

"What will mother say, I wonder?"
 "We won't tell her just yet," said Achilles. "She has enough to worry her with Patty sick, and hearing this would stir her up and take away what little chance of sleep she has. We will keep it quiet until Patty gets well. Perhaps father will never come back."

And so the long sentence was completed; the prisoner was free, the July sun shone for Thomas Stanhope; the fields and the highways were open before him; he had a name and not a number; he no more wore the hideous stripes.

How had it all happened? What had been his fortunes since he became a trusty, in charge of a corridor, and was one of the prison schoolmasters?

His life had passed on with very little change, day like day, and week the counterpart of the week that preceded it. As the end of the time of his imprisonment came in sight, he began to plan more and more what he should do when he was free, and he resolved to open these matters to Mercy in his next letter. And then, thanks to Uncle Barum's little scheme, silence fell between the prisoner and his home.

As week after week passed, and no news came, Thomas began to be very uneasy. He wrote, and wrote again, he persuaded the chaplain to write for him; but all three letters left the post-office in the pocket of Uncle Barum's old coat, and still no news came to the prisoner. Thomas began to assure himself that his family, taking the alarm as his term of imprisonment drew near its close, had preferred to stop all communication with him.

He had made up his mind to write to Friend Amos Lowell, asking him to be his intercessor with the family, assuring them of his deep penitence, and begging them to give him another trial, and allow him to redeem somewhat the past, when that letter written by Uncle Barum arrived, telling him that Mercy had obtained a divorce, remarried, and that all the family preferred that he should not return to Ladbury. There was a check for forty dollars in the letter, payable to the warden of the prison.

If his friend the chaplain had been there to read this letter and advise him, perhaps Thomas Stanhope would not have been so sorely crushed by it, and might still have written to Friend Amos for further news. But the chaplain had just gone away for a month, ill, and Thomas had no one to whom to speak of his great sorrow. The deputy read the letter and sent for Thomas. The deputy was not a very sympathetic man, he had passed more than his quarter of a century among felons, but he regarded Thomas as a "good prisoner," who had made himself generally useful, and had never given any trouble. He was roused to some pity by the anguish on Thomas' face as he read the letter. He essayed to console him.

"Come, Stanhope, keep a stiff upper lip; this is rather rough on you, but such things will happen. It is part of the penalty of getting into the stripes. Women get divorced even from square men often, and your wife has done pretty well to wait seven years. Women find it hard to earn their bread sometimes. You are not so bad off, man; here are forty dollars that I'll keep on the books for you, and you have laid up about twenty. Next Thanksgiving you will get out, on account of good conduct, no doubt, and sixty dollars and a new suit will set you up in the world. You are not an old man, and you're strong. If I were you I would go to Texas and hire on a cattle ranch; this little matter of the stripes won't follow you there."

The deputy felt that he had been exceedingly friendly to Thomas in this disquisition, and giving him his letter, dismissed him again to his duty. Thomas went, in an agony of mind; his future was robbed of hope; he had now suffered the sharpest punishment of his crime ended; the outside world had no attractions, now that Mercy and the children had forgotten him. He had no thought of replying to this letter, and brooding over it alone he became unable to even speak of it. When the chaplain returned it was too late to be taken into Stanhope's confidence. Thomas could not now go to the chaplain and unfold his new sorrow; the chaplain, having six hundred troubled and troublesome prisoners in his care, could give only general

attention to those who were not sick, or who did not personally seek him out.

Thus some weeks passed on, and Thomas in increasing gloom bore his new burden. Uncle Barum died and was buried, and Mercy laid her plans for going to see Thomas. Then the dullness of life in the penitentiary was broken in upon by an event.

One of the prisoners, a desperado sentenced for manslaughter, became greatly incensed at the deputy, and determined to have revenge. The man worked as a cutter-out in the clothing shop, and the knives used by the cutters are long, slim, and amazingly sharp. The man made a practice of concealing one of these knives in his sleeve when he left the work-room, watching his opportunity of meeting the deputy.

