

THE MINISTER'S CHARGE;*

OR, THE APPRENTICESHIP OF LEMUEL BARKER.

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v.

LEMUEL stretched the note between his hands, and pored so long upon it that the clerk began to tap impatiently with his finger-tips on the register. "It won't go?" faltered the boy, looking up at the clerk's sharp face.

"It won't go here," replied the clerk. "Got anything else?"

Lemuel's head whirled; the air seemed to darken around him, as he pored again upon the note, and turned it over and over. Two tears scalded their way down his cheeks, and his lips twitched, when the clerk added, "Some beats been workin' you?" but he made no answer. His heart was hot with shame and rage, and heavy with despair. He put the note in his pocket, and took his bag and walked out of the hotel. He had not money enough to get home with now, and besides he could not bear to go back in the disgrace of such calamity. It would be all over the neighborhood, as soon as his mother could tell it; she might wish to keep it to herself for his sake, but she could not help telling it to the first person and every person she saw; she would have to go over to the neighbors to tell it. In a dreary, homesick longing he saw her crossing the familiar meadows that lay between the houses, bare-headed, in her apron, her face set and rigid with wonder at what had happened to her Lem. He could not bear the thought. He would rather die; he would rather go to sea. This idea flashed into his mind as he lifted his eyes aimlessly and caught sight of the tall masts of the coal-ships lying at the railroad wharfs, and he walked quickly in the direction of them, so as not to give himself time to think about it, so as to do it now, quick, right off. But he found his way impeded by all sorts of obstacles; a gate closed across the street to let some trains draw in and out of a station; then a lot of string teams and slow heavy-laden trucks got before him, with a turmoil of express wagons, herdicks, and hacks, in which he was near being run over, and was yelled at, sworn at, and laughed at as he stood bewildered, with his lank bag in his

hand. He turned and walked back past the hotel again. He felt it an escape, after all, not to have gone to sea; and now a hopeful thought struck him. He would go back to the Common and watch for those fellows who fooled him, and set the police on them, and get his money from them; they might come prowling round again to fool somebody else. He looked out for a car marked like the one he had followed down from the Common, and began to follow it on its return. He got ahead of the car whenever it stopped, so as to be spared the shame of being seen to chase it; and he managed to keep it in sight till he reached the Common. There he walked about looking for those scamps, and getting pushed and hustled by the people who now thronged the paths. At last he was tired out, and on the Beacon street mall, where he had first seen those fellows, he found the very seat where they had all sat together, and sank into it. The seats were mostly vacant now; a few persons sat there reading their evening papers. As the light began to wane, they folded up their papers and walked away, and their places were filled by young men, who at once put their arms round the young women with them, and seemed to be courting. They did not say much, if anything; they just sat there. It made Lemuel ashamed to look at them; he thought they ought to have more sense. He looked away, but he could not look away from them all, there were so many of them. He was all the time very hungry, but he thought he ought not to break into his half-dollar as long as he could help it, or till there was no chance left of catching those fellows. The night came on, the gas-lamps were lighted, and some lights higher up, like moonlight off on the other paths, projected long glares into the night and made the gas look sickly and yellow. Sitting still there while it grew later, he did not feel quite so hungry, but he felt more tired than ever. There were not so many people around now, and he did not see why he should not lie down on that seat and rest himself a little. He made feints of reclining on his arm at first, to see if he were noticed; then he stretched himself out, with his bag under his head, and his hands in his pockets clutching

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the money which he meant to make those fellows take back. He got a gas-lamp in range, to keep him awake, and lay squinting his eyes to meet the path of rays running down from it to him. Then he shivered, and rose up with a sudden start. The dull, rich dawn was hanging under the trees around him, while the electric lamps, like paler moons now, still burned among their tops. The sparrows bickered on the grass and the gravel of the path around him.

He could not tell where he was at first; but presently he remembered, and looked for his bag. It was gone; and the money was gone out of both his pockets. He dropped back upon the seat, and leaning his head against the back, he began to cry for utter despair. He had hardly ever cried since he was a baby; and he would not have done it now, but there was no one there to see him.

