

The blessed day at last came; and when James Latimer met at table the few boarders who congregated in that low haunt of vice where he had taken up a temporary abode, they spoke of a horrible murder that had been committed during the night upon the body of an unfortunate girl. But it did not once occur to him that the victim was Agnes; for they spoke of the girl by name, and it was not that of his sister.

After breakfast, James went out to meet Agnes according to appointment. But, although he remained in the neighborhood where she had promised to see him, for two hours after the time at which she had agreed to be there, she did not make her appearance, and James wandered off to other parts of the city, with an oppressive weight upon his feelings. Two or three times during the day, he came back to the place where they had agreed to meet; but she was not there. Night came without his again seeing her, when he returned for lodgings to the tavern where he had spent his first night in the city after an absence of many years. Again the conversation among the boarders turned upon the murder that had been committed; still it did not occur to James that the wretched victim might be no other than his fallen sister, until one of those present happened to say that of course the name by which she was known was not her real one. Then the fear came thrilling upon the heart of James, that the murdered girl might be Agnes.

"Did you see her?" he asked, in a voice that was calm only as the result of an effort, speaking to one who seemed to know more about the affair than the rest.

"Yes," he replied. "I was at the house to day."

"Was she very young?" inquired James.

"Yes; quite a young thing."

"What kind of eyes and hair?"

"Very dark."

"Is she buried yet?" asked James, evincing some agitation, and rising up as he spoke.

"No; I believe not."

"Where is the house?"

The man gave him minute directions, and James started off with a trembling heart. One glance at the mangled body sufficed to tell him the dreadful truth. He looked at it but for a moment, and then, with a feeling of horror, turned away. And even as he did so, while yet the terrible object he had looked upon was distinctly before his eyes, the feeling he could not utter in words, nor even to form to itself a thought, accorded with the sentiment—"It is better for her to die than to live as she was living."

From the house where his murdered sister lay, James went back, with a sad heart, to his lodging place. He had three shillings in his pocket, the balance that remained of the small sum of money given him by Agnes. After that was gone, he knew not from whence the means of living were to come. To none of the rough occupants of the boarding house he had selected, did he mention the dreadful truth he had discovered, though some who noticed him more closely than the rest, saw that something painful was on his mind. He passed another unhappy and almost sleepless night, and appeared, on the next morning, evidently exceedingly disturbed in mind.

"What are you going to do with yourself, my lad?" said one of the boarders to James, as he walked out into the street with him after breakfast.

"Dr. on myself, I believe," replied James, moodily.

"That's a poor kind of business, in my opinion," returned the man, "and doesn't pay.—Are you out of money?"

"Yes."

"Have you friends in the city?"

"No."

"Are you willing to do anything?"

"Yes; if I can get anything to do. I don't want to starve."

"Well, my lad," returned the man; "I am going to open a public house to-morrow, and want a smart chap to help me at the bar. Will you come?"

"Of course I will. But what will you give me?"

"Two dollars a week and find you."

"That'll do, I guess."

"Very well. To-morrow we'll begin."

And on the morrow they did begin, by opening a new avenue through which men could go, body and soul, to destruction.

The new drinking house soon had its customers of all grades, and James soon began to feel perfectly at home in the pestilent

atmosphere he was breathing. But, when the bustle and excitement of the day were over, and he was alone with himself again, thoughts of his murdered sister and mad father, and a remembrance of the cause which led to such horrible consequences, oppressed and disturbed him; and there were times when he wished himself back again in the quiet home he had left far off in the country. But, daily familiarity with vicious company, and the daily habit of drinking what he wanted at the bar, soon began to bear him down to a lower deep than any into which he had yet descended, and to render his feelings and perceptions still more obtuse. He had entered a school of vice, and was proving himself an apt scholar.

It is not our intention to trace, step by step, the progress which James Latimer made in the downward road. That would take up too much time, and not at all aid in the purpose we have in view. We have seen his entrance, and we know, too well, to what depth of degradation and misery the way leads.

In a year the lad had changed sadly for the worse. He had learned to drink to intoxication, and associate with persons of the vilest character. His father, who had been ruined by the bottle, entered the broad road to destruction late in life, as compared with his age. What hope was there, then, for the son? It was but as a feeble, glimmering light. During the first year of his downward course, James continued to serve customers at the bar of the man who had opened the new drinking house; but he had become so debased, kept such vile company, and was so quarrelsome in his temper, that even this drunkard maker was compelled to threaten him with a discharge from his employment, if he did not mend both his habits and his manners.

Before the second year had rolled round, this threat was put into execution, and James Latimer was again adrift. For a few months he loitered about the city, harboring in dens of infamy, and consorting with wretches of the vilest and most degraded character. Sometimes he had food, and sometimes went for days with scarcely enough to sustain nature. Amid all, he managed to get liquor, and was for more than half of his time in a state of partial or complete intoxication. One so young and so fallen, could get no employment. His very appearance caused all to whom, in more lucid moments, he applied, to turn from him with a quick denial. He was an outcast; and there were times when he felt this bitterly. But, even if a feeble desire to reform, arose sometimes, there was no friend at his side to fan the little spark into a flame; no one to take him by the hand and lift him gently upon his feet, and point the way which he had power to stand alone.

One morning he crawled out of a miserable hovel, where, for a few pennies he had procured a night's shelter, and was moving aimlessly along the street, when a voice called out,

"Hallo, Jim! Isn't your name Latimer?"

He looked across the street, and replied to a staggering crony who had thus hailed him—

"Id'no. Believe it is."

"Well, if it is, somebody advertises this morning that he wants to see you on some very particular business. I saw it in the Sun."

"Wants to see me?"

"Yes, if your name is James Latimer."

"What does he want to see me for?"

"Doesn't say. But you'll see it in the Sun, if you'll get one."

A Sun was bought from a newsboy who was passing, and there James read an advertisement, earnestly desiring him, if in the city, to call at a certain number in a certain street, where a person wished to see him on a subject that particularly interested him.

"I guess they don't catch this lark in that way," said James, after reading the advertisement.

"Ain't you going?" said his companion.

"No, indeed. If any body wants me, let him find me."

"What's the matter? Afraid of the police?"

"No. But it's very strange that any body should want to see me. Taint for no good. Let 'em catch me, if they can. But I ain't green enough to put my head in any of their traps."

This was young Latimer's first decision. He thought of the House of Refuge, and of the master from whom he had run away; and did not in the least doubt, but that this was a movement to get him back.

Still he read the advertisement over and over again, and referred to it a dozen times in an hour. After all, it might not be a