and stealing of food was by no means confined to the “General”; it was, indeed, so much in vogue that periodical raids were made on the beds, and even inside the shirts men were

wearing, which invariably resulted in the exhumation of sundry delicacies. So strong was the ruling passion that one wretch with half a lung, who was allowed extras which he never consumed, rather than part with a crumb, would hide chops and even rice pudding in his pocket-handkerchief and towel, or secrete them in his bedding or about his person.

That food was a drug in the market may be reasonably assumed; and if further proof was wanting, the reckless waste that took place after meals would amply provide it. The supplies of soup, porridge, cocoa, and gruel were invariably in excess of the regulation personal allowance. Discipline, however, demanded that so much and no more should be given to each man; and I have seen gallons of capital soup and cocoa thrown down the sink daily that many a starving wretch outside would gratefully have devoured. I do not blame the hospital warders for this custom so much as the kitchen officials for either sending too much or adding too much water, for experience had taught them that it was equally dangerous to give more or less than the regulation allowance, and that they would probably be reported by one thief, if another thief got more than himself; and it was a common occurrence for vagrants who had never heard of arrowroot before coming to Coldbath to complain of the thinness of their nightly allowance as "unfit to be eaten." I once suggested to the head hospital warder (but my proposal was never carried out) that the staple food of discontented vagrant invalids should be treacle and brimstone, and that if they complained of their diet, the treacle should be omitted by way of variety.

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I don't know what is the annual expense of food, fuel, and gas in the various prisons, but I confidently assert that an immense saving would result if the coal at present issued *ad lib.* for the use of the warders was as carefully weighed as the prisoners' various allowances. These turnkeys, whose supply of coal at home is probably limited to half a hundred a week, cannot here do without fires banked up a foot high night and day in the various corridors; and I have often been awakened in various parts of the prison by the shovelling and piling on of coals on even temperate nights. I should like no better billet than to be appointed contractor for the coal and potatoes used and wasted in Her Majesty's prisons.

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Another means of keeping down the present excessive expenses connected with prisoners' keep and warders' coals would be the adoption of the sensible course pursued in France, whereby the clothes of murdered men and the instruments with which the murders have been committed, if not claimed within three months, are sold by public auction. This might be supplemented by the sale of the articles found in cabs and elsewhere, often comprising objects of considerable value, and at present taken to Scotland Yard and never claimed. It will possibly be urged that all this would be opposed to English tastes and ideas; and yet it is an incontrovertible fact that the principal purchasers at these "art" sales in Paris are English and Americans, that the price of articles which have belonged to notorious criminals generally runs very high, and that the ghastly relics for the most part find their way to England.

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Exercise was a most ridiculous ceremony; the tables were pushed back, and everyone proceeded round and round in two rings. A scene I once saw at some theatre, representing the "casual ward" of a workhouse, more nearly resembles it than anything I can think of.

Amongst my numerous companions in this delectable sport was a celebrated pickpocket; who was good enough on my invitation to show me "how it's done." My request, indeed, appeared to flatter his vanity so much that on more than one occasion, when I was not thinking of his particular talent, he has removed my pocket-handkerchief, and politely returned it as if pretending to pick it up. I once saw him bring his science to bear on a thoughtless warder, who, through ignorance probably of his special talent, had asked him to brush him down. A wink from the thief drew my attention to his movements, and I watched him with profound interest. For some seconds he confined himself to the legitimate brushing, but as he worked round and the arm of his victim was slightly raised, with the unemployed hand he deliberately opened the warder's pouch, took out a piece of tobacco, and then quietly re-buttoned it; with another smudge of the brush and "I think that'll do, sir," he resumed his place. I wouldn't have betrayed him for the world; indeed, I gave him some bread for the exhibition.

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It was pretty generally known that I was very green, and that I was anxious to see everything; indeed, I never lost an opportunity of conversing with everyone capable of telling me an adventure; so that one way and another I heard a lot, much of which I shall hereafter narrate.

Another oddity with whom I was associated was a kleptomaniac. Nothing was safe from him, and his eye was as quick as his hand. He might be seen at all hours sneaking about, thrusting his arm between mattresses and occasionally into people's pockets. He was undergoing two years' imprisonment for stealing *two ounces of tobacco*. So impossible was it for him to keep his hands from picking and stealing that it was frequently necessary to lock him into a separate cell for weeks at a time, only to be released after piteous appeals and promises not to offend again, which were invariably broken on the first opportunity. He was as nimble as a cat, and occasionally gave an acrobatic performance on the sly. The poor wretch was admittedly an imbecile, and it seems inexplicable how he ever incurred the punishment he received, though he was probably happier at Coldbath than he was ever likely to be elsewhere. One day he could not be found, and after the hue-and-cry had been raised and the prison and grounds scoured, he was found concealed in a tank on a portion of the roof. What he could have wanted there is beyond comprehension, for he dreaded the water and never washed unless compelled.

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I've heard a great deal of prisoners escaping, and from the penal establishments it is unquestionably practicable. At a prison conducted, however, on the Coldbath Fields' principle

such an idea is simply absurd. I do not refer to the impediments of locks and doors so much as to the full blaze of light system along the corridors. The constant countings, too, and patrols night and day would at once discover the truant, to say nothing of the 20-foot wall that surrounds the building. I have occasionally read descriptions of escapes from the Bastille, where prisoners with a yard of rope, a spare shirt, and an oyster knife, have burrowed and scaled and got clean off. I am not in a position to dispute these assertions, but I will willingly undertake to provide the most expert acrobat with a sack full of ropes, crowbars, and linen, *in* his cell, and stake my existence that he does not proceed five feet beyond his premises without detection. The escape of a notorious burglar from Millbank Convict Prison last year gave rise at the time to considerable discussion amongst the officials at Coldbath Fields. That a man should be able to break through the roof of a cell during the early hours of morning without creating a disturbance seems incredible, and had the corridors had the same acoustic properties as those at Coldbath, would have been simply impossible without collusion.

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COUNTING.

So extraordinarily is sound conveyed in these vast and barren tunnels that every word spoken during the night at the other end of the passage is distinctly audible, whereas conversation close by is almost unintelligible, so great is the echo. I think Mr. Burglar Lovell may congratulate himself that he had not been relegated to Coldbath Fields, for he would most assuredly have derived less benefit there from his sixty feet of rope than he appears to have done at Millbank. A prisoner attempting to escape forfeits all the time he may have completed of his sentence—a sufficient deterrent for a sane man! A very disgusting adjunct to the convalescent ward is “Itch Bay,” and though comparatively distinct, is actually next door, and leads from it. It is devoted to those filthy creatures who, on admission, are found to abound in vermin, or who, after months in prison—as can be verified—have caught the disease (according to my theory) by using the universal bath. The treatment of this complaint can hardly be said to be a pleasant, although undoubtedly a very effectual one. A man is taken to “the bay,” made to strip off all his clothes, put into a separate cell, and smeared with a thick coating of mercurial ointment, and left to soak for three days at least, and often longer. His bedding may best be described as an ointment mattress, with “blankets to match,” so saturated is everything in this fearful quarter, the stench from which pervades the passage, and works into the convalescent ward. I used almost daily to see these loathsome objects, either before admission or after three days’ retirement, and it is difficult to say which is the most revolting. On admission, and previous to treatment, I have seen three or four of these unclean things waiting to be admitted. During this time—often an hour and more—they sit in the convalescent ward, use the furniture, and circulate with the others. This surely is wrong, and may justly be laid to the charge of negligent warders! On leaving they are again taken through the ward, devoid of all covering but the saturated blanket, and conducted to a bath. This bath is a fixture in the hospital kitchen. Yes, the *itch bath* in the principal prison of civilized London is *in the hospital kitchen*! I have seen these social pariahs splashing about within a few feet of the kitchen fire, whilst a rice pudding was being made—an appetizing accompaniment to the preparation of human food. This gross outrage on cleanliness must fairly be charged to the Home Office people; and as the kitchen is situated in the main thoroughfare, and passed through almost daily by visiting justices or prison commissioners, it is clearly no official’s business to point it out—and if a surgeon represented it he would probably be told to mind his own business. This is in conformity with prison usage, and anyone mentioning, or taking apparent interest in a trifle not actually connected with his special department, is at once suspected of some sinister motive. I have heard officials regret this disgusting institution, and their inability to remedy it.

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I have more horrors connected with this kitchen to mention when I describe the hospital, and hope some one whose business it is will redress this crying shame. As a set-off to the many discomforts attending the convalescent ward, were the facilities it offered for the uninterrupted working of the telephone, and so multifarious were the opportunities, and so utterly impossible detection, that I omitted the commonest precautions as absolutely superfluous. My favourite time for correspondence was between two and four in the morning. I noticed that nature usually asserted itself on turnkey humanity, and that the most watchful became drowsy about this time. It must be remembered that a night warder is in the room all night, and that the gas, though turned down, is alight. I frequently wrote for two hours at a time, and as my bed was next the fire-place I had the advantage of poking it into a blaze as circumstances required. I often wondered whether these watch-dogs were really dozing. That they had not the faintest suspicion

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I am confident; the very possibility of such coolness may possibly have disarmed them, for I have written for hours under their very noses. One night I had a considerable scare. I had been carried away by the interest of my letter, and whether I had thought aloud and some word had escaped me I cannot say, but on peeping round the mantelpiece I saw one of the most ferocious of the tribe—who was on duty that night—leaning forward and peering in my direction. His eyes glistened like a cheetah's as he cautiously approached the fire-place—the mantelpiece and one bed alone separated our respective positions, the rattle of a paper, or a hurried motion, would have been fatal; so, proceeding to mutter in my sleep, I slid my arm over a very damning pile. For some moments he stood intently watching me, and then happily began to poke the fire. Had he delayed much longer I should inevitably have betrayed myself; as it was, the noise "justified" my being disturbed, and I rolled round, "papers under," as *Bell's Life* would once have described a pugilistic round. The danger was now past, but I had quite determined, if he had asked me any unpleasant questions, to have made a dash at the fire-place and destroyed the evidence. There is a curious invention that exists in various parts of the prison. Detector-clocks are intended to show that a warder must have been alert every half-hour, by being required to press down a pin. This pin is so constructed that it cannot be let down except at the exact time, or unless the clock is unlocked. These various clocks undergo a minute inspection the following morning, and if all the pins are not down the delinquent is fined a shilling, or even more, for each omission. I could tell some curious stories about these detector clocks, but their narration might be interpreted as pointing in directions I have no intention of indicating. I may, however, without compromising anyone, state that if the authorities conceive they are aware of the exact number of keys that open these clocks, they are considerably out of their reckoning.

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"My eye, old man," I one morning said to an acquaintance, "you've missed two or three pins."

"Never mind," he replied; "I've got a pal outside that'll make it all right before I'm relieved."

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At 6.30, when my friend was, I hope, comfortably in bed, I saw the Detector inspected and found "correct."

On one occasion a friend kindly supplemented the rubbishy literature provided by the chaplain by lending me to read the book of "Rules for the Guidance of Warders and Assistant-Warders." They can hardly be said to be as interesting as those lately published by Howard Vincent for the guidance of the police, although, situated as I was, they were to me vastly more important. I had intended to have produced them verbatim, but they are not of sufficient general interest. They, however, deal with the various duties of warders in that absurd style which attempts to impress on them the responsibility and general respectability of what, if carried out in its integrity, is a contemptible system of espionage.

## CHAPTER XX. CRIMINAL LUNATICS.

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IN one of the padded cells was a dangerous lunatic. For weeks and months he had kept up an incessant conversation with himself, occasionally diversified by shrieks and yells. At first it was believed the man was shamming, and he was taken before the visiting justices and sentenced to be flogged, but this usually infallible cure had not the desired effect. Clothes were converted into rags in an incredibly short space of time. He was handcuffed in front, and still they were destroyed. He was handcuffed behind with the same result. On his door being opened he would be found naked, the handcuffs on the floor, and his clothes in shreds. Canvas sacks, with slits for the head and hands, were suggested, and, first clothed, then handcuffed with his hands behind him, and finally covered with the huge sack, he was again consigned to the cell. The same result, however, invariably followed, and the kind-hearted doctor, despairing of cure, and though inwardly convinced it was an artfully contrived sham, yet loth to persist in the stringent remedies that alone were effectual, gave him the benefit of the doubt, and consigned him to the Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Hanwell. I have frequently seen this maniac fed. His door was opened and he was brought out, and, half-naked and handcuffed, bleared, filthy, and bleeding from self-inflicted injuries, with dishevelled hair, and glaring like a panther, this wild beast in human form would open his mouth, and gruel and bread be shovelled in bounteously. Attempts would occasionally be made to induce him to wash, but at best they were qualified successes, and the assistance of four or five turnkeys had eventually to be resorted to. It was impossible to believe this being was sane and capable of keeping up the deception for such a time. Sleep was out of the question, for night was made hideous by the muffled shouts and blasphemies that forced themselves through the padded cell. But a reprieve at length came, and it was with a sense of relief that I one morning saw him taken off to Hanwell. The lull, however, was not of long duration; and he was eventually sent back as "cured." The cure showed itself in a curious way. On finding himself again in his old quarters, and smarting under a pretended sense of breach of faith, he raved that the doctor at Hanwell had promised to release him if he withdrew his claim to the crown of Ireland. And now a reign of terror began in earnest, and shouting for Parnell, his secretary, the Empress Eugenie, and Old Ireland, he raved and roared day and night. How human nature could bear such a strain appeared marvellous. One night all was calm. "Thank goodness!" I thought, "he's collapsed." Had he? The wish, alas! was father to the thought, and the lull was only the precursor of the storm. Whilst we were sleeping the maniac was maturing his plans, and a shout

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of "Fire!" one night reminded us of his proximity. Smoke was now issuing from the padded cell. To draw back the ponderous bolts was the work of a second. To distinguish anything was absolutely impossible. Blinding smoke filled the cell, and as it poured out a terrible sight presented itself. On the floor was the charred mattress, the horse-hair alight, and the plank bed smouldering, and peacefully lying beside it was the madman. The first idea was that he was dead, but the smoke that would have killed a sane man had but temporarily stupefied him. In an instant he was on his feet, and, his arms being free, made a desperate attack with pieces of glass on the two men who had humanely approached him. Further help was now sent for, during which time he kicked, struck, and bit everything within reach, and it required sixteen men to secure and remove this wild beast in human form. The extent of his mischief now made itself apparent. How he had removed the handcuffs remains a mystery, but with the cunning and dexterity only to be found in maniacs, he had succeeded in reaching the gas, which, situated ten feet from the ground, and protected by a strong glass, must have taxed his ingenuity, not only to reach, but eventually to open, and yet this had been done so quietly that forty men and a watchful warder in the adjoining room heard nothing. With the fire now at his disposal, he had burnt the straps that were lashed round his body to secure the sack, but finding the effect not sufficiently expeditious, had proceeded to pull out the bed-stuffing, and lying down naked, bruised, and bleeding, beside the smouldering mass, calmly awaited the conflagration that was to free him. The cell presented an extraordinary appearance. On the floor were broken glass, burning wood, and his clothes torn to shreds; here the handcuffs, there the charred straps: the walls were smeared with filth and dabbed with porridge; the plank bed was torn up, and plaster and brickwork removed: a terrible wreck, an incredible performance, and all the work of two hands, handcuffed behind and strapped, and surrounded by every precaution that official ingenuity could suggest.

