

CHEAP TRACTS, No. 11.

(Second Edition.)

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# THE EXECUTION ;

OR, THE  
AFFECTING HISTORY

OF  
TOM BRAGWELL,

AN UNHAPPY YOUNG MAN,

Who was cut off for his crimes in the morning of his  
days ; with some account of his companions  
in iniquity.

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*"It is better to prevent crimes than to punish them."*

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DUNFERMLINE :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY JOHN MILLER.

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1828.

## TOM BRAGWELL.

DURING my residence at a small town, on the coast last autumn, I went out one Sunday evening, in order to obtain a little relaxation from the fatigues of study, and inhale the refreshing breeze, (before lighting candle to resume my reading,) without expecting any thing to break in upon my reflections, or to draw off my attention from such scenes, as nature at this delightful season of the year, might present to my view.

My steps at first led me to the church-yard, and after having taken a few turns amongst the numerous mementos in this great school of morality, my mind filled with reflections, serious, mournfully pleasing. I went forward into the fields, where I had not proceeded far until I was reminded of being again in the land of the living, by a confused kind of gabbling noise, which I found arose from some boys who had got into an adjoining field of beans, and were at once busily employed in talking, treading down the corn, and filling their pockets.—“There,” said I, (alluding to the place I had just left,) “There the wicked cease from troubling; here, (looking to the place from whence the noise came) I find them busy at work.”

Shocked at the circumstance, not merely of a parcel of boys being so employed on a Sunday evening, but at that effrontery, which, unmoved, could be guilty of such a practice, in the immediate neighbourhood of a town, and in the presence of a person actually passing at the time; and having been long a convert to the axiom, that "It is better to prevent crimes than to punish them," I felt a strong inclination to exert myself on this occasion, in order to check such early blossoms of wickedness in the bud.

Just as I arrived, one of the lads, whose name afterwards learned was DAVID DOUBTFUL, was expressing his fears that the strange gentleman, as he was pleased to call me, might have noticed them, and had gone to give information to the proprietor of the field; for, added he "I saw im gang rather faster after he was past, and now e's out o' sight.—I think we had better be awa' wi' what we hae got, for farther on and we may be warse." WILL CANDID, one of his companions, gave it as his opinion, that it was very possible the gentleman might have seen them, for he was obliged to caution both BRAGWELL and CARELESS not to speak so loud, at the very time he was looking that way; at the same time observed he, "I didna think there is ony danger, for he went on without takin' muckle notice." JOHN CARELESS observed, that "he didna care for his part whether he saw them or no,—the beans were nane o' his,—an', at ony rate, he cau'dna feel ken them at sic a distance, for it was getting darkish," and a very good time, he thought, to get his pockets well filled.

“Weel done, Jock,” cried TOM BRAGWELL. “Wha’s feared?—for me, as long as I hae the use o’ my legs, and guid sea-room, I fear na man;—as for that co’artly fallow, DOUBTFU he’s aye startin’ questions, an’ s feared o’ s an shadow. He was tryin’ before to mak us believ there was some ill in takin’ beans i’ the Sunday when ilka body kens we’ve naething else to do an’ begude to talk about SUTHERLAND, MACDONALD, and MACKINTOSH, the Edinburgh chap that were hangit, just as we were doin’ ony thing like them; and because we winna gae o’er, he now tries to frighten us; an’ cares nae a farthing for either him or his beans.—Gang wha will, I’m determined no to flinch till my pouches are bairn weel lined, in spite o’ fate.”

“Then,” said CANDID, “according to what ye say, ye wadna be frighten’d though it was thun’ just now. D’ye mind TAM what a fright ye gyon Sunday forenoon when we war gaen to the turnips?” “O! aye,” said BRAGWELL, “but ye ken I had a sair fit that time; but this is a fine night, WULL, an’ there’s nae fear o’ thun’er lightning either, ma man; and I’m as sure that we hae naething to be fear’d for just now, as I that DOUBTFU’ was speakin’ nonsense when he begude wi’ his palaver about an e’e seein’ us, when I ran awa’ wi’ the auld wife’s cloak, when she came after us for daddin’ her cabbage at halloween, though it was dark. This was the first time I fell in wi’ him, an’ I wish we had never ken ony thing about him, for he’s aye fear’d for somethin’ or ither—I wonder he disna try to fright



again wi' this e'e, but he kens we could easily find him out the night, for its no dark yet.

