

After breakfast I went to Moulensland; there I called upon the doctor, the lawyer, and the curate. I saw the doctor was the man to befriend me.

He was young, not over thirty, pleasant in manner, comely in face, tall, strong, and dantless; just the man to face a foe. He saw that I looked deadly pale and trembled. I told him the story.

"You are not given to delusions?" he asked. "I never had a delusion or thought of a ghost in my life?" I replied.

He mused for a few minutes.

"As you say, Mr. Dale, it would be a terrible thing for anything to happen to the property; once let a rumor circulate that it is haunted, and you will never know another day's peace."

"I should never live in it myself, and I love the place already," I said.

"I will help you all I can, Mr. Dale. I never feared man or ghost yet. Let me go back and sleep with you. If the figure comes again I will follow it; then perhaps the mystery will be solved."

I was only too pleased and grateful. I spent the day with Dr. Aspen, not being willing to return to Tatton alone—before night we were intimate as brothers.

We returned to the Hall about seven in the evening. Mrs. Glynn had a very nice dinner prepared for us. I gave my friend some of the finest wines in the cellar—we smoked cigars and enjoyed ourselves very much. At eleven we went into my bed-room. "I shall not undress," said the doctor; "and you had better not either."

We did not talk much. Just at twelve the terrible sounds came again; the awful cry, the sob, the fluttering breath. Brave as he was, the doctor's face grew white as death. Then, although we had looked it, the door opened, and the same white figure appeared, the stony dead face, with its glaring eyes turned on the doctor. She raised her forefinger to him, as she had done to me, and beckoned to him to follow her. "Let go, in God's name," said the doctor. He took the large lamp from the table, and I heard him muttering a prayer to himself.

The white figure floated down the stairs, we followed it. The deadly fear seemed to have left me. I was even able to note where we went. Down the broad stairs, through the hall, through the dining room, and the library, then through the long hall that led to the western wing. The great oaken door flew open as the white figure approached; never a word during that terrible walk spoke we. From the white figure there seemed to emanate a bright light; it kept about two feet in advance of us. I looked once in the doctor's face; it was pale, calm, and composed.

She did not, as I had half anticipated go up to the closed rooms, but down. Down through narrow passages, leading to strange out-of-the-way cellars and dark vaults. What such places were ever intended for puzzled me now.

We came to a narrow vaulted passage; we, I, speaking for myself, saw no door in it, but at the end, a door hidden in the black wall opened, and we entered.

Oh Heaven! such a place—a small low vault; we could barely stand upright in it. The white figure floated in, we followed; it seemed to hover for half a minute over the floor, then it disappeared. Dr. Aspen stooped down, and by the light of the lamp we saw a skeleton—the skeleton of a woman lying on the ground. There was a terrible odor in the place—one that made us both faint and sick.

There was no vestige of clothing, nothing but the bare bones; on the left hand, on the bony finger, we saw a wedding ring. Dr. Aspen set the lamp on the moist brick floor, and looked at me—we heard the scratching and scuffling of rats quite close to us.

"Mr. Dale," said the doctor solemnly, "I am convinced that this is the body of your late kinsman's wife; instead of having run away, she has been murdered and thrown in here."

We stood looking at each other in horrified dismay.

"That is the solution of the mystery," he said. "Theodore Dale was mad with jealousy; in a jealous fit he has slain her, and knowing the secret of this vault, with the hidden door, he has thrown her in here."

I could but own to myself in all probability it was true. Then we looked round; there was nothing upon the floor except a metal button, which seemed to have been torn from a man's coat. I may here mention that some time after in looking over the wardrobe of my late kinsman, I found the very coat from which the button had been torn, and the cuff of the same coat was stained with blood.

"Who shall know the secrets of the next world?" said the doctor. "This poor soul has been permitted to return to tell us of the murder done, and to get Christian burial. There can be no doubt it was murder; see, the skull is fractured. If the spirit of this poor murdered woman is near us now, in the name of God I promise Christian burial to her bones."

Then we left the place. We had the greatest difficulty in finding our way back to the upper rooms. What a relief it was when the oaken door of the western wing containing the deadly secret was closed behind us. We talked all the rest of the night. The doctor's impression was that Theodore Dale, mad with anger, had killed his wife by a heavy blow in her sleep, then in the dead of the night had flung her into that terrible vault and left her there. Perhaps in her death struggle she tore the button from his coat. It may be that he left her there still dying, but not dead. The truth will never be known.

Well might he close the doors and leave the

rooms untouched; well might he send all the servants away, lest one, wandering through those intricate passages, should light upon his ghastly secret.