When he had his cry out he felt a little better, and he got up and went to the pond in the hollow, and washed his hands and face, and wiped them on the handkerchief his mother had ironed for him to use at the minister's; it was still in the folds she had given it. As he shook it out, rising up, he saw that people were asleep on all the benches round the pond; he looked hopelessly at them to see if any of them were those fellows, but he could not find them. He seemed to be the only person awake on the Common, and wandered out of it and down through the empty streets, filled at times with the moony light of the waning electrics, and at times merely with the gray dawn. A man came along putting out the gas, and some milk-carts rattled over the pavement. By and by a market-wagon, with the leaves and roots of cabbages sticking out from the edges of the canvas that covered it, came by, and Lemuel followed it; he did not know what else to do, and it went so slow that he could keep up, though the famine that gnawed within him was so sharp sometimes that he felt as if he must fall down. He was going to drop into a doorway and rest, but when he came to it he found on an upper step a man folded forward like a limp bundle, snoring in a fetid, sodden sleep, and, shocked into new strength, he hurried on. At last the wagon came to a place that he saw was a market. There were no buyers yet, but men were flitting round under the long arcades of the market-houses, with lanterns under their arms, among boxes and barrels of melons, apples, potatoes, onions, beans, carrots, and other vegetables, which the country carts as they arrived continually unloaded. The smell of peaches and cantaloupes filled the air, and made Lemuel giddy as he stood and looked at the abundance. The men were not saying much; now

and then one of them priced something, the owner pretended to figure on it, and then they fell into a playful scuffle, but all silently. A black cat lay luxuriously asleep on the canvas top of a barrel of melons, and the man who priced the melons asked if the owner would throw the cat in. There was a butcher's cart laden with carcasses of sheep, and one of the men asked the butcher if he called that stuff mutton. "No; imitation," said the butcher. They all seemed to be very good-natured. Lemuel thought he would ask for an apple; but he could not.

The neighboring restaurants began to send forth the smell of breakfast, and he dragged up and down till he could bear it no longer, and then went into one of them, meaning to ask for some job by which he could pay for a meal. But his shame again would not let him. He looked at the fat, white-aproned boy drawing coffee hot from a huge urn, and serving a countryman with a beefsteak. It was close and sultry in there; the open sugar-bowl was black with flies, and a scent of decaying meat came from the next cellar. "Like some nice fresh doughnuts?" said the boy to Lemuel. He did not answer; he looked around as if he had come in search of some one. Then he went out, and straying away from the market, he found himself after a while in a street that opened upon the Common.

He was glad to sit down, and he said to himself that now he would stay there, and keep a good lookout for the chaps that had robbed him. But again he fell asleep, and he did not wake now till the sun was high, and the paths of the Common were filled with hurrying people. He sat where he had slept, for he did not know what else to do or where to go. Sometimes he thought he would go to Mr. Sewell, and ask him for money enough to get home; but he could not do it; he could more easily starve.

After an hour or two he went to get a drink at a fountain he saw a little way off, and when he came back some people had got his seat. He started to look for another, and on his way he found a cent in the path, and he bought an apple with it—a small one that the dealer especially picked out for cheapness. It seemed pretty queer to Lemuel that a person should want anything for one apple. The apple when he ate it made him sick. His head began to ache, and it ached all day. Late in the afternoon he caught sight of one of those fellows at a distance; but there was no policeman near. Lemuel called out, "Stop there, you!" but the fellow began to run when he recognized Lemuel, and the boy was too weak and faint to run after him.

The day wore away and the evening came again, and he had been twenty-four hours houseless and without food. He must do something; he could not stand it any longer; there was no sense in it. He had read in the newspapers how they gave soup at the police-stations in Boston in the winter; perhaps they gave something in summer. He mustered up courage to ask a gentleman who passed where the nearest station was, and then started in search of it. If the city gave it, then there was no disgrace in it, and Lemuel had as much right to anything that was going as other people; that was the way he silenced his pride.

But he missed the place; he must have gone down the wrong street from Tremont to Washington; the gentleman had said the street that ran along the Common was Tremont, and the next was Washington. The cross-street that Lemuel got into was filled with people, going and coming, and lounging about. There were girls going along two or three together with books under their arms, and other girls talking with young fellows who hung about the doors of brightly lighted shops, and flirting with them. One of the girls, whom he had seen the day before in the Common, turned upon Lemuel as he passed, and said, "There goes my young man *now*! Good-evening, Johnny!" It made Lemuel's cheek burn; he would have liked to box her ears for her. The fellows all set up a laugh.

Towards the end of the street the crowd thickened, and there the mixture of gas and the white moony lights that glared higher up, and winked and hissed, shone upon the faces of a throng that had gathered about the doors and windows of a store a little way down the other street. Lemuel joined them, and for pure listlessness waited round to see what they were looking at. By and by he was worked inward by the shifting and changing of the crowd, and found himself looking in at the door of a room, splendidly fitted up with mirrors and marble everywhere, and colored glass and carved mahogany. There was a long counter with three men behind it, and over their heads was a large painting of a woman, worse than that image in the garden. The men were serving out liquor to the people that stood around drinking and smoking, and battenning on this picture. Lemuel could not help looking, either. "What place is this?" he asked of the boy next him.