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This final escapade materially assisted the magisterial finding as to the extent of the maniac's "cure," and he was again consigned to Hanwell.

Another lunatic of a different type was an inmate of the convalescent ward, a harmless, inoffensive creature, that had been flogged out of his senses. His physique proclaimed him incapable of doing bodily harm to a calf. He was not more than five feet high, with a fore-arm like a robin's thigh, and the receding forehead, sunken eye, and conical skull associated with imbecility; but he had once "threatened" a warder, a hulking, round-shouldered old woman, that might have squeezed the life out of him without turning a hair, and discipline demanded he should be reported, and the visiting justices sentenced him to be flogged. From that day he never spoke, and would sit for hours without moving; suddenly he would break out into an immoderate fit of laughter, to be immediately followed by a paroxysm of grief, and, laying his head on the table, would sob like a child. Nothing appeared likely to restore his naturally limited intellect, and the country will be at the expense of keeping this "dangerous criminal" for another twelvemonth, who would be infinitely more at home at Earlswood Asylum for Idiots. A perfect child occupied another of these hospital cells, an incorrigible young scamp of about fourteen, that nothing seemed capable of taming. Everything within reach he proceeded to destroy, and clothes supplied him in the morning were in shreds at night. He, too, was constantly handcuffed; he refused to eat, and for a week nothing passed his lips. One day, on his door being opened, he was found suspended by a bed-strap from the bell-handle: another second, and life would have been extinct. For this he was taken before the visiting justices and birched. It had, however, no deterrent effect, and up to the time of his release he remained the same incorrigible young ruffian. There is no hope for such a lad; his future is bound to be a repetition of many instances I saw amongst the adults, who had commenced a career of crime with birchings, followed by three and five years in a reformatory, and ending with imprisonment and eventually penal servitude. Another companion that was the source of occasional anxiety, had been an inmate of a lunatic asylum, and though usually quiet, was subject to extraordinary fits. The first intimation of one coming on was a demoniacal groan, and in an incredibly short time a space was cleared round him. It had been found, indeed, that nothing could arrest the first paroxysm, and on the "band beginning to play," a stampede invariably ensued: and not without cause, for everything within reach became an instant wreck, and tables, chairs, books, and (when procurable) arms and noses, were ruthlessly attacked by hands, feet, and teeth. When comparatively restored it took six or eight men to remove him into a cell, and the only thing that appeared to rouse him was the presence of the priest. So efficacious was this remedy that when everything else failed, the Roman Catholic chaplain was invariably sent for, and in a moment oil appeared to be thrown on the troubled waters, and the maniac arose subdued, and clothed in his right mind. Here was a religion that appeared to appeal to the feelings, and to produce results never attained by brow-beating and personality—a lesson to be laid to heart, and worthy of imitation, though in the quarter it was most needed it was, I fear, utterly thrown away. Personally this influence did not surprise me, for though debarred, by being a Protestant, from coming into actual contact with the priest, I was considerably struck, and almost fascinated, by the kind smile and friendly salutation he had for all his co-religionists. An Italian by nationality, with all the refinement of manner habitual to his countrymen, this polished gentleman was a pronounced contrast to the fire-and-brimstone snob occasionally met with in the "Established" ranks.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### PRISON CELEBRITIES.

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I WAS surprised at the number of respectable men—such as solicitors, an ex-officer of Guards, a bank manager, a man of title, stockbrokers, cashiers, ex-officers of the army and navy, clerks, clergymen, etc.—in Coldbath Fields. Some of these had quite lost (supposing they ever had any) their pristine semblance of respectability; others, again, retained the appearance of persons of education, and spoke and deported themselves as such. A lamentable instance of the fatal effect of associating with the scum, and the ease with which a young man of good position can acquire the style and appearance of a vagrant, was exemplified in young B—. He was not more than 25 or 26, had been a subaltern in the — Guards, and came, moreover, of a good county stock; and yet in six short months he had so far degenerated as to be punished on the day his sentence expired for stealing a loaf from a fellow prisoner.

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A worthy old man with grey hair and venerable appearance, and who might have passed for the chairman of a board of directors, appeared every morning at mine and other cells in the passage with a dust-pan, and with methodical precision removed the sweepings. He told me he had been a solicitor with a large connection, with chambers in — Street, and had a wife and grown-up family in a comfortable house in a well-known suburb. His imprisonment was perceptibly telling on him, and his hair and beard grew whiter every day.

A bustling, business-like man, one day attracted my attention. He was connected with the stores, and brought me a new pair of boots. He had been the manager of a London bank, and undergoing retirement for six months for some error regarding the ownership of £300.

A tall, smart-looking man that was pointed out to me, was, I was informed, an individual who attained notoriety some two years ago over a mining scheme. He was suffering two years' incarceration for a miscalculation of over £7000.

A man who called himself Count H—, and an ex-convict to boot, was languishing for a year, because certain noblemen had had the bad taste to object to his having obtained money from them by false pretences. This nobleman! had a mania for petitioning the Home Office (I will give a specimen of his style hereafter).

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In addition to these, numerous individuals who had been gentlemen in their day were known to me by sight. Conspicuous amongst them, was an old jail bird and ex-convict, who had 20 years ago been a captain in the army, and ever since had existed (and still is) in prison, for terms of seven, five, five, two, and one years. All the starch had been thoroughly wrung out of him, though he occasionally stood on a dilapidated kind of dignity. I once asked him where a friend of his had gone. He replied, "I don't know; we don't speak now; he's no gentleman. Will you believe it, he had the impertinence to doubt my word." As his word had been doubted a good many times during the past 20 years, I was considerably amused by this assumption of dignity.

Many prisoners are under the impression that they have only to petition the Home Office to procure a remission of their sentence. It seems perfectly immaterial to them, whether they have the slightest grounds for this assumption or not, and it frequently happens that, instead of mitigating their offence, they put matters in a more unfavourable light by airing their grievances, whilst others make a rambling statement referring to every subject but the one particularly concerning themselves.

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Count H— was a specimen of this class. He was undergoing a well-merited 12 months' imprisonment for defrauding the Dukes of S— and M— and other noblemen of sums of money, by representing himself as the son of some individual, which he certainly was not. It is, of course, possible that he may (to use a vulgar expression) have been "changed at nuss," though the fact that he had previously undergone five years' penal servitude for a similar offence minimizes the probability that he was acting under a misapprehension. The Count! had no sooner taken up his quarters than he expressed a desire to petition the Home Secretary. A "form" being supplied him, which he retained four days, eventually reappeared so blurred and smeared with blots and erasures that its transmission was impossible. A second attempt was more successful, and the following exhaustive specimen of penmanship and veracity struggled up to the Home Office, and eventually struggled back:—"That your petitioner, on being discharged from Pentonville Convict Prison, at the expiration of five years' penal servitude, found that certain moneys and property, valued at several hundred pounds, had been stolen by his agent, who collected his rent on his estates in Italy; that being at that time without funds to go abroad, he had written to the Duke of S— and Duke of M— and others, asking for a loan until he received his rents. That his father really was Count H— and a friend of these noblemen, and that the charge of false pretences was consequently incorrect. That he had held diplomatic appointments, and been decorated for gallant service, and that he possesses a coronet with S.P.Q.R., all of which clearly proves his identity. In conclusion, your petitioner appeals to you with confidence as a lawyer of renown, and a scion of the noble house of Vernon.—Signed, H—."

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I have corrected "the Count's" spelling as far as possible; the logic and composition were, however, past redemption. The rogue evidently knew the Home Secretary's claim to "Royal descent," as delicately hinted at in the concluding paragraph.

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Another individual petitioned against his hair and beard being cut, on religious grounds, and quoted the Law of Moses as forbidding these formalities. This specimen did not, I believe, leave the establishment.

I was frequently struck by the vast difference in the sentences awarded in what appeared to me to be parallel cases, and tried in vain to discover any system that might be supposed to regulate

them. It cannot be denied that a great difference of opinion exists apparently amongst judges on the subject of crimes and their punishment, and that whereas one judge will administer justice with harshness, another will attain the same desirable end with a regard to humanity. With these respective characteristics, the criminal classes are thoroughly conversant, and it would astonish the Bench if they heard how accurately their respective peculiarities are summed up. Thus one judge is credited with being very severe on conspiracy and long firm cases, whilst another is supposed to be "down" on burglars, whilst it is generally conceded that a plea of guilty will invariably fare better than one of not guilty. For my own part I fancied I had noticed that conspiracy is considered the most serious offence, and that two men conspiring to defraud another of £50 will run the risk of a severer punishment than the individual who unaided steals £500.

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I will quote a few first offences which, apparently similar, differ considerably as regards their sentences:—

(a) A solicitor for passing a forged cheque for £18 that had been paid to him: 18 months' imprisonment with hard labour.

(a) A bank manager for appropriating £300: six months' imprisonment with hard labour.

(b) A wine merchant for complicity in a forged cheque, £52: sentence, 18 months' imprisonment with hard labour.

(b) A commission agent for forging a £600 bill of exchange: 12 months' imprisonment with hard labour.

(c) A clerk (with twenty years' good character and recommended to mercy), for forging £50 and stealing employer's cheque: sentence, twenty months' imprisonment with hard labour.

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(c) A City man, for a fraudulent mining scheme and forgery, whereby he obtained £7000: sentence, two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

(d) A shopman, for robbing his employer of £50: sentence, three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

(d) A beggar boy, for stealing 1s. 6d.: sentence, three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

There are men in Coldbath whose cards show upwards of seventy previous convictions, varying from a year to seven days; nor is it to be wondered at, considering the starvation that confronts them outside and the comfort that is accorded them in prison. One of these habitual vagrants on his periodical appearance was usually accosted with an official joke, "Same address, I suppose?" "Yes, please," was the invariable reply; "no change since last time."

One old man in the convalescent ward, suffering from rheumatism and asthma, who was supplied with dainties he could never have heard of before, confessed to me that he should have preferred six to the three months' imprisonment he was undergoing. Another old vagrant (a City man) told me that he always made it a rule to sleep on a doorstep a day or so before Christmas Day to insure the Christmas meal of a loaf of bread, beef, pudding, and a pint of ale, stood by the Lord Mayor to every prisoner in Newgate. He was bewailing the loss of that charming residence, and telling me how, having foolishly omitted to make himself acquainted with the change of system, had subsisted last Christmas Day in "Coldbath" on dry bread and stirabout.

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Foreigners of every description find their way into Coldbath, though the majority consists of Germans, mostly Jews. There is an advantage in belonging to this faith, as I was led to understand by a gourmand. It consists in receiving meat on Mondays in lieu of the usual bacon and beans. Circumstances, however, render the temporary embracing of this faith more difficult than they do that of Romanism, which is much in vogue; and as certain punishment would follow the certain detection, Judaism has not as many followers as the Australian meat would otherwise command.

Flogging is usually administered for insubordination and malingering. For less serious offences the punishment cells and short commons usually have the desired effect. There are two descriptions of corporal punishment—the cat and the birch, usually reserved for youths. In the former case the culprit is lashed to a triangle; in the latter he is hoisted on what is euphoniously called a donkey. As a punishment, the cat, as applied in prisons, is not to be compared to its defunct namesake in the army or navy. It is sufficiently severe, however, to necessitate certain after-treatment—an item in the programme regulated rather by the "system" than humanity. A soldier was invariably admitted into hospital after undergoing corporal punishment; a prisoner is, however, flogged and then conducted to his cell.

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These floggings are usually administered in the forenoon in presence of a surgeon, and before evening a zinc plaster—perhaps two—is applied to the recipient's back. The performance takes place in a room off the main passage, and is not unattended with a certain amount of ceremony. The traffic is stopped, and no particulars transpire but the howls of the victim, which can be heard all over the building. Since the abolition of Newgate, Coldbath has risen in retributive importance, and garrotters sentenced to the lash here receive their punishment.

