

PATHETIC HISTORY ²⁴

OF

George Barnwell

THE LONDON APPRENTICE ;

Who, by keeping Company, and following the
Advice of a

WOMAN OF THE TOWN.

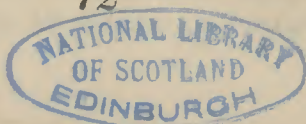
Was reduced to the lowest pitch of Infamy ; de-
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the robbing of his Master to the most dreadful
MURDER of his UNCLE ! for which he was
EXECUTED.



GLASGOW ;

PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.

72



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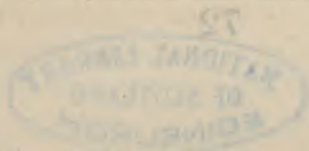
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HISTORY

OF

George Barnwell.

GEORGE BARNWELL was apprenticed to his uncle, a merchant of the city of London, who had, by his industry and prudence, amassed a very considerable property, and at an advanced period of life retired from the active pursuits of business to his seat in Surrey, where his hospitality and social disposition endeared him to an extensive circle of acquaintance; and with this estimable man George Barnwell spent three years, previous to his entrance into the bustling scenes of life. Whilst an inmate in his uncle's house, he gained the affections of the old man, who often declared, that after his death he should inherit his fortune.

The person of George was tall, and his whole behaviour marked with an elegance, rather uncommon in persons who, like himself, had been secluded from the scenes of life.—With these qualifications he entered into the counting-house of Mr. Strickland, a very considerable woollen-raper in Cheapside. For some time our hero's assiduity and punctuality were so conspicuous, as to render him, in the eyes of Mr. Strickland, worthy of the most implicit confidence; while, by his indefatigable exertion, he obtained a complete

proficiency in the counting-house department : a perfect knowledge in mercantile transactions ; and a degree of prudence in his dealings with others rarely attained by persons of his age.

About this time Maria, his cousin, and daughter of his worthy master, became sensible of the merits of George, and had too much candour and too little prudery to conceal an affection, the object of which appeared so highly deserving. With that unreserved confidence, which confers the greatest honour on her character as a daughter, she opened her heart to her parents, and experienced the felicity of understanding, that when Barnwell had gained more experience in the world, and had entered into business, her wish should be gratified.

Thus happily was he situated in the bosom of a family which esteemed him ; thus did he daily make a progress in their affections, which promised to lead to the most blissful and honourable consequences ; and thus fulfilling his duty to others, did he communicate gladness to his uncle's heart, and establish his own reputation and serenity of mind. But this season of peaceful serenity lasted but for a short period, for temptation led to vice, and Barnwell fell from virtue.

Sarah Milwood was the daughter of a merchant in Bristol, who spared no expence in endowing her with every accomplishment ; but her princi-

ples were undermined by the flatteries of those who surrounded her. She at length married a Mr Milwood, who two years afterwards lost his life in a midnight broil. In the course of her daily perambulations, she one morning encountered Barnwell, as he was coming out of a house in Lombard-street, and she resolved not to let slip an opportunity of making a profitable adventure of her morning's walk. No sooner had she made up her mind on the subject, than observing him turn to view her with some attention, she made a false step, and, with a loud scream, fell on one knee. The ill-fated youth immediately tendered his assistance, and, raising her from the ground, she expressed her fears that she had dislocated her ankle, and she found herself utterly unable to walk without his assistance, and entreated that he would increase her obligations by assisting her to reach her residence in Cannon-street. Barnwell complied with her request, and conducted the artful woman to her house, where she insisted upon his entering and receiving some refreshment.

Eager to improve the moment, Milwood threw herself upon a sofa, and raising her leg from the ground, as if in agony, and apologising for her apparent indelicacy, solicited the youth to examine if the ankle appeared swollen. The request, coupled with the appearance of a most

delicately turned foot, produced an emotion in our hero to which he had hitherto been a stranger. His agitation, notwithstanding his efforts to conceal it, did not escape her scrutinizing eye, and her hopes rose accordingly. She now contrived, in the course of conversation, to learn from Barnwell the particulars of his name and connections, and every other particular which was at all likely to facilitate her intended project of seduction.