The opportunity came as the prisoners were marching out from dinner; the deputy happened to be standing in the shadow of a building opposite the door of the dining-room. Out of the file leaped the convict, with murder in his heart, and with upraised knife flung himself on the unarmed deputy. Thomas Stanhope was the man who walked next behind the would-be murderer, his hand upon his shoulder. He leaped instantaneously after him, and throwing his arms about him destroyed the force of the descending blow. The man made a second thrust, but Stanhope's hand closed over the knife; as the assassin drew the weapon back, Stanhope was severely cut. By this time, scarcely a minute having passed, the deputy had recovered from his surprise, and one of the guards had drawn a pistol. Finding himself likely to be overpowered, the prisoner who made the attack tried to fly, but as he dashed down the prison yard, the excited guard shot him. The file of prisoners was disordered into an excited throng, which the guards were trying to reduce to quiet. On his face, on the stone pavement, dead, lay the man-slayer. One of the guards tore a handkerchief and tied it tightly about Stanhope's wrist, trying to stop the flow of blood leaping in great jets from his wound. The deputy took a long pencil from his pocket, and made a fashion of tourniquet to stop the bleeding, and Thomas was taken to the hospital.

In a fortnight the wound was entirely healed, and as Thomas was expecting to return to his hall, the deputy-warden sent for him.

"Stanhope," he said, "I am glad you are quite well, and the surgeon tells me your hand will not be permanently injured. Your sentence would have expired next November, but in consideration of your bravery the other day, the governor has sent you a full pardon. You are free. You will find a freedom suit all ready for you. You can go at once. I wish you good luck. Be sure and don't drink any more; it was drink brought you here, and it might bring you back, as it has hundreds of others. You are a square man now, keep square. I see you are all right when you are sober. You have laid up twenty dollars, and you had a check for forty; I will add twenty more, as my personal gift; you saved me an ugly cut the other day; how will you have the money, bills or coin?"

"Coin," said Thomas, hardly knowing what he said. Free! Able to go out! No longer a convict, free! but where should he go? Who cared for him now? He took the money, went to the cell where his new citizen's clothes had been placed, made his few preparations for departure; they were simple enough; he brought nothing into the prison, he took nothing from it. He asked for a piece of canvas, and made a money belt; in this he put seventy-five dollars, and five he put in his pocket. He thought of going to see the chaplain, but at the gate he met him with a party of friends, coming to examine the penitentiary. There was no time for conversation; the chaplain shook his hand, wished him well, gave him a Bible from his own pocket, and bade him "go right home." Go home! Oh mockery! Home! He had no home, no wife, no family.

The prison gate swung to behind him with a loud clang. He was free to choose his own way. It seemed as if he were lost; lonely, dazed in this wide world, he who had been shut within four walls for eight long years. It seemed, too, as if every one who saw him knew him for an ex-convict, in spite of that good new suit of

citizen's clothes and the straw hat. He felt alarmed and nervous in the throng upon the streets. Then great nature seemed to call him; he remembered fields, streams, woods, hills, flowers, birds, silence, freedom, the broad blue horizon on every hand. Evidently no city could stretch on and on forever. Whichever way he went, whether north, south, east, or west, he would come at last to the city limits and reach the free country. And so, with no aim but this, he went his way straight on toward the north. He had been imprisoned so long that weariness came to him soon in walking; his limbs shook; there seemed to be too much air in the world; his lungs felt drowned in it; he was overpowered, oppressed with that very freedom which he had once desired.

Well, on and on, and finally the houses were less closely placed; the sidewalks narrowed, and were lost; grass grew by the waysides; there were wide, vacant spaces, where cows and goats fed; chicory and daisies bloomed by the pathway. How long it was since he had gathered a flower! Then there were broad fields and country roads; and wild blackberry-vines with berries upon them; and horses and kine were pasturing in meadow-lands. The farm-houses were far apart, the sun was setting; he was so weary that he could scarcely drag one aching foot after the other; he was faint for food, he had eaten nothing since breakfast. By the roadside he finally found a little house where he asked for supper and a night's lodging.

"There's only one room," said the man, evidently a carter, "and my hand has that, and he is sick."

"Can't I sleep in the barn?" said Thomas, too exhausted to go farther, and referring to a little tumble-down stable.

"Well, no; the mules and cart are all I have, and I can't afford to keep them insured. I never let any one sleep there, for fear of fire."

"I won't smoke, if that's what you fear," said Stanhope.

"I wouldn't trust any one; the risk is too big."

"There's two single beds in the lad's room," spoke up the woman who was cooking supper, "and as for sick, he's only got a bad cold. He's had it for four or five days." She needed the money, and preferred to have the proposed lodger stay.

"Take the vacant bed, if you want it," said the man; "fifty cents for supper, bed, and breakfast. It's cheap enough."

Thomas, too weary to do more than crawl, entered and sat down. The coffee and bacon and corn-bread refreshed him.

"You seem pretty well done up," said his host, "for coming only from town; 'tain't over nine miles."

"I've been sick for two weeks in the hospital, cut in my hand."

"Oh, that accounts for your tirin' so quick. Where are you going?"

"Wherever I can find work."

