

she was snatched away untimely in giving birth to their only child.

The blow fell with appalling force on the bereaved husband. Howard's dream of joy was over. His heart's love, withered at its core, never budded again. His thoughts dwelt often with the past. The anniversary of his wife's death was a day of fasting and prayer, and the whispered utterance of her name quickened the pulsings of his heart till it grew still forever. On her tombstone, in grateful recollection of her virtues, her husband inscribed the touching tribute of praise:—

"She opened her mouth with wisdom;
And in her tongue was the law of kindness."

Howard's health gave way beneath the intensity of his grief. He again sought the balmy air of Italy for its restoration. But the glowing skies, and lovely scenery, and glorious art of that favoured land, had for him no longer the absorbing interest they once possessed. A noble purpose filled his soul and swayed his will as the moon the tides of ocean. A new zeal fired his heart: not the passive contemplation of pathetic dead Christ's on canvas, but succouring His living image in the person of suffering humanity was henceforth the purpose of his life. So, on partial restoration to health at Turin, he abandoned his design of wintering in Naples, "As I feared," he writes in his journal, "the misimprovement of a talent spent in mere curiosity, and as many donations must be suspended for my pleasure. . . . Oh! why, he continues, should vanity and folly, pictures and baubles, or even the stupendous mountains, beautiful hills, or rich valleys, which ere long will be consumed, engross the thoughts of a candidate for an everlasting kingdom! Look up, my soul! How low, how mean, how little is everything but what has a view to that glorious world of light and love!"

HIS LIFE WORK.

The immediate occasion of his entering on his great life-task was his acceptance of the office of Sheriff of Bedford in the year 1773. He entered upon his duties with energy. To him the shrievalty was no mere matter of gold lace and red plush, of petty pomp and ostentation, but of earnest work. He forthwith began his inspection of Bedford Jail. That old historic prison becomes thus invested with a twofold interest. At its gate, padlocked by the leg, John Bunyan often sold the tags and laces, by making which he won his bread. Yet to his rapt soul its gloomy vaults were glorified by the beatific vision of the New Jerusalem, and there ains from the "Land Beulah" breathed.

The appalling horrors of those hideous cells, which had been thus hallowed with the light of genius, smote the heart of Howard with consternation. It was a revelation of duty to his soul. Here was a mission worthy of his zeal. To reform the prison system of England, to grapple with its dire evils, to drag to light its dark facts, and to take away from his country the reproach of her infamous treatment of her prisoners,—this was to be henceforth the work of his life.

The Bedford jailer had no fees from the county, but lived by oppressing the prisoners. Howard demanded for him a stated salary. The Bench of Justices, after their wont, asked for precedents.

Howard rode into the neighbouring counties in search of them. What he sought he found not, but he found that which fired his soul with grief and indignation—a world of sin, of suffering, and of wrong before unknown. He forthwith burrowed in all the dungeons in England—literally *burrowed*, for many of them were underground, sometimes mere caverns in the solid rock, in which human beings were immured for years. No place, however obscure or remote, escaped his inspection; his official position, his munificent charity, and his resolute will everywhere procuring him admission.

THE PRISON WORLD.

Sadder than the wildest horrors of fiction were the awful realities of England's dungeons—the worst in Europe save these of the Inquisition. The condition of the prison-world—a world distinct by itself, with its own peculiar laws and usages, and with a densely crowded population—was simply execrable. The prisons were very chambers of horror, whose misery and wickedness recall the dreadful pictures of the regions of eternal gloom in the pages of the Italian poet. They were a world without the pale of the constitution, and their inmates beyond the protection or control of the law. Religion and its rites were banished from a region cut off from civilization. The cruelty, and lust, and cursed greed for gold of a brutal jailer, who frequently united the humane profession of hangman to his normal duty of warden, were indulged without restraint. Men had to crouch at a narrow wicket in the door and gasp for breath. The stench was intolerable. There was frequently no straw, and prisoners had to lay their rheumatic limbs on the damp and cold stone floor. Yet to those who had money the utmost license was allowed. The keepers pandered to the worst vices of those who could bribe their aid.

Howard found comparatively few felons in the prisons. The frequent jail deliveries, when the unfortunate wretches were dragged on hurdles to the place of execution, and amid every indignity, put to death, effectually emptied the cells of the more flagrant criminals. It was found cheaper to hang them than to keep them in prison; and this inhuman policy was publicly advocated by eminent jurists. The poor debtors, who could not be hanged for their misfortunes, were allowed to rot in dungeons. Howard, when he met such, generally paid their debts and set them free. Occasionally, to his great grief, his charity was too late. At Cardiff, a debtor to the exchequer to the amount of £7, languished in prison for ten years, and died just before the liberator came.

HOWARD'S LABOURS.

Howard at first confined his philanthropic labours to Great Britain. But this was too limited a range for his sympathies. They could not be confined within the narrow seas, but, like the waters of the ocean, encompassed the earth. A wider horizon of suffering was before him, which he was eager to explore. So he overleaped the barriers of national distinction, and claimed the world as the field of his labours. He started upon a grand tour of the old historic lands of Europe, "not," to use the language of Burke—"not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces or the stateliness of temples; not to make

accurate measurement of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curiosities of modern art; not to collect medals nor collate manuscripts—but to dive into the depths of dungeons, to plunge into the infection of hospitals, to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries."