"Why, don't you know?" said the boy. "It's Jimmy Baker's. Just opened."

"Oh," said Lemuel. He was not going to let the boy see that he did not know who Jimmy Baker was. Just then something caught his eye that had a more powerful charm for him than that painting. It was a large bowl at

the end of the counter which had broken crackers in it, and near it were two plates, one with cheese, and one with bits of dried fish and smoked meat. The sight made the water come into his mouth; he watched like a hungry dog, with a sympathetic working of the jaws, the men who took a bit of fish, or meat, or cheese, and a cracker, or all four of them, before or after they drank. Presently one of the crowd near him walked in and took some fish and cracker without drinking at all; he merely winked at one of the bartenders, who winked at him in return.

A tremendous tide of daring rose in Lemuel's breast. He was just going to go in and risk the same thing himself, when a voice in the crowd behind him said, "Hain't you had 'most enough, young feller? Some the rest of us would like a chance to see now."

Lemuel knew the voice, and turning quickly, he knew the impudent face it belonged to. He did not mind the laugh raised at his expense, but launched himself across the intervening spectators, and tried to seize the scamp who had got his money from him. The scamp had recognized Lemuel too, and he fell back beyond his grasp, and then lunged through the crowd, and tore round the corner and up the street. Lemuel followed as fast as he could. In spite of the weakness he had felt before, wrath and the sense of wrong lent him speed, and he was gaining in the chase when he heard a girl's voice, "There goes one of them now!" and then a man seemed to be calling after him, "Stop, there!" He turned round, and a policeman, looking gigantic in his belted blue flannel blouse and his straw helmet, bore down upon the country boy with his club drawn, and seized him by the collar.

"You come along," he said.

"I haven't done anything," said Lemuel, submitting as he must, and in his surprise and terror losing the strength his wrath had given him. He could scarcely drag his feet over the pavement, and the policeman had almost to carry him at arm's length.

A crowd had gathered about them, and was following Lemuel and his captor, but they fell back when they reached the steps of the police station, and Lemuel was pulled up alone, and pushed in at the door. He was pushed through another door, and found himself in a kind of office. A stout man in his shirt-sleeves was sitting behind a desk within a railing, and a large book lay open on the desk. This man, whose blue waistcoat with brass buttons marked him for some sort of officer, looked impersonally at Lemuel and then at the officer, while he chewed a quill toothpick, rolling it in his lips. "What have you got there?" he asked.

"Assaulting a girl down here, and grabbing her satchel," said the officer who had arrested Lemuel, releasing his collar and going to the door, whence he called, "You come in here, lady," and a young girl, her face red with weeping and her hair disordered, came back with him. She held a crumpled straw hat with the brim torn loose, and in spite of her disordered looks she was very pretty, with blue eyes flung very wide open, and rough brown hair, wavy and cut short, almost like a boy's. This Lemuel saw in the frightened glance they exchanged.

"This the fellow that assaulted you?" asked the man at the desk, nodding his head toward Lemuel, who tried to speak; but it was like a nightmare; he could not make any sound.

"There were three of them," said the girl with hysterical volubility. "One of them pulled my hat down over my eyes and tore it, and one of them held me by the elbows behind, and they grabbed my satchel away that had a book in it that I had just got out of the library. I hadn't got it more than ——"

"What name?" asked the man at the desk.

"A Young Man's Darling," said the girl, after a bashful hesitation. Lemuel had read that book just before he left home; he had not thought it was much of a book.

"The captain wants to know your name," said the officer in charge of Lemuel.

"Oh," said the girl with mortification. "Statura Dudley."

"What age?" asked the captain.

"Nineteen last June," replied the girl with eager promptness, that must have come from shame from the blunder she had made. Lemuel was twenty, the 4th of July.

"Weight?" pursued the captain.

"Well, I hain't been weighed very *lately*," answered the girl, with increasing interest. "I don't know as I been weighed since I left home."

The captain looked at her judicially.

"That so? Well, you look pretty solid. Guess I'll put you down at a hundred and twenty."

"Well, I guess it's full as *much* as that," said the girl, with a flattered laugh.

"Dunno how high you are?" suggested the captain, glancing at her again.