Until this hour George's heart had been uncorrupted, and the first impressions of a vicious nature were accompanied by the most bitter sensations. Alarmed at this breach of fidelity to his master, he took his hat, and seizing the hand of his seducer, begged of her to suffer him to depart—a request which she would not comply with, until she had extorted from him a promise to renew his visit the following evening. As he walked homewards, his eyes were fixed on the ground, and his thoughts were deeply intent upon framing an excuse for his long absence; at last, still hesitating and undetermined, he reached the counting-house. It was now he awoke to a proper sense of his situation: a thousand times he resolved to break his appointment with Milwood; and as often would he say to himself that the best proof he could give of his contrition

would arise from the triumph of his virtuous principles in the hour of temptation.

Thus did the misguided youth reason himself into an opinion, that the second interview was founded on the most excellent of motives; and, when the evening approached, forming an excuse for his absence, he left his master's house, and with impatient steps hurried to Milwood's residence. As he reached the abode of this depraved woman, a strange fluttering of heart betrayed his emotions. If the imagination of Barnwell was already wrought to a dangerous warmth, his second reception was calculated to increase it. On a crimson damask sofa, placed under a brilliant mirror illuminated with wax-lights, the siren Milwood reclined. She did not rise as he entered the room, but holding out a most beautiful arm, encircled at the wrist with a brilliant bracelet, she motioned him to be seated. George doubted for a moment whether the woman of sentiment he had beheld on the preceding day, and the wanton form now before him, were the same. She touched the strings of a harp which lay near her, and the effect on Barnwell was instantaneous. Her embrace so infatuated him, as to destroy all his good resolutions, and his heart once more renounced its principles.

This moment the artful woman directly fixed on to complete the ruin of Barnwell, and with

bewitching looks and expressions she gradually seduced him.

The morning brought with it a return of compunction, but the voice of Milwood again soothed him into a degree of composure: and his mind was gradually led to suppose the vice unto which he had fallen, as less wicked than it appeared at first; he listened with less pain to the observations of his seducer, as to the necessity of her seeking new apartments in the course of the day; and to his providing her with money, as she could not bear the idea of applying to her friends after what had passed. Every thing which she requested was promised by her infatuated victim, who appeared to have sacrificed reason and duty at the shrine of his unhallowed passion; and, before he departed, Milwood promised to leave a note for him at a place which he appointed, informing him of her new place of residence, where she expected him in the evening.

The gentle and affectionate reproaches of the amiable Maria for his absence, and want of attention to herself, revived in his breast the slumbering feelings of penitence and remorse; but they were transient and ungrounded, and her absence destroyed their influence, and left him once more the prey of appetites, which now raged with uncontrolled fury. His attention to business, which until now had been indefatigable and un-

wearied, was remitted, and appeared to be the result of a painful struggle, rather than the effect of a will devoted to his master's interest. Having gained the information by letter from Milwood, that she had removed to a lodging in Moorfields, thither Barnwell repaired in the evening; and, bringing with him a considerable sum of money, he was welcomed by the designing woman with an appearance of the sincerest affection. At this visit he related to her the suspicions which his absence had occasioned, and consulted her as to the most ready method of continuing his connexion with her without the hazard of a discovery.

Milwood determined to try the nature of his attachment to her, declared, in reply, that as she had taken these apartments, she expected that he would give up his companions, quit his master's house, and take up his residence with her; who, as she said, had given up every thing on his account. On consideration of his putting this project into execution on the following day, she consented to allow his absence on that night; and, after an hour or two, Barnwell submitted to the conditions which his mistress had imposed, and accordingly took his leave of her.

A thousand thoughts now engaged his harassed mind; it was the grand struggle between virtuous honour to his master and patron, and all powerful illicit love to a fascinating wicked woman

Love seemed to have gained entire ascendancy over him; and just as he had made up his mind to inform his uncle he could no longer remain with him, his kind patron met him at the door, and received him with more than his usual affection, which recalled poor Barnwell's scattered senses of honour to so good a master, that he altered his resolution, and determined to forget Milwood, and by attention repay the favours he had received from his uncle.