“Yes,” cried I, “there is an EYE that sees you ;” but, before I had time to finish the sentence, BRAGWELL had taken to his heels, got across the field, and without looking behind, leaped over the wall, and was out of sight in an instant. CARELESS, at the impulse of the moment, fled also, but having stumbled into a deep furrow, and observing on his getting up, that I had not proceeded to lay violent hands on his remaining companions, he returned. The other two had been too much petrified at the time to attempt to fly, and, as CARELESS came forward, they stood trembling, and in tears, before me.

As it was my object rather to reclaim than to terrify, my first effort was to restore confidence by soothing expressions. “Come forward, my young man,” said I to DOUBTFUL, “you have got quit of your adversary. What fellow was that, I pray, who talked so lustily, and, by his defiance of fate, seemed to ‘mouth the heavens ;’ yet fled at my approach ; nor looked behind him, though there was neither thunder nor lightning at his heels.

DOUBTFUL seemed lost in thought, and was too much taken up with his own situation to make an immediate answer ; gave me to understand that the name of the runaway was THOMAS BRAGWELL ; that he was the son of an industrious mechanic, but one of those easy sort of creatures, who do not love to be hard upon their little ones ; who think the greatest punishment that should be inflicted upon them, is to threaten well, but never to lay on ;

to soothe them with promises they never mean to realize; and, if all will not do, to make them behave peaceably, and stay within doors on a winter's evening, to frighten them with bugbears, which, as the children grow up, they learn to despise; and are thus led to conclude, that what their parents taught them as truth, was a system of deceit and falsehood altogether.

No wonder, then, that this hopeful plant, nurtured in such a bed, after having arrived at sixteen years of age, vexed the spirit of his grey-headed parent, by refusing to settle at any employment. He had not been accustomed to put his hand to the smallest job as he grew up, and now that idle habits were formed, the old man found it was difficult to drive them from him.

In his attempts to instil religious principles, and give TOM some idea of a Divine Being, he was not more successful; for although the promise of a new hat, or something fine, would at times make him put on a serious countenance, and even go to church, yet, no sooner was his father's back turned, than TOM turned all into ridicule, and would say, "he used to mak me believe in ghosts and witches, and sic things, when a bairn; but let him trick me now gin he can."

DOUBTFUL, I found, was more fortunate with regard to his parents,—not that they were in better worldly circumstances,—for if there was any difference in this respect, it was in favour of OLD BRAGWELL; but DAVID'S father was a man of principle, and did not spare the rod when he saw occasion, nor had he reason in general to bribe his

son with any thing fine to do what was right: but unfortunately, this evening, in opposition to his father's advice and his mother's entreaties, DAVID would go out under some pretence, and had not proceeded far, when he was stopped on his way by CANDID and CARELESS, who were loitering at the head of the Western Lane when he came up to them.

CANDID, I learned, was a true object of pity. It had been his misfortune to lose both his parents at an early age; and although now entered to an apprenticeship at thirteen, was still lodged at the expense of the parish, with an old woman, who thought she did her duty sufficiently if she "eled and fed him," as she said, "without troubling hersel' how he was employed on the Sabbath-day, providin' he didna stay awa frae the kirk, for gif he did that, she was sure to hear o't frae the minister."

JOHN CARELESS, was the son of a poor well-meaning widow-woman, but whose over fondness for an only child, (who had lost his father at two years of age,) was like to prove his ruin; for the darling boy had already thrown of all parental restraint; and was fonder of rambling about the streets, or joining the idle boys on a Sunday evening, at the place of rendezvous.

From the history of these three young men, it is thus easy to account for their being assembled together when BRAGWELL also made his appearance in an evil hour, and with "How are ye my brave lads! we're a' weel met," and other words of similar import, soon ingratiated himself so much into their favour, as to find no difficulty in getting

the better of the scruples of even DOUBTFUL himself, and enticed all the three away with him.