"Losh! ain't there work in the city?"

"I'm tired of the city. I was raised in the country, and when a man has been sick, he longs for country quiet and air."

"Well, that's so," admitted the carter, and began to talk about the roads and distances until Thomas presently recovered his ideas of direction and locality, and knew where he was. Going up to the attic he slept, but, waking by times, heard the sick lad moaning or talking in his sleep. He took him a drink twice, and shook up his pillow and smoothed his bed-clothes. In the morning he asked him how he was.

"Oh, I feel pretty bad. I'm all broke out with something; reckon I've got the chicken-pox. Ever had it?"

"I guess so," said Thomas, paying little attention. All night he had dreamed of home. He must once more see Ladbury; the home where his father had lived; the grave-yard where his parents and his children slept. He must look once more on the cottage on the mountain, where he might have been so happy, so honourable, so content. He would disturb no one; he would not make himself known; he would only look from afar on the paradise of home. And so this new Enoch Arden started on his way.

He had no desire to make speed; the quiet and beauty of the summer world comforted him, and seemed to remove from body and soul the stain and shadow of the prison. He wandered on, catching a ride

now and then, getting meals and lodgings as he could; a well-dressed, quiet-looking, well-spoken man, whom no one feared or suspected; and so, one Friday, he was climbing the mountain where had once been his home. He moved but slowly that day; he was feverish and stopped to drink wherever there was water; he felt so tired, so weak; his bones ached; his head throbbled and ached; he was not hungry, but faint. He thought it strange that after his out-of-doors life and plain food, and no drink but water, for the past ten days, he should feel so wretchedly ill.

He passed the Titus farm, where Mercy had lived when he had known her as a girl. O Mercy, gentle, patient, kind one, how hard had been your lot, until even your heart had failed! Blame Mercy for finally casting him off? Not he. How false he had been to every promise! He deserved to be cast off.

There was no sign of Uncle Barum about the old place; strangers were there. He asked a lad where was Barum Titus.

"Dead, oh, a good many weeks ago!"

On then, and finally across the shoulder of the mountain, there was the tall dead pine-tree called the "Eagle Tree," and there the guide-board that he knew, and yonder was the Canfield place, and there the Gardiners' farm; he knew them. They had improved a little in eight years, but where was his home—where the paintless, porchless, fenceless, unkempt, broken-windowed home of Thomas Stanhope, drunkard? It had stood there, the guide-board pointing to it like an index finger. But what house was this that stood there now? Here was a green door-yard with trees and two large round flower-beds brilliant with bloom; a paling-fence neatly kept; even those adjuncts of a hitching-post and a horse-block. Here was a cream-coloured house with a porch draped in grape-vines, and with two bright red benches and a rocking-chair invitingly placed upon it. There was a swing, hung upon a frame over a little board platform, speaking of attention to some child's pleasure. This house had a bay window; it had two dormer windows on the newly-painted roof; it was evidently a house kept in scrupulous order. No one appeared in sight; but door and windows were open, and on a line in the grassy back-yard hung a washing. Thomas observed that the clothes were whole and white, and there were pillow-cases and red-bordered towels. Yonder was a neatly fenced barn-yard; a rebuilt barn painted red; a lusty crowing and cackling of fowls was heard; from the pen came now and then a squeal of pigs; in the hill-pasture two cows fed; and yonder, on the upland, worked a tall, strong man, his red shirt and wide hat coming out strongly against the wooded background, and every motion betraying vigour and energy. A little lad worked with this man; could this be Mercy's new husband?

Certainly, Mercy must have married a man with some money, and plenty of goodwill, or this change could not have been wrought in her broken-down home! Poor Mercy, what a life he had led her in that house! Was it not well that she had found kindness and plenty at last?

Keeping along the field back of the road, and as much out of sight as possible, Thomas went his way, his head bent, his limbs shaking, scarcely able to crawl, until he came to a log house, long unused except as a winter shelter for sheep. He drank heartily at a spring near, ate a biscuit which he had in his pocket, and climbing into the upper part of the place, lay down on some clean straw. He was devoured by mental and physical anguish. Loss, remorse, despair attended with great bodily misery and pain.

(To be continued.)

WHAT HIS FATHER LEFT.

THE famous artist, Mr. Hubert Herk-omer, London, says, "In renouncing tobacco and alcohol my father left us a legacy of priceless value; and I hope many generations may bless him for it as I do now." A splendid epitaph for a son to be able to write on his father's tomb. How many other sons there are away down in "darkest England" who with equal truth might say, "My father by his love of alcohol left us a legacy of ruin and disgrace."