He became thus more composed, and settled to his business with all his wonted assiduity; till one morning, being just on the point of going out on business, a woman knocked at the door with a letter for him; it was from Milwood. Trembling with emotion, he opened it; it was full of this wicked woman's pretended misery in not seeing him for so long a time, and stating her destruction if he neglected her. It was worded with such tenderness, that for the moment she regained his affection; and placing the letter in his pockets he uttered to the bearer, "I will come."

When the evening arrived, our hero again procured leave of absence until the following morning, and he again hastened to the house of infamy. When he entered, Milwood, with feigned regret, threw herself into his arms, and entreated him to forgive the impetuosity of her conduct, so incon-

sistent with her affection for one whom she prized so highly; to which the credulous youth listened. Before Barnwell left his mistress on the following morning, she had intimated to him the necessity of procuring a fresh supply of money, as her funds were again nearly exhausted; the enamoured youth promised to comply, and vowed that nothing should induce him to cause her future unhappiness.—This declaration was received by Milwood with a great show of gratitude, and she entreated him to come every evening, if he only remained with her a single hour; he assented, and took his leave.

Weeks thus crept on, and as Barnwell's affection for his seducer was ever on the increase, his love for Maria naturally declined. Still, however, to save appearances, he continued to pay her his customary attentions; but they were not the effusions of sincere love, and the scrutinizing eye of affection did not fail to observe the constraint which marked his conduct. Many were the unhappy hours which the discovery cost Maria.

But notwithstanding our youth appeared still attentive to the duties of his business, his visits to his wicked mistress were observed with the most rigid punctuality. She never failed to drain him closely, whenever she found he had received money; and often-times was he compelled to draw

upon the liberality of his uncle, in order to support her extravagance, and gratify her rapacity. The time however was at hand, when Milwood began to extend her views, and to discover still deeper designs upon her ill-fated victim. She complained at first with an appearance of tenderness, which gradually gave way to a more reprov- ing manner, of the supplies which he brought her.

In vain did the unhappy Barnwell urge, that he had already drawn from his generous uncle, until he was ashamed to solicit any further contributions towards his extravagance; that he had not only received all the wages that were due, but that he was even in arrears with his master. Every thing was urged in vain; and when driven to desperation by her continued reproaches, he he exclaimed, "What would you have me to do?" Milwood, with a sarcastic sneer replied, "Do you ask such a question, who have continually your employer's money vested in your hands?"

Never, until this moment, had the idea of robbing his master been suggested to him, and the sensation which followed it was dreadful in the extreme. Distressed beyond measure, his spirits sunk, and more than once a full resolution was formed, to quit his mistress for ever, than to support her by dishonest means; but, alas! its influence was transient.

The evening approached rapidly—the hour

drew nigh, at which he had pledged himself to carry to Milwood, the spoils of his integrity. Thrice he opened his desk, and as often did he close it again, unable to summon courage enough to commit the act he meditated. At this instant he glanced at the clock—a quarter to seven, and seven was the hour appointed; a shivering seized him, and a tremor crept over him, as he seized the lid for the fourth time. He cast his eyes fearfully and cautiously round him; no person was present, he hesitated, stretched out his hand, and drew from the drawer a bank-note of one hundred pounds; the lid fell from his hands, and, with a faint sigh, the unhappy youth hurried the plunder into his pocket, sunk back into his seat, and for a moment lost all recollection.

Hurrying out of the house, Barnwell hastened, in a state of madness to Milwood's lodgings. No sooner had he entered her apartment, than, with bitter sighs, he threw the note before her; which his mistress no sooner saw, than she grasped it in her hand; and assuming the most bewitching tenderness, she exclaimed, "My dearest Barnwell, why this agonizing emotion? has any thing occurred to distress you, which the unalterable love of your Milwood, may not alleviate? Deceived by this appearance of uncommon affection, Barnwell poured forth in her ear the tale of his feelings and his sufferings, on account

of the unpardonable step he had taken. When he had ended, he threw himself into Milwood's arms, and gave way to the bitterness of his grief.

