

the negro savages he received more kindness than from his own countrymen. The appalling cruelties of that floating hell, a slave ship, were never more vividly described. Battered down under the hatches, half the human cargo were suffocated in a single night. Driven to frenzy by outrage and wrong, the slaves rose in mutiny. Overpowered by their tyrants, many plunged overboard and were drowned. Bloodshed and murder raged unrestrained. "The mariners," says Told, "seemed greedy of eternal death and damnation." The unhappy boy, amid these vile companionships, plunged recklessly into sin; yet, through the mercy of God, his terrified conscience was never without fear of death, hell, and the judgment.

The outrages and wrongs wreaked upon the hapless slaves in Jamaica were too revolting to be described. By an awful and inevitable retribution, such wickedness degraded masters as well as slaves; and in his many sojourns on the island Told never met a single person having the fear of God, or even the form of godliness.

With a sailor like vein of superstition, he tells us that, on the home voyage, the captain being sick, a hideous devil-fish followed the ship for eighteen hundred miles, and on the captain's death disappeared, and was seen no more.

During a later voyage the vessel in which Told sailed was captured by Spanish pirates, and the crew were informed that "every one of them should be hanged, and that without ceremony." The prize, with its crew, made its escape, however, but only to be wrecked upon a rocky shore. The crew were rescued by a New England vessel, but were again wrecked on Martha's Vineyard. Reaching the mainland, they set out for Boston, but were arrested for travelling on Sunday.

After several other voyages, in one of which, through stress of weather, the ship's company could dress no food nor change their wet clothing for six weeks, the whole crew were pressed for the royal navy. The commander of the ship to which Told was assigned, in striking exception to many of his class of that age, was a devout Christian, and used constantly to visit the ship's invalids on his knees at their bedsides. The story of Told's short sailor-courtship and marriage is recorded in four lines. He now joined the royal fleet of twenty-four ships of the line, which soon sailed to Lisbon to protect the Brazil fleet from the Spaniards. They lay at anchor in the Tagus ten months, and then returned to Chatham, which movement occupied another month. Those were the leisurely times before the days of steam and telegraphs. Told was now paid off, and, disgusted with the hardships and wickedness of a life before the mast, he never went to sea again.

"Being now married, and desirous of living a regular life," as he says, "he habituated himself to church-going," but, finding churchmen living as others, he hastily concluded that religion was a mere sham. He obtained the position of a schoolmaster on the magnificent salary of £14 a year. The curate of the parish frequently decoyed Told to his lodgings to join him in smoking, drinking, and singing songs, so that often the ex-sailor could scarcely find his way home. As Told once quoted a text of Scripture, the parson exclaimed, "Are you such a blockhead as to believe that

stuff? It is nothing but a pack of lies." Such clerical influence and example did not deepen his conviction of the reality of religion.

He shortly after found employment with a builder in London. One day a young bricklayer asked him some question on business. He answered roughly, which treatment the young man received with much meekness. "This," says Told, "struck me with surprise." That young man, by his meek silence, had preached an eloquent sermon, which led to Told's conversion, and, through him, to the conversion of multitudes of others.

His new acquaintance introduced him among "the people called Methodists." Told tried to stifle his convictions by cursing and swearing at his young friend, who had been so largely the cause of them; but he bore it all with unwearied patience, without returning one evil look or word. "His countenance," says Told, "appeared full of holy grief, which greatly condemned me."

Told was at length induced to go to early Methodist service at "the Foundery." He found it a ruinous old place which the Government had used for casting cannon. It had been abandoned, and was much dilapidated. Above the smoke-begrimed rafters was seen the tile roof-covering. A few rough deal boards were put together to form a temporary pulpit. Such was the rude cradle of that wondrous child of Providence called Methodism.

Exactly at five o'clock a whisper ran through the large congregation that had assembled, "Here he comes, here he comes!" Told expected to see "some farmer's son, who, not able to support himself, was making a penny in this low manner." Instead of this, he beheld a learned clergyman of the Established Church arrayed in gown and bands. The singing he much enjoyed, but the extempore prayer savoured rather of dissent for Told's sturdy Churchmanship. Wesley's text was, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you." The words sank into the heart of the long-storm-tossed sailor, weary with bearing its load of sorrow and sin. "As long as I live I will never leave this man," he exclaimed with a characteristic, generous impulse. He was soon met by persecution. "What Told, are you a Whitefieldite?" jeered his boon companions. "As sure as you are born, if you follow them you are damned," admonished those zealous enemies of Methodism. His wife, also, although, he says, "a worthy, honest woman," swore at him, and said, "I hope you have not been among the Methodists. I'll sacrifice my soul rather than you shall go among those miscreants." Thus was the despised sect everywhere spoken against. His firmness and affection, however, overcame her opposition.

Told was soon requested by Mr. Wesley to undertake the teaching of the charity children at the Foundery school, at the salary of ten shillings a week. At this work he continued for seven years, having the children under his care from five in the morning till five in the evening, both winter and summer. During this time he "educated two hundred and seventy-five boys, most of whom were fit for any trade."