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A one-legged garrotter was lately flogged; his leg, which had been amputated at the thigh, prevented his being securely tied, and his abortive struggles procured him a flogging infinitely severer than ordinarily experienced. Every blow fell on a different place, and the twenty lashes

left twenty wheals, breaking the skin in a dozen different places. Sympathy with a garrotter would be out of place, and no one can doubt that he richly deserved his punishment; yet one's bowels of compassion are instinctively moved by the description given to me by an eye-witness, of a lump of bleeding humanity alone and sobbing in a cell, and receiving at five in the afternoon a zinc plaster to apply to the back that had been torn and lacerated in the morning.

This treatment in no way reflects on the prison officials, who simply carry out the regulations; it is the system that is to blame, and is capable, like the dispensation of justice before described, of considerable improvement on the score of humanity.

Floggings and birchings appear to have no effect on these hardened criminals, and though they shriek and bellow during the infliction, they invariably revert to the same offence, and qualify for a second edition. Shamming madness is a favourite form of malingering indulged in by prisoners. The uneducated mind, however, invariably resorts to the same tactics—a combination between the symptoms of idiocy and hydrophobia that generally fails in its objects, and invariably yields to treatment by the cat.

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The boys that find their way into Coldbath are the most hardened young scamps I ever saw. They are supposed to be isolated, as required by recent agitation on the subject of juvenile offenders. That the isolation is a farce need hardly be said. At chapel they certainly occupy benches to themselves, but so do the various wards and trades; the tasks they are put to are similar to those done by adults; and the pains and penalties they undergo are identical in time and circumstance to those of the full-blown criminal. I have seen these urchins on arrival, with their knuckles in their eyes, blubbering in chapel, and a week later winking and making signs as if determined to assert their qualification to be clothed and treated like their adult fellow-prisoners.

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Tearing up their clothes is the favourite pastime of these promising youths. I have frequently seen these children marched along a passage, handcuffed behind, and preceded by a warder carrying a bundle of rags three inches square, that formerly represented their linen and clothes. The treatment they receive puts this crime at a premium. Boys are admittedly vain, and desirous of appearing as men to their older associates, what more natural then, that a child (one of the instances I refer to could not have been fourteen) should aspire to the honour of appearing as a hero; marching through a crowded passage with his manly work conspicuously displayed, treated, moreover, like a real man, manacled, and eventually birched, and receiving the approbation invariably accorded by the criminal classes to the perpetrators of wanton mischief. One would suppose that in a huge building like Coldbath Fields these urchins might be absolutely isolated, and if their offences were punished without the publicity that at present attends them, they would soon be given up as not worth the consequence. That the treatment of this hardened class of boys is a difficult problem, cannot be denied, and the cunning and ingenuity they display is almost incredible. Fully aware that the visiting Justices only visit the prison once a fortnight, and that without their order a birching is impossible, it frequently happens that on the day of their discharge every article of their clothing is made into mincemeat. For this mischief they are absolutely free from any consequence, it being an offence against the prison, and not against the law. If a remedy was applied to this crime, similar to the Article of War that provides against the destruction of Government property, the delinquent might be handed over to a policeman, and this would effectually stop the practice.

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## **CHAPTER XXII.**

### **THE TREAD-WHEEL.**

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By Act of Parliament, all prisoners, till quite recently, were photographed after admission to the various prisons. This universal system is now abolished, and since January, 1882, it is only reserved for habitual criminals and prisoners sentenced to police supervision. I had the good fortune to add to my experiences and my desire to see everything, by coming under the universal system, I having become a Government ward exactly eleven days before the expiration of the Act. One morning, whilst at exercise, my name was called amongst some half-a-dozen others. I could not conceive what new atrocity I had perpetrated, and what could have occurred to disturb the even tenor of my ways. A few of my more experienced comrades, however, enlightened me by remarking I was "a-goin' to be tuk," and I found myself on the road to the studio.

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Photography such as this can hardly be considered artistic, though I have seen worse, but not much. It probably, however, answers all the requirements it is intended for. These works of art are only produced in duplicate, and though I offered a fabulous price to the seedy artist for an extra copy, no business was done; for though negatives are kept, they are kept under lock and key. Of the copies usually printed one was presented to the Governor of Newgate (this individual being lately abolished, I do not know who is now the recipient), the other finds its way into the Coldbath album, and no doubt affords pleasure and instruction at such jubilant gatherings as prison lawn tennis parties, or warders' beanfeasts, which I was informed (though never invited) are occasionally indulged in. Prisoners are taken in their own clothes, and it is a matter of regret that the ones I then wore have gone the way of all old clothes, for, like their owner, they did not improve by their incarceration, and their huge proportions made them worthless without alteration. Pose or position is a secondary consideration, a good out-and-out resemblance is the thing to be attained; a deformed ear, or a fly-blown nose, would at once be seized upon, and the lens directed point blank at such fortunate distinctions. In my case there was nothing to merit special reproduction, so with a smirk that would have hanged me fifty years ago (for even here the "artist" could not resist the conventional request) I qualified for the Government album. On one side one's number is pinned to one's coat, on the other is a slate with one's name in full, thus supplying an index simple but complete, and in proportion to the intellects of such probable students as the motley crew one periodically saw at Newgate. To me the ordeal had neither terror nor charms, though to some of my companions it was evidently not agreeable. One rogue caused considerable trouble by persistently protruding his chin or distorting some feature; these antics were not indulged in in a spirit of levity, but resorted to gradually as the cap was being taken off. He evidently objected to an accurate likeness, and so he might. I never could find out particulars, but not long after he disappeared from Coldbath, and whether hanged or a "lifer," I never heard. *That* photograph had fulfilled its mission.

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Visits to Coldbath cannot under ordinary circumstances be undertaken by any but the most robust. The accommodation is clearly intended for the scum of London, and it is unfair to expect any respectable person to come unless smell-proof and provided with a box of Keating's insect powder. I received one visit under these revolting conditions, though my subsequent ones left nothing to be desired. Conceive, then, a cell eighteen feet by twelve, fitted with four partitions on either side, divided by a narrow passage, with a warder walking up and down. Into one of these cages the visitor is conducted and locked in. Immediately opposite, and similarly enclosed, is the object of his visit. In appearance they resemble a Cochin China hen-coop; in size they about equal the den of the untameable hyæna in a travelling menagerie. Conversation of a private nature is out of the question, as, indeed, is intended; topical subjects are tabooed, and but for the sake of adding to my experiences I should never have subjected myself or my friend to such nasty conditions. Within a foot of one, and flanked on both sides, was either a costermonger talking to his missus and her frowsy, unvaccinated-looking offspring, or a pickpocket hearing the latest news from the Seven Dials; the Babel consequent being such as to leave no alternative but to say nothing, or shout at the top of one's voice. There is a snobbishness about this custom that went far to determine me in my course of telephoning as the only way to retaliate effectually on official inconsideration. No one would be foolish enough to expect that a gentleman should be better treated than a costermonger under such painful circumstances, although it would be an act of consideration, involving neither inconvenience nor relaxation of discipline, if some little discretion were exercised, as at Newgate, regarding the visitors.

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The tread-wheel occupies a prominent position in prison life. There was none at Coldbath on my arrival, the old one having been burnt down a short time previously. There is a delightful interpretation to the three magic letters, C. B. F. (Cold Bath Fields), that long puzzled me, and which takes its origin—as I heard—from the ancient structure. I had frequently heard this

cheerful place referred to as "The Farm," and on enquiry it was explained that it was facetiously known as "Charley Bates's Farm." "Charley," it appears, was a peculiarly ferocious turnkey that some years ago superintended the tread-wheel, but whether burnt, like his toy, or still burning, or alive, I have not the remotest idea. Its successor was now being rapidly built, and all the artisan talent procurable was laid on, in order to complete without delay this necessary adjunct to hard labour.

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A reference to the "system of progressive stages" will obviate my repeating many details as to the particular men put to this punishment, etc.

I had never seen a tread-wheel except from the stalls of the Adelphi Theatre, and was particularly anxious to gratify my curiosity. I cudgelled my brains as to how it was to be managed, with such success that I eventually found myself on the "works." As I have the misfortune to be neither a mechanic nor an artisan, and incapable of driving in a nail without hammering my finger, and being a perfect infant in the use of a shovel, I was at a loss to conceive how I could possibly be employed; but this difficulty was at length surmounted, and armed with a brush I was put on a roving job. I had the run of the building, with a kind of general instruction to brush everything and everybody, up stairs and down stairs, and in the warder's chamber. The warder in charge of this building in course of construction, was a worthy man, incapable of being tampered with, though I never tried him (why should I?), but withal courteous, respectful, and considerate—one of those men whose bringing up had thrown him amongst gentlemen, and who knew how to maintain his own position without offending the susceptibilities of others. The artisans under him worked with a will, and reports and rows were things unknown, except on scrubbing days, when some ill-conditioned hound happened to be temporarily employed. My duties consisted in sitting about in sheltered nooks with the broom between my knees, and on the approach of a spy, with which the place was infested, to rise and make furious lunges at imaginary spiders. These sweeps into space were very effective, and, fatal as they would have been to any insect had I seen one, were equally gratifying to their human prototypes, whose desire was to see one working hard. During my employment in this building it was, I verily believe, the object of more inspection than it had ever been before. I had been informed by telephone that my antipathy had given a hint that I was to be looked after, and if he was satisfied with the result I certainly was. Not twenty minutes elapsed between the various inspections, and occasionally they swarmed like horse-flies in summer round a lump of sugar. These frequent visits involved an immense loss of energy, and the casualties amongst the spiders must have been enormous. When all had been destroyed I constructed a pile of dirt—one pound of dust to four of shavings—which I placed in a conspicuous position. This was violently propelled from me during a visit, and gently restored when the intruder had passed.

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I had the opportunity of inspecting this huge instrument of torture, and was considerably disappointed that I could not try its effect. I had the gratification, however, of putting some paint on one panel and a piece of putty into a hole, thereby having assisted at the making of the wheel. Putting putty into a hole is not so easy as it may sound. At the inspection of work next day I had the mortification of seeing my lump condemned, and cruelly removed. The tread-wheel is moved by elaborate machinery worked by powerful engines, which, in addition to setting the wheel in motion, grinds corn in an adjoining building for the use of the prison. It is entirely different from the Adelphi one, and may be described as four long cylindrical wheels extending the length of the building on either side and along the gallery. Partitions, of sufficient dimensions to enable a man to stand up, run the entire length of the various wheels, thereby precluding all communication between the several occupants. Two hundred and sixty men can be "on" at once, and the punishment is carried out on the principle of ten minutes "off" and twenty minutes "on." The victims are marched down at 7.30 A.M., and beguile the time thus pleasantly till 11.30. They return at 1.30 p.m., and continue the enjoyment till 5.

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I am told this is considered an easy wheel, and men who have experienced the working of others assured me that this one was mere child's play. A great deal depends on the worker, and the experienced jail-bird rises—or, as it was termed to me, "waits for"—the step with little or no exertion. With the novice, however, it is severe labour, and the exertion involved bathes him in perspiration. A supply of warm water is given them on returning to their cells of an evening, to obliterate in a degree the unpleasant consequences of the wheel. But the discomfort—can one estimate it? A poor wretch bathed in perspiration, and having to sleep in the same shirt and work in it for a week! Only prisoners fit for hard labour are put to the wheel, and no man is ever so employed unless passed by the surgeon. The doctor's work is considerably augmented by the reconstruction of the wheel, and besides having to visit the yard frequently during the day, he is persecuted by strings of schemers trying by every conceivable subterfuge to evade the punishment. Some go the length of tumbling off, and occasionally succeed in temporarily disqualifying themselves by a sprained ankle or wrist. I was much amused during my employment at its construction at the interest that the various officials took in every detail connected with its progress. They revelled at the prospect of the treat in store for them, and seemed to gloat over the exquisite misery awaiting some of their lambs. Bunches of these warders would occasionally meet, and discuss the intricacies of the machinery with a gusto only to be acquired by prison contagion. It would not have surprised me to have heard that the opening ceremony had been attended by some kind of *fête*, to which the warders and "their ladies" had been invited, and condiments—made on the premises—distributed wholesale.

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My worst enemies, and those I had to fear most, were the prisoners. They were all jealous of me, and had got an absurd notion into their heads that I could do as I liked, and, though there was no

truth in such an impression, never lost an opportunity of "rounding" on me. A one-eyed scoundrel, who was one day checked and eventually punished for idleness, complained to the Governor that he didn't see why he should work all day and another man (me) sit down and do nothing. This had the effect of causing me to be transferred elsewhere, and I next added to my experiences by becoming a gardener. I was not sorry to leave the wheelhouse, for it had a depressing effect on me, which the hum of the traffic just outside did not assist in allaying. As a wag said to me one day, "This will be a nice place when it's finished."

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## CHAPTER XXIII. GARDENING.

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I HAD at last indeed tumbled on my legs. My new duties offered a combination of advantages—such as variety, fresh air, newspapers, tobacco, etc.—far in excess of my fondest dreams. There are six so-called gardeners, who are constantly employed in the grounds. At 7.30 they go out, and rarely return before dinner; and again at 2, remaining out till 5. In fine weather this is a great relief, and I enjoyed many an afternoon basking in the sun on a grassy bank.



GARDENING.  
"HONOURING APPROACHING."