So dangerous is it "to stand in the way of sinners," that it is often, (as here it was proved to be,) but one step to a higher degree of wickedness—the "walking in the counsel of the ungodly."—What an awful lesson to parents?—I mean to all who unconcernedly suffer their children to loiter idly about the streets at any time, but especially on a Sunday evening.

Do such not consider, the obligation that they and all christian parents lie under, to bring up their little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? And what time more fit for this purpose, than the evening of that day, when the poorest labourer among us enjoys the privilege of repose, and the most humble head of a family has sufficient leisure to devote his patriarchal powers to the best interests of those whom Providence has entrusted to his care.

"What a pity, my young men," I resumed, "that you should have been found by BRAGWELL in such a situation as this.—A situation of idleness is the most dangerous in which a young man can be placed,—you have no doubt heard the proverb, that, 'when the devil finds a man idle, he generally sets him to work'—it was no wonder, then, that your depraved associate, who seems to be too much under the influence of the evil one, found you in this situation, an easy prey to his deceitful wiles." For it appears Tom had not the hardihood to propose the Bean Expedition all at once; No,—it was only "a walk in a fine evening;" that was



he alluring bait he first held out ; and it was not till after this had taken effect, and the field appeared in view, that his ultimate intentions became more apparent.

Having heard this account of the matter, I could not help looking upon BRAGWELL as a most detestable character, and therefore pointed out his cowardly conduct in running off, and leaving them in the scrape into which he had brought them, (as is usual with such characters,) as one mean to induce his companions to avoid his company in future.

“ But what,” addressing myself to CANDID, “ did you mean by attempting to frighten TOM with thunder and lightning ? ” “ O ! as for that, sir,” he replied, “ he kens very weel what I meant himsel’, although he pretended he had a sair fit. It was ae Sunday, atween sermons, the last harvest, when we were gaun to the turnips ; CARELESS was there ; but we had not t’hen fa’ en acquaint wi’ DOUBTFU’,—when just as we began to pu’, there was a most terrible clap o’ thun’er, at which TAM was frightened, an’ wanted to gang hame, pretending the turnips were owre sma’. We heard some mair dreadfu’ loud claps on the road, and though BRAGWELL limped some, yet he was sae frightened that he got aye formaist. But ae time, he stopped a’ on a sudden, for he thought a bolt had broke ow’r our heads. I’m sure I’ll ne’er forget the glowr he gaed me, when he cried, D’ye hear that WULL, man, that’s real awfu’ ! Gif we were ance hame again, I’se hae the Bible in my hand ! Neist time I saw him, the impression had worn aff ; for he said, he saw naething

worth while readin' in the Bible, and he was young and stout, and it was time enough to think o' deeing yet."

"You acted well," said I, "when TOM had begun to throw out his atheistical notions, to recall to his mind the thunder-storm; but had he staid, and given me an opportunity, I would have tried to convince this almost convert, or half atheist from some of the more common, and less awful appearances in nature, that there is, in reality a God! and that for the very same reason; which seems to have had such an effect upon him formerly; namely, because 'no human creature could do the like!'"

Here I observed the countenance of DOUBTFUL brighten up. CANDID became all attention; but CARELESS, who had picked up something from the ground, was amusing himself by twirling it in his hand. So true it is, that if you 'bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.' "What is that you have got, sirrah?" said I, in rather an angry tone. "It's only a bean-stalk," said he, presenting it to me.—"It's only a bean-stalk!" replied I; "but why put only to it, as if it were a thing too insignificant to be noticed? Come forward, my lad, and I will endeavour to make good the position I have just now advanced, concerning the being of a God, from what, as a thing of no consequence whatever, you call only a bean-stalk."

