

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ONE INFIRMITY CONQUERED.

‘Every man is the hero of a triumph or tragedy, as wide as the universe.’

STRANGE histories are there at the Five Points. Striking contrasts between the past of comfort and respectability, and the present of weariness and woe. An enemy has done this. From happy homes, and honored positions, Intemperance has driven his thousand victims down the “easy slope” of sin, until all their pleasant places are hidden from their sight. It was a noble resolve in young Warren Hastings, a boy, poor and unfriended; to regain the broad lands of his ancestors, and to be Hastings of Daylesford—a purpose not lost sight of when he reigned over the millions of India, and accomplished by the force of his indomitable will. It is nobler when a poor, despoiled child of earth resolves, in the strength of a heaven-born purpose, to arise and go to his father, to recover his alienated inheritance, and to have his name, which had become a by-word and reproach, enrolled in the

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peerage of Heaven. These resolves, though not chronicled on earth, have their record on high!

One, we know at the Mission, who had a comfortable home and respectable position. His father being in good circumstances, intended him for the church, and sent him to one of the minor colleges at the University. But while there, his father died, leaving his property much involved, and a new aspect was given to his life. He left college, and thrown at once upon his own resources, entered the police service, and became head constable of the constabulary in Dublin, with fair prospects of promotion in her Majesty’s service; but “this infirmity” hindered his preferment, and brought him, through all the descending stages of social life, to the Five Points.

During the time that he held this office, he was in the receipt of a good salary, and he gave his daughter a very fine education. While on a visit to a friend in Dublin, she attracted the favorable notice of Lieut. — of the 17th Lancers, who married her, much against the wishes of his family, who were people of high birth and fortune. She was however received by them, and soon after accompanied her husband, who had sold his commission, to the continent. We have seen her daguerreotype in her father’s room at the Mission. It

portrays a fair creature, richly attired, with soft eyes, delicate features, a well turned head, hair gracefully arranged, and a modest, gentle expression of countenance. She paid her father's and sister's passage to this country, gave her picture as a keepsake to her step-mother, and since then they have heard nothing from her. In her "travelled and cultivated luxury," does she think of the struggling ones to whom she is so nearly allied?

Mrs. B. brought out to this country furniture to the value of three hundred dollars, a good supply of clothing for winter and summer, for herself and the children, and \$275 in money. She was an industrious woman, and perfectly temperate in her habits, and she secured the washing of some gentlemen in the Merchants' Hotel for a year. Their first location was an unfortunate one, in a house in Liberty Street, where there were always snoking and drinking, and consequently, temptations too strong for Mr. B. to resist. His occupation, too, canvassing the city with books, brought him into daily contact with friends from the old country, with whom he was induced to take a social glass, and so the course was still downward—downward.

Removing from Liberty street, they took three rooms in Mulberry street, at five dollars and a half a month,

and let out one of them; but an old man, connected with the Five Points House of Industry, who had known Mr. B. in the old country, came to him and advised him to rent a basement room in Mr. Pease's house, saying, that he could have it for four dollars a month, and that he could do a good business there. In an evil hour he consented. "I never heard," said his wife, "of the Five Points until I was landed in it." The room was in wretched repair, the plaster fallen down from the ceiling—and worse than all, so excessively damp, that Mrs. B. was soon attacked with inflammatory rheumatism. "Not a hand nor foot, body nor bone," said the poor woman, "could I move; and what with doctors' bills, and other necessary expenses, the forty dollars I had when I went there, were soon gone." Mr. Pease, on being told of the dampness of the room, had her carried up into an attic, where the air was drier; but the change failing to produce any amendment, she was advised to go to the Hospital. With no means to procure admission into the New-York Hospital, she reluctantly consented, that she might regain her health and work for her family, to go to the Hospital on Ward's Island. Her children, weeping around her, were to be left exposed to the terrible influences of the Five Points. Her hus-

band's "infirmity" she knew full well; and in her despair she turned to the Superintendent of the House of Industry, and asked him if he would take charge of her furniture—her feather bed, and dinner and tea-set, of stone china, and all the other articles of which her memory has taken a strict account. Her mind was quite relieved when Mr. P. promised her, as she was lifted into the carriage, that he would store her furniture in an unoccupied loft until her return.

