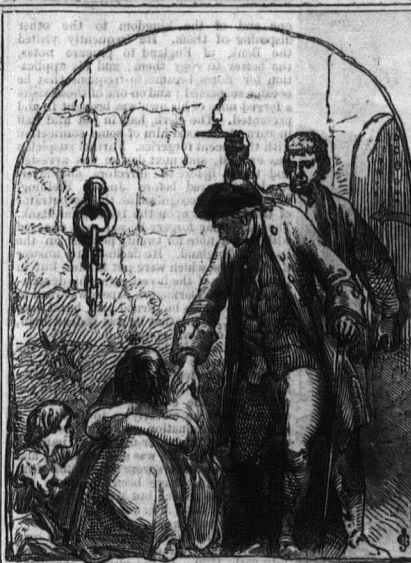




HOWARD, THE PHILANTHROPIST.

A little over a century ago an accidental circumstance led John Howard to form the design of visiting the gaols of England with a view of devising means for alleviating the miseries of their inmates. Before he stepped from the retirement which he could have so well enjoyed, English prisons were dens of iniquity and barbarism. The degraded herded with the innocent, debtors were thrust into the society of the most abandoned felons, and the most horrible atrocities were perpetrated. There were no separate cells for each prisoner then, no broad corridors, no regard to health, no thought of religion.

John Howard was the son of a London tradesman, who died while he was yet an infant, leaving him to the care of guardians. The boy was in due time apprenticed to a grocer, but, possessing not only a delicate constitution but an aversion to trade, he purchased his indentures from his master, and went abroad. His father had left him a large fortune, but in his will he expressly prohibited him from acquiring the control of it until he had reached his twenty-fifth year. On Howard's return he went to lodge with a widow lady at Stoke Newington—then a suburb of London, surrounded by green fields. Here he was attacked with illness, and the lady attended him with so much care that, although she was twenty-seven years his senior, he conceived an affection for her, and was married to her when a very young man. Mrs. Howard, however, died about three years after the union; and with a view to relieve the monotony of his existence, Howard embarked for Lisbon in 1756, a few months subsequent to the calamitous earthquake which destroyed that city, with the view of aiding the survivors of that stupendous catastrophe. But it happened that on the passage Howard's ship was captured and taken to France, and he was placed in prison; and it was the hardships which he suffered during his imprisonment that first aroused his attention to the subject of his future labours. On being released he went to Italy, and on his return to England he settled in Hampshire. In 1758 he married a second wife, but she died in 1766, leaving him one son. Having been appointed High Sheriff, his duties brought the wretchedness and distress

of prisoners in the county gaol more immediately under his notice. Howard was so amazed at what he saw that he took immediate measures for calling public attention to it; and with such results, that in the following year he was examined before a Committee of the House of Commons on the subject of Prison Regulations, and received the thanks of Parliament for the information he gave. It occurred to him that other prisons were in much the same condition as those in his own country, so he resolved to make a tour of inspection through England and Wales. This was before the age of steam had rendered travelling at once cheap and expeditious, and Howard, accompanied by a single servant, one John Prole, performed the journeys on horseback. Well mounted, and not fastidious tourists, they accomplished about forty miles a day. There was hardly a cabin which they passed, even in remote tracts in Ireland and Scotland, that failed to satisfy their requirements. Dried biscuit and a draught of milk or water was the staple of their frugal fare. Not that Howard was parsimonious, but he cared not for luxuries; and he paid waiters, postilions, and all persons of their class munificently. He often said that in the expenses of a journey which must necessarily cost three or four hundred pounds, twenty or thirty pounds extra were not worth a thought; thus, by the liberality which he invariably displayed, he gained the good will of those amongst whom he journeyed.

In 1777 Howard published a work upon *The State of Prisons in England and Wales*; and so successful had been his labours, that he determined to extend his inquiries to foreign lands. He visited successively the prisons of Holland, France, the German States and Poland, and finally penetrated into Russia, then a region scarcely known to Western Europe. He was graciously received by the Empress Catherine, and every facility was afforded for the prosecution of his labours. He travelled from St. Petersburg to Moscow, thence to Kiew, and finally to Cherson, a town built upon the Dnieper, about fifty-seven miles from the point where it falls into the tempestuous waters of the deep Black Sea.

While he was taken with a fatal illness which, on the 20th January, 1790, carried him to his last home. He was buried in a spot which he had himself selected, and a brick pyramid, a Russian tribute to his memory, marked the peaceful place of his rest. It bore simply the words, "JOHN HOWARD."

As long as civilization endures—as long as the English language is spoken upon the earth and the memories of great and good men are revered—so long will the work of Howard be remembered.

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"Go to the d—l!" said Lord Thurlow one day, when storming at his old valet. "Pray give me a character, my lord," replied the fellow, dryly: "people like, you know, to have characters from their acquaintances."

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