"Well, yes, I *do*. I am just five feet two inches and a half."

"You don't look it," said the captain critically.

"Well, I *am*," insisted the girl, with a returning gayety.

The captain apparently checked himself and put on a professional severity.

"What business — occupation?"

"Saleslady," said the girl.

"Residence?"

"No. 2334 Pleasant Avenue."

The captain leaned back in his arm-chair, and turned his toothpick between his lips, as he stared hard at the girl.

"Well, now," he said, after a moment, "you know you've got to come into court and testify to-morrow morning."

"Yes," said the girl, rather falteringly, with a sidelong glance at Lemuel.

"You've got to promise to do it, or else it will be my duty to have you locked up overnight."

"Have me locked up?" gasped the girl, her wide blue eyes filling with astonishment.

"Detain you as a witness," the captain explained. "Of course, we shouldn't put you in a cell; we should give you a good room, and if you ain't sure you'll appear in the morning ——"

The girl was not of the sort whose tongues are paralyzed by terror. "Oh, I'll be *sure* to appear, captain! Indeed I will, captain! You needn't lock me up, captain! Lock me *up*!" she broke off indignantly. "It would be a *pretty* idea if I was first to be robbed of my satchel and then put in prison for it overnight! A great kind of law *that* would be! Why, I never heard of such a thing! I think it's a perfect shame! I want to know if that's the way you do with poor things that you don't know about?"

"That's about the size of it," said the captain, permitting himself a smile, in which the officer joined.

"Well, it's a shame!" cried the girl, now carried far beyond her personal interest in the matter.

The captain laughed outright. "It *is* pretty rough. But what you going to do?"

"Do? Why, I'd ——" But here she stopped for want of science, and added from emotion, "I'd do *anything* before I'd do that."

"Well," said the captain, "then I understand you'll come round to the police court and give your testimony in the morning?"

"Yes," said the girl, with a vague, compassionate glance at Lemuel, who had stood there dumb throughout the colloquy.

"If you don't, I shall have to send for you," said the captain.

"Oh, I'll *come*," replied the girl, in a sort of disgust, and her eyes still dwelt upon Lemuel.

"That's all," returned the captain, and the girl, accepting her dismissal, went out.

Now that it was too late, Lemuel could break from his nightmare. "Oh, don't let her go! I ain't the one! I was running after

a fellow that passed off a counterfeit ten-dollar bill on me in the Common yesterday. I never touched her satchel. I never saw her before —”

“What’s that?” demanded the captain sharply.

“You’ve got the wrong one!” cried Lemuel. “I never did anything to the girl.”

“Why, you fool!” retorted the captain angrily; “why didn’t you say that when she was here, instead of standing there like a dumb animal? Heigh?”

Lemuel’s sudden flow of speech was stopped at its source again. His lips were locked; he could not answer a word.

The captain went on angrily. “If you’d spoke up in time, maybe I might ‘a’ let you go. I don’t want to do a man any harm if I can’t do him some good. Next time, if you’ve got a tongue in your head, use it. I can’t do anything for you now. I got to commit you.”

He paused between his sentences, as if to let Lemuel speak, but the boy said nothing. The captain pulled his book impatiently toward him, and took up his pen.

“What’s your name?”

“Lemuel Barker.”

“I thought maybe there was a mistake all the while,” said the captain to the officer, while he wrote down Lemuel’s name. “But if a man hain’t got sense enough to speak for himself, I can’t put the words in his mouth. Age?” he demanded savagely of Lemuel.

“Twenty.”

“Weight?”

“A hundred and thirty.”

“I could see with half an eye that the girl wa’n’t very sanguine about it. But what’s the use? I couldn’t tell her she was mistaken. Heigh?”

“Five feet six.”

“Occupation?”

“I help mother carry on the farm.”

“Just as I expected!” cried the captain.

“Slow as a yoke of oxen. Residence?”

“Willoughby Pastures.”

The captain could not contain himself. “Well, Willoughby Pastures,—or whatever your name is,—you’ll get yourself into the papers *this* time, *sure*. And I must say it serves you right. If you can’t speak for yourself, who’s going to speak for you, do you suppose? Might send round to the girl’s house — No, she wouldn’t be there, ten to one. You’ve got to go through now. Next time don’t be such an infernal fool.”

The captain blotted his book and shut it.

“We’ll have to lock him up here to-night,” he said to the policeman. “Last batch has gone round. Better go through him.” But

Lemuel had been gone through before, and the officer’s search of his pockets only revealed their emptiness. The captain struck a bell on his desk. “If it ain’t all right, you can make it right with the judge in the morning,” he added to Lemuel.