Her recovery was more rapid than she expected, and though still on crutches, she returned home. "*Home,*" did I say? There were the four walls of the room—a table, with a loaf of bread, out of which a piece had been broken; for knife there was none; nor spoon, nor plate. On inquiring of Mr. Pease for her furniture, he told her that he knew nothing about it; that he had too much else to attend to, to look after her things. Two of her children had been sent to the Home of the Friendless, and the other was there, dirty and neglected. The poor woman looked round upon the empty room, and said, "I brought nothing into this world, and I can carry nothing out." Mrs. Hewlen, the teacher of the day school, came in to comfort and pray with her, and words of kindness melted the heart of the poor, desolate creature. Lame as she was, she got a tin pan, and

washed her child, and a few soiled clothes she found in a corner, to make ready a clean garment for the poor little neglected one. She then scoured a black tin plate she found there, and ate her "bit off it," and obtained credit with a neighboring grocer for a bowl, of the value of three cents, for her tea. She could bear, she said, the "spoiling of her goods," but she must leave that place, for she hated the very walls where she had known so much sorrow.

Her children came to her from the Home of the Friendless, and a way was opened for her to depart. A kind friend in Greenwich street, who had known her in Ireland, gave her six dollars, which she paid at once for the rent of a room in Trinity-place, where she remained for eighteen months, during which time she was frequently visited by the Rev. Mr. J——, of the Floating Chapel. They then moved to City Hall place, where they were found by one of the Ladies of the Mission.

One Sunday morning the lady was accosted by a little girl, who asked her to come and see her sick mother. Accompanied by a gentleman associated with the Mission, she followed her little guide to the fourth story, front room, of a house in City Hall Place. Deep poverty was there, but there was still an air about the

room, that betokened some idea of comfort and respectability. The poor woman was suffering great agony from inflammatory rheumatism, her hand being enormously swollen. Sympathy and kindness soothed even the anguish of disease, and as the gentleman knelt, and earnestly commended the afflicted family to the care and keeping of a merciful Father, both husband and wife were deeply affected. The husband returned with the lady to the Mission, and was furnished with flannels and such articles of comfort as the invalid required. Some days after he came again, saying that his wife was now attacked with inflammation of the chest, and was very low. Mrs. — at once sent her own Physician, who blistered her, and "saved her life," said her husband, "for she would have surely died without that timely help, as the Dispensary Doctor but seldom came to see her, and she needed careful treatment." She soon recovered; and the lady, who was most favorably impressed with Mr. B.'s intelligence and gentlemanly bearing, saw that there were elements of goodness in him, which only needed culture to make him a respectable and useful man, and she urged him to take the pledge. He did sign a temperance pledge, which he has most faithfully kept, and he says, he trusts by the grace of God, that he never, under any circumstances,

will touch a drop again. Mrs. — told him that, in the Spring, there would be rooms in the Mission-building to be rented at a low rate, and that there he would be shielded in some measure from the temptations which had been so fatal to him.

"And I thank God that I came," said he, "and that I ever saw the Five Points; for, but for the Mission, I should have been lost, body and soul. And now everything goes well with me." The infirm of purpose has been led by wise counsel, and watchful care, to a steadfast reliance on that Power, who to them that "have no might, increaseth strength." The Missionary obtained an excellent situation, with a good salary, for Mr. B., who, by his faithful performance of his duties, gives great satisfaction to his employers. Mrs. B. finishes shirts for a store in Broadway, where she has obtained work for two years, and in which she has now secured a good place for her step-daughter, who very much resembles the sister who is moving in so widely different a sphere. Their youngest child is one of the neatest, prettiest little girls in the Mission school; and their lightsome, tidy, comfortable room in the Mission building, tells of better days.

"It is better and better every day," he said, with a beaming face, the day before Thanksgiving, which was

probably the first real Thanksgiving day he had ever kept, when, with a full heart, he could pour forth his thanks for the blessed hopes and brighter days now dawning upon him. The son is with an excellent family, on a large farm, in Connecticut. On a recent-visit to him, Mrs. B. was delighted to find him so happy in his country home, away from the temptations and dangers of a city—in a pious family, where he is present at morning and evening prayers, and where he is trained up to the useful, vigorous life of a New England boy. Her little daughter who accompanied her, wished “that all the Five Points’ children could have such a large, beautiful place to play in.” After speaking of her visit, Mrs. B. told me of a “good dream” she had had the night before. She thought that our Saviour had come upon the earth, and that all were rushing to see Him. She too, went, and saw a mountain of rolls of bread; and the Saviour, whom she did not see, for he seemed to be hidden in this bread, gave her two of the rolls, with which she returned home entirely *satisfied*. The sweet prayer, “Lord, evermore give us this bread,” which perhaps suggested the dream, rose to my lips, and Mrs. B. added, that she hoped to eat of that bread which would fully satisfy the hunger of the soul. This dream recalled another to her mind, which years before she

had written “on a bit of an old copy book,” that she might not forget it. She thought that she saw the Saviour extended on the cross, but that she saw him dimly through a stained glass window, and she woke, crying out,

“Oh, that I might my Saviour see,
With unbeckoned eyes.”