Fancy the horror of the life he led, shut up with such a secret. Imagine his guilty fears; the rewards offered to avert suspicion; the mention of his wife in the will, when he knew well where she was lying.

We kept the secret. He was gone where justice is strictly dealt. Revealing it would simply have brought shame and disgrace on me, which I did not deserve. We took the clergyman into our confidence. I sent Mrs. Glynn to London ostensibly to hire servants, in reality to get her out of the way. The curate, the doctor, and myself gathered the grim skeleton and placed it in a coffin. In the dead of the night the curate read the burial service over it and we left it in consecrated ground.

Our peace was never afterwards disturbed. I pulled down the western wing and did away with those hideous vaults. It was rebuilt after a different fashion, and my wife lives there now, with little children playing around her.

Neither doctor or curate ever told the horrible story. The grave is under the shade of a spreading tree; it has no name, but on the tombstone one reads—

"Sleeping in hope of resurrection to come."

A LONDON REFUGE OF THE POOREST SORT.

All through the mere wretched portions of great London I sought this ideal spot, and having at length pitched upon it, rising like a gaunt barrack from amidst the hovels where vegetate the toy-makers, I was not surprised to find its scant accommodation so much in demand as to render admission a matter of no little difficulty.

Night after night, at the hour of six, I picked my way through the black mud which dryeth never, and hung about, hoping against hope, to receive each evening the monotonously discouraging rebuff, "No vacancy, my man."

In vain I pleaded extreme poverty, ignorance of London, trifling sickness, even—but without avail. Always the same answer, spoken kindly but firmly, "No vacancy, my poor fellow; we're full. You can't have more of a cat than his skin. It's a crying shame that there should not exist more similar resorts," &c., &c., leaving me always out in the cold with a dirty door labelled, "Refuge, Male Ward," slammed inexorably in my face. But perseverance is a virtue which usually, even in our lopsided world, meets with its reward. At last after much wistful importunity, the master took pity on my homeless state, almost promising to keep a vacancy for me for the following evening. I arrived accordingly, tapped timidly at the master's private door, and was received by his son, a pretty lad of twelve, his pale hair and face glorified with premature authority, who, with an assumption of extreme dignity, bade me follow him to the male ward already closed, and refusing all help from my superior height with a disdainful wave of the hand, proceeded to make dashes at the too aspiringly situated bell, till a murmur and clatter of keys was audible from within, and the dirty door swung upon its hinges, apparently of its own accord. But no—my proud little protector muttered a few words to a baby janitor, barely two feet high, standing in tiny corduroys and blue shirt crossed by leathern braces, with close cropped convict hair, and oh! such a wicked, puny, wizened face, cunningly scanning mine, and then bowing me a cold good-night, left me to the tender mercies of the pigmy.

Innocent little dear! How delightful a web of fancy might be woven from this consignment of tempest-tossed wrecked man to the guidance of a child. How charming a..... To my dismay the Lilliputian slowly closed one eye, placed an extremely grubby finger on the root of his snub nose, and giving vent to the strange remark, "You're a dead 'un. Oh! yes. You aint got a blessed drab. Oh! no. You're a blooming pauper, you air. Oh-yes-of-course-to-be-sure. I'm-fry," opened wide his mouth, rolled round his eyes, gurgled, protruded his infant tongue, banged the door to with all the wee strength that he could muster, and strutted on, still winking violently, as he piped forth a command to follow him.

This refuge is a huge place, square, grimy, ungainly, as forbidding and utterly ugly as the grievous poverty which it is mission to conceal. There is a female ward, a male ward, and a ragged school, or, more properly speaking, a reformatory; for the hundred screaming mischievous little demons of which the school is composed have all either been plucked up by the police, as waifs from the refuse population seething in metropolitan courts and alleys, or have been sent here to be cured of precocious wickedness by order of the worshipful the Mayor. A shrieking unmanageable crew they are—tough twigs to bend—their hair standing up in obstinate shocks like a pony's hog mane, their young faces prematurely hardened and lined by vice, dark with the closed shutters of departed innocence, their cherry lips opening but to launch some ribald remark, or to make use of some awful oath, such as makes one's hair emulate their own. It is a thing to meditate over, to hear them in chapel of a morning like devils suddenly broken loose, bandying obscene jokes as they thumb their hymn-books, and upon entrance of the master as suddenly changing into angels, raising their

clear bell-like voices chirpingly in artless psalms of praise, as though the ingenious act came as natural to them, as spontaneously joyous, as the pure bright lark's notes they so much resemble, soaring upwards in guileless thankfulness for the beauty of the world in which they have been placed. Yet who shall blame their crooked ways, poor outcasts? All they know of the loveliness of God's handiwork is the fetid stifling den from which they sprang, the grinding suffering in which father and mother have been steeped till life became unendurable save through the rosy glamor of alcohol; kicks, blows, curses, dirt, disease, their heritage; a stomach never filled their daily lot; strength denied through lack of sufficient sustenance; a dreary prospect of a life of never-ceasing punishment, with no hope of relief or change, but in the pauper's grave that grimly closes the squalid prospect.

