

Fourth Department.

ALDERMAN KELLY.

In the year 1780, a youth of fourteen years of age, carrying a small bundle containing his whole wardrobe, and with only a few shillings in his pocket, entered the city of London. His parents were very poor and unable to afford him a good education. Friends he had none in the mighty Babylon. An humble situation was open to him. During 23 weary years, his wages, commencing with ten pounds a year and his board, never rose beyond eighty, and were divided between his parents' necessities and his own. Yet this humble man, a loving son and faithful servant, was Lord Mayor of the greatest city in the world in 1836, the possessor of a princely fortune, and a liberal benefactor of his country. To explain how these vicissitudes occurred, and to afford an encouraging example to young men in business, the following sketch is written:—

Thomas Kelly was born at Chevening, in the County of Kent, in the year 1772. His parents were then keeping an inn, where they lost the savings of an industrial occupation. Ere a year had passed, however, they retired to an impoverished farm of thirty acres in Chelsham, Surrey. Here, with a large family, bad crops, and a high rent, they struggled to maintain their existence for many years. Thomas was the eldest son, and, after a brief period of instruction at village schools, was, at twelve years of age, taken to assist his father on the farm. The severe toil, the poverty of his parents, led him to aspire to something better than the crook and the plough; and, after much anxiety and several disappointments, he obtained an assistantship in the counting-house of a London brewery.

This he exchanged, on account of the failure of the concern, two or three years afterwards, for the office of a shopman to a bookseller in Paternoster Row. Ten pounds a year and his board formed his wages for standing behind the counter all day and sleeping beneath it all night. But these were the commencement of events yet to make the Row so famous.

Kelly had remained long enough under a parental roof to profit much from the example and instruction there afforded him. There he received his first impressions both in religion and business. The devout Sabbath-keeping, and the contented industry of his father and mother, stamped an influence upon his mind that was never lost. Such a home could not be too often visited; and he availed himself of the blessing by many a walk of thirty miles. The faithful training and affection of his parents were not without their reward. His chief ambition was to increase their comforts. The half of his scanty salary was saved for them; and Mr. Fell informs us that, "when his salary was raised to eighty pounds (a sum which it never exceeded,) he afforded them still more important assistance, even taking upon himself the entire payment of their rent; and it is here, also, deserving of special notice, that the heavy expenses of deaths and interments, at various periods of five younger brothers and sisters, were defrayed by him." The old man ended his life struggling in 1810, leaving a debt of eighty pounds; but which, along with the funeral expenses, and a medical bill of one hundred pounds, were discharged by his meritorious son. He had only been in business, on his own account, one year at that date; yet no personal sacrifice was spared to repay parental love and evince filial regard. This virtue is rarer than it has been, but there is none so blessed. It is "the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." In Thomas Kelly's experience it was amply verified.

A young man in London has many temptations. The confidence reposed in him, the want of parental oversight, the attractions of pleasure, the evil example and counsel of fellow-shopmen or others in business, all conspire to try the character of an ardent youth. But Thomas Kelly withstood the wiles by which so many are caught. He was a faithful servant. For 20 years and two months he remained in one situation, without receiving any encouragement beyond a small addition to his salary, till it reached eighty pounds. But the attention he paid to his master's interest was as great as if it had been his own. His anxiety to fulfil his duty was so intense as to evidence itself at first in "extraordinary feats of somnambulism." During the first fifteen years of his service, he had no holiday, no offer of a better situation or a share in the business; yet his fidelity was none the less to his master, and his strict Sabbath-keeping unbroken. We are told that, "of all the young men of his age and manner, who were so persuasively earnest in their entreaties to him to join them in their Sunday excursions to Gravesend

and elsewhere, he frequently averred that he saw the end, adding emphatically, that not one of them came to any good." While others sought pleasure, Kelly sought profit. On week evenings he improved his mind by study, and on the Lord's day his heart by prayer. Let young men be encouraged. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Thirty-eight years of his life passed without any advancement; but now a rapid tide of prosperity flowed upon him. Declining a partnership with the prodigal son of his master, Thomas Kelly began business on his own account in 1807. He had nothing but a character. But that is much, young man, to gain and possess. "I would give ten thousand pounds for a character," said the infamous Colonel Charteris; "because I could make twenty thousand pounds by it." This our hero had, and it was his success under God. He rented the small front room of a barber's shop in No. 52, Paternoster Row, and put "THOMAS KELLY" over the door. But few knew the name. As he stood at the door to attract purchasers, a customer of his former master's asked him, "Well, Thomas, and who is this Kelly that you have taken up with?" Patience and perseverance triumphed. Scanty in his own wants, having no debts, he bought a few books and resold them. A thousand copies of "Buchan's Domestic Medicine" in sheets having been purchased, he made them up into parts, sought subscribers, and sold them all with ample profit. Then commenced the business which yielded a fortune to himself and diffused healthy literature all over the country. This was the number system, by means of which valuable books were introduced to families by agency not of the trade, and paid for by sixpences and shillings at a time. Like all other philanthropic novelties, this system had opposition, but he who had waited long for his opportunity, could bear a trial which in uprightness he was making. One of his earliest attempts was a Family Bible, with notes and illustrations. Having appointed trustworthy agents to procure subscribers, he started with a circulation of upwards of 80,000 copies, of which the first part was paid for on delivery. This gave him capital for preparing the work, which extended to one hundred and twenty-three numbers. The price was five pounds fifteen shillings and fourpence to subscribers, and the list, swollen to 80,000, produced a sum of £460,000. After paying printer, engravers, agents, his capital was considerably increased. Various other works were soon produced and sold in this way—every one valuable—most of them religious—and, in the course of twelve years, he had acquired a leasehold of a large property in the Row, suffered a temporary loss of two thousand pounds by fire, and an actual loss of several thousands by litigation and by bankruptcies; yet never had a bill dishonored. Twelve editions of the Bible, in various forms and sizes, were issued by him, most of them stereotyped and illustrated. Of "Brown's Self-improving Bible" he sold 100,000 copies. He is believed to have printed and circulated about 200,000 copies of the Word of God. They were brought within the reach of all, were carefully read, and by many of the humbler classes made tamely heir-looms. With a publisher seeks to diffuse proper works, how great a benefactor may he be! We also believe that, by a system of colportage, cheap books of intrinsic worth and attraction might find their way to every home in the land. From the labors of such as Alderman Kelly, and other firms well known for Christian character, much may be learned in the circulation of healthy cheap literature of the present day among the people.