Lines, that she said, she had “travelled in vain through many a hymn book to find,” and her prayer was for herself and her husband, that they might their Saviour see with unbeckoned eyes. We trust that her husband has found that “the right hand of the Most High” can give him strength to conquer his “infirmity,” enabling him to walk prayerfully and steadfastly in the narrow way upon which he has entered; and that years of improved prospects—happier, holier years, may justify the wife’s declaration, “I feared the Five Points would be the death of me, but I trust I have found here my resurrection and my life.”

Night Scenes in the Old Brewery.

"In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day time. They know not the light."—Job.

After the purchase of the Old Brewery, rumors were rife of hidden treasures buried in its dark cellars and passages, of vestiges remaining of the crimes that had so long held high festival in that gathering place of the workers of iniquity. That there was some foundation for such rumors may be gathered from the following incident. Soon after the purchase of the property, a man called on the agent to inquire if the lower under-ground cellar was to let. The agent, though perfectly ignorant of the fact that there was such a cellar, replied that he presumed so, and followed the man down into a long dark damp cellar without a floor, which had held some of the machinery of the Old Brewery in its days of business. "For what purpose can you use this doleful cellar?" asked the agent. "I am a trader in vegetables," was the ready reply, "and I wish to hire this cellar to store them in." The agent, thus unexpectedly put into possession of more available room, named his price for the month. The

man immediately handed him the sum required, took possession of the key, and departed. He did not appear again during the month, and but for the occasional thought that the vegetable dealer was very quiet, the circumstance passed from the mind of the agent.

On the first of the following month, he again called, and tendering the key to the agent, said he should want the cellar no longer as he found it too damp for his purpose. There was an undefinable something in the manner of the stranger that excited the curiosity of the agent, and taking the key, he went immediately to the cellar. There were no indications that vegetables had been stored there; but there were evidences of a more mysterious transaction. Two holes were dug in the ground, one sufficiently deep and wide to admit a large chest, and directly over this hole, an iron hook was fastened in the beam supporting the floor above, and this beam broken, as if some very heavy body had been drawn out of the ground by a tackle. The ground was newly turned; the beam recently broken; and that the vegetable dealer had taken out of the cellar more than he put in, was a conclusion to which the agent speedily arrived. But conclusions were all he could reach; and with these, he was obliged to be satisfied.

A few weeks after this, it was deemed necessary that the old, rickety building should come down.

On the evening of Thanksgiving day, it was illuminated preparatory to its demolition, and the broad blaze of light shone out cheerily in that dark place. All were willing to see in it a symbol of the coming light of truth, which could penetrate even that gross darkness. For three or four nights, the Old Brewery was thrown open to the public, and thousands came to visit it, ere it was blotted from the face of the earth. Each visitor was furnished at the door with a candle, and by its light, he wandered through the dark passages, and up and down the creaking old stair-ways—peering into low, damp, mouldering rooms, and passing through breaches made in the blackened walls to afford free passage through the building. It was curious to see the lights flitting to and fro in the darkness, and to mark the expectant look of mingled curiosity and awe on the young faces, many of whom had never before been brought into such close contact with poverty and crime. For though the inmates had departed, yet the very “stones in the wall seemed to cry out,” and echoes of wailings and wild revelry to linger there. And now the strange hum of cheerful voices, and the open look of honest faces, were in strong contrast with the past,

which pictured its horrors vividly to imaginations excited by the novelty of the scene.

The work of demolition was begun; and while the discolored walls, upon which might have been written whole histories of sin, were being taken down, two men were observed to come frequently and stand there with the air of unconcerned spectators. One night, at one o'clock, a carriage drove up and stopped near the Old Brewery, and shortly after the door of the office in the building was shaken. The man hired to watch the premises at night, opened the door, and was accosted by two well-dressed men: “Can we see the Old Brewery; we have heard so much about it?” The watchman said it was rather an untimely hour for a visit. But they told him that they had come from a distance, and were anxious to see it; and he replied, “You can see what is left of it.” One of the men, apparently familiar with the premises, passed through the office into the yard, when as the light from a handsome lamp which he had brought with him, flashed on his face, the watchman recognised him as one of the two men whose frequent visits had been remarked. “Where about these premises do you live?” asked one of the strangers. “Up stairs, in the rear of the Old Brewery.” “Will you show me?” said he, leading the way up the