The general duties of a so-called gardener are a combination of the qualifications necessary for a dustman, carpet-beater, and agricultural labourer. They are, in fact, the scavengers of the establishment, and poke about all day under a curiosity of the turnkey species, and overhaul everything and everybody. Their duties are absolutely legion, and carpet-beating, mowing, weeding, and raking the walks are only a moiety of their accomplishments. I was appointed to this favoured team through the kindly recommendation of the assistant surgeon after my recent temporary discharge from hospital; and the master gardener, not having been consulted, as I fancy he usually was, was not by any means predisposed in my favour. That, however, wore off; and though I found him the most crotchety, three-cornered eccentricity I had ever met, I soon discovered his weak point, and did pretty much as I pleased. I must here repudiate any insinuation that by this I mean to imply he was to be squared. I might as well have tried to square the Marble Arch. Besides which, I did not require to, my supply being greater than my demand.

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Our first duty was to proceed to the tool-house, and, armed with shovels, wheelbarrows, baskets, etc., to commence grubbing about. As a newcomer I was selected for the "barrer," and a heavier "barrer" I never felt; but having knocked some paint off a gate, and rolled it over a sacred grass plot, my incapacity was so manifest that I was disrated to a shovel. Here, too, I was lamentably ignorant, and out of every spoonful I collected a third went into the "barrer" and the remainder everywhere else. I was, in fact, trying to emulate the scavengers one sees ladling mud on wet days. The long shots they make have always inspired me with admiration; their revels in the oceans of mud exercised a fascination over me, causing me till now to overlook the science that is required to produce such apparently simple efforts.

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I have often driven up the hill that runs outside the front of the prison and fancied it was steep; that fancy has since been confirmed, and I am now in a position to assert positively that it is very steep, especially between the shafts of a "barrer."

A duty we were about to undertake one day was the weekly overhaul of the head warder's quarters. I was spared a share in this revolting exercise—I never knew how—but was simply told I should not be required.

I had often sympathized with these gardeners long before I joined them, when seeing them shaking the frowsy rugs and rags, carpet slippers, and other gimcracks, and dusting Mrs. Head Warder's best Sunday willow-pattern teapot. My general ignorance, too, in the various branches of scavengering had become so apparent that I felt convinced I should be informed that I "didn't suit"; but, thanks to the consideration of the Governor and assistant surgeon, I was retained, though otherwise employed. I was henceforth entirely detached, and turned out into various portions of the grounds, and told to do the best I could. My special instructions were to

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annihilate a certain weed, for which purpose I was armed with a knife, though I seldom used it for that particular purpose. The effect of this weed on the funny head gardener was very strange, and he would grind his teeth and mutter at the very sight of one. I at once took the cue, and feeling it would please him, besides showing my zeal, used the strongest language I could lay tongue to whenever I detected one. My zeal, I fear, often led me into mistakes, and valuable clover and priceless dandelions were ruthlessly sacrificed to my want of discrimination. These errors in uprooting the wrong plants generally elicited a gentle rebuke, but the "cussing" at the hated fungus condoned my offence. "It was zeal, sir, zeal," and he began to "like that chap—he was willing, anxious like." But the way I won the old boy's heart was my love for old coins (as a fact, I know nothing about them, and prefer the more modern specimens). It happened one day he picked up a rusty coin—whether a button or an obsolete farthing I cannot say. I boldly, however, pronounced it to be a Henry the Seventh, said I would gladly pay five shillings for one like it, rattled along about Museum Street, my collection, etc., till he recognized a brother-collector, and a bond of sympathy was established; and as he dropped the Henry the Seventh into his pocket, he led me to understand he had many like it at home. Whether he undertook a pilgrimage to Museum Street I cannot say, but about a month later a coolness showed itself in his manner towards me, which rather led me to suspect he had.

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I now found myself my own master. No one was specially interested in my movements. I was on my own hook, and so long as I appeared to be occupied when certain individuals were going their rounds, I was never interfered with; and as these rounds took place at about the same hours daily, I mapped out my occupation accordingly.

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At 7.30 I was turned into a large lawn, with sloping banks on three sides and railings on the fourth; between these and the outer wall was a gravel walk that circumvented the prison. A turnkey patrolled this walk day and night, armed with a cutlass. I asked one of them one day what he should do if he found anyone scaling the wall. "Do?" he said. "If it was you, I should say, 'Don't be a fool; you'll sprain your ankle dropping down t'other side.'" "And suppose it was some other chap?" I inquired. "Ah! then," he added, "I should carve him about a foot below the waist."

Between 8 and 9 parties of men were constantly passing to and fro to their various work. I usually, therefore, devoted that hour to contemplation, the selection of some half-a-dozen weeds for future decapitation, and a general look round. When things had settled down a bit, my knife came into requisition, and proceeding to one of my hiding-places I selected one piece of tobacco for immediate use, and sliced enough for my day's consumption. I had some of these holes in various parts of the grounds, constructed of a slate floor about three inches square, with bricks for the roof and sides. I found them admirably adapted to resist rain, and many I daresay are still in existence. This enjoyment lasted till 11, when it became dangerous. (I was nearly choked on one occasion by foolishly having a lump of tobacco in my mouth when suddenly confronted by an official.) After dinner I had a good hour's reading (the papers don't arrive before; indeed, the postal arrangements are capable of considerable improvement), and so the afternoon passed comparatively pleasantly, between the daily paper, 'baccy, and the sloping bank. I often felt amused at the thought of how different all this was to what some people believed; and a conversation I "overheard" in the previous January, when one cad was explaining to his inebriated companion that imprisonment with hard labour was worse than penal servitude, came vividly to my recollection. On one of these sunny days I was much amused by an outline of the day's telegrams as given me by a friendly turnkey. It was the day on which the news of young Vyse's death whilst reconnoitring Arabi's position reached England. "Them Arabians are rum chaps; ah, and can shoot too, I tell yer: that officer as was recognizing—look at that!"

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Chewing was an accomplishment I did not acquire in a day; indeed, it took me weeks. At first it made me absolutely poorly, but I persevered, and eventually found it as agreeable as smoking. I could not, however, manage the twist, and invariably used the honey-dew or negro-head. This daintiness was not unattended with inconvenience, as no shop in the neighbourhood kept such a thing, and involved journeys to the Strand or Oxford Street. I was never so foolish as to keep the tobacco about me, and my cell was as free of it as any hermit's. In the grounds, however, it was perfectly safe; tobacco under a stone might belong to anybody, and though the suspicion would probably have cost me my staff appointment, absolute conviction would have been impossible. To say that I was free from some sort of suspicion would be hardly correct, for although I was

never searched myself—except on the one occasion before mentioned—my next-door neighbour was “turned over” about twice a week. The reason that led to this was as follows:—I had found this man specially useful—he was quite a second Mike to me; anything I required he did, and in return I gave him portions of my superfluous food, and occasionally a piece of tobacco. This traffic had not passed unnoticed, and had been communicated to a warder by another prisoner, who felt himself aggrieved at the preference shown by me for his fellow prisoner. These sneakings are universally practised, and through my entire experience I had to be careful of these wretches; they watched me and hated me, and if they got the chance, always rounded on “The Swell.” Swell indeed! The swelling had long ago subsided. I only weighed, thank heavens! about fourteen stone. These sneakings never affected me, and one of these individuals was once considerably astonished at getting three days bread and water for a privileged communication about me. A circumstance that occurred one day impressed me very much on the matter of destiny, and the accidents that sometimes combine to form a link between two individuals that a month or two previously would never have been dreamed of. It was the day on which (the late) Dr. Lamson had been sentenced to death. I was standing not far from the prison van, which had lately returned after depositing him at the House of Detention, and watching two prisoners cleaning it out. The partition that he had occupied contained three or four pillows, and I was informed it was a delicate attention on the part of the Government to prevent condemned men intentionally injuring themselves. “What are those pillows for?” I asked of a turnkey. “Oh, they’re only Dr. Lamson’s,” was the facetious reply; “he was sentenced to-day, so we just put them in for fear he should chafe himself, poor fellow.” When the cleaning was over my brother reprobate led me to understand he had made a discovery. Beneath the pillows he had found three cigars; he considerably gave me one, as indeed prison etiquette demanded, it being an axiom that an uncompromised holder of a secret is never to be trusted. I certainly should not have rounded on my *confrère*, but was nevertheless very glad to be the recipient of a specimen of this “Marwood” brand. It was a sin to chew them, but there was no alternative, as smoking was out of the question. Half-an-hour later, as I bit off a piece, the thought forced itself upon me, “Three months ago, he at Bournemouth, and I at Brighton, had never heard of one another, and here I am chewing the condemned man’s tobacco.” Funny thing, destiny!

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

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### THE CHURCH MILITANT IN PRISON.

RELIGIOUS ceremonial plays an important part at Coldbath Fields. The quantity, indeed, is lamentably in excess of the quality, and leavened with a degree of barbaric hypocrisy incapable of engendering any feeling but that of nausea. Language fails me in trying to describe it in its proper light; and though reluctant to appear as scoffing at religion—which I emphatically repudiate—what I saw and heard makes it a hopeless task to allude to the subject and yet divest it of its component parts. This cure of some 1400 (criminal) souls was vested in two chaplains, of whom one had the misfortune to be a gentleman. I say “misfortune” advisedly, for unless incapable of contamination the most charitably inclined and refined is bound to deteriorate. Their duties, in addition to those usually associated with clergymen, embraced a *souçon* of the schoolmaster with a dash of the district visitor, and if they were disposed (which all were not) to throw in a slice of detective work, it was not considered a disqualification for further preferment. The spiritual welfare of the Protestant portion of the prisoners was divided between them, all fresh arrivals during this month being specially assigned to the one, and all coming in the next devolving on the other. The etiquette and punctilio that regulated this division when once made, was as marked as that usually found amongst country medical practitioners. Thus, if Sykes the burglar, who happened to be one of the Rev. Smith’s lambs, unfortunately cracked his skull, and was in immediate want of spiritual consolation, he would in all probability be requested to defer his departure till the arrival of the Rev. Robinson. I mention this in regard to the system, and not as referring to anyone in particular, although the way I was ignored (very much to my delight) some weeks later, when my particular pastor was on leave, fortifies me in the conviction that my theory is correct.

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A portion of the prisoners are visited daily by their respective chaplains, and day after day, between ten and twelve, is devoted to this solemn pilgrimage. That religion may be administered in various forms was apparent from the method pursued respectively by the two chaplains. The one seemed to think that a kind word and a pleasant smile might safely be addressed to the vilest criminal without detracting from his spiritual dignity; the other relied implicitly on scowls and frowns, and a recitation of the terrors of judgment and hell as the proper ministrations for miserable sinners.

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I have special cause to be grateful for the accident that assigned me to whom it did, as, being a Presbyterian, and never having benefited to the extent of “confirmation,” I should most assuredly have found my spiritual lines cast in harder places under an uncompromising bigot of Episcopacy, than under one who was willing to admit, that the kingdom of Heaven was not specially reserved for members of the Church of England. The multifarious calls on his time prevented my chaplain from seeing me more frequently than once or sometimes twice in a fortnight; but even these occasional visits did not pass unnoticed, and I gleaned, from a casual remark he once made, that his spiritual superior considered a visit every two months ample for

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the requirements of the most depraved outcasts. I can only attribute this conclusion to the potency of his peculiar ministrations, which, unless taken in homoeopathic doses, might possibly have been injurious to both body and soul.

I never came much in contact with the chief pillar of the chapel, though I was made acquainted with his usual routine by many of his flock:—"What are you here for? Do you say your prayers?" were the soothing conundrums he rapped out on his periodical visits; and if the answer was in the negative, it was followed by "D'you know where you're going to?" and then the door was slammed with a reverence suitable to the occasion. The relief that followed his exodus was, however, only momentary; and again the key rattled in the door, and a head, with eyes flashing, was once more thrust in, and yelled out, "To hell!" For of such is the kingdom of Heaven!

Chapel was an infliction one was subjected to four times a week. The service in its entirety was conducted with a strict regard to official etiquette, and the degrees of relative rank were as clearly defined by the Bibles and prayer-books as by the seats, hassocks, reading desks, etc., allotted to the officials. Thus, the Governor's Bibles and prayer-books were gilt-bound, with gilt clasps; the deputy Governor's, Scripture-reader's, and schoolmaster's, gilt bindings without the clasps; the principal warders', clasps without the gilt binding; and those of the rank-and-file of warders destitute of either gilt binding or clasps. Prisoners had to content themselves with thumbed, dog-eared, leafless specimens, and so the united hallelujahs ascended to Heaven—let us hope equally acceptable, whether dog-eared or gilded. The interior of this sacred edifice resembled a barn, the nave being fitted up with rows of backless benches capable of accommodating some 600 knaves, a yard apart.

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A bird's-eye view of this congregation was one that challenged reflection, comprising as it did young men and old, dark and fair, short and stout, tall and thin, lads with fluff, and hoary-headed sinners, all stamped with the same mark of Cain—hang-dog faces and protruding jowls, conical heads with hair extending down the nape, bullet pates and cadaverous faces, cripples and blind men, one-legged and one-armed, yet all, with few exceptions, marked with the same indescribable jail-bird brand never to be mistaken, and once seen never to be forgotten.

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The floor was tessellated (of the alms-house period), and one of the hardest floors with which I had ever come in contact. I realized this from a regulation that necessitated one's grovelling on the slightest provocation. The walls of this portion of the building were of a bilious-official mud colour, the monotony of which was occasionally relieved by scrolls and texts of a personal nature. Beyond were a few steps leading to the pulpits and pews for the higher officials; here the mural decorations assumed a brighter form—indeed, paint seemed to have been laid on regardless of expense, and with a degree of vulgarity I had never seen equalled, except perhaps in Albert Grant's lately pulled-down house at South Kensington. The mania for smearing the walls with texts was by no means confined to the chapel, but was to be found everywhere that propriety and extreme religious fervour seemed to suggest. Thus over the surgery, as a reminder to possible schemers, "lying lips" were very properly condemned; near the stores advice as to "picking and stealing" was conspicuously displayed, with about as much effect as if it had been placed in the oakum-picking wards; and everywhere, conspicuous *by its absence*, was the wholesome admonition, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain."

