

about what his father had said the day before, until the carriage stopped in front of a gloomy stone building.

"Are you going to stop here, father? Why, it looks like a prison!"

"It is a prison," said Mr. Palmer, who had been unusually grave and silent during their ride, as Walter remembered afterwards.

"But I thought you were going to see an old schoolmate of yours?"

"Here is where he lives."

Walter followed his father silently up the steps which led to the heavy massive door of the main entrance.

"Did you ever think that any of your schoolmates might find a home in some such place as this? or even that you might?" said Mr. Palmer, as he pulled the bell, whose clangor broke harshly upon the strange silence that reigned around.

Before Walter could reply the heavy door swung back, and they were ushered into the warden's office.

He was a heavily-bearded man with a stern, almost forbidding countenance; but he shook hands with Mr. Palmer, whom he had met before, bestowing on Walter a pleasant word and smile, the latter giving his face quite another aspect.

"I came to enquire about John Jackson, the forger," said Mr. Palmer, after a few preliminary words. "He is an old schoolmate of mine. I remember him as a high-spirited boy, rather headstrong, and fonder of play than study, but with many genial and pleasant traits of character. How is he getting along?"

"Very well. Had he been competent I should have given him a place as book-keeper, made vacant by a convict whose time was up. As it was, I had to put him in the shoe-shop. He is quiet, but he takes it pretty hard, as such chaps are apt to who have always had plenty of money and nothing to do. It is not in strict accordance with the rules, but if you would like to see him I'll have him sent out."

Mr. Palmer assented, and in a few minutes a grave, quiet man entered, whose closely-cut hair and peculiar dress gave him a very strange look to Walter, who had never seen anything like it before.

He seemed glad to see Mr. Palmer, though there was a visible constraint in his manner which showed that he felt keenly his changed position and surroundings.

Of the two, Mr. Palmer seemed the most affected. His voice broke a little, as he said:

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Jackson; but sorry, very sorry to find you here."

"You can't be more sorry than I am to find myself here," said the man, with a forced smile.

Then, as if anxious to change the subject, he turned to Walter.

"I needn't ask whose boy this is?"

"It is my eldest son, Walter. He is just about the age we were when we used to go to school together, in dear old Bridgeville. Have you forgotten all about those days, John?"

Whether it was these words, or the sight of that fresh, innocent face, for a few moments Jackson struggled silently with the tender and subduing recollections that rushed over him; then breaking down suddenly, he covered his face with his hands.

Walter had never seen a man weep before, and those sobs and moans were something he never forgot.

"I wish I could!" said the wretched man, lifting up his pale, tear-stained face. "I wish I could forget what I once was, all that I might have been, and what I am! I sometimes think that it is a horrible dream; that I shall some day wake and find it so!"

"How did it happen?" inquired Mr. Palmer, as soon as his companion was calmer. "When I last saw you, your prospects were bright—apparently brighter than mine."

"It can be summed up in two words," was the gloomy response: "Idleness and bad company. If my father had trained me to habits of industry and self-reliance, I had not come to this. But he loved me, and I am glad that the grave has hid from him all knowledge of the shame and misery of the son whom his ill-judged, short-sighted kindness ruined. As you know, I would not study. I thought there was no need for me a rich man's son—to do that. I can remember how I despised the dull, plodding fellows who are honored men to-day. My father's death put me into possession of wealth, of which I never earned a dollar, and of whose use and worth I knew nothing. How it went I hardly know; but I awoke one morning to find myself poorer than the lowest clerk in the establishment that my father had built up with so much care and labor, but which had now passed into the hands of strangers. My fair weather friends, who had helped to spend my money, urging me to every conceivable folly and extravagance, left as soon as they found that there was no more to spend. I knew nothing about getting money by honest work, but money I must have; so I turned my attention to the various ways of getting money without work. The rest needs no telling."

Here the warden entered; and with his heart somewhat cheered and strengthened by Mr. Palmer's words of encouragement and sympathy, Jackson returned to his dreary task.

The warden now took them around through the various workshops, cells, etc., kindly explaining to Walter all that he did not understand.

When they visited the shoe-shop, Walter saw Jackson sitting there

among the rows of busy, silent men, not one of whom dared to lift his eyes as they passed by.

