

## How it Came There.

I mean the family Bible which I saw in the window of a certain pawnbroker's shop in the Old Kent-road. It was the top book of a pile in one corner. 'Surely I have seen that Bible before,' I said to myself when looking in at the window one afternoon. But upon consideration I tried to dismiss the thought as one of many vain ones that will sometimes, perforce, intrude themselves.

The window of a pawnbroker's shop has always had attractions for me, greater than that of any other I can mention, not even excepting a second-hand book store. Looking at the tools, the jewellery, the plate, the pipes, the books, the blankets, the clothing, and other things too numerous to mention, one sees plenty to occupy the imagination, wondering where this or that came from, and how it came there. If it were only possible to get behind the scenes what tales there would be to tell!

'Try as I would it was impossible to dismiss that Bible from my thoughts. It appeared again and again, flitting through the mind like a phantom, and whispering that we had met before. I walked on up the road, but felt so strangely disturbed that, determined to settle the doubt in one way or another, I walked back to the shop and boldly entered.'

'Would you allow me to see that Bible in the corner?' I asked the assistant.

'Do you wish to purchase it, sir?'

'I may possibly do so if for sale,' was my reply.

'The price is five shillings, sir,' placing it before me on the counter.

I opened the Bible, glancing at one of the fly leaves, and was surprised, if not shocked, to read the following inscription in my own handwriting:—

'Presented to Thomas James and Mary Brown by fellow-members of the St. Arthur's Church Bible Class, on the occasion of their marriage, June 1st, 188—'

I have for obvious reasons given fictitious names, but how well I remember that wedding morn, when, bright and hopeful as the summer day itself, the young man and maiden pledged themselves before the altar. Tears of joy came to their eyes as I read out the inscription, and with my own hands, being conductor of the class, made the presentation. And now, after many years, I once more hold in my hands the self-same Bible. How came it in a pawnshop?

'I will take the book,' said I, putting down five shillings.

'Thank you, sir. You seem rather interested in it,' the assistant remarked.

'I am, indeed,' was my reply, 'and should very much like to find out the whereabouts of the original owners. Could you inform me when and by whom it was pledged?'

'I can let you have the date, also the name and address of the party that pledged the Bible, without, of course, vouching for their correctness,' he added with a smile.

He went up to his desk to examine the books and presently returned, saying:

'The Bible was pledged exactly fifteen months ago in the name of Mary Brown, 17, Martin's Buildings, Walworth. I cannot say, but I fear this will not help you very much.'

'I hope it will supply me with a clue with which to commence a search,' I said.

Having neatly wrapped it up he handed me the Bible, and, thanking him for the trouble he had taken, I left the shop.

Arriving at home I opened it again and closely examined the pages, if perchance, I might find anything, if only by way of a hint, that would help me in my search for these young people, for to seek them out I was quite determined.

In the space ruled off as a family register

I found their own births and marriage entered, also the births of three children and one death.

The Bible was not to say worn, although it bore many evidences of having been frequently read, some chapters more than others which contained verses here and there marked with pencil. I fancied, moreover, that tear-stains were to be traced on some of the pages. Altogether the book contained unmistakable indications that trouble had come to the young couple, and this increased my anxiety to find them tenfold. I wrapped the Bible again in paper, and, taking it with me, set out on my search that very afternoon.

I first of all made it my business to visit Martin's Buildings, one of the many great blocks of model dwellings to be found in Walworth. No. 17 was on the top floor, which necessitated the climbing of painful flights of steps. Out of breath, I knocked at the door, which was answered by a not over-tidy woman.

'Does anyone of the name of Brown or James live here, or did live here some fifteen months ago?' I asked.

'No one of that name lives here now,' was the reply. 'We've only been here three months, so you'd better inquire at the office, or perhaps the party as lives at 19 can tell. She have lived there ever so long, two years, I should think.'

So I tried the 'party' at 19, and found her to be a respectable, chatty little-body.

'Come in, sir,' in answer to my inquiries. 'People as comes to th' buildings don't generally stop long. I never see such folk to change about in my life, but I remembers the party you are askin' about very well. They was here about six months.'

'Can you tell me what became of them?' I anxiously asked.