One of these boys, plucked from the more or less best behaved, is told off in daily rotation as gate-keeper, his business being to pass on any person that may call to the man in charge of the men's ward hard by. In pursuance of his orders the facetious urchin aforementioned, with much parade of importance, unlocked an inner door, upon which grease had long taken the place of paint, and crying in shrill accents, "Here's another bloke," deftly prodded me in the back, sending me forward with a jerk, and locked the door behind me. I found myself in a low room, some six yards square, squalid and dirty to the last degree, with a bar running round it about two feet from the ground, to which was attached, by means of hooks, the heads of canvas hammocks rolled away. For furniture there were four benches and a broad plank on trestles to serve as table, while the single jet of gas, by which this uninviting chamber was lighted, further disclosed two dust-grimed windows opening inwards, and a portal without a door opposite, leading evidently to a brick-paved, but improperly drained, and consequently odorous wash-house. Two or three laboring men, silent and gloomy, sat at the table drinking their tea from tin mugs, and cutting their half-loaves of excellent white bread with pocket-knives, well-nigh worn away with sharpening. Moody all of them, for they had been on the tramp all day seeking work and had found none. By degrees the rest dropped in, seventeen in all, specimens of almost every trade. A few were being temporarily employed on the establishment, and came in accordingly from time to time reeking from their work, more especially the gentleman who sat next to me, a white-washer, whose face, hair and arms were speckled like aucuba leaves, and who took a grim delight in rubbing his garments against mine, which were seedy enough, indeed, and whose seams scarce wanted whitening. There was a biscuit-baker, too, an intelligent, quiet fellow, who had fallen into indigence through illness, and talked in his humility of the outer world as "civilians," as though by having sunk so low, we could claim no more communion with the common throng—as though we had been turned into Pariahs with a visible mark of Cain upon our brows. And then there were two Irishmen, a dock-labourer whose injured hand prevented his obtaining work, and a shoemaker of the fierce, ferocious class of Celts of which Fenians are made, and who seem as if trouble had rubbed away their veneer of humor, only leaving an underlying gnawing sense of injustice and of wrong. There were two carpenters always at logger-heads as to the best way of executing a given piece of work, distinguished one from the other by the rest, the one by the sobriquet of "Planes," the other by the nickname "Old Chips." For once received within those doors, you cease as utterly to have a name as far as your companions are concerned, as though you were enjoying open air and improving exercise at Portland, being invariably addressed by the style of your trade, or should two of one trade be present, by some facetiously appropriate nickname. Tea being over, and the tin pots removed, we leaned our elbows on the table for an hour's chat before prayers and bed, and each aired his pet grievance to any one who had good-nature and unselfishness enough to listen to it. One related, amidst breathless admiration, that a gentleman had bestowed on him three-and-sixpence, which on the morrow he intended to expend on a suit of clothes, "for no one," he added, as an axiom, "will give work to a man ill-dressed."

"Isn't three-and-sixpence rather cheap for a suit of clothes?" I enquired, timidly.

"For a new suit from a West End tailor it might be, young lins (this in reference to my passing for a journeyman printer), but down at Petticoat-lane, or thereabouts, I could rig myself first class for three-and-six. A slap-up pair of kickles and a gum-stretcher, a paper collar and second or third-hand tie. Of course boxes would not be included. I'd have to manage them as best I could, and mine with a wipe of blacking would look first class." For the benefit of the uninitiated, I had, perhaps, better here explain that boxes mean boots, and that a gum-stretcher is a long coat, such as shall mask all deficiencies, rendering such an article as a waistcoat a superfluity. "Rich and rare were the togs he wore, and a brand-new box on each clump he bore," chimed in the maimed but frolicsome Irish day-labourer, who was in Tapleyan spirits, despite adverse conditions, forever singing favourite snatches of tunes, ingeniously adapted to suit circumstances.

"I say, lins," sagely remarked the biscuit-baker, "you seem new to this sort of thing, and a refined sort. Take the advice of one who knows. Stand any hunger, and any thirst, and any privation, and any trouble, but never part

with your clothes. So sure as your clothes find their way into the pop-shop, so sure you will never get no work, never no more. That's my experience, anyways."