"How many of these men," inquired Mr. Palmer, as they returned to the office, "have ever been trained to any useful trade or business?"

"Not one in ten."

The spirited boys in their glittering harness were champing their bits and tossing their heads impatiently outside the high walls; and Walter experienced a feeling of relief as he found himself once more in the pure, sweet air and bright sunshine.

"How 'readful it must be to have to live in such a place as that!" he said, as reaching an eminence, he gave a backward glance at the building, which looked so grim and solitary in the distance.

"It is the necessity that is dreadful, my son. Miserable as these men are, they are happier there, where they are obliged to be orderly and industrious, though only through the fear of punishment, than if they were allowed to follow, unrestrainedly, the devices of their foolish and evil hearts."

There was silence for some minutes. Then Mr. Palmer said:

"You asked me a question, yesterday, Walter, and this is my answer, a better answer than any words can frame. The world calls me a rich man, and so I am. I am able to afford you many advantages, all the opportunity you can ask for moral and mental culture; but I am not, and never shall be, rich enough to afford to have you idle. Strange as it may seem, I am too rich to afford it. I have a mill, filled with industrious operatives, whose living from week to week depends on its skilful and prudent management. I have houses full of tenants, whose health and comfort depend largely upon whether their landlord is a just and faithful man. These and other interests may some day be entrusted to you. Many a father has learned to his sorrow, that to have a boy idle is something that rich men cannot afford."

"I think I will go to school Monday, father," was Walter's only response to this.

HOW HE SAVED ST. MICHAEL'S.

'Twas long ago—ere ever the signal gun
That blazed before Fort Sumter had wakened the North as one;
Long ere the wondrous pillar of battle-cloud and fire
Had marked where the unchained millions marched on to their heart's desire.

On roofs and glittering turrets, that night, as the sun went down,
The mellow glow of the twilight shone like a jeweled crown,
And, bathed in the living glory, as the people lifted their eyes,
They saw the pride of the city, the spire of St. Michael's, rise
High over the lesser steeples, tipped with a golden ball,
That hung like a radiant planet caught in its earthward fall;
First glimpse of home to the sailor who made the harbor round,
And last slow-fading vision dear to the outward bound.
The gently-gathering shadows shut out the waning light;
The children prayed at their bedsides as they were wont each night;
The noise of buyer and seller from the busy mart was gone,
And in dreams of a peaceful morrow the city slumbered on.

But another light than sunrise aroused the sleeping street,
For a cry was heard at midnight, and the rush of trampling feet;
Men stared in each other's faces, thro' mingled fire and smoke,
While the frantic bells went clashing clamorous, stroke on stroke.
By the glare of her blazing roof-tree the houseless mother fled,
With the babe she pressed to her bosom shrieking in nameless dread;
While the fire-king's wild battalions scaled wall and capstone high,
And planted their glaring banners against an inky sky.
From the death that raged behind them, and the crush of rain loud,
To the great square of the city, were driven the surging crowd,
Where yet firm in all the tumult, unscathed by the fiery flood,
With its heavenward pointing finger the church of St. Michael's stood.
But e'en as they gazed upon it there rose a sudden wail,
A cry of horror blended with the roaring of the gale,
On whose scorching wings updriven, a single flaming brand,
Aloft on the towering scepter clung like a bloody hand.
"Will it fade?" the whisper trembled from a thousand whitening lips;
Far out on the lurid harbour they watched it from the ships.
A baleful gleam, that brighter and ever brighter shone,
Like a flickering, trembling will-o'-the-wisp to a steady beacon grown.
"Unaccounted gold shall be given to the man whose brave right hand,
For the love of the periled city, plucks down yon burning brand!"
So cried the Mayor of Charleston, that all the people heard,
But they looked each one at his fellow, and no man spoke a word.
Who is it leans from the belfry, with face upturned to the sky—
Clings to a column and measures the dizzy spire with his eye?
Will he dare it, the hero undaunted, that terrible, sickening height,
Or will the hot blood of his courage freeze in his veins at the sight?
But see! he has stepped on the railing, he climbs with his feet and his hands,
And firm on a narrow projection, with the belfry beneath him, he stands!