

said that the blind confidence of the father, the almost fatuous trust of the mother, the cool, determined, precocious villainy of the son as told by himself, with every point and circumstance, in the witness box, were of themselves sufficiently extraordinary; but the one great fact, the stay and stronghold of the defendant's case, the text at which Mr. Bovill pounded away with the persistency and tenacity of a puritan preacher who turned his hour-glass four times in the course of a sermon, was the marvellous allegation that a man used to an inordinate degree of luxury, accustomed to the indulgences and elegances of refined society, one who had sat for an important borough, headed a large volunteer corps, been the ostensible owner of hundreds of houses, the possessor of a fortune approaching half a million, should, without some sinister motive, some hidden purpose, some design to save for his family the fortune he had dissipated himself, have come forward to confess a crime whose inevitable consequence would be to subject him to a protracted, or as it actually happened, a life-long period of penal servitude. There is no doubt that these considerations greatly helped the counsel, and that they weighed much with the jury, nor do we by any means say that they were unfairly pressed by the one, or unduly estimated by the other. But without questioning the accuracy of those Cheimsford jurymen who stood out for the purchasers of the Roupell property or denying that the compromise ultimately arrived at was a fair and reasonable one, we cannot help thinking that if the case were to be tried next week, the family would go into court with a much better chance of winning than on the previous occasion. We have had an illustration of the power of conscience over flagrant offenders, more wonderful in its way than that furnished by William Roupell, and though it has not as yet led to sensation trials or to melo-dramatic incidents, the plain unvarnished story may well serve "to point a moral or adorn a tale."

In the summer of 1864, Augustus George Fletcher was cashier in the Melbourne Branch of the Union Bank of Australia. His reputation was, of course, as good, his character as high, the confidence reposed in him as profound as that of the great majority of the men for whom he has proved himself an unworthy colleague. He could not stand the test of repeatedly having within his reach the opportunity of enriching himself with dishonestly acquired gains, and, yielding to the temptation, he abstracted from the bank coffers securities amounting to nearly £10,000. Unwatched, unsuspected, he continued for some time to fill his accustomed post, nor does even his return to England a few months after the robbery appear to have generated a belief of his guilt. During a short stay in this country he turned his booty into cash, and started with the proceeds for the other hemisphere. From New York he went to Buenos Ayres, and from the latter place he only recently returned to

London. Those who may at any time be tempted to copy his evil example, should ponder thoughtfully the story of his subsequent adventures.

"Ill got, ill goes," is a proverb which has stood a good deal of handling, but which does not seem likely to wear out in these days of commercial and financial delinquencies. The £10,000 had got small by degrees and beautifully less, till barely eighteen months after it was stolen, not above one-fifth of it was left in the hands of its guilty possessor. Meanwhile the bank had become aware of the name of their depredator, and Augustus George Fletcher found himself in a foreign land, with occupation gone, with character blasted, with hopes destroyed. Still, he was better off than most of his order. He had £2,000 or thereabouts in his pocket, and he was in a country to which no police officer could penetrate, and from which no extradition treaty could fetch him back. He might have invested his money in foreign stocks, or employed it in some branch of commerce, or failing either of these expedients for husbanding or increasing it, he might have lived upon it carefully or recklessly while it lasted, and when the worst came to the worst, he could have earned his living and kept his freedom as a day laborer. But he did neither of these things. Tired of dissipation, worn out with excitement, stung by remorse, he communicated his crime to the British authorities at Buenos Ayres, and acting on their recommendation he took passage home, and landed with the intention of surrendering himself to offended justice.

It must be confessed that if Fletcher is out of prison, it is not for any want of effort to get into it. On the first Friday in January, he went to the bank in Old Broad Street, and presented himself just before the close of business hours, as his employers' self-confessed plunderer. But the bank officials seem to have been completely dumbfounded by the appearance of so queer a customer. They had never had to open an account or honor a draft of this nature, in all their long experience. The secretary called in the solicitor, and the two, after a conference, decided to make no charge against the defaulter. The would-be prisoner left the bank, sought the help of the first policeman he met, poured his confession into his ear, and was promptly taken off to the nearest station-house. Thus far, therefore, he had succeeded, but his success was of short duration. He met with a fresh disappointment next morning when he was taken before the presiding alderman at the Mansion House. His confession was heard, the charge against him entered, but himself was discharged on his own recognizances, the magistrate and his adviser being of opinion that there was no jurisdiction to detain him. Some weeks have passed since Fletcher's release, and so far as we know, he is still at large in London in possession of property he is anxious to give up, and of personal liberty