On meeting his master the following morning, the unfortunate victim of vice hid his face, and sought, by fixing his attention upon business, to lose for awhile the sense of what he had done.

Every succeeding day assisted to tranquilize his mind, and to render the recollection of his crime less irksome: through the liberality of his uncle, he was fortunately enabled to repay the money he had taken, before it was necessary to make up his accounts for his employer's inspection.

Christmas arrived, and the liberality of his uncle and his master enabled Barnwell to make handsome presents to his mistress, which rendered her more loving and attentive than ever.

Soon after this Milwood proposed to give up the lodgings, and make her own house the scene of their future affection, as, she said much expence would be saved. She then continued to urge him for more money, which the infatuated youth complied with; having received a considerable sum, which he should not have to account for for some time, he took two hundred pounds, to Milwood.

Our hero had now become politic in his guilty conduct, and he managed so well in his concealment as effectually to impose on his master, who, still retained his original opinion of his worth. True-

man, indeed, who had been, from their first introduction, the tried and sworn friend of George, observed a change in him, which escaped the notice of those who were contented with a more superficial view of his conduct.

A month only had sufficed for Milwood to spend the money which our hero had secreted from his master's service, and another demand was made upon his liberality. At first he resisted the evident extortion of his mistress; but finding it in vain to contend, and being required in the customary manner either to bring a fresh supply of money at his next visit, or to come to her house no more, the poor victim returned home, fully prepared to lay his master's property again under contribution. He thought little now about replacing what he should take away, since as the debt accumulated, he became more desperate, and careless of the result.

From this moment the artful woman assumed a degree of despotic rule over her unresisting victim, which she never before attempted; since, as she justly calculated, his mind being completely vitiated, he was willing to become her instrument in the execution of any designs, however remote from honour or rectitude. Her demands upon his purse now became unremitted, and his presence was received with either smiles or frowns, in proportion as he came loaded with golden of-

ferings to the deity who presided in this unhal-
lowed temple. His salary, and the supplies of
his uncle, were greatly incompetent to the expen-
ees which Barnwell thus plunged into continual-
ly; and he was, of course, obliged to have re-
course to his master's property.

But it was not possible for this course to con-
tinue long unnoticed; his daring and increasing
calls being so unqualified and frequent, and the
day of reckoning rapidly approaching. As this
dreadful period drew near, the terrors of Barnwell
began to revive; and the more he thought of the
impossibility of meeting the deficiencies his crimes
had occasioned, the more his apprehensions gained
ground; but when he imparted his fears to Mil-
wood, she laughed at his pusillanimity; and her
embraees and the intoxication of guilty pleasure,
proved effectual in drowning for a time the sober
voice of reason: and a temporary forgetfulness of
grief was eagerly resorted to, in the absence of
every consolation of a more cheering and per-
manent nature.

From this moment, Barnwell resolved to ab-
sent himself from his duty; but, previous to this
step, he resolved to make free with the remain-
der of the property entrusted to him, which
amounted to above £300.

But the idea of deserting Maria (although not
so painful as it would have been some time since),

was not entertained without some uneasiness; since he had continually poured in her ears vows of fidelity and love, even at the moment when his heart was paying homage to the abandoned Milwood; and he could not reconcile himself to the thought, that he must soon be looked upon with horror and detestation, by a family which had been used to love and confide in him. Barnwell being resolved to leave his home, addressed the following letter to Maria:—

“M^RIA, — I know my absence will surprise my honoured master and yourself; and the more, when you shall understand that the reason of my withdrawing is, my having embezzled part of the cash entrusted to my care. After this, it is needless to inform you I shall return no more. Though this might have been known by examining my accounts, yet to prevent that unnecessary trouble, and to cut off all fruitless expectations of my return, I have left this from the lost
“GEORGE BARNWELL.”

