

very proud of myself in those days, and perhaps with some sort of reason, for I was a tall, broad-shouldered, good-looking fellow, and being a good workman, was generally singled out by my employer, Mr. Wilson, to any specially difficult bit of work.

I got on very well with my mates too, for being strong and in good health and full of spirits, nothing came amiss to me in the way of work or amusement. In fact I had a shrewd guess that had the men been asked who was the best fellow among them all, they would have replied with one voice, Harry Morris.

I was steady, too; I should have been ashamed to be otherwise. I had no patience with those chaps who could not keep themselves out of a mess. No one had ever seen me the worse for drink in my life, nor ever should; no one had ever heard me use bad language, or found me out in anything underhand or dishonest. I was far too respectable for that. Yes; that is just what I was—*respectable*. But why did mother look so anxiously at me at times, and when I came home in high spirits and a trifle inclined to boast of my doings, why did she sigh as she listened to my excited talk? Why did she—as I knew she was doing, though I pretended not to see it—keep my brother Dick away from me as much as possible? What made Mr. Elliot, our rector, look at me pityingly, as I passed him in the street, with my head in the air, barely condescending to touch my hat?

Honest, sober, steady, trustworthy, but utterly godless!

Of course I had been brought up differently. Mother had no need to vex herself about that, as she did; but in an evil day, when I was quite a young chap, I fell in with a clever, amusing fellow, who laughed and jeered at religion, and led away by his wicked talk, I gave up one good practice after another, till now for years I had not been inside a church—had not thought of saying a prayer, night or morning.

There, then! the mischief one bad man may do! Just as the ripples in a pool spread further and further from the stone first thrown in, so did the mischief started

by Evans spread wider and wider. At first I was content only to go my own way, then by degrees I began to laugh at others till I had succeeded in making them as bad as myself.

'I didn't see any need of religion,' I said to Mr. Elliot on one occasion when he remonstrated with me. It was all very well for women, or for men who were weak and sickly, or who couldn't keep straight without it, but I was strong and healthy, and had a long life before me, and no one could say I was anything but respectable and well conducted.

'Yes, that is true, Morris,' Mr. Elliot answered. 'It is God's pleasure that you should be able to keep yourself, as you say, respectable. Though you will not acknowledge Him, He is watching over you; but if He were to give you up, where, think you, would be your respectability then? Once He withdraws His help, and you will sink. And as to your bodily strength, you have indeed much for which to be thankful, but have you *never* seen a man as strong as you here to-day, gone to-morrow?'

I felt uncomfortable at this sort of talk, so I kept out of Mr. Elliot's way as much as possible. You see I had become a sort of leader among the godless set in the works, and I did not want to give up my position. I had, I suppose, plenty of brains, and in a sort of way, of eloquence, for I know I never failed to carry my hearers with me when I made, as I was fond of doing, a speech in the room where we working-men often spent our evenings and talked—I scarcely like to think now how we talked.

One evening I shall never forget. I had been giving the company the benefit of a highly-spiced speech, which had been received with uproarious applause by my hearers, during the course of which I had indulged in one or two side sneers at the Church, the clergy, and religion in general. Poor chaps, had they been brought to book, they would have been puzzled to say what they were applauding, still less would a great many of them have agreed with me had they thought it over quietly. But alas! I had sown the tares and they were bound to spring up one day.