

Narrative Pieces.

THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS.

About seven years ago, in one of our courts of assize, in the Norfolk circuit, a young man was placed at the bar to take his trial on a charge of having robbed his employer. The result was his conviction, and sentence to transportation for a term of years. Had he belonged to that class of hardened criminals who are cradled in ignorance and vice, and from whom the world has nothing to expect but dissipation and dishonesty, he might have listened to the announcement of his punishment with reckless indifference, and endured it with a heart harder than before. But such was not the case.

Scarcely had the sentence passed the lips of the Judge, when the pent-up agony of his soul burst forth. In vain did the officers of the prison gather around him, attempting to assuage his sorrow, and to induce him to meet the punishment he had merited with fortitude. His was grief which no heart but his own understood, and no officer of justice could lessen. Every expedient failing to console the unhappy convict, he was requested to mention any individual he would like to see; when he named a Minister of the Gospel, beneath the sound of whose faithful voice he had often sat. The young man's grief was so great, that although it is not general to comply with the wishes of a convict, an exception was made in this instance, and it was deemed advisable to grant his request. The Minister was sent for.

Some time after the writer of this paper listened to a sermon addressed to young men by this same Minister; when, in holding up to his hearers the fearful danger and fatal consequences of treading "in the way of transgressors," he detailed the circumstances of his visits to the young convict. These left such an impression upon the writer's mind that he would fain re-produce the picture which was then disclosed, to the eye of every youth who has enjoyed that invaluable boon, an enlightened education, and is about to step upon the world's wide stage a candidate for its enjoyment and ad-

vancement, as well as a combatant with its legions and temptations.

"As soon," said the Minister, "as the young man saw me, he burst into tears, and buried his face in his hands. Some time was spent in silence, which was at length broken by the culprit's speaking in the language of self-reproach. While looking at his position, his grief knew no bounds: he felt that a foul blot, he could never wipe away, now stained his reputation; and in vain I tried to soothe his troubled soul. He related his history. He was the son of a pious mother, who, in childhood, from day to day, taught him to bend his knee in prayer. She led him to the sanctuary, and pointed out the path in which he ought to tread. At length the time arrived for him to quit the parental roof, and find another home. He had not been long in his new situation when the thought occurred to him that the form of prayer he employed was useless. This was the turning-point of his life. Had he, under the recollection that the mere form was useless, merged that form into the reality, God would have heard his supplications. But it was not so. He laid aside his form of prayer, which had—though useless in itself—been a sort of defence, preventing him from sinking deeper in sin. Now, this being gone, bitter were the results. His mother was not present to advise and direct him; and, his last hedge being removed, he easily listened to the ensnaring voice of youthful, sinful companions, saying, 'Come thou with us in the pursuit of pleasure.' He soon found their pleasure too expensive for him, and then followed the next downward step. To support himself in his extravagance, he robbed his employer. Undiscovered at first, he went from step to step, until his dishonesty was brought to light. Justice seized him, and, bearing him to the prison, left him a convict in a convict's cell."

"I saw him," continued the Minister, "several times after this; but our interviews were of the same character. There was the same overwhelming sense of shame; the same unmitigat-