So exemplary had been the life of Mr. Kelly, so upright his business, that notwithstanding the opposition of the trade to his mode of publishing, he was requested by the citizens of the Ward of Farringdon Within, many of whom were bookellers, to accept the office of alderman. This office he held for 25 years, to the satisfaction of all. In 1825, he acted as Sheriff of London and Middlesex. In 1826, he entered the Common Council. In 1831 an attempt was made to raise him to the civic chair, but he declined the distinction. In 1836, the honor was again conferred upon him, and the bookeller's boy of former years became Lord Mayor. It was an eventful year (1837) and brought him into close contact with the throne, being the year of the death of William IV, and the accession of her majesty Queen Victoria, who has since so worthily reigned over the English Empire.

On retiring from the chief magistracy, tokens of the appreciation of his conduct were freely accorded by his fellow citizens. He had occupied his high place with dignity and grace, and borne with him into office all the urbanity, modesty, and benevolence which adorned his private life.

Selections.

The case of Alicia Rico was again before Vice-Chancellor Kindersley on Saturday, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Haddon appearing for the Protestant petitioners, and Messrs. Bagshawe, son, and jun., for the Roman Catholic mother. The question is whether, on the facts of the case (which were reported last week), the Court of Chancery will appoint some other guardian than the mother. The argument was only heard so far as to enable the Vice-Chancellor to decide what should be done with the girl during the short vacation, as the Court, at the close of the sitting, adjourn for a week and it would be impossible to go into the whole case in one day. His Honour suggested that the counsel should agree as to the disposal of the child in the meanwhile, and that nothing should be done to disturb her mind on the subject of religion:—

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—Does your Honour think it necessary to leave the child's mind in a blank condition?

The Vice-Chancellor—A "blank condition!" Can the mind of a girl of that age be in a blank condition for a week? I should be extremely reluctant, whether the girl be a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, that she should be without religious instruction.

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—I will undertake, sir, that no discussion shall take place, all instruction shall be given her, in the interval. I am content that the child shall say such prayers as a parent is bound to teach a child, and that the child shall go with her mother to the Roman Catholic church.

The Vice-Chancellor—You could not give any other undertaking.

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—I am content with that minimum, sir. I am content that neither the clergyman, the priest, or any other person shall speak to the child upon the subject of religion at all, but that the simple duty shall be carried on which is carried on with children—that is, of saying the prayers which my child, or any other Catholic child, would have to say.

The Vice-Chancellor—If that were a *sine quâ non*, that will not be satisfactory. The undertaking I should require would be, in substance, that you should not remove the child, or interfere with her, by causing her to attend any Roman Catholic place of worship, and as the mother probably would not like her to go to a Protestant place of worship, so she should not, either by her attendance at a Roman Catholic chapel, or by her communications with the child, or by suffering any communication with a Roman Catholic priest, or from any other quarter, allow a word about religion to enter her mind.

An adjournment now took place, but the counsel were unable to agree, it being insisted that the girl should attend some place of worship, and considerable discussion ensued between the counsel for the mother and the Vice-Chancellor on this point:

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—Would your honour leave it to the child to say such prayers as it may think fit, without the intervention of the mother?

The Vice-Chancellor—Of course, it requires no power—no permission of the Court—that the child should do that. I cannot help thinking, Mr. Ellis, that if the child's religious views are so settled, as you say, in favour of the Protestant Church—I cannot conceive that saying a few Roman Catholic prayers, even although they may be invocations to the Virgin or to the saints, for a few days, even if voluntarily said, could unsettle her deeply settled views.

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—Especially with such evidence of the child's strength of constitution.

The Vice-Chancellor—Yes, but it ought to be the voluntary act of the child.

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—Neither the mother nor any other person shall say a word to her on the subject of religion.

The Vice-Chancellor—Nor take her to a Roman Catholic place of worship.

Mr. Brudistone, sen.—It is a matter of the strongest obligation among Catholics that a mother should not only go to Church herself, but take every child with her; and no such excuse of the child being ill, unless it were so ill as to render it improper to take her, would make an excuse.

The Vice-Chancellor—It astonishes me that when there is this exigency in the case, still it is considered absolutely essential (according to the judgment of the Roman Catholics) that the child must go to a Roman Catholic place of worship, notwithstanding she does not go to a Protestant place of worship. As you say, so it is, no doubt, but I hear it with great surprise.

Mr. Bagshawe, sen.—The First Catechism teaches the parent, "You must go to church on Sunday, and take your children."