old stairs. "So, here is where you live. Will you take a glass of brandy?" said he, drawing a flask from his side-pocket. "No, thank you," said the watchman, "I am a temperance man." "Well, but you are out in the cold, and this is a disagreeable business to be thus exposed." Finding that no entreaty could prevail upon the watchman to drink, and evidently wishing to detain this "Parley the Porter" in conversation as long as possible, he offered him a cigar, and plied him with questions and inquiries, from which he found it difficult to break away. He offered him ten dollars if he would allow two men to come on the premises for a few nights unmolested. The watchman refused. Fifty Dollars! A hundred were then offered, but the watchman still refused the tempting offer, until he had consulted some of the gentlemen of the Advisory Committee by whom he was hired. The watchman, rather doubtful of the propriety of his course in thus parleying with the strangers, returned to the yard, followed by his companion, who asked permission to look about him a little. He then measured twelve feet from the corner of the wall, and looking curiously at the place, pulled out a copper bolt. At a certain number of feet from another point, he pulled out two copper bolts; then going down into the cellar and measuring four feet

from the window, they found two copper-nails driven cross-wise into the wall. The measurements completed, apparently to their satisfaction, they told the watchman to keep his own secrets and they would make him as happy a man as any in the Points, and left him with the permission to return the following night.

On communicating these facts to some gentlemen of the Advisory Committee, the watchman was instructed to have a police officer on the spot, as the visit of these men who "loved darkness rather than light" might lead to the recovery of stolen property. The next night, the police officer, wrapped in an old great-coat, was snugly ensconced in a dark corner of the office when the strangers entered. His presence was soon detected by their quick eyes, and they remonstrated with the watchman for allowing any one to be there, when they had told him they must be alone. One was for putting the man out, but the other said, "Never mind him, he is only a drunken loafer not able to heed anything," and they went to the spot they had previously marked. The police officer came to the back door, and watched their movements. They found a soft place in the ground, apparently of some decaying matter, and with a sharp pointed stick they "speared" the ground here and there, till they seemed to discover

what they wanted. They found, however, on coming back to the office that the sleeping man had disappeared, and looking out of the door they saw him rapidly hastening in the direction of the Tombs for assistance. "We have been entrapped," said one of the men, "and we must be off at once;" and they immediately disappeared. The counter-plot was not successful. The watchman tried to follow out the clue they had given. He removed a large stone from the wall of the "Den of Thieves" whence they had taken the copper bolt, but he found no casket concealed behind it. He dug in "the soft place" where the strangers had "been spearing," but no gleam of golden treasure rewarded his toil.

Night after night passed, and no tidings of the mysterious strangers. At length, the watchman saw five of them in the yard, they having effected their entrance in the rear. Fearing that they might tie him up while they carried away what must be of some worth to involve such trouble and expense—he went to his room for his pistol, the firing of which was the signal agreed upon with the police. He fired, and at once stones and brick-bats were hurled at him without mercy, but he could easily shelter himself behind the fragments still standing, of the wall of the Old Brewery. "Kill him! kill him!" they cried out, as

he again fired, and filling the air with imprecations, they climbed over the rear wall towards Pearl street, leaving behind them their implements of digging.

No more parleying with the porter after this! The mystery was still unravelled, the nightly visitation still unexplained! The significant marks on the stone in the wall—the bribe offered to the watchman—all suggested visions of jewels and precious things to those made acquainted with what was passing at the dead hour of the night, amidst the crumbling walls of the Old Brewery.

But vice is often on the alert when duty sleeps at her post. How or when we know not, but probably while the watchman slept, the persevering strangers effected their purpose, and carried off the object of their search. Silently and surely they did their work, though they were obliged to remove a large heap of rubbish, which, by the order of the contractor for the building, had been placed upon the spot. A hole had been dug near the place indicated by their marks, and nothing was left but the void from which may have been taken treasures of great price.

The Old Brewery may have had its brilliant jewels carefully hidden from the light of day, but we have not seen them. We *have* seen the jewels of the New

Mission House; precious stones, gathered from deep caverns of crime, yawning abysses of iniquity—needing to be “cleared of the dark incrustations of sin,” and to be “fretted” and polished, that they may shine in that day when the Lord of Hosts maketh up his jewels.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAYNOOTH PRIEST.

THE experience of those who visit at the Five Points, is singularly varied and interesting. Some new phase of human life is continually presented—not always portraying the gradations of vice, and leading us step by step to the lowest point that fallen humanity can reach; not merely relieving the dark picture by a faint flash, which seems only to reveal what might have been, if purer influences had sooner exerted their power, and which was not, because the Christian Church had failed to perform its appropriate work here, until hundreds of adults were hardened in vice, and scores of children blighted in their opening years.

Not always are pictures such as these permitted to agonize the Christian hearts, who, in the providence of God, are called to labor in this fearful place.

Ever and anon, amid this desert waste, is discovered an oasis so green and so refreshing, that the desponding laborer, gazing on the scene, feels new life rushing