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Saved by Grace.

By W. G. SHEPHERD.

John Shannon had never before been a Christian in the spring-time. The temptations he had withstood during the winter had been many and trying; but now, bringing additional vexation of the spirit, came spring, with its whispers of freedom and wildness. It assailed John with a fury that sent him to his knees in prayer in a little dark ante-room of the mission.

When he rose and came out into the room where the chairs were standing in neat rows, ready for the afternoon meeting, he blinked his eyes at the sunlight that streamed in through the windows. When he had regained his sense of sight, he saw Sister Bandon entering the front door.

Sister Bandon was a small, frail, wrinkled woman, with tan-hued, scraggly hair. She called the men who were converted at the mission "my boys," and it was her sole aim in life to have them call her their "little mother." Somehow, John, looking back across the wild, reckless days to the time when he was with his own mother, could not apply the title to Mrs. Bandon. He was kind though, and he did the next best thing, he thought, by calling her "sister."

This afternoon it seemed to John

pocket, second-story man, burglar, forger, and confidence worker, was really this man walking along the street. Only the other day one of the young women who sometimes came from one of the churches to play the piano at the mission said to him:

"Mr. Shannon, you're losing all those hard lines that were in your face when I first met you."

And John had replied:

"Thank God."

There was a scar—a memento of a fight—on John's right cheek. His face was full; its base was a square chin, bisected by a vertical indentation. From his nostrils to the outer edges of his mouth extended lines of the sort which hard thought makes, and which only smiles and cheerfulness can drive away. His clothes were neat and clean, for John had always been fastidious, if not fashionable in his dress.

John swung along the Bowery street with an easy grace. He didn't know the Bowery well. He had just begun to get acquainted with it, when he heard a man singing a song in front of the mission. But in many other cities he knew folk just like the Bowery people. He was familiar with the types, and



Suddenly two men, and then a third, stepped out from doorways.

that he could not endure listening to Sister Bandon's talk, kind and honest as it was. As she came down the aisle toward the platform where he stood he felt like running away.

Just then the front door opened again, and in came sister Johnson. Sister Johnson was a portly, red-faced individual, who had charge of the clothing department of the mission. To the distribution of clothing among the worthy poor of the district she brought a highly practical and systematic method, which she applied with rare enthusiasm. Apparently she believed that the affairs of the kingdom of heaven had suffered, before her time, because proper business principles had not been applied to their administration.

The temptation to run became irresistible. John started down the aisle toward the door, hurried past Sister Bandon and Sister Johnson, and escaped to the street. As he departed he heard Sister Bandon say:

"John, I've calculated on having you sing 'Saved by Grace' this afternoon."

But John sauntered away down the side walk, a victim of spring fever. As he walked he thought. His mind turned to the days he had spent in prison; to the nights in saloons; to police-station cells; to court-rooms; to lodging-houses; and, at last, to himself in his present situation. On this particular afternoon it was hard to believe that he really was a Christian; that John Shannon, the ex-convict, pick-

knew them by heart; so he was at home on the Bowery.

Shortly he approached the busier portion of the city. All about him were noise and hurry, but in his mind there was even greater tumult. He turned into a cigar-store, half intending to buy a package of cigarettes, but just as he reached the counter a little prayer flashed through his mind, and he said to the clerk:

"Give me a package of cough-drops." He had bought many packages of cough-drops in the earlier days, after his first mission experience, in this same way. Their use was getting to be almost a habit with him. They cleared his throat just before he sang his evening solos at the Bowery corner meetings.

On the sidewalk again, he felt a strange loneliness. Somehow, after all, it was true that a man couldn't be of this world and, at the same time, sacrifice everything to make himself good. This afternoon John longed to have a part in the world; he wanted a place in the restlessness about him.

The evening dusk was settling down on the streets when John, his mind by this time sorely disturbed, saw a neatly dressed woman step from the door of a jewelry-store, carrying a small hand-satchel. She looked about her nervously, and then started up the street. In the old days an incident like that would not have escaped John's notice; probably for the same reason he noticed it now.

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