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The chapel, moreover, boasted of an organ—a serious infliction, involving a temptation for the encouragement of singing; and nobody that has not heard 600 malefactors without an "h" in their composition bellowing "'Oly, 'oly, 'oly," can sympathize to the extent the occasion merits. I was peculiarly unfortunate in my usual seat, which happened to be amongst the trades, and was flanked by the blacksmiths. I never heard them yelling without thinking that Handel's "Harmonious Blacksmith" must have been a different sort, which in its turn gave way to the "four-and-twenty blackbirds that were baked in a pie," and then I was recalled to the proximity of the four-and-twenty blacksmiths by "'Oly, 'oly, 'oly." I could have wept from sheer sympathy when I heard that glorious "Te Deum" so brutally massacred, and pitied the organist—an excellent musician—for having to play on such an instrument to such an accompaniment.

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The entrance of the prisoners was not conducted on the principle customary in places of worship (though I suppose no one really associated this specimen with any attributes of the kind), but was accompanied by the blowing of whistles, and shouts of "Move higher up!" "Come on, there!" "D'you know where you are?" "This ain't a music-hall!" and such-like appropriate exclamations. Music-hall indeed! The Middlesex magistrates would never licence such an exhibition; indeed, it only required a few handfuls of orange-peel to have made it a formidable rival of "The Vic." in its palmiest days.

The chief cause of most of this indecent behaviour was one of the head warders, and when this man superintended the chapel parade the scene was disgraceful; and "Take that man's name down!" "I'll send you to your cell, sir!" and bully, bully, was the preparation for the service. This is no exaggeration, and hundreds of officials and prisoners will recognize the description. At the same time it is only right to add that the Governor and chaplains have no means of knowing of these daily outrages, for custom regulates their entrance after the chapel is full, and when a toadying, eye-serving, make-believe reverence has succeeded the state of things I have described. The service was happily not a long one, and twenty minutes was the average duration from find to finish. It was conducted, I should say, with a tendency to High Church formula on the part of the clergy and a portion of the congregation. Thus, the ministers, the laundrymen, and the blacksmiths invariably turned to the east during certain portions of the

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service, whilst the Governor (an old man-of-war's man, who could box the compass as well as ever), myself (I could see the weathercock from my window), the needle-men, who followed me to a man, and here and there a tailor, as persistently faced due north. p. 302

The habit of trying to sing "second" was a very severe trial to listen to, and I remonstrated with one old man that I looked on as a kind of ringleader, at the pain his efforts caused me. His voice was by way of being a tenor, and his disregard of all harmony induced me to christen him "Wagner." One day poor old Wagner appeared with his neck painted with iodine, and the feeble croaks that he emitted, however painful to himself, were a considerable relief to me.

Remembering, too, that when the Devil is sick he is supposed to be most susceptible of good impressions, and not wishing to lose the opportunity of working on his feelings, I determined to let him have it. I impressed on him the brittleness of tenor voices in general; how susceptible their metempsychosis was to disorganisation; how the epidermis of the carotid artery was peculiarly sensitive; and, with a casual glance at his neck, implored him for his own sake, if not for mine, to give his voice a rest. With beads of perspiration and iodine trickling down his back, he gasped compliance; and thus I reduced my "crosses" by one. Another horrid old man never failed to irritate me. He was undergoing twelve months' imprisonment for inciting little boys to steal, but was now on the religious tack. So religious, indeed, had he become, that in a portion of "The Creed" he could not say "hell," but invariably substituted "the grave." I had never heard this impertinent innovation before, and could have kicked him and his hypocrisy into Wagner's lap. Instantaneous conversions, such as took place years ago during the so-called Revivals, were of occasional occurrence, brought about, as I take it, by the thrilling discourses we were sometimes treated to, and the "awakened one" would stand up and hold forth. But very short work was made of these converts, and a couple of matter-of-fact warders soon trundled them out, to be brought up later on and punished for disturbing the service. I made a careful study of the two chaplains and their respective peculiarities in conducting the service. With the one I never had cause for annoyance, and though his sermons could not be said to bristle with eloquence, he was evidently in earnest, and mindful of the fact that the word Protestant embraced more denominations than one, and seemed particularly careful not to outrage the feelings of the many Presbyterians, Wesleyans, and other Nonconformists that formed a portion of the congregation. p. 303

The other reverend individual had a partiality for the declamatory style, and whenever circumstances, or the calendar, gave him the option of selecting a psalm, never failed to declaim how "Moab is my washpot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe" (Ps. cviii.). I verily believe he used to think he was talking of his own household effects, and the expressions of admiration on the faces of the blacksmiths generally leave little or no doubt in my mind that they were thoroughly convinced he was appraising the contents of his charming little suburban retreat. But what he revelled in were the commandments: "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" were balm to the holy man, and I was always pleased to see him enjoying himself. A favourite dodge amongst prisoners, now pretty well played out, is to petition for a remission of sentence on the plea of conversion and regeneration. That such a circumstance should be flattering to the vanity of a man who is morally convinced of his incapacity for converting anything, is not to be wondered at, but the marvel is, how men with the varied experience of prison chaplains (I speak generally) should be gulled by such shallow artifices. That they are, however, is beyond dispute. I have met and conversed with many of these brands plucked from the burning, and my experience accords with that of many capable of forming an opinion, that they are matchless both in cunning and rascality. They are invariably tale-bearers, or what are known in the comprehensive criminal vocabulary as "creepers," for they do creep up the back of any one foolish enough to confide in them, and as surely creep down the next official's who is mean enough to encourage their tattle. p. 304

These gentlemen are pretty well labelled, and I made it a practice to always preface my conversation with any of them by letting them understand they might tell "Gehazi," or any one they pleased, all and everything I might happen to say. One glaring instance of the converted type that I often led into conversation told me that he was very sanguine on the subject of a remission of the remainder of his sentence; that one of the chaplains was "working it" for him; and, indeed, that he and many other likely to be well informed individuals, such as assistant-turnkeys and fellow-prisoners may be presumed to be, had assured him that his success was a foregone conclusion. I asked him how he succeeded in getting such "powerful" advocacy, and although at first he assumed the fervent style, he very soon relapsed into his normal condition on seeing that I looked on him as a humbug. He then proceeded to explain that he began by expressing a desire to see his chaplain in private, in hopes of satiating the thirst for peace of mind that gave him no rest; that this led to salutary advice and a fagot of tracts, and had ended in his partaking of the Holy Communion—I almost hesitate to repeat this rank blasphemy, and my only justification is its unexaggerated truth; indeed, I would not dare to write such horrors unless fortified by my veracity. He went on to add that it was awfully jolly, and that he generally received any surplus that might remain of the consecrated bread or wine. p. 305

I am indebted to him for the following details of the custom that prevailed on these solemn occasions, which, retailed in a bantering style, may be briefly summed up as follows:—That the ceremony was usually attended by one official of each grade—such as the deputy governor, one chief warder, one warder, and a turnkey—to whom it was administered according to seniority; that the prisoners' turn came next, and that by a judicious foresight he usually managed to secure the first place. He went on to add that he confidently expected some cozy billet in the prison suitable to his serious tendencies, and that his chaplain had promised to interest himself in procuring him some situation on discharge. As we became more intimate, he confided to me that he could never undergo poverty and privation again, and was determined to attain affluence, honestly if possible, but otherwise by one bold dash that should attain his end, or qualify him for p. 306

penal servitude. This hopeful convert had been convicted of a till robbery, and had moreover committed forgery, which had not been preferred against him on condition that he restored the stolen money. It was this last spontaneous (!) honourable act that formed the basis of his petition, proving his instantaneous remorse for the error of a moment—a remorse that had since ripened into sincere and heartfelt repentance. He concluded by informing me that his chaplain had led him to understand he should probably give him a few pounds on his discharge, but that he had been deceived so often by “converts” he had assisted eventually becoming “convicts,” that he hesitated to help any of whose sincerity he was not perfectly satisfied. Let us hope he has not again been a victim of misplaced confidence! I have on more than one occasion found it difficult to maintain my gravity when hearing this rogue and his victim discussing Bible questions, and whining at the ridicule he had to submit to on account of his convictions, and receiving consolation by the quotation of the case of Mary Magdalene. I have no scruple in giving this account, as the principal actor has long since been discharged (but not on his petition, which was naturally refused), and because it is an ungarnished, indisputable proof of the deceptions practised by criminals, and goes a long way to justify the apparently harsh treatment frequently accorded them. That the chaplains are a conscientiously disposed class may be gleaned from the circumstance that on one occasion, when a converted sinner after his discharge sent a *souvenir* in the shape of an eighteen-penny *papier mâché* inkstand, the reverend recipient declined to accept it till he had first obtained the sanction of the visiting Justices.

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*“Tantum religio potuit suadere.”*

## CHAPTER XXV

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### THE HOSPITAL DEAD-HOUSE.

DURING my career as a gardener I became very unwell. I attribute this in a measure to a recurrence of a malady contracted in the tropics, and a chill I caught from lying on damp grass in a draughty yard. Another cause of my serious and probably life-long illness may possibly be traced to an insane and spontaneous act—an over-taxation of nature—many months previously. I had fined down in the ordinary course of events to the weight and bulk (according to my theory) that nature clearly intended; but not content with this satisfactory result, I determined to attain still slimmer proportions. Many indications convinced me I had found “my bearings,” and common sense ought to have suggested, *enough*; but vanity prevailed, and perseverance attained the further desired reduction, though at a more serious price than I had contemplated. My theory on the reduction of fat is based on my own case, and had I stopped as I recommend others, when I had found “my bearings,” I should have retained my usual health; as it was I went on and on, and like those enthusiasts who sacrifice health and life to the perfecting of a principle, so I, regardless of my own convictions, acted in direct opposition to my advice to others, and may be congratulated on having probed a theory to the very bottom at considerable personal sacrifice. If any sceptic is disposed to disparage my system, I ask him to blame me and not it. The latter consists of a dietary in itself harmless, and certain to produce diminution. When a certain point is attained it says *stop*; and if it is asked why, I reply because beyond that point it is rash, and if persisted in, the theory is clearly not to blame. I am aware that many will seize the opportunity to disparage the system, and endeavour to deter others from following it. Such a course would be as logical as to condemn a glass of sherry, because someone had died from *delirium tremens*; or to abstain from eels because Henry I. had died from a surfeit of lampreys; or, to carry the absurdity a degree further, to avoid (like the old woman) apple-tart, because her husband had died of apple-plexy. It was in the spring that I commenced my campaign against nature, and though I had ample proof that I had arrived at my “natural bearings,” I determined (never dreaming of the danger) to persevere a little more. I was then about 15 stone in weight, and knowing it was a stone in excess of the average for men of my build, I thought if I could reduce just one stone more I would rest satisfied. I found, however, that my ordinary daily diet of mutton broth, a chop, potatoes, bread, and cocoa failed to reduce me as it had hitherto done, and that, try as I would, I recorded the same weight a fortnight hence. The remedy that most naturally suggested itself was to reduce the quantity, and I proceeded to divest my consumption, of the broth, the fat from the chops, and a portion of the potatoes and cocoa; but nature still continued to warn me, and I as persistently ignored her, and, losing all patience, I entered on a course little short of starvation. I took a solemn oath that I would for one week confine myself to six ounces of bread and six mouthfuls of water a day (six ounces of bread will be found to be synonymous to six mouthfuls, and no more). During the first 48 hours my appetite became ravenous, and on the third and fourth days the pains of hell did indeed get hold of me; and it was as much as I could do to resist the temptation of taking one mouthful of the savoury broth and mutton that was lying untouched on my table. The trial now became almost more than I could bear, and more than once I approached the table, where the food would have to remain for an hour, but at the last moment drew back. So acute, indeed, did I find this agony that, to avoid temptation and to put it out of my power, I used to throw the food into the slop-pail. After a few days, the cravings of appetite began to cease, and I congratulated myself that I was getting accustomed to it. An accidental circumstance also prevented my testing the result at the end of the seven days, and I continued in my madness for another week. On being weighed I then found I had lost nine or ten pounds. My appetite meanwhile had entirely forsaken me; the smell and even the sight of meat produced nausea, my eyes seemed to be affected, my head began to swim,

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I became giddy without cause. I was now really ill, and I endeavoured to remedy the evil, but my stomach refused nourishment, and if I ate I was immediately sick. The possibility of having fatally injured myself so alarmed me that I saw the surgeon, who prescribed tonics and a change of diet; and, as all failed in restoring outraged nature, I was admitted into hospital. During this time Dr. Tanner and his starvation exhibition were constantly in my mind, and the man I had once associated with the performance of a wonderful feat of self-denial descended in my mind to the level of a poor sick man like myself, absolutely incapable of taking food. Starvation has an ugly sound, and in its first stages is unquestionably painful; but in a very few days (three or four at the most) the sensation passes away, and is succeeded by an absolute aversion to food. When I have seen a half-starved man in the streets who has told me he has not tasted food for a week and was "so 'ungry," my bowels of compassion have always been moved. If any mendicant was to tell me so now, I should know he was lying and refuse to assist him; but if he said he had not eaten for two days and was in agony, I should pity him and give him sixpence if I had it. I shall give a detailed account of my life in hospital, and the incredible kindness and consideration I received, later on. Meanwhile I will confine myself to the assertion, that to such an extent had I injured myself that in six weeks I had lost two stone. On one's admission into hospital one is at once put to bed, and one's clothes removed. This latter custom is intended to insure a proper compliance with the regulation, until the doctor's sanction is obtained to the contrary. "Sitting up" has, however, been found to be half way to "going down"; and, as hospital is the goal to which all prisoners aspire, it does not require much inducement to commend their observance of this particular rule. The hospital consists of a large airy ward, fitted up with twenty beds. Through this, and communicating with a glass door, is a smaller room with three large windows, which gave a clear view of the outer world from Holborn Town Hall to St. Pancras Station. It was my good fortune to be located here, detached and alone, and yet sufficiently near to see and hear all that was going on. The menial duties of the hospital are performed by three prisoners selected for good behaviour. These billets are specially prized, and though associated with the most unpleasant duties, offer facilities for eating and drinking which, in the estimation of prisoners, cover a multitude of drawbacks. These cleaners eat up everything; indeed, so fat do they often become that it is a kind of unwritten rule that when they have increased a stone in weight they revert to prison life. The voracity they display is incredible, and until they become too dainty to care for anything but the best, they may daily be seen finishing eggs, tea, mutton, milk, beef tea, pudding, and arrowroot promiscuously, as they pass from patient to patient. The opportunity for this gluttony is unlimited, and a glance at the fare I subsisted on for over five months will convince the most sceptical that kindness and liberality can exist even in a prison; indeed, I attribute my being alive now to the tender care and medical skill I received, and can never adequately express my gratitude to the surgeons and the entire hospital staff.