"When I sees gents rigged out in gloves and summer hats, and canes and that, it do make me so wild," grumbled another, with over-developed bald head, glistening with tightness of skin, as though he had water on the brain, and whose appearance and manners were rendered the more unpleasant by the complete absence of one eyebrow, from a burn, a lisping style of speech, weak watery eyes, and blood-thirsty proclivities. "I'd like to tear their gawgaws from their backs, I would."

"Darling Isabella, with her gingham umbrella," gently carolled the musical one.

"It's the unfairnest thing out," continued the revolutionary orator, with an indignant snort at the interruption, "the aristos pay no taxes, live on the fat of the land, and won't even touch us if they can help it. Lookes here, now. There's somewhere about three millions in London. About two thousand are tearing rich, curse 'em. About ten thousand are well to do, and all the rest, two millions, and more, are struggling against each other in the mud, tooth and nail, for bare life. Is that proper? Civil war's the only thing for us. Other countries have found that out, and we're coming to it, too, let me tell yer. There are two many in the world, much too many in the town here. I'll go ball, Paris is the better for its burning. We must kill some of 'em off to make the equislope right, as they call it, and the only way to do it legal is by civil war. Do a thing legal, and don't fear consequences. Hang the means, I say, it's the end as we want. Of course you and I may be among the killed, and so much the better for the rest. We must take our chance of that, and devil take the hindmost, say I. I'd dearly like to see blood flowing in them swell squares, I would, among them fine flaunting la-di-da ladies, with their mincing ways and trash. Ain't we better nor them?"

And the iconoclast mopped the water from his weak eyes, while his neighbour warbled in an undertone, "The la-di-da ladies to Old Harry are gone, in the ranks of death, you'll find 'em."

"You're a fine lot, you are, to settle things," cried out another, who had been pencilling something on the bare table, "where would be my trade, but for the la-di-da ladies, and many other trade too? I'm a painter and decorator, and must earn my bread as well as you."

"Oh, hark to the artist!" they all laughed, and see what a beautiful thing he's been doing, as they crowded one over another to admire the work of art just sprung from his hand, which consisted of the royal arms, very fairly pencilled, as we see them engraved on bills, "by special appointment to Her Majesty."

"I quite agree with 'Planes' there that something should be done," put in the Irish shoemaker. "See how we're moved on if we stand for a moment in the street. But the la-di-das may lounge before shop-windows all day. No one says nothing to them. And when we go into the country how we're stopped at every turn with questions, 'are we on the tramp,' or 'have we means, and are we going to work,' and if we sit down in a field to rest, why, we're had up for trespassing."

"Ah! the law of hospitality," thoughtfully sighed the biscuit-baker, "that's played out! In old times, as you might read in books, mates all, you stopped at a castle-door, and only had to blow a trumpet for people to give you food and ask you kindly to sit by the cheerful fire, and let you lie on a clean shakedown of fresh straw somewhere in a donjon-keep, whatever that may be, but we read of it in the *London Journal*. I'd like to know who'd do that now? You go and ask for a night's lodging, and see what'll happen. You'll get a month from the nearest magistrate, that's about what you'll get. We live in a beastly world, sure-lie."

But now the young gentleman neatly clad in black came in—the schoolmaster, whose business it is to coerce into respectability that batch of devilish urchins; and, arranging a homely desk and books, commanded us to stand for prayers. Two or three verses from the Psalms and a short prayer followed, and the schoolmaster left us to prepare for bed. This interested me much, as I had been counting again and again the hammocks coiled against the wall and could make out only eight. Seventeen into eight won't go. How were we going to manage? I puzzled my brains as with the pitfalls of mental arithmetic we used to be taught as boys. The lucky owners of the eight uncoiled them, fixed the two iron rods attached to the foot of each into sockets in the beams, steadied them with an arrangement of chains screwed into the floor, and drew from a corner a hideous heap of fetid rags, utterly worn-out, falling into gaping holes, disseminating a combination of evil odors with fever on their wings such as turned me for a moment sick and faint. A murmur became manifest among the seventeen.

"What! those old things again. The master promised us new ones. They are not fit for beasts, much less for Christian men."

"Very sorry, lads," said the superintendent, who never left us alone, but whistled and rattled his keys incessantly. "The master says they haven't come, so you must just do your best with the old ones for another night."

Those among us who had not hammocks were now shown our several sleeping-places on the floor, foot to foot, with the exception of myself, who being the new comer, was very properly given the worst place, being accordingly billeted half in the room, half on the damp bricks of the wash-house—a delightful spot, at