"Observe, sir," said I, while his two companions looked on with surprise, "of what parts

this bean-stalk is composed. Here is the root for taking hold of the earth, and drawing nourishment from the soil; the trunk for conveying the sap upwards, and supporting the other parts; the little branches, or props, which support the leaves; the leaves, which serve as organs of respiration, to modify and prepare the sap as it passes through them for its important purposes in the economy of vegetation, as the blood is, for its uses in the animal structure, by the action of the lungs in its circulation through them in the human frame; and, at the same time, to defend and preserve the flower and fruit in their progress to maturity; the flowers, which serve to cherish and protect the first rudiments of the fruit; and, lastly, the fruit itself which you know partly the use of, but which is also necessary for the production of the future plant; so that a continual succession of this useful vegetable may be kept up for man and beast. You observe how nicely all these parts are adapted to their several ends; but these are only a specimen of the wonderful contrivances manifested in the structure of a bean-stalk. Had I a microscope to show you the different parts of this common production of nature when cut across, and was botanist enough to explain the several uses of the various filmy fibres, tubes, and sap vessels, in its composition, you would be lost in admiration; and, without my having occasion to go further, had BRAGWELL been here, even he would have been forced to confess, 'that no human creature could do the like!'"



Observing the effect of this discourse upon my young hearers, I felt disposed to continue it, and asked DOUBTFUL, if he knew how a bean-stalk was produced, (for I still adopted the language of CARELESS,) "Yes," said he, "a bean is first put i' the ground, then it's watered bie the rain, and the heat o' the sun makes it sprout up an' get ripe." "But who made the earth, the rain, and the sun?" rejoined I. He was silent, but his speechless eloquence plainly evinced that he understood my meaning: so I went on, "Yes, DAVID, the earth, the rain, and the sun, have all their several uses in the production of vegetables; but neither the earth, which receives the seed into its bosom, and covereth it as a garment; the clouds, which drop down fatness, and refresh the earth; nor the sun, which warmeth and fructifieth it by his beams, made themselves! All these causes must have had a cause, and the great primary first cause of all, we call—GOD!"

"By these observations on a bean-stalk, you see, my young friends, that there is no need for waiting on the loud roaring thunder, and vivid lightning, to convince the unbeliever that there is a God.—No! the mild and silent, as well as the rough and boisterous operations of nature, speak forth the existence of a Deity, and challenge our praise, and there is not a spot, however remote, but where the most incontrovertible proofs of Divinity may be distinctly traced and pointed out; 'for whither,' in the beautiful language of the Psalmist, 'shall we go from his Spirit, or whither shall we flee from his presence?'"



Well pleased, that even CARELESS himself, had now become an attentive hearer, I went on. "I have been the more particular, my young men, to impress on your minds a sense of the Divine presence, both from nature and scripture, from an anxious wish to check the first approaches to vice by the most powerful antidote in my power; being sensible, that there is no error into which parents can fall of a more dangerous tendency, than their taking so little pains to instil into the minds of their children this great and fundamental truth, this ground-work and foundation of all religion, that they are always in the presence of God!

"We are also told in the New Testament, that 'he that cometh to GOD must believe that HE IS,' as well as that 'he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Indeed, what can be expected from the conduct of those, whatever other useful knowledge they may have acquired, who have not been taught, that, when out of sight of their parents, guardians, or friends, an All-seeing Eye still watches their motions, an Omnipresent Ear still hears their words, an Omniscient God still knows the secret thoughts and most hidden intents of their hearts.

"To this, more than to any other cause, (for all others are but secondary to this,) that 'God is not in all their thoughts,' would I trace that unblushing wickedness which now stalks abroad in the world at noon-day, and has also of late been productive of such shocking scenes of blood among men in the silent hours of darkness. Surely the

cruel murderers of the MARR and WILLIAMSON families, did not consider that they were in the presence of God, at the time those most dreadful murders were committed; and it is not possible that the unfortunate youths, who by their conduct, disgraced the streets of our metropolis at the commencement of the year, had, at the time, 'the fear of God before their eyes?'

Poor DOUBTFUL, who seemed much affected at what I had said, informed me, that just as they had arrived at the field, the thought struck him that it was the Sabbath-day, and he could not forbear mentioning to his companions, that the breach of that day, was one of the reasons assigned by the Edinburgh lads as the cause of their ruin!