Lemuel looked up at the policeman who had arrested him. He was an elderly man, with a kindly face, squarely fringed with a chin-beard. The boy tried to speak, but he could only repeat, “I never saw her before. I never touched her.”

The policeman looked at him and then at the captain.

“Too late now,” said the latter. “Got to go through the mill this time. But if it ain’t right, you can make it right.”

Another officer had answered the bell, and the captain indicated with a comprehensive roll of his head that he was to take Lemuel away and lock him up.

“Oh, my!” moaned the boy. As they passed the door of a small room opening on an inner corridor, a smell of coffee gushed out of it; the officer stopped, and Lemuel caught sight of two gentlemen in the room with a policeman, who was saying:

“Get a cup of coffee here when we want it. Try one?” he suggested hospitably.

“No, thank you,” said one of the gentlemen, with the bland respectfulness of people being shown about an institution. “How many of you are attached to this station?”

“Eighty-one,” said the officer. “Largest station in town. Gang goes on at one in the morning, and another at eight and another at six P. M.” He looked inquiringly at the officer in charge of Lemuel.

“Any matches?” asked this officer.

“Everything but money,” said the other, taking some matches out of his waistcoat pocket.

Lemuel’s officer went ahead, lighting the gas along the corridor, and the boy followed, while the other officer brought up the rear with the visitor whom he was lecturing. They passed some neat rooms, each with two beds in it, and he answered some question: “Tramps? Not much! Give *them* a board when they’re drunk; send ‘em round to the Wayfarers’ Lodge when they’re sober. These officers’ rooms.”

Lemuel followed his officer downstairs into a basement, where on either side of a white-walled, brilliantly lighted, specklessly clean corridor, there were numbers of cells, very clean and smelling of fresh whitewash. Each had a broad low shelf in it, and a bench opposite, a little wider than a man’s body. Lemuel suddenly felt himself pushed into one of them, and then a railed door of iron was

locked upon him. He stood motionless in the breadth of light and lines of shade which the gas-light cast upon him through the door, and knew the gentlemen were looking at him as their guide talked.

"Well, fill up pretty well, Sunday nights. Most the arrests for drunkenness. But all the arrests before seven o'clock sent to the City Prison. Only keep them that come in afterwards."

One of the gentlemen looked into the cell opposite Lemuel's. "There seems to be only one bunk. Do you ever put more into a cell?"

"Well, hardly ever, if they're men. Lot o' women brought in 'most always ask to be locked up together for company."

"I don't see where they sleep," said the visitor. "Do they lie on the floor?"

The officer laughed. "Sleep? *They* don't want to sleep. What *they* want to do is to set up all night, and talk it over."

Both of the visitors laughed.

"Some of the cells," resumed the officer, "have two bunks, but we hardly ever put more than one in a cell."

The visitors noticed that a section of the rail was removed in each door near the floor.

"That's to put a dipper of water through, or anything," explained the officer. "There!" he continued, showing them Lemuel's door; "see how the rails are bent there? You wouldn't think a man could squeeze through there, but we found a fellow half out o' that one night — backwards. Captain came down with a rattan and made it hot for him."

The visitors laughed, and Lemuel, in his cell, shuddered.

"I never saw anything so astonishingly clean," said one of the gentlemen. "And do you keep the gas burning here all night?"

"Yes; calculate to give 'em plenty of light," said the officer, with comfortable satisfaction in the visitor's complimentary tone.

"And the sanitary arrangements seem to be perfect, doctor," said the other visitor.

"Oh, perfect."

"Yes," said the officer, "we do the best we can for 'em."

The visitors made a murmur of approbation. Their steps moved away; Lemuel heard the guide saying, "Dunno *what* that fellow's in for. Find out in the captain's room."

"He didn't look like a very abandoned ruffian," said one of the visitors, with both pity and amusement in his voice.

VI.

LEMUEL stood and leaned his head against the wall of his cell. The tears that had come to his relief in the morning when he found

that he was robbed would not come now. He was trembling with famine and weakness, but he could not lie down; it would be like accepting his fate, and every fiber of his body joined his soul in rebellion against that. The hunger gnawed him incessantly, mixed with an awful sickness.

