

"Meerschaum."

"Who gave you that name?"

"Judas Iscariot."

This would not do by any means. There was a burst of laughter from the more boisterous of the Field Lane boys, and the interrogator was about to suggest a more private interview, when Meerschaum explained further, with the most perfect amiability :

"It ain't his name : but they *give* him that name because it was wrote up similar over his shop, after the gentleman gave my mother her trouble, because Akers wouldn't give his evidence. Which I could have given the same evidence as what he did, but the magistrate wouldn't let me, 'cause he said I didn't know the nature of an oath. I ought to, for I have heard as many sworn as ever he has. Know the nature of an oath ! Why I could swear as many as a clever gentleman like you. But I don't do it because Judas says that God will be angry with you for it—and——"

Meerschaum was proceeding into theological regions, far beyond the farthest flight of his questioners, when the Evening Hymn was started, previous to the closing prayer ; which was fortunate for one of the two parties in conversation, at all events. Before the boys were sent to bed, the original interrogator of Meerschaum and the manager had an interview with the boy.

Father had been a sailor, drowned. Mother had been very kind to him, until the judge gave her seven years about a bad half-crown—they were always giving his mother bad money. Any relatives ? An aunt, married, at Gravesend, but no good, at least not to *him*. He wanted to learn a trade. Would he be good ? If he hadn't wanted to be good, he would not have come here ; if he had wanted to be bad, he might have gone to heaps of places. Wanted to be like his father ; wanted to be like the good gentleman that old Judas told him about, Jesus Christ. What did he know about *Him* ? Nothing except that he was a good gentleman without any money ; thought he would have helped him to learn a trade if he had been alive, but he was dead now, though. Judas said that he was coming alive again. Wished he would come soon : thought he was very much wanted. Asked as to the character whom he had so often mentioned

as Judas, he replied that he was a general cove who lived in Gravel Lane, with a young girl the same age as he, Meerschaum, was. The boy was dismissed to bed.

The original interlocutor and the manager merely nodded their heads at one another. The former said, "Great Queen's street, of course." Then the interlocutor took his hymn-book, and departed up Farringdon street, past Coldbath Fields Prison, towards his home at Highgate, praying for compulsory education, denominational or other, at any price.

Before he was well past King's Cross, looking for an omnibus, the manager had gone in with his lamp, to see if the boys were asleep. Meerschaum emphatically was ; he had put on a clean shirt provided for him, and was lying on his back, a picture of innocence and beauty among the more squalid and meaner faces around him. The shirt he wore was too small for him, and he had pulled it up until his left fore-arm was bared. On it, done in gunpowder, probably by his sailor father, were the initials M. D.

Shortly after the manager slept the sleep of the just, and the next day Field Lane knew Meerschaum no more ; he was absorbed into Great Queen Street, into the home for houseless boys, an institution which honors itself, while it disgraces the State which so feebly supports it.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the French Protestants fled away like storm-birds in a gale of wind in spring time, to find the nearest place in which they could make their nests. The nearest place for many of them was the east of London, and in Spitalfields, where we may find them still, or, to be more correct, their descendants.

The Couliers came there at the Revocation ; they were Dieppe people, and worked at ivory. Long after the revocation of the Edict ; even after the Great Revolution itself had been forgotten, the name Coulier stood over the shop in the east, and in a part which was then a suburb. They were in their way what the Childs are in the banking way.

It was never known, and will never be known, exactly what money they made, but at the end of the first half of this century their business had utterly declined. There was a little dusty ivory work still in the window, but no one went in to buy it,