One morning as Told, with his scholars, attended the five o'clock sermon, Mr. Wesley preached from

the words, "I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." The generous-hearted sailor was conscience-stricken at his neglect of what was now revealed as a manifest duty, and was "filled with horror of mind beyond expression." Learning that ten malefactors were lying in Newgate under sentence of death, he committed his school, without an hour's delay, to the care of an usher, and hastened to the prison.

Silas Told had at length found his vocation. For five and thirty years he continued to burrow in the dungeons of London and the neighbouring towns—often literally to burrow, for many of them were underground—carrying the light and liberty of the Gospel to their dark cells, and to the still darker hearts of their inmates. The unvarnished story of his experiences abounds in incidents of the most thrilling and often harrowing interest.

He was often locked up with the felons all night before their execution. He sat beside them as they rode to the gallows in the death-cart, with the halter on their necks, sharing with them the jibes and jeers, and sometimes the missiles, of the inhuman mob who gloated on their misery. He prayed with them and exhorted and comforted them as they stood on the brink of eternity. He begged or purchased their bodies for burial, and often succoured their wretched and suffering families. He led many to repentance and forgiveness of sins. Hardened criminals broke down under his loving exhortations; and turnkeys, sheriffs, and hangmen wept as they listened to his prayers. Friendless and degraded outcasts clung to him for sympathy and counsel, and through the manifestation of human love and pity caught a glimpse of the infinite love and pity of Him who died as a malefactor to save the malefactors. Through his influence the felon's cell became to many the ante-chamber of heaven; and to those that sat in darkness and affliction and terror, light and joy and gladness sprang up. The ribald oaths and obscene riot of the British jails—then the vilest in Europe, save those of the Inquisition—often gave place to the singing of Christian hymns and the voice of prayer and praise.

At one time Told had a Methodist society of thirty members, and at another, of thirty-six members, among the poor debtors of Newgate. The chief opposition to this Christ-like work came from the "ordinaries" or chaplains, whose hireling and heartless service was put to shame by the intense and loving zeal of this voluntary evangelist. But he burst through every obstacle, and, "in the name of God, would take no denial."

The appalling condition of that prison-world, with which he became so familiar, makes one recoil with horror. The dungeons reeked with squalor and wretchedness and filth. Honest debtors were confined, sometimes for years, in odious cells; and, as a favour, were permitted, caged like wild beasts, to solicit the precarious charity of passers-by. Men and women were dragged on hurdles to Tyburn, and hanged by the score, for forgery, for larceny, for petty theft.

Told records the tragic circumstance of a poor man who was hanged for stealing sixpence to buy bread for his starving wife and babes. Their parting in the prison was a harrowing scene. Told collected from a poor Methodist

congregation a sum of money for the destitute widow.

Sometimes a rescue of the culprit was attempted by his friends. A volley of stones would assail the sheriff's posse, and a rush would be made toward the gallows. Then the ghastly proceeding would be hurried through with the most indecent despatch and confusion.

Yet the frequency of this awful spectacle did not diminish crime. On the contrary, it flourished, seemingly unrestrained, beneath the very gallows. Familiarity with scenes of violence created a recklessness of human life and propensity to bloodshed. Often the confederates of the felon surrounded the gibbet and exhorted the partner of their guilt "to die game," as the phrase was.

Sometimes Told had the great joy of conveying a reprieve to the condemned. After a convivial election dinner, three young sprigs of nobility, half crazed with drink, diverted themselves by playing highwaymen and robbing a farmer. One of them, an officer on one of the King's ships, was betrothed to Lady Betty Hamilton, the daughter of an ancient ducal house. The lady importuned the King upon her knees for the life of her lover. "Madam," said His Majesty, "there is no end to your importunity. I will spare his life upon condition that he be not acquainted therewith till he arrives at the place of execution." The condemned man fainted with joy when the reprieve was communicated to him; "but when I saw him put into a coach," says Told, "and perceived that Lady Betty Hamilton was seated therein, in order to receive him, my fear was at an end."

Such was some of the checkered scenes in which this humble hero bore a prominent part. He was not only a remarkable trophy of divine grace, but an example of the power of Methodism to use lowly and unlettered men in evangelistic and philanthropic work. And what was the inspiration of this unwearying zeal? It was the entire consecration of an earnest soul to the service of its divine Master. At a time when Told rose daily at four o'clock, attended morning service at five, and toiled every spare hour for the prisoner and the outcast, he was agonizing in soul over the remains of the carnal mind. Like the psalmist, he even forgot to eat bread by reason of his sin. Often he wandered in the fields till near midnight, "roaring for very disquietude of soul." If he might, he would have chosen "strangling rather than life." At length deliverance came. The heavens seemed visibly to open before him, and Jesus stood stretching forth His bleeding palms in the benedictions of full salvation. Tears gushed from the eyes of the impassioned suppliant, and, in ecstasy of soul, he exclaimed, "Lord, it is enough."

Thus was he anointed to preach good tidings to the prisoners, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty of soul to them that were bound. Like the Lord he loved, he went about doing good, till, with the weight of well-nigh seventy years upon him, "he cheerfully resigned his soul into the hands of his Heavenly Father."

I AM not what I was, I am not what I would be, I am not what I should be, I am not what I shall be, but, "by the grace of God, I AM WHAT I AM."—John Newton.