In 1777 Howard published his great work on the "State of Prisons"—a revelation of horrors almost as terrific as Dante's vision of the realms of gloom, which smote with dismay the consciences of Europe, and led to great Prison Reforms.

In 1781, the indefatigable philanthropist started on a new continental tour through Denmark, Norway, Russia, Poland, Sicily, Spain, and Portugal. While on the voyage from Civita Vecchia to Leghorn, an incident occurred which gave a new direction and a fresh impulse to his labours. A storm arose, and the shattered bark in which he sailed was successively driven upon the Tuscan and African coasts. But everywhere the inhabitants, both Christian and Moslem, refused them permission to land—their fears of the infection of the terrible plague conquering every instinct of humanity in their breasts. This incident made a deep impression on the mind of Howard. Here was a new source of human suffering to be explored, and the misery it caused if possible removed. He was now in the sixtieth year of his age. His health, always infirm, was sore broken. He had already travelled 42,000 miles over Europe—from Lisbon to Moscow, from Stockholm to Naples—in all manner of conveyances—in diligence or lumbering drotsky, on horseback or on foot. He had sacrificed a life of ease and dignity for the self-denying toil of an apostle or a martyr. He had expended £30,000 on his labours of love. Most men would now have ceased from their toil, and enjoyed in old age their well-earned rest. Not so he. While human suffering could be relieved and human sorrow assuaged, his philanthropic efforts must know no surcease. He girded up again his loins, and took his pilgrim-staff in hand, and set forth to encounter the perils of disease and death in their most frightful forms.

IN THE LAZARETTOS.

He went forth alone in his sublime crusade against the dreaded plague, the terror and the scourge of Europe. He knew the danger, and would not suffer even his faithful servant, the companion of all his former travels, to share it. He explored the lazarettos and hospitals of Marseilles, Rome, Naples, Valetta, Zante, Smyrna, and Constantinople. He daringly penetrated pest-houses and infected caravanseries. He seemed to bear a charmed life. He braved the fever-demon in his lair, and came forth unscathed. To this result his abstemious diet doubtless contributed. Some dried biscuit and a cup of milk or of cold water was his usual fare.

As the crowning act of his enthusiastic self-sacrifice, Howard resolved to sail in an infected vessel, that he might undergo the strictest quarantine and leave a record of his experience in case he should not survive, for the benefit of the medical profession in England. The plague was in the vessel. It was

also attacked by Barbary pirates—hero fought as valiantly as he encountered danger in the fever-hospital. He endured a living martyrdom of forty days while quarantined in a lazaretto of Venice, parched with thirst and racked with pain.

Though his stricken heart returned ever from all its wanderings to the dear home-scenes of Cardington, he was not permitted there to end his days. Bearing his crushing load of sorrow, he turned resolutely once more to his great life-work. He designed visiting Russia, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Egypt, and the Barbary States. But his work was well-nigh done. It seemed to have a presentiment of his death. To a friend he wrote: "You will probably never see me again; but, be that as it may, it is not a matter of serious concern to me whether I lay down my life in Turkey, in Egypt, in Asia Minor, or elsewhere. The way to heaven from Grand Cairo is as near as from London. Like the word of that dauntless Christian mariner, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, is this, as in the storm and darkness, ere his ship went down, he was heard to cry, 'Fear not, shipmen, heaven is as near by water as by land.'" Or like the older word of the monk Jerome, which has been thus rendered into verse:

"Not from Jerusalem alone
The path to heaven ascends;
As near, as sure, as straight the way
That leads to the celestial day,
From furthest climes extends,
Frigid or torrid zone."

HIS DEATH.

From St. Petersburg Howard went to Moscow, where, as if in anticipation of his near departure, he renewed his solemn covenant with God. He was greatly interested in the condition of the Russian conscripts, the mortality among whom was appalling. Their sufferings excited his deepest commiseration. To visit their cantonments, and, if possible, to better their condition, he sailed down the Dneiper to Cherson, a Tartar town near its mouth. Here he was called to visit a young lady ill of an infectious fever. He went,—riding four-and-twenty miles by night through a pitiless winter rain-storm. He caught the infection. He soon felt that his race was run. But death had no terrors to his soul. "It is an event," he said, "to which I always look with cheerfulness; and, be assured, the subject is more grateful to me than any other. . . . Suffer no pomp," he continued, "to be used at my funeral, nor let any monument be ever made to mark where I am laid; but lay me quietly in the earth, place a sundial over my grave, and let me be forgotten." Vain request! His name was too indelibly engraven on the heart of the world to be ever erased! In this assured faith, and like the setting sun calmly sinking to rest, on the 20th of January, 1790, John Howard died.

The tidings of his death caused a thrill of sympathy and sorrow throughout all Europe. But the deepest sympathy and the bitterest sorrow were doubtless in the hearts of the innumerable prisoners whose miseries he had soothed, and whose lives he had blessed. On the base of the statue, erected to his memory in that noble mausoleum of England's glorious dead—St. Paul's Cathedral—is recorded a grateful country's estimation of his worth:—