After a long time a policeman passed his door with another prisoner, a drunken woman, whom he locked into a cell at the end of the corridor. When he came back, Lemuel could endure it no longer. "Say!" he called huskily through his door. "Won't you give me a cup of that coffee upstairs? I haven't had anything but an apple to eat for nearly two days. I don't want you to *give* me the coffee. You can take my clasp button —"

The officer went by a few steps, then he came back, and peered in through the door at Lemuel's face. "Oh! that's you?" he said; he was the officer who had arrested Lemuel.

"Yes. Please get me the coffee. I'm afraid I shall have a fit of sickness if I go much longer."

"Well," said the officer, "I guess I can get you something." He went away, and came back, after Lemuel had given up the hope of his return, with a saucerless cup of coffee, and a slice of buttered bread laid on top of it. He passed it in through the opening at the bottom of the door.

"Oh, my!" gasped the starving boy. He thought he should drop the cup, his hand shook so when he took it. He gulped the coffee and swallowed the bread in a frenzy.

"Here — here's the button," he said as he passed the empty cup out to the officer.

"I don't want your button," answered the policeman. He hesitated a moment. "I shall be round at the court in the morning, and I guess if it ain't right we can make it so."

"Thank you, sir," said Lemuel, humbly grateful.

"You lay down now," said the officer. "We sha'n't put anybody in on you to-night."

"I guess I better," said Lemuel. He crept in upon the lower shelf and stretched himself out in his clothes, with his arm under his head for a pillow. The drunken woman at the end of the corridor was clamoring to get out. She wished to get out just half a minute, she said, and settle with that hussy; then she would come back willingly. Sometimes she sang, sometimes she swore; but with the coffee still sensibly hot in his stomach, and the comfort of it in every vein, her uproar turned into an agreeable, fantastic medley for Lemuel, and he thought it was the folks singing in church at Willoughby Pastures, and they were all asking him who the new girl in the choir was, and he was saying Statira Dud-

ley; and then it all slipped off into a smooth, yellow nothingness, and he heard some one calling him to get up.

When he woke in the morning he started up so suddenly that he struck his head against the shelf above him, and lay staring stupidly at the iron-work of his door.

He heard the order to turn out repeated at other cells along the corridor, and he crept out of his shelf, and then sat down upon it, waiting for his door to be unlocked. He was very hungry again, and he trembled with faintness. He wondered how he should get his breakfast, and he dreaded the trial in court less than the thought of going through another day with nothing to eat. He heard the stir of the other prisoners in the cells along the corridors, the low groans and sighs with which people pull themselves together after a bad night; and he heard the voice of the drunken woman, now sober, poured out in voluble remorse, and in voluble promise of amendment for the future, to every one who passed, if they would let her off easy. She said aisy, of course, and it was in her native accent that she bewailed the fate of the little ones whom her arrest had left motherless at home. No one seemed to answer her, but presently she broke into a cry of joy and blessing, and from her cell at the other end of the corridor came the clink of crockery. Steps approached with several pauses, and at last they paused at Lemuel's door, and a man outside stooped and pushed in, through the opening at the bottom, a big bowl of baked beans, a quarter of a loaf of bread, and a tin cup full of coffee. "Coffee's extra," he said, jocosely. "Comes from the officers. You're in luck, young feller."

"I ha'n't got anything to pay for it with," faltered Lemuel.

"Guess they'll trust you," said the man. "Anyrate, I got orders to leave it." He passed on, and Lemuel gathered up his breakfast, and arranged it on the shelf where he had slept; then he knelt down before it, and ate.

An hour later an officer came and unbolted his door from the outside. "Hurry up," he said; "Maria's waiting."

"Maria?" repeated Lemuel, innocently.

"Yes," returned the officer. "Other name's Black. She don't like to wait. Come out of here."

Lemuel found himself in the corridor with four or five other prisoners, whom some officers took in charge and conducted upstairs to the door of the station. He saw no woman, but a sort of omnibus without windows was drawn up at the curbstone.

"I thought," he said to an officer, "that there was a lady waiting to see me. Maria

Black," he added, seeing that the officer did not understand.

The policeman roared, and could not help putting his head in at the office door to tell the joke.

"Well, you must introduce him," called a voice from within.

"Guess you ha'n't got the name exactly straight, young man," said the policeman to Lemuel, as he guarded him down the steps. "It's Black Maria you're looking for. There she is," he continued, pointing to the omnibus, "and don't you forget it. She's particular to have folks recognize her. She's blacker'n she's painted."

The omnibus was, in fact, a sort of æsthetic drab, relieved with salmon, as Lemuel had time to notice before he was hustled into it with the other prisoners, and locked in.