The sight of the other clerks making up their accounts with unclouded brows, was agonizing in the extreme to the unfortunate youth; and the evening had scarcely closed in, when rifling the desk of its contents, he rushed out of the house, and stayed not till he had reached the house of his mistress. Throwing himself on a seat, in an agony of despair, he exclaimed, “It is over! I

have given the finishing stroke to my crimes, and deserted my good old master!"

Milwood, on hearing this, eagerly enquired if he had secured any property; and, as he answered in the affirmative, and threw his ill-gotten spoils into her lap, she almost devoured him with kisses, called him her saviour and her love, and told him her arms should shelter him from every evil. At this unlucky moment, Barnwell mentioned that his uncle had called upon him, when the vile woman, with her artful questions, drew from him an account that the worthy old gentleman had drawn a considerable sum from his banker's hands, with an intention to go on the following day to a distant fair.

No sooner had Milwood obtained these particulars, than she began to toy with him with redoubled affection, throwing her arms around his neck, and having reduced him to a state of temporary madness, by liquors, she ventured to hint at a method which, if adopted, she said, could not fail to produce a considerable booty. The unfortunate youth eagerly enquired the method, when Milwood proposed that he should lay in wait for his uncle, and murder him, so as to gain the treasure which he possessed.

'Gracious God!' exclaimed Barnwell, 'what! add murder to robbery! Am I sunk so low as to be thought capable of such a crime? I have

already forfeited all which ought to make life dear—my honour and integrity; but yet there is a charm. Oh! my Milwood, will nothing less satisfy thee than the blood of my revered uncle? If it will not, say but the word, and by heaven he dies, if it will but gain a smile from thee!”

Milwood overwhelmed him with carresses, and praised the generous affection which animated his bosom. She continued to strengthen his mind by her arguments, and, before bed-time, it was resolved that Barnwell should sally forth to accomplish the diabolical purpose.—The next day Milwood gradually revived the subject of the intended murder. The resolution of the youth seemed to be wound up to a desperate pitch, and he frequently exclaimed, “Yes, yes, give me a weapon that cannot err.” About 8 o’clock the wretched victim arose; his ghastly appearance, his beamless eyes, his hollow cheeks, and monotonous tone of voice, struck an inexpressible terror into her guilty soul, and, by all the endearments of artful love she strove to recall him to his wonted cheerfulness. But, alas! peace was flown for ever from his mind, and the impervious and immoveable gloom of despair had their fixed its habitation. He struck his clenched hands with uncommon violence against his temples, and gnashed his teeth with bitter agony. “Am I not a wretch indeed!” he at length exclaimed,

“not only to rob my master, who placed unbounded confidence in me, but I must also murder my beloved unele! Oh! Milwood, revoke the cruel sentence you have passed; bid me not add murder to my long list of irrevocable crimes, and I will worship you for ever!”

“Away with this hypoeriticial whine, Barnwell,” exclaimed Milwood; “have you so determined to break your resolutions of last night? Come, come, there is too much time lost already; the sun-beams have risen above the window, and you told me old Barnwell is an early man. Here is brandy—drink deep!—again, and yet again!”

Hurrying out of the house with the utmost trepidation, the unfortunate young man slunk through the streets, afraid to raise his eyes from the ground, lest they might encounter some person who should elaim aequantance. After walking for an hour, he espied a person coming across a field towards him, who he immediately recognized to be his unele. At the first sight a secret horror chilled his blood; but the recollection of Milwood’s words, aided dy the intoxicating fumes of the brandy which Milwood had plied him with, soon expelled the unwelcome sensation.