"But did nothing strike you farther, David," said I, "as to the heinousness of the offence of stealing your neighbour's property, which was unlawful on any day, even although it had not been the Sabbath?" "O no," said he, "it was only a few beans; I didna mind that, after what BRAGWELL had said." Alas! DAVID," I replied, "your ideas on this point are still very imperfect; you cannot think of breaking the Sabbath, but you forget to pay proper attention to one of the weighty matters of the law—JUSTICE. Mind, my lad, the words of a rule, which justly merits the appellation it has obtained, and deserves, indeed, to be recorded in letters of gold:—

"THEREFORE, ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM; FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS."

“ How would you have been pleased, if this field had been yours, and a parcel of boys (at the time you were at home reading your book) had come out to it, and, not content with filling their pockets, had trodden down and injured a considerable part of the corn besides ?

“ Who knows but Sutherland, Macdonald, and Mackintosh, were among the bean-stealers of last autumn ! The approaches to vice are easy and almost imperceptible. A boy begins by stealing a marble from his play-fellow—his plea is the same as yours, it was only a marble !—this passes without detection, and he next proceeds to carry off trifles from his parents, and divides them with his school-fellows :—they, in their turn, do the same, and they have a joint stock of juvenile plunder ;—With his little associates he next sallies out into the open fields, where they fill their pockets with turnips or beans :—one degree farther, and doors and walls are not proof against their depredations ; for they find means to rob gardens and orchards ;—a little more advanced, a sense of shame forsakes them, and they do not scruple, in the confusion of mobs and fairs, to catch and carry off what they can lay hold of—By this time they advance in years, grow up and get entangled in dissolute company, who, for more regular supplies, encourage them to advance still farther in the ways of iniquity,—they now proceed to rob their masters or mistresses, and break into shops and houses,—till, at last, grown hardened in wickedness, they throw off all restraint, bid defiance to the laws, betake



themselves to the highway, and, being fortunate, as they call it, in escaping so long, at last finish their career on a gibbet!

I again resumed—"It gives me great pleasure my young friends, to observe my words have had such an effect; for your tears show you feel conviction, and your promises of amendment give me reason to hope that I have done something towards reclaiming you from the paths of vice; and let me tell you, for your comfort, that the merely being sensible of your error, and the forming of good resolutions, already prove that you have advanced two steps on the ladder of repentance.

"Follow these up by an earnest prayer to God, that he will perfect what he has begun, and there is no fear of you; for your Saviour not only says, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden;' but he also declares, that 'Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.' Engage in prayer, then, with the most heartfelt conviction and unbounded confidence that you will be heard; and watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; avoid carefully the least appearance of evil; for, as I said before, the approaches to vice are almost imperceptible.

"Idleness, my young man," addressing myself to CANDID, "is justly defined 'the parent of want and misery,' and ill habits are more easily conquered to-day than to-morrow; endeavour, therefore, to persist in the good resolutions you have formed. Fly idleness, and the haunts of idleness, as places of the greatest danger; and should you



ever again be overtaken in any of these, through any inadvertency, let the recollection of that saying of MACKINTOSH, as a friendly monitor, come to your aid,—‘that South Bridge has been my ruin!’

“Disobedience to Parents, David,” turning to DOUBTFUL, “is perhaps a more serious crime than you imagine. You must know that there is an express command to guard against it, with a promise of long life annexed, to those who attend to it, which, doubtless, implies the threatening of death to its breakers;—but, that you may be perfectly satisfied of the importance of this precept, the wise man says, ‘The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pluck it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.’” As your coming here, however, seems to have been rather accidental, and as you have been your own accuser for disobedience to your parents, I shall not enlarge upon this head farther, than by saying, that I hope in your future conduct, you will abundantly atone for the errors of the past—bearing in mind, that in a short time you may be deprived of one or both of your parents, and be left, like poor WILL CANDID, without either to advise you;—and, remember, that disobedience to parents, and Sabbath-breaking, were mentioned among the causes of SUTHERLAND’S ruin.