There were already several there, and as Lemuel's eyes accustomed themselves to the light that came in through the little panes at the sides of the roof, he could see that they were women; and by and by he saw that two of them were the saucy girls who had driven him from his seat in the Common that day, and laughed so at him. They knew him too, and one of them set up a shrill laugh. "Hello, Johnny! That you? You don't say so? What you up for *this* time? Going down to the Island? Well, give us a call there! Do be sociable! Ward 11's the address." The other one laughed, and then swore at the first for trying to push her off the seat.

Lemuel broke out involuntarily in all the severity that was native to him. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves."

This convulsed the bold things with laughter. When they could get their breath, one of them said, "Pshaw! I know what he's up for: preaching on the Common. Say, young feller! don't you want to hold a prayer-meetin' here?"

They burst into another shriek of laughter, so wild and shrill that the driver rapped on the roof, and called down, "Dry up in there!"

"Oh, you mind your horses, and we'll look after the passengers. Go and set on his knee, Jen, and cheer him up a little."

Lemuel sat in a quiver of abhorrence. The girl appealed to remained giggling beside her companion.

"I — I pity ye!" said Lemuel.

The Irishwoman had not stopped bewailing herself and imploring right and left an easy doom. She now addressed herself wholly to Lemuel, whose personal dignity seemed to clothe him with authority in her eyes. She told him about her children, left alone with no one to look after them; the two little girls, the boy only three years old. When the van

stopped at a station to take in more passengers, she tried to get out — to tell the gentlemen at the office about it, she said.

After several of these halts they stopped at the basement of a large stone building, that had a wide flight of steps in front, and columns, like the church at Willoughby Pastures, only the church steps were wood, and the columns painted pine. Here more officers took charge of them, and put them in a room where there were already twenty-five or thirty other prisoners, the harvest of the night before; and presently another van-load was brought in. There were many women among them, but here there was no laughing or joking as there had been in the van. Scarcely any one spoke, except the Irishwoman, who crept up to an officer at the door from time to time, and begged him to tell the judge to let her have it easy this time. Lemuel could not help seeing that she and most of the others were familiar with the place. Those two saucy jades who had mocked him were silent, and had lost their bold looks.

After waiting what seemed a long time, the door was opened, and they were driven up a flight of stairs into a railed inclosure at the corner of a large room, where they remained huddled together, while a man at a long desk rattled over something that ended with "God bless the commonwealth of Massachusetts." On a platform behind the speaker sat a gray-haired man in spectacles, and Lemuel knew that he was in the court-room, and that this must be the judge. He could not see much of the room over the top of the railing, but there was a buzz of voices and a stir of feet beyond, that made him think the place was full. But full or empty, it was the same to him; his shame could not be greater or less. He waited apathetically while the clerk read off the charges against the vastly greater number of his fellow-prisoners arrested for drunkenness. When these were disposed of, he read from the back of a paper, which he took from a fresh pile, "Bridget Gallagher, complained of for habitual drunkenness. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, your honor," answered the Irishwoman who had come from Lemuel's station. "But make it aisy for me this time, judge, and ye'll never catch me in it again. I've three helpless childer at home, your honor, starvin' and cryin' for their mother. Holy Mary, make it aisy, judge!"

A laugh went round the room, which a stern voice checked with "Silence, there!" but which renewed itself when the old woman took the stand at the end of the clerk's long desk, while a policeman mounted a similar platform outside the rail, and gave his testimony

against her. It was very conclusive, and it was not affected by the denials with which the poor woman gave herself away more and more. She had nothing to say when invited to do so except to beg for mercy; the judge made a few inquiries, apparently casual, of the policeman; then after a moment's silence, in which he sat rubbing his chin, he leaned forward and said quietly to the clerk, "Give her three months."

The woman gave a wild Irish cry, "Oh, my poor childer!" and amidst the amusement of the spectators, which the constables could not check at once, was led wailing below.

Before Lemuel could get his breath those bold girls, one after the other, were put upon the stand. The charge against them was not made the subject of public investigation; the judge and some other elderly gentleman talked it over together; and the girls, who had each wept in pleading guilty, were put on probation, as Lemuel understood it, and, weeping still and bridling a little, were left in charge of this elderly gentleman, and Lemuel saw them no more.