At length his unsuspecting benefactor entered near a clump of trees, and he resolved to intercept him. With this intention he increased his speed, keeping considerably to his right, till he

was at a little distance before him; and when by the side of a large tree, he levelled the fatal weapon, and drawing the trigger, the best of men fell weltering in his blood. No sooner did he behold the dreadful effects of his crime, than he sunk, overpowered by the violence of his feelings. The shock, however, was temporary, and he recovered himself sufficiently to escape before any person appeared in sight: after having rested himself a little while, he called a coach, and in a short time was with Milwood.—From the moment of his departure on the dreadful errand, Milwood had been in a continual state of trepidation, both of body and mind. The agitated manner—and frenzied appearance of her victim, at his outset, had raised terrible apprehensions in her bosom, lest by incautiousness and alarm, he might lead to suspicion; and she had no doubt, that if interrogated closely as to the cause of the murder, he would confess the whole of the circumstances, and probably implicate her as being an accomplice in the murder. Such reflections were ill calculated to make her easy; added to which, the long absence of the youth increased her fears; he had departed at eight o'clock, and she fully expected him back by twelve: it was now past four, and the day began to wane; but, when Barnwell opened the door, and with the air and wildness of insanity fell senseless into a chair, she hastily

sprang to the door, and bolting it, exclaimed, "Tell me, for heaven's sake, are you pursued; or have you been fortunate enough to escape suspicion?"—"I have escaped!" exclaimed Barnwell, "from every thing but my own conscience, and that will pursue me every where;" and throwing the bag of money upon the table, he heaved a deep sigh, and fell insensible on the floor. Milwood summoned her servant, and by their united efforts he was restored to his reason; while his mistress was counting over the dear-bought plunder, convulsive sobs rent the agonized frame of the murderer. Milwood upbraided him for his villainy in murdering his uncle; to rob him of life, nature's first, last, dear prerogative; telling him she would not hazard her life by screening him. At this treatment Barnwell became almost frantic. "Oh, Milwood!" said he, "if you hate me, if you wish me dead, then are you happy; for, oh! 'tis sure my grief will soon end me." Milwood exclaimed, "In this madness you will discover all, and involve me in your ruin." After pausing awhile, she said, "To preserve myself, I must hand him over to justice," and immediately called in a servant, requesting an officer to be brought to seize Barnwell; 'for,' said she, 'if I suffer the villain to escape, I may be thought as bad as he.' The servant having left the room, Barnwell begged Milwood to stop

the messenger, exclaiming: " 'Tis fit I die, indeed, but not by you.—I will this instant throw myself into the hands of justice; for death is all I wish. But thy ingratitude tears my wounded soul, 'tis worse ten thousand times than death with torture!" " I care not," said Milwood: " I am willing to live, and live secure, which nothing but your death can warrant." The servant, with two officers, now entered the room. " Sir," said she to one of them, " take this youth into your custody; I accuse him of murder, and will appear to make good my charge;" Barnwell was seized and hurried to prison. His master had been informed by Milwood's female servant of his mistress's diabolical proceedings, and went to the lodgings of the monster Milwood, and upbraided her for the villainy of her conduct. Milwood tried to extenuate her guilt: " Well may I," says she, to Barnwell's master, " curse your sex, who robbed me of reputation ere I knew its worth, then left me, to count its value by its loss. What are your laws, of which you make your boast, but the fool's wisdom, and the coward's valour, the instrument and screen of all your villainies? By them you punish in others what you act yourselves, or would have acted, had you been in their circumstances. The Judge who condemns the poor man for being a thief, had been a thief himself, had he been poor."

The ill-fated Barnwell, in a few days was put to the bar, to take his trial. The evidence brought against him was conclusive, and, after a most affecting and impressive address from the judge, the jury returned a verdict of 'Wilful Murder!' The sentence pronounced, the prisoner shed tears, and the whole court sympathised in his fate. Barnwell's attention was abstracted from earthly things. His old employer came to see him, who displayed a father's feelings, wishing that he had known his situation before the fatal murder. Ah! the moment of separation, was such as to render force necessary to divide them. The feelings of Maria, who accompanied her father, may better be imagined than described. When she beheld the unhappy youth, with his arms folded, conversing with the elergyman, she screamed aloud, and fell senseless on the floor. From this time she pined away, and died of a broken heart.

The evening now closed in, the waning hours denoted the rapid approach of that awful moment, when he must resign his earthly being, the whole of which time he passed in devotion, reposing about two hours, he arose, and prepared to go through the awful ceremony. Mounting the cart which waited to receive him, he was conveyed to the place of execution.

FINIS.