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My dietary consisted of—

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6 A.M.	—Half-a-tumbler of rum and new milk.
7 ,,	—A pint of tea, bread-and-butter, and an egg or two.
11 ,,	—A pint of new milk.
12 noon	—Beef-tea, rice-pudding, and two glasses of sherry.

(I was offered, when I wished it, to substitute a chop, fish, chicken, rabbit, or *anything* I might fancy.)

5 P.M.	—A pint of tea, bread-and-butter, and an egg.
7 ,,	—A pint of new milk. (This milk was so excellent, that often when I left it for the night, I skimmed off a thick coating of cream that would have shamed many dairies.)
8 ,,	—A pint of arrowroot.

Every item was the best that money could procure, and unlimited in the supply, nor could I have lived better at a West-End hotel at thirty shillings a day; but my health precluded my enjoying it, and I could not summon the appetite for one-tenth of the dainties. Everything I left was devoured by the cleaners, and I have seen these cormorants gorging as if determined to burst rather than waste a scrap. Mine was by no means an isolated case, for every one was equally cared for, and it seemed as if a man had only to be really ill to be made to forget that he had fallen amongst thieves, and was now under the care of the good Samaritan. Sick men are proverbially impressionable; but now, months after, in a genial climate, surrounded by every comfort that a kind mother can think of, and gradually regaining my strength, I cannot look back on the past without feelings amounting almost to veneration, as I remember the kind friend and skilful hand that saved me from the jaws of death. The hospital is unquestionably the best managed of the various departments in Coldbath. I attribute this to the excellent staff of experienced warders, and the supervision of the medical officers. Where all seem actuated by the same desire, it would be invidious to draw comparisons; but the authorities little know what hard-working, efficient, and trustworthy men they have in their two night-warders, who week by week relieve each other, and perform their multifarious duties through the livelong night in a quiet, unostentatious way, and all for a pittance of an extra shilling a night beyond that paid to an ordinary turnkey. The many sleepless nights I passed gave me ample time to study their habits, which never varied, nor seemed regulated by eye-service; and from 6 in the evening, when they appeared neatly attired in white jacket and apron, till 6 in the morning, these living automatons neither slumbered nor

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slept, but were engaged, without intermission, in dispensing medicines, preparing plasters and poultices, and keeping up the fires, without fuss or noise, and with the regularity of a chronometer. At first my utter prostration prevented me leaving my bed, but as time wore on, I began to get about and observe what was going on. The day was a long and dreary one, though it was optional when one got up, nor could it be divested of the many annoyances that officialism—spiritual and temporal—seemed unable to forego even in a hospital. The chief culprit was the Scripture reader (as I understood was his official designation, though I never saw or heard him so engaged), who appeared regularly at 2 o'clock, and read a monotonous harangue, with a religious tendency evidently intended to be entertaining. I should be sorry to misjudge the worthy man, whom I am disposed rather to sympathize with, as the passive instrument of an irreverent exhibition; indeed, he conveyed to me the notion of a man actuated by a strong desire to fulfil a duty conscientiously which he felt was contemptible, and that deceived neither himself nor his audience. This farce and its surroundings were all sprinkled with the same reverential ceremony, and as he strutted up the passage with his billycock under his arm, a subdued tone pervaded the room and heads were uncovered as became the solemn farce. "The subject for our study and meditation," began the unhappy man, "is entitled, 'Jonas, or the bilious whale,' or, 'Cain, the naughty man,'" as the case might be; and then followed twenty minutes of twaddle, senseless and monotonous, and as incapable of removing moral stains as would be "Thorley's Food for Cattle," if substituted in things temporal (and seedy) for "Benzine Collas." A fervent "Amen" always followed these effusions, loudly joined in by the cleaners, who felt it might be considered a recommendation for continued hospital employment, and those patients approaching convalescence, who hoped it might turn the scale in favour of a few more days in hospital. By opening the door I could see and hear everything, and I often caught poor "Bubbling Bill" casting sheep's eyes in my direction. Meals were always preceded by a grace (?) said by a turnkey: "Bless O lor' th' things touruse for crysake, Amen!" a refreshing and commendable adjunct.

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It seems peculiarly unfair on religion that it should so often be presented in a hideous or ridiculous light, and if the same stipulations were enforced as to quality as at present exist as to quantity, more things than time might possibly be saved.

At 11, and again at night, the surgeons visited the hospital, when every case was carefully gone into. The care that prisoners receive in this hospital puts crime almost at a premium, and though I may indirectly be accusing those eminent and otherwise irreproachable physicians of unintentionally aiding and abetting law-breaking, veracity compels me to say what I think. A case I met goes far to prove it. In the hospital with me was a broken-down old gardener who had seen better days, and was in receipt of a pension of five shillings a week from a former employer. This pittance, however conclusive it might be of his comparative honesty, was wholly inadequate to procure medical comforts for rheumatic gout, to which he was a martyr. He next appears at a police court for having a pig in his yard, which he had driven in from the street, and then informed the police. There can be only one solution of this act, for he was a man of sixty, beyond absolute want, and had never seen the inside of a prison before. He had now attained his object, and was undergoing three months' imprisonment, during all which time he was in hospital. I saw him on admission, a cripple, crumpled up and half-starved, and I saw him every day swaddled in cotton wool, his limbs frequently fomented, and fed on the daintiest luxuries. This man was one of the few I met who was grateful for the care bestowed on him, and honest enough to wish he had had six instead of three months' imprisonment. I saw him on the day of his discharge, comparatively cured, and wondered how long it would be before he again caught the right sow by the ear. A disadvantage that patients have to suffer from is the architectural construction of the ward: it unites the two angles of the prison, and necessitates its being traversed in its entire length by every official going his rounds. On these occasions great inconsideration is shown, the orange-peel delinquent of chapel notoriety being peculiarly offensive in the unnecessary noise he made. I heard him on one occasion complain to the warder, that a patient, who was almost *in extremis* at the time, was "too lazy to look up."

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During my retirement I saw more than one painful death-scene; the one that made the most unpleasant impression on me was that of a living skeleton, who seemed incapable of dying, although too weak to do anything but blaspheme dreadfully, and keep up one incessant groan. He was a man of sixty, and had been in his time the best known and expertest of swell-mobsmen. He had not a relation in the world, and although offered his discharge months before, had nowhere or no one to whom he could go. I saw this man dying for weeks, and eventually stood at his bedside when he took his last gasp. This man had been either a convict or undergoing imprisonment for the last twenty years, and the crime that led to his death in Coldbath was the sacrilege of putting a counterfeit half-crown into a collection plate, and taking out as change a genuine florin. One of the cleaners—an unmitigated thief, but sufficiently good to have qualified for staff employ—had told the warder the day before his death that he knew him to be acquainted with certain persons he named; and with the consideration that characterizes the treatment of prisoners in hospital, no pains were spared to discover the creatures. I saw them next day (two females, known to every policeman in London, the one as the keeper of a thieves' lodging-house, the other as a "decoy"), actuated by no motive but curiosity and the intimation they had received, standing at the dying man's bed in their tawdry finery, in company with the priest as attired in chasuble and stole he pronounced the extreme unction for dying sinners. The dying man, the kindly priest, the tawdry females, and the surroundings, formed a picture truly awful, and baffling description. But the end had not yet come; and as the room was again left to its normal condition, banter reassumed its sway, and bets began to be made as to the probable hour of his death. Pots of tea and bread-and-butter were freely wagered, and yet through the livelong night

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the dying groans, getting feebler and feebler, told how the swell-mobsman was still tussling with death. At five in the morning the end was evidently at hand, and slipping on my clothes, I joined the knot of men attracted to the bedside. The man was happily unconscious; and as the excitement of the sweepstake increased, I can only compare it to the game of roulette, when the ball almost rolls into one compartment and then topples into the next; and "He's dead now," "No, he isn't," "That's his last," followed gasp after gasp, till at a few minutes to six a profound silence announced that the swell-mobsman was gone. (It is only fair to state that much of this occurred unknown to the solitary warder, for what was one amongst so many?) By this time the prison bell was ringing, and the place was astir as day and night warders relieved one another. To stretch, strip, and carry him out of bed were the work of a moment; and what had been a living man a few seconds before had been washed, laid out, rolled in a blanket, and carried to the dead-house in less time than I have taken to write it.

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The washing and laying out of a corpse is too dreadful to pass unnoticed. This necessary but revolting ceremony is performed in the kitchen. I saw the corpse divested of all clothing, lying on the top of the bath, in the centre of the kitchen, with the kettle boiling within a yard of it, and surrounded by pots and pans and other paraphernalia in daily use. The stench that pervaded the kitchen after this ceremony was so apparent (nor could it be got rid of for days) that I was absolutely unable to eat anything that had passed through it, and for days subsisted on the insides of loaves and eggs, as the only places where the flavour of potted pickpocket did not appear to have penetrated. This washing of corpses and the "itch bath" in a hospital kitchen is as great a scandal as ever was perpetrated by any Government.

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The dead-house is a primitive establishment, and cannot even be divested of superfluous officialism. Its entire contents consist of a slab and a wooden block for the head of the corpse, and yet it boasted of an inventory board. This latter absurdity is conspicuously displayed, and reads—

"ONE TABLE."

"ONE BLOCK."

Another death I saw was even more awful in its suddenness. It was during dinner when some five or six patients were devouring their chops. One man, that was conspicuous for his habitual voracity, had left the table whilst waiting for the pudding. As he passed his bed he toppled over and was dead. The cook, with the characteristic officiousness of the criminal class, rushed out of the kitchen with a saucepan full of rice pudding in his hand, and began to assist at the ghastly manipulation. I was within a foot of him, and saw the wretch brush off a tear from the dead man's eye, which he then proceeded to close; he then resumed his culinary duties, and gave the saucepan a stir. Rice pudding, I understand, is liable to "stick" to the pot; for my part, I made a vow to "stick" to dry bread; indeed, I never see one now without being reminded of this disgusting scene.

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I was now beginning to yearn for tobacco. For some days past my illness had indisposed me for it; besides, my arrangements had been upset by my sudden admission into hospital. To communicate with one of my agents, although by no means difficult, was a question of opportunity. I was particularly anxious, too, not to be suspected of breaking a rule, for though it could only have been interpreted as a breach of discipline to be dealt with by the Executive, I found it difficult to divest myself of the notion it would appear ungracious towards my kind physicians if I transgressed any rule whilst in hospital. But my craving increased, and as I could not eat, and to smoke I was afraid, and consoling myself with the assurance that what the eye does not see, the heart does not feel, I decided, in the burning words of Bishop Heber, to "mind my eye and blaze away."

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My position necessitated my breaking a fundamental rule of my principle, and I confided in a rascally cleaner. I had, indeed, no alternative, for, though by the confidence I increased the chances of detection, I minimized and almost precluded the possibility of the ownership being brought home to me. My first anxiety was to find a place, for between my mattresses was out of the question, and I at length decided on the flooring; but selecting a plank and removing the nails are two different things, and I should have been defeated at the very outset. Chance, however, favoured me; and one day, to my great delight, a ram was caught in the thicket, in the shape of a carpenter, come to repair a window. As opportunity offered, I pointed out to him a short plank, and leaving the room, said, "I shall be back in ten minutes; meanwhile, if you remove those nails, and replace the plank so as not to be observable, I'll give you as much grub as you can carry away." These instructions would have been ample, but fearing his zeal to earn the food might outrun his discretion, I popped my head in and added, "If you're caught messing about, kindly remember I know nothing about it." This will hardly be deemed chivalrous, though strictly in accordance with etiquette in giddy Clerkenwell. Being satisfied with his work, but dreading to explore my secret cave, I told a cleaner to collect all the spare bread-and-butter he could find. So well did he carry out my request that he shortly appeared with thirty-eight slices, but so bulky was the quantity that it was necessary to smuggle it in, and the coal-scuttle was pressed into the service; but my carpenter did not object, and, removing the lump that concealed it from the vulgar (turnkey) gaze, proceeded to devour it. With his mouth full of one slice and shoving in another, he occasionally gargled out, "This is a treat!" "This is jam!" until sixteen slices had disappeared. He now began to show signs of distress, and secreted the rest inside his shirt; but what between the sixteen slices inside and the twenty-two outside, his dimensions had so increased that detection was a certainty. I therefore refused to let him leave unless he swallowed

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eight more—just to make an even two dozen—and the unhappy man again began. I can see him now, sitting on the window-sill, pretending to hammer, his eyes starting out of his head, imploring me to “let it be;” but I was firm, and had not the remotest intention of jeopardising my position by any such weakness. As the last piece disappeared, he was speechless, and I almost feared he was choked; but my mind was considerably relieved by his asking me, for mercy’s sake, to give him a drop of water. But there was none in the room, and, telling him it was all nonsense, and that the walk downstairs would make it all right, saw him leave the room with considerable satisfaction.