“But the twinkling stars now beginning to appear, warn me that it is time to be gone; and the evening dews make it already unwholesome to stand on the damp ground. Before I, however, depart, I have one thing to beg of you, which is,

that although I must caution all of you in future to shun BRAGWELL as a companion, if he continues in his evil courses, as you would do a serpent, yet feeling, as I do, for one in his situation, I would wish you to go in a body, before you separate, and while my words are fresh on your memories, and find him out,—and tell him all that you have heard and seen:—That although he may congratulate himself for the present, on making his escape by the use of his legs, and good sea-room, as he termed it, yet a time may come, and that, perhaps, not far distant, when, immured within the dreary walls of a prison, he may be deprived of both, and brought to the pitiful condition (like one of these unhappy young men) of envying the state of a mouse creeping across the floor, and be made to say, in the words of poor SUTHERLAND, ‘Ah! could I as easily escape as that little creature will do.’

“Tell him,—that there is, in reality, some ill in stealing beans on any day, and that the crime is aggravated by being done on a Sunday;—that, even although for a time he may go on prospering in his way, by evading the vigilance of men, yet he must never think to escape the piercing Eye of that august Being, who frightened him with the thunder of his power:—that, he that formed the eye, cannot but always see:—that He sees him every where, at all times, and in all places; and was no less present when he ran off with the old woman’s cloak in the dark, than when he hastened to the turnip-field at noon-day;—that it is not only in the whirlwind and the storm that the great Creator

manifests himself, that,—even in the smallest insect that buzzes in his ear,—the most seemingly insignificant reptile that crawls at his feet,—or the smallest blade of grass he treads upon,—he would find, if attentively examined, matter of admiration, and reason to conclude, that no human creature could do the like; that, the hand that made it is Divine!

### THE CONSEQUENCES.

ALTHOUGH, from the characters of the boys, introduced as the heroes of this, the sequel that I am about to communicate might have been expected; yet, I must confess, that at the time I penned it, I could not possibly have had the remotest idea, that the rapidity of events in the history of that unhappy individual, whose melancholy fate is about to form the principal part of my story, would have been such, as to have hurried him so quickly from one degree of vice to another, till he arrived at that deplorable condition to which he is now reduced; and which must soon hurry him from an earthly to a heavenly tribunal, with all his sins and imperfections on his head:

Having occasion a few days since to visit the same town, where my residence was, at the time the interview above alluded to took place, I could not help feeling as I passed the well known spot,

a strong desire to learn something of my young acquaintances, particularly what impression my discourse had made on JOHN CARELESS; and still more so, to be informed of the fate of his more hardened companion, whom fancy brought to my recollection, pursuing, with rapid strides, his way across the field. For WILL CANDID and DAVID DOUBTFUL, I had the best of hopes from the time I parted with them, and felt not the smallest anxiety on their account.

No sooner, therefore, had I arrived at my lodgings, and made arrangements for the night, than I sent a message to Will, and it was not long ere he made his appearance.

“Well, my young man,” said I, “do you recollect having seen me before?” “Yes, sir,” said he, “and I shall never forget you.” But what has become of David, and how is he employed? for I wish to hear all about him.

To this he gave me a very distinct, and, I must add, a most satisfactory account of the conduct of this young man, in which I could not help remarking the wonderful change in his language, and the manner in which he expressed himself, since our last conversation. David, he informed me, now assisted his father in the way of his business, and had become such a dutiful son, that his behaviour was pointed out as a model for young men to imitate, all over the neighbourhood.

“As for Careless,” said he, “I have not seen him for some time; and from something that has befallen him since you was here, worse than the



accident, I am afraid he is not much better for all that you said to him.

But tell me said I, "what has become of Bragwell? I hope, William, you did not forget my request at parting." "Ay, Tom Bragwell is in a poor situation now. O, sir, if you had seen him, when he was marched off from our prison by a party of soldiers, it would have made your heart WAE to look at him; for he was MAIR like death than life! But it was not your fault, nor ours either:—far better for him had he ta'en your advice."

"Much, very much has befallen him," said he, trying to compose himself, while he faltered out—  
 "HE HAS BEEN GUILTY OF ROBBERY AND MURDER! and now lies in Holdagain jail, to be tried for his life!