One case followed another, and Lemuel listened with the fascination of terror; the sentences seemed terribly severe, and out of all proportion to the offenses. Suddenly his own name was called. His name had been called in public places before: at the school exhibitions, where he had taken prizes in elocution and composition; in church, once, when the minister had mentioned him for peculiar efficiency and zeal among other Sabbath-school teachers. It was sacred to him for his father's sake, who fell in the war, and who was recorded in it on the ugly, pathetic monument on the village green; and hitherto he had made it respected and even honored, and had tried all the harder to keep it so because his family was poor, and his mother had such queer ways and dressed so. He dragged himself to the stand which he knew he must mount, and stole from under his eyelashes a glance at the court-room, which took it all in. There were some people, whom he did not know for reporters, busy with their pencils next the railing; and there was a semicircular table in the middle of the room at which a large number of policemen sat, and they had their straw helmets piled upon it, with the hats of the lawyers who sat among them. Beyond, the seats which covered the floor were filled with the sodden loafers whom the law offers every morning, the best dramatic amusement in the city. Presently, among the stupid eyes fixed upon him, Lemuel was aware of the eyes of that fellow who had passed the counterfeit money on him; and when this scamp got up and coolly sauntered out of the room, Lemuel was held

in such a spell that he did not hear the charge read against him, or the clerk's repeated demand, "Guilty or not guilty?"

He was recalled to himself by the voice of the judge. "Young man, do you understand? Are you guilty of assaulting this lady and taking her satchel, or not?"

"Not guilty," said Lemuel, huskily; and he looked, not at the judge, but at the pretty girl, who confronted him from a stand at the other end of the clerk's desk, blushing to find herself there up to her wide-flung blue eyes. Lemuel blushed too, and dropped his eyes; and it seemed to him in a crazy kind of way that it was impolite to have pleaded not guilty against her accusation. He stood waiting for the testimony which the judge had to prompt her to offer.

"State the facts in regard to the assault," he said gravely.

"I don't know as I can do it, very well," began the girl.

"We shall be satisfied if you do your best," said the judge, with the glimmer of a smile, which spread to a laugh among the spectators, unrebuked by the constables, since the judge had invited it.

In this atmosphere of sympathy the girl found her tongue, and with a confiding twist of her pretty head began again: "Well, now, I'll tell you just how it was. I'd just got my book out of the Public Library, and I was going down Neponset street on my way home, hurrying along, because I see it was beginning to be pretty late, and the first thing I know somebody pulled my hat down over my eyes, and tore the brim half off, so I don't suppose I can ever wear it again, it's such a lookin' thing; anyrate it ain't the one I've got on, though it's some like it; and then the next thing, somebody grabbed away the satchel I'd got on my arm; and as soon as I could get my eyes clear again, I see two fellows chasin' up the street, and I told the officer somebody'd got my book; and I knew it was one of those fellows runnin' away, and I said, 'There they go now,' and the officer caught the hind one, and I guess the other one got away; and the officer told me to follow along to the station-house, and when we got there they took my name, and where I roomed, and my age —"

"Do you recognize this young man as one of the persons who robbed you?" interrupted the judge, nodding his head toward Lemuel, who now lifted his head and looked his accuser fearlessly in her pretty eyes.

"Why, no!" she promptly replied. "The first thing I knew, he'd pulled my hat over my eyes."

"But you recognize him as one of those you saw running away?"

"Oh, yes, he's one of *them*," said the girl.

"What made you think he had robbed you?"

"Why, because my satchel was gone!" returned the girl, with logic that apparently amused the gentlemen of the bar.

"But why did you think *he* had taken it?"

"Because I see him running away."

"You couldn't swear that he was the one who took your satchel?"

"Why, of course not! I didn't *see* him till I saw him running. And I don't know as he was the one, now," added the girl, in a sudden burst of generosity. "And if it was to do over again, I should say as much to the officers at the station. But I got confused when they commenced askin' me who I was, and how much I weighed, and what my height was; and *he* didn't say anything; and I got to thinkin' maybe it *was*; and when they told me that if I didn't promise to appear at court in the morning they'd have to lock me up, I was only too glad to get away alive."

By this time all the blackguard audience were sharing, unchecked, the amusement of the bar. The judge put up his hand to hide a laugh. Then he said to Lemuel, "Do you wish to question the plaintiff?"

The two young things looked at each other, and both blushed. "No," said Lemuel.

The girl looked at the judge for permission, and at a nod from him left the stand and sat down.

The officer who had arrested Lemuel took the stand on the other side of the rail from him, and corroborated the girl's story; but he had not seen the assault or robbery, and could not swear to either. Then Lemuel was invited to speak, and told his story with the sort of nervous courage that came to him in extremity. He told it from the beginning, and his adventure with the two beats in the Common made the audience laugh again. Even then, Lemuel could not