That evening I explored my cavern, which surpassed my fondest expectations; the architect must have put it there on purpose, so admirably was it adapted. Lifting up the eighteen-inch plank, I discovered a hollow place about six inches deep and two feet square. I now lost no time in getting my supplies, and, making a bag, at once filled it with paper, envelopes, a knife, pencil, and a cake of tobacco. From 6 to 7 A.M. was my favourite hour for writing and other business. I then carefully replaced my treasures, and sent off my letters, leaving nothing crinating about me except five or six atoms of tobacco, which I would have swallowed rather than that they should have been discovered. There were several advantages connected with a choice of this hour. In it one was perfectly safe from interference; so busy, indeed, was everybody, that the orange-peel man, who was busy counting and inspecting, and the other officials sending off night reports, would never have dreamt of anyone devoting this particular hour to the breach of a dozen rules.

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As time wore on, I began to dread the detection of my hiding-place; so conspicuous, too, did it appear to my guilty conscience that I determined to abandon it. The light seemed to pour on its well-worn crevices, the Governor stood on it twice or thrice a week, the surgeons crossed it a dozen times a day, warders absolutely hovered over it all day long; so I communicated with the cleaner, and entered into an arrangement whereby, for a consideration of food and a piece of tobacco daily, he was to secrete my bag elsewhere. I felt it was madness to trust a confirmed thief, but there was no alternative; and within a week I discovered the fallacy of there being any honour amongst thieves, and the brute I had treated with the greatest liberality stole my bag, and came to me with a whining tale of how it had been discovered and taken away. It never alarmed me, as it would had I really believed him; and shortly after the whole conspiracy was revealed to me by about the only reliable prisoner amongst them, and I had undoubted proof of the complicity of every cleaner in the place.

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My weary afternoons I usually beguiled by pantomimic love-passages with a frowsy damsel in a neighbouring house. Our acquaintance began as I watched a portion of her graceful form bulging over a window-sill she was cleaning at the time, which ripened into such an intimacy, that day by day we looked out for each other, and exchanged such protestations of devotion as might be conveyed by her holding up to me portions of her employer’s eatables, such as eggs and once a steak, which I gracefully reciprocated by exposing Government property, such as a medicine bottle and occasionally bread-and-butter. Graceful Selina! may my successor have been more worthy of your innocent virgin heart!

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## CHAPTER XXVI. BURGLARS “I HAVE MET.”

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THE number of admissions into hospital about this time necessitated my having a companion billeted on me, an unfortunate Frenchman, utterly oblivious of any language but his own; and as it turned out that his attainments in English were exactly of the same extent as that of the warders in French, there seemed to be an impassable gulf fixed between all communication of ideas, if either party had happened to possess any. He was complaining to me one day of the disadvantage he laboured under, and described the usual conversation that took place daily between himself and the hospital warder.

"Well, are you better?"

"No, sare."

"O, all right."

"*Voilà mon ami*. What do you tink?"

My companion, I was gratified to observe, was gradually mastering some of the idioms of our language.

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Not long after, an extraordinary creature was admitted as a patient, and I cannot to this day say what his nationality was, although I am inclined to believe his language was some kind of Russian *patois*. Nobody could make head or tail of him, and a distracted warder, in this dilemma recollecting my success with the "other foreigner" and doubtless giving me credit for a knowledge of every language of the earth besides a few of the lunar ones, came and asked me to try and understand him. My knowledge of outlandish languages is not remarkably extensive (it is confined, I may state, to the Hottentot word for "rice" and the Chinese for "smoke"), and as no one appeared to have a Russian dictionary, I addressed him in Hindustani, considering that in point of longitude it came geographically nearest the Russian. He at once replied in a rambling speech, throwing his arms about and beating his chest; and though I am convinced he understood no more of my speech than I had of his, my reputation was established, the more so as he had no means of betraying my secret. Having then explained to the warder that he complained of pains in the chest, and would prefer an egg beaten in his tea instead of boiled (a change I considered unlikely to materially affect his complaint), I retired to my apartment.

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I now for the first time came into personal collision with the chaplain. For weeks and months circumstances, and possibly choice, had kept us apart, nor had we exchanged a word since the eventful day when he discovered that an "unconfirmed" sinner stood before him. It was during prayers (a movable feast indulged in three mornings a week at the chaplain's convenience) that I was referring to a book on the table in hopes of finding the particular extract he was reading. Failing in that I replaced the book, and resumed my hypocritical solemnity, in blissful ignorance of any impropriety. The holy man, however, thought otherwise, and hissed out at me—

"I consider your behaviour impertinent to me, and disrespectful to God."

At first I retained my equanimity, for he was incapable of raising my ire; and I assured him what my object had been, and reminded him I was a Presbyterian. At this his rage knew no bounds, and sneering in a manner unworthy of a clergyman (I won't say a gentleman), he said—

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"A Presbyterian, are you? Ah, I thought you didn't belong to the Church of England!"

I soon got the unhappy man's back up. I assured him I was indifferent to his opinion, and added I was proud to belong to a Church where such intolerant views were not expressed by its ministers. This undignified scene was heartily enjoyed by twenty prisoners and warders, all of whom assured me I had had considerably the best of it. I intended to have paraded him before the visiting Justices, but common sense prevailed, and I should have ignored his further existence had it not been for a petty spite he indulged in shortly after. As I have before stated, the library books are under his special care. During my long illness I had waded through this "special" catalogue till I had reached number 21, and in the course of events might naturally hope to receive number 22 next. In this, however, I had made a miscalculation, and his Reverence decided that a school edition (the eighth I had read) of the History of England was a more wholesome dietary for a bumptious Presbyterian. I was convinced the mistake was not unintentional, but, anxious to give him an opportunity of gracefully retracting a contemptible action, I sent the following day to point out his oversight. The reply was, as I expected, "If he does not choose to have it let him go without." I reported the matter to the Governor, who at once offered to place the matter before the visiting Justices, as he had no jurisdiction in the matter; but I decided that the man and his book were neither worth it. I should now, under ordinary circumstances, have been left entirely bookless—a contingency in my case that did not occur. It also gave me the opportunity of reading "The General History of the Church," a well-written and exhaustive work by the Abbé Daras, supplied for the use of Roman Catholics. The superiority of the literature—religious and profane—selected and supplied by the Roman Catholic chaplain, together with his personal merit and gentlemanly bearing, makes Romanism a formidable rival to the "Established" Religion as dispensed at Coldbath. To judge by the jealousy that exists in a certain quarter, it is evident this superiority is realized elsewhere. But the circumstance was not unnoticed by my lynx-eyed, ghostly comforter. On many occasions I have seen him watching, as if he would have liked—had he dared—to ask me what I was reading; but he confined himself to discussing me with the warders, with such remarks as, "I see he's got hold of something," or "What's that he's reading?" all of which was duly reported to me. I feel I have given undue importance to this contemptible squabble; but I look on it as a tilt between sects, a tussle between an Episcopalian divine, armed with authority, and a Nonconformist, placed at a considerable disadvantage, and where—had I been in a position to do so—I should have left the room—as the Governor once did the Chapel when unmeasured and ill-advised criticism was being lavished on Dissenters. The guilt of schism lay heavily on this orthodox Churchman's heart. I say schism, for I call it such of the most culpable type that ignores the insignia of Divine sanction accorded to the Ministry and people of Nonconformity. I would ask this bigoted Episcopalian what he thinks of Richard Baxter, Livingston, John Horne, Wesley, Whitfield, Chalmers, Candlish, Caird, Guthrie, McLeod, names only to be mentioned to inspire veneration, and yet these were all

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Nonconformists of one denomination or another. Surely, if Divine grace finds and fashions such men, they may be considered as entitled to at least respect from clergymen and gentlemen, who, if they do not agree in their respective tenets, may at least abstain from unmeasured abuse of them and their followers! Arrogance anywhere is bad, but is doubly so when men who claim to be disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus set such an example by their narrow-minded remarks about Nonconformity. The Church of England is a venerable and illustrious section of the true Church, and unlikely to have its fair fame sullied by the ravings of a nameless ranter. But it becomes a question, is a chaplain with such extreme views, so uncompromising in his denunciations, so unguarded in his language, so ungovernable in his temper, the sort of person for a prison chaplain, or one likely to convert sinners from the error of their ways? God forbid that my remarks should be mistaken. I do not aspire to be considered either a ranter or a hypocrite, but I respect and never fail to detect religion, and despise its base counterfeit wherever and in whomsoever I find it; and if I can hear the "old story" ungarnished by rhetoric, I care not whether it emanates from Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Nonconformist of whatever denomination.

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That this is a very small world was demonstrated to me during a conversation I once had with a fellow prisoner. He was a decent, educated man, and had been in a pawnbroker's establishment. Our conversation one night turned on things theatrical, and he was giving me some interesting experiences of the "ladies" he had met at various times on business. He asked me if I knew Mrs. —, and I said I had spoken to the old hag. He then proceeded to tell me what a constant customer she had been in former days, and how her contributions had varied from woollen rags one week to valuable jewellery another. It was then that a circumstance was brought to my mind—told me some three years ago by a lovely and accomplished actress, since retired from the stage—of how a popular burlesque artiste in the same theatre had once lost a valuable jewel, and how suspicion pointed at this identical old woman, who had a girl at the theatre. I asked him if he recollected anything about it, and he at once proceeded to give me details that convinced me that the pendant he referred to was one and the same as that which had mysteriously disappeared, and that the suspicions formed a few years ago might have been very fully confirmed had a visit been paid to an establishment not a hundred miles from Tottenham Court Road.

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During my illness I had at different times the services of the various cleaners in making my bed, brushing the floor, and bringing in my meals, and I invariably extracted anything of interest about their previous careers. My first was an unmitigated young "till thief." This is a special branch of the profession, requiring assurance rather than dexterity, and consists in watching your opportunity when the shop is empty, and then making a dash for the till or cash-box. My valet had apparently been eminently fortunate, and although he had undergone a previous twelve months, had escaped detection a score of times. He was then undergoing a lengthened seclusion for an unforeseen occurrence, which he in no way considered as a reflection on his prowess. He had, it appears, entered a confiding lamp-dealer's, and finding the shop conveniently empty, and the cashbox conspicuously displayed, had done his business, and proceeded to leave the premises. A swinging glass door, however, unfortunately intervened between the shop and the street, which in the excitement he pushed the wrong way, and in some way jammed. This little delay made a difference in his and the shopman's respective accounts of about £45. On another occasion he found himself in a corn-chandler's—a class that is proverbially considerate in avoiding superfluous obstacles to a hurried exit,—and whilst helping himself to the till, a customer came in, who, seeing him engaged, asked for a pennyworth of barley; to this he obligingly served her, added the cumbrous coin to his other findings, and then complacently left the shop. This individual was a special pet with the turnkeys, and as such—combined with his trustworthy reputation—was invariably selected for expeditions to the various stores. His special talent here stood him in good stead, and he never returned without having stolen three or four eggs, a handful of flour, or a lump of soap. Indeed, so inherent was the spirit of thieving, that if all else failed, he would annex physic, and I have often seen him with bottles of quinine and iron mixture. This latter forms a considerable article of commerce, and is much sought after and bartered (never mind how or where) for advantages of a more palatable type. A short time before his discharge I advised him to drop the cash-box game, and he assured me he had quite determined to "turn it up." Within a week he had been re-convicted, and is at present undergoing seven years' penal servitude. In my next valet I was considerably disappointed. Although an unmitigated thief, I fancied I detected some redeeming features. I talked to him frequently, and treated him with as much kindness as a man with my circumscribed means had probably ever been able to. In return he assisted to rob me of contraband things, of which he always had a liberal share. He had been a lieutenant (in burglary) of the late Mr. Peace, and often discussed that eminent man with evident regret. He had been with him in various minor affairs, and through his entire career had never been "nabbed." His present incarceration was the result of treachery, where a less fortunate associate had rounded on him, and he was arrested a week after. He often hoped to meet him outside, though an incident that occurred will necessitate a postponement of the pleasure. A batch of convicts, *en route* to penal servitude, were one day being medically examined by the surgeon (a new regulation lately come into force), amongst whom my valet recognised his *quasi* friend, the informer. The interview took place near the kitchen, where my man was cooking a chop, the surgery being next door, at which the convicts were ranged. "And what did you say?" I enquired. "Say!" he replied, "I slapped my stomach to show 'im I was all right, and then I says, 'You looks 'orrid ill, you —; you'll never do it; thank God, 'twill kill yer.'"

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A pleasant prelude to ten years' penal servitude.