After having furnished me with a mournful detail of the iniquitous course he had pursued, several particulars of which the young man had learned from TOM himself, while he lay in prison, I asked him when his trial was expected to come on, and how his father bore up under this severe affliction.

He informed me, that his trial was to come on in a fortnight; and that his father, since his departure, was in the most deplorable condition imaginable. Sometimes, he observed, the old man will break out into the most frantic lamentations, taking the whole blame upon himself, that by his want of firmness in correcting his son, he was brought to the unhappy situation he was in.—He had every reason to believe, that the old man would not live to be informed of the last moments

of his son, as he was apparently sinking, with increasing celerity, under the load of his accumulated griefs, and it was in vain to hope, that any relief could be derived from medicine, to a mind diseased like his.

I could not help being greatly moved at this recital, and recollecting that I should be in Holdagain soon after the trial, I made up my mind to visit Tom Bragwell, in jail, and learn something more of the eventful history of this unhappy youth from himself.

The day of trial came; and, as might have been anticipated, the proofs of guilt were so clear, as to leave not a doubt on the minds of his judges, and the awful sentence of the law was pronounced upon him—that on that day fort’night, he should be hung up by the neck until he was dead; and his body given for dissection.

Two days previous to this event I got myself introduced to the unfortunate youth; whom I found seated in a distant corner of his narrow abode, loaded with irons,—his head reclining upon one of his hands, while his elbow rested on his knee. At first, he seemed totally insensible of, or indifferent to my visit, and I had advanced almost close up to him, before he appeared to evince the smallest inclination to change his position; but when I addressed him in the following soothing strain—  
 “What crime, my poor young man, has brought you into such a pitiful situation?—he started up from his reverie, and, gazing in my face with the wildest confusion, exclaimed—Robbery and Murder

to be sure! Ah! little did I once think that ever Tom Bragwell would have turned out a murderer!

I intimated to him that I had already learned part of his history, and wished to be farther informed as to some farther particulars of it from himself. To this request he readily assented; and the details he communicated, were indeed a striking illustration of the progress of vice—of the fatal consequences that result from Idleness and Disobedience to Parents—and that, the way of transgressors is hard.

On the morning of the execution, the sun arose in clouds, and, as if nature herself wished to add to the solemnity of the scene, a gloomy darkness, and unusual stillness in the atmosphere, marked the approach of the hour in which Tom Bragwell was doomed to pay the forfeit of his crimes.

I had taken my station in the window of a friend's house that overlooked the place of execution, so that I could notice all that passed, without being exposed to the inconvenience of a mob; and here I had not long remained before the gate of death opened, and the mournful procession, in slow and solemn steps, moved forward from the jail to the scaffold—Alas! in what a pitiful plight appeared poor Bragwell.

How, now, was the crest of the boastful hero fallen!—Unable to stand, he was borne forward between two of the officers of justice, and placed beneath the halter; but he sunk from their grasp at the instant that a loud peal of thunder shook the heavens; and he may be said to have been literal-



ly dead with fear at the time the executioner performed the sad office of adjusting the rope about his neck ; which, indeed, he appeared to have considerable difficulty in accomplishing, owing to something of a bulky nature, for which I was unable to account. Another peal from 'heaven's dread artillery' seemed to awaken the criminal from his fit, just as the cap was about to be drawn over his face, for he looked fearfully around him ; but the hangman having done his duty, and the attendants having retired, whether from accident, or that they thought they had had sufficient trouble with him already, I know not, but without waiting for the appointed signal, the drop fell, and, after a few convulsive struggles, the unhappy youth, cut off for his crimes in the midst of his days, went, indeed, to meet his Judge.

The rain now pouring down in torrents, dispersed the crowd, which gave me an easier passage out, and I found no difficulty to regain my lodgings before the unfortunate lad was cut down, in order to undergo the latter part of his sentence.—I looked up to the inanimate corpse as I passed the scaffold, and could not help thinking, that the clothes in which the poor wretch met his untimely fate, had, in part, assumed somewhat of a bloody appearance.

*FINIS.*