'Well, I don't want to send any trouble to 'em,' she said, looking at me suspiciously; 'the poor souls had enough o' that when they was here.'

'You need not fear that of me,' I said; 'my object in seeking them out is rather to render help if they are in any trouble, as seems more than probable.'

'Then please take a seat, sir, an' I'll tell you all I knows, which, after all, ain't much. Mrs. James and her husband came to these buildings about eighteen months ago. She was as tidy a little woman as ever walked, an' there wouldn't ha' bin anything amiss wi' th' man if he'd only kep' to hisself an' away from th' drink; but he got mix'd up with a bad lot as led him off, and the end of it was that he got into trouble and is now doin' eighteen months' hard.'

'Dear, dear! How sorry I am to hear this,' I exclaimed. 'Can you tell me where she is now living?'

'She's tryin' to live at 9, Tucker's Rents, just off East street, where she's got one room. It ain't where I should like to live myself, but th' poor soul had no choice. She pawned well nigh everything she had and was obliged to move from here. I taught her how to do bead work, but she's slow and can make very little at it. If you goes there you'd better ask for Mrs. Brown.'

Thanking the good woman for the information afforded, and her kindness to poor Mary James, I left Martin's Buildings and at once set out for Tucker's Rents, which I knew could not be far away. I found the place after some little difficulty, a long, narrow court containing a number of broken-down old houses that bore not the sweetest odor either natural or moral. I asked a dirty, slatternly girl who was sitting on the doorstep of No. 9 if she could direct me to the room occupied by Mrs. Brown.

'Top floor, back,' without making the least attempt to move.

Almost stepping over her I made my way up a dirty, rickety stairs, wondering how human beings could possibly breathe amid such filthy surroundings, and gently knocked at the door indicated. The door was opened by Mary James herself, but so changed in features and person I scarcely knew her. She was pressing a hand to her heart, and drawing a deep breath, as women do at the sight of a stranger they think might be bringing new trouble.

'Mr. —!' she exclaimed, recognizing me after a moment or so, and then she changed color, looked confused, and finally burst into tears. 'I didn't expect to see you, sir.'

'Well, I called to see you, Mary, because I heard you were in trouble. Why have you not come to me, or some of your old friends?'

'The trouble was too great, sir.'

'Now, tell me all about it, Mary, so that I can think what can be done, for it is impossible for me to leave you in such misery as this,' and I looked round the room, in which there was hardly a scrap of bedding or stick of furniture, and it must be confessed that my tears fell fast.

Touched by the sympathy I sincerely felt, she told me all her trouble, even to her husband's disgrace and imprisonment.

'He is coming out' next week, and I was hoping to get two decent rooms for him to come to where we could begin life afresh. He's had such a lesson that I don't think he'll ever go wrong again—indeed, he wouldn't a done now if it hadn't been for the drink. I can't think what made him take to it.'

'I hope you have not taken any, Mary,' I said.

'Never a drop, sir; not even in my greatest trouble.'

'I am glad to hear you say so, Mary. Now I am going out for a cab, so please get your two children ready, as I intend to take you home with me. You shall not stay in this place another hour.'

'Oh, Mr. —!' and she sat down on an old box and once more gave way to tears.

It was not long before we were at home, and my good wife soon found some comfortable clothing in which to set them up, for the poor creatures, though clean, had, literally, scarcely a rag to their backs.

By the time the husband was out of prison, I, with the help of friends, had provided decent rooms for them, and he having found employment is hopefully beginning life again.

The Bible, once more in their possession, lies on a little table and is often taken up by both husband and wife.

When the reader is looking in at the window of a pawnbroker's shop, where something or other has drawn his attention, let him give just one thought as to how it came there.—Mnason in 'Temperance Record.'

## Value of Home Music.

In bird-life, one of the partners sings, but in the human family the gift of song is well-nigh universal. Music should play a much more important part in home life than it usually does. It certainly would promote health and happiness. Husband and wife, if they have musical talent, should cultivate it all their lives long, have teachers occasionally at least capable of keeping their voices well drilled to the later years of life. The time some men spend in idle talk, and which some women fritter away, if given to music, would produce good effects on the health, and be at the same time a very important means of education.—'Everybody's Magazine.'