I am indebted to this noble-minded creature for many hints as to how burglaries are concocted and how best guarded against, and I am of opinion that attention to them will do more to obviate their frequency than all the absurd warnings as to window shutters and area gates, that periodically emanate from Scotland Yard. No burglary is ever attempted on chance; in fact, no house is ever entered except on exact and reliable information. This is usually obtained through a frivolous maidservant (in which case a delay of weeks may be necessary for love-making), a rascally butler, or the local chimney-sweep. The information chiefly sought after is the strength of the garrison (whether males or females), the class of valuables (whether plate or jewellery), their usual locality, and the habits of the occupants. With this as a basis, the house is watched for days and weeks, in order that a confirmation of the information may be obtained. The time preferred is when the night police are in the act of relieving the day men, and if that should be inconvenient (to the burglar), between the night patrols. All this may appear ridiculous, but I give it as the testimony of a notorious burglar, imparted to me in good faith, under exceptionally favourable circumstances for hearing the truth, and if acted on will materially increase the security of householders.

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I asked my mentor his opinion about window shutters and door bolts, at which he absolutely laughed. No burglary is ever attempted through a window unless considerably left open. The front door is the invariable point of attack, as most favourable for ingress and a precipitate retreat, and under occasional circumstances the area. The operation never takes more than twenty minutes, as is erroneously supposed, the object being to be in and out again between the periodical promenade of the policeman. These nocturnal strolls are accurately calculated, and the precision with which they are performed, however admirable from a disciplinary point of view, are totally inappropriate as deterrents to burglaries.

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"But suppose," I asked, "a person said to you, 'I've only got so-and-so in the house—you can have that': would you be satisfied?"

"Satisfied?" he replied. "No, we knows jolly well what there is afore we comes; and, for the matter of that, there's no time for talk. We goes straight for the swag, and if anyone tries to 'inder us, we're bound to let 'im 'ave the jemmy right across the face. That's 'ow poor Peace got 'imself into trouble fust." He then went on to tell me that he had a lovely (!) little jemmy about eighteen inches long and tipped with the finest tempered steel, capable of being carried up the sleeve, and so fine that it could be inserted into the smallest crack or hinge; "And," he added, "once let me get 'is nose in, and make no mistake, I walks in very soon arter."

This gentleman's testimony is worthy of consideration. He was associated, as he informed me, with the butler in a well-known burglary of plate somewhere in Kensington, and where the butler, being knave enough to rob his master, was fool enough to entrust a large portion of the proceeds to his confederate to melt down and divide. As I understood him, half only of this bargain was carried out in its integrity.

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The secrecy with which foolish women fancy they put away their jewels in secure safes let into the wall is a labour lost in vain. Their hiding-place is thoroughly well known, and probably its value, and other useful particulars. That they have hitherto escaped is merely an accident of time and opportunity; that they will ultimately be victimized is a foregone conclusion. The moral to be gleaned from this is, to be sure of your servants, a fool being almost as dangerous as a knave, and to abstain from flashing your jewellery before eager eyes, only too ready for a clue to its whereabouts.

If after this disinterested advice unprotected women are fools enough to barricade themselves and their treasures in defenceless houses, they have only themselves to thank. They should be careful, however, not to waste their visitor's time when confronted by his "bull's-eye," as burglars are proverbially children of impulse. Houses containing little or nothing of value are never burglariously entered. Men won't risk penal servitude on a chance; the prize and its price have been carefully calculated.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

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### "JUSTICE TEMPERED WITH MERCY."

I HAD now been many months in hospital, though all the care and kindness I received seemed incapable of improving my condition. Strengthening medicines, stimulants, tonics, all failed to rouse me, and the tempting food, that I had only to suggest to have provided, could not induce me to eat. I was subjected to a minute medical examination, and my lung was found to be affected. Later on a further examination proved that the malady was slowly progressing. To remain in prison was certain death, so my case was submitted to the Home Secretary, who, with the humanity that has characterised his tenure of office, ordered my immediate discharge. I shall never forget the morning when an impulsive turnkey rushed into my room, and saying, "It's come!" hurriedly disappeared, and I understood that her Majesty's gracious pardon had arrived, and I was free.

The preliminaries for departure were somewhat long in my case, and it was nearly eleven o'clock before I bade adieu to gloomy Clerkenwell. I had, however, been by no means idle. The

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resumption of my clothing was a matter of time and difficulty; and though they had, by the kindness of the Governor, been considerably taken in to suit my diminished proportions (eighteen inches in the girth and seven stone in weight), retained a hang-down appearance in the vicinity of the neck and shoulders, that involved an immense expenditure of pins and ingenuity. The clothes of prisoners after admission into prison are, as a rule, subjected to a very necessary process. I do not know whether any discretionary power exists as to dispensing with the rule in certain cases, but it seemed incredible that mine should have undergone the usual formula without retaining a vestige of the fact. Clothes are, however, subjected to a process of modified cremation, and placed in airtight lockers, and smoked in a phosphoric preparation supposed to be antagonistic to the respiratory organs of creeping things. But the smell of fire had not passed over mine, and I can only suppose that the ceremony had been dispensed with as a graceful compliment to the executors of my deceased tailor, whose representative I last met at the "House of Detention." My hat, too, had either considerably expanded, or my head had considerably contracted, for it necessitated at least a yard of brown paper between the brim and my cranium, before being padded to wearable dimensions.

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As I passed through the office, I caught the first glimpse of myself in a respectably-sized looking-glass, and could hardly believe that the scarecrow I saw was really myself. But what mattered it if I had half a lung more or less than of yore?—I was free! I was not going to die in prison, and contribute in my person an additional item to the dead-house inventory board.

With what different sensations did I again find myself in the office which I had not entered since my arrival some months before. It seemed as if all the formula would never be completed, and I would almost have foregone the handsome donation of ten shillings I had earned for laming malefactors to have got out a moment earlier. But business is business, and the labourer is worthy of his hire, and in a few moments I had received a rare gold coin (at least so it appeared to me at the time), known as half-a-sovereign. The warder that had accompanied me from the hospital now sent for a cab, and as I drove through the ponderous gate a load appeared to fall off my mind, and though shattered in health, as I breathed the free air of a London fog, my lungs began to expand as they had not done for months.

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The usual hour for the jail delivery is 9 A.M., when gangs, varying from ten to a hundred, are daily discharged. As they pass the wicket one by one, each man is presented with a breakfast order, entitling him to an unlimited supply of coffee and bread-and-butter at an adjoining tavern. This kindly act takes its origin from a private source that cannot be too highly commended, and though I failed in discovering its identity, understand it is in no way connected with the "Prisoners' Aid Society." Every detail connected with a prisoner on discharge reflects credit on the Government. A vagrant enters prison hungry, filthy, and penniless. He again emerges with his linen washed, his clothes fumigated, money in his pocket, and provided with an ample breakfast. Such treatment has not its parallel in any other country in Europe, and I cannot refrain from offering my testimony in opposition to the usually accepted and erroneous impression, and confidently assert that the British criminal is, if anything, far too generously treated in every respect.

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On my way I stopped at a tobacconist's and bought the biggest cigar I could find. It was, I believe, a good one, though for aught I knew it might have been brown paper. My sense of taste had apparently forsaken me, and it was days before I lost the sensation of having sucked a halfpenny. A friend I met soon after did not at first recognise me. "Good gracious!" he said, as he looked at my diminished circumference, "you're not half the size you were." "My dear fellow," I replied, "you forget I've been lately *confined*."

The sense of taste that had apparently forsaken me was for a time accompanied by a loss of voice; at least it seemed so, for acting on the force of habit, I could not bring myself to speaking above a whisper; and a waiter at the — Hotel seemed to think he was serving a lunatic as I asked him in a mysterious whisper for a pint of champagne. But the events of the day were too much for my strength, and before 7 that evening I had fainted, and was again in bed, under the care of an eminent physician. A careful examination next day confirmed the opinion of the prison surgeons, and I was ordered forthwith to the South of France, or anywhere from cruel London. Door handles caused me considerable surprise for days: they appeared, indeed, as superfluous additions that I was totally unaccustomed to. A morbid craving for old newspapers now seized me, and I again discovered the importance that seemed to attach itself to my late escapades. I am happily not a vain or unreasonable being: had I been so I might have found ample grounds for either when called upon to pay sixpence for a *Daily Telegraph*, and one shilling for a *Truth* at their respective offices, for copies containing references to my case. As it was, I merely concluded that the bump of avarice was equally developed in the Jew and the Gentile news-vendor.

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And now the time has come to close my reminiscences. To continue them would be apt to lead me into drivel, an adjunct I have tried to avoid. I make no attempt at justifying my work—though as a literary production it is beneath criticism—being quite aware that many will consider my resuscitating the past an act of bravado. In this I cannot agree with them, for though guilty of a portion of the offence with which I was charged, and which I unhesitatingly admitted, I am happy to know that cruel circumstances prevented my refuting at the time a fraction of the thousand and one lies that were laid to my charge. Not the most trivial incident appears to have passed unnoticed, and the omission to pay for a pennyworth of bloaters has been since transformed into a crime, and carried, as only cowards can, to quarters most likely to injure me. And one scurrilous society journal, notorious for its "enterprise" rather than its "truth," had the

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impudence to hint that I had made money at cards by foul play (I who have lost a fortune by gambling); but this I attribute to personal malice, and in return for my once publishing a scheme of a shady nature projected by its owner. This precious prospectus is in my possession, and at the service of any one with a taste for the perusal of rascally documents. I had indeed intended publishing it, but ultimately decided not to add to this volume of horrors, on the principle that "two blacks don't make a white." Whether it sees the daylight at the next general election is another affair. The marvel is I have not been associated with the "Clapham Junction Mystery," or discovered to be the chief of the Russian Nihilists. These remarks are not incapable of corroboration. The link then missing has since been found; and more than one lawyer, and a certain high official, know the truth; and the only deterrent to a very thorough *résumé* of the case is the pain it would cause to others. For my own part, I should not object, and if any shadow of the "possibility" of the truth lurking in my assertion is to be extracted, it may commend itself by the publicity I have given to my experiences—a frankness not usually associated with *unmitigated* guilt. But after all, is it worth it? For my part, I value the world's patronage as much as I do its odium. I've tested and accurately appraised both!

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My motive, too, has been to present prison life in a truer light than I have hitherto seen described, and, with a few trifling exceptions, and a necessary transposition of names and places, to give the outer world an insight into that mysterious community that lives and moves and has its being in their very midst. The erroneous impression that exists as to the harsh treatment of prisoners has, I trust, in a measure been removed. To represent a prison as an elysium would be absurd. It is intended as a deterrent, though considering the wild beasts it has to deal with, it may be questioned whether it is not far too considerate in the matter of food. Nor can it be denied that the rules are framed, and their execution carried out by officials actuated as a body by humane and honourable principles. That there are black sheep in every grade must also be conceded, and if their responsibilities were curtailed, and in some cases transferred, considerable advantage would, I think, ensue. A man of education and worldly experience, circumstanced as I was, is probably capable of forming a juster estimate of things as they really exist than a Governor or any otherwise well-informed individual: and as my remarks have been suggested in no spirit of acrimony, but, on the contrary, under a sense of obligation, it is to be hoped that the seed sown in Clerkenwell may bring forth fruit in Whitehall. That my remarks are disinterested nobody will be foolish enough to deny, and whether acted on or not is a matter of perfect indifference to me. At the same time, a probe here and an inquiry there will manifest the weak points of the "system," and convince the highest in authority that there are more things in a prison than are dreamt of in their philosophy. My conclusions have been drawn in a great measure from the treatment of others. For my own part, I often fancy my past experiences are a dream, so difficult is it to believe that the treatment I received, and immunity from degrading employment except in name, are compatible with "imprisonment with hard labour." And if even one of the many objects I have aspired to is attained, the blank that divides the past from the future will not have been endured in vain.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII. A RETROSPECT.

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I CANNOT conclude my story without asking, What constitutes honesty? and if anybody can give a really logical and satisfactory reply, I would ask him, Has he ever met a really honest man?

In the conviction of being credited with a reprobate mind, I freely admit my inability to answer either question satisfactorily. It is my experience, indeed, that no such thing as honesty—as at present understood—exists, and that it is simply a question of time, circumstance, or opportunity, although I have met many rich men who are credited with this undefinable attribute. That men of means are proverbially the best of fellows (I was once a "best fellow" myself) need not be repeated, nor will I insult your common sense, virtuous reader, who never did a shady thing in your life, by telling you what everybody knows—that their goodness increases in proportion to their wealth. Whether they are really honest is another question, and though no one would credit them with theft, would they be equally exemplary in regard to filthier and more nameless crimes? Why should a rich man steal? As a class they are proverbially mean and selfish. Why, then, should they worry themselves with such unnecessary consequences? That the highest of the so-called aristocracy are not above suspicion may be remembered, when some well-known names were once associated with a nasty scandal not entirely composed of strawberry leaves; and if their better halves were like Cæsar's wife, the immunity did not extend to themselves. And a comparison of the men undergoing penal servitude for huge commercial swindles, bogus "cab companies," and rascally prospectuses, with others at large, less fortunate in finding dupes, only proves that detection and want of opportunity have been left out of the calculation; that "not proven" and "guilty" are synonymous terms; and that at heart prince and peasant, duke and dustman, are alike desperately wicked. It was said, with a great deal of truth, that when a certain projector contemplated another gigantic fraud on the public it was his invariable custom to preface the robbery by building a church—a hint that was not lost on the observant speculator. In the same way, when a person thrusts himself into prominence as the self-constituted scourge of erring humanity, and is offensively blatant in his denunciations of fraud, it may be reasonably assumed in nine cases out of ten that the man is an undiscovered rogue, and

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fairly qualified for "Eighteen months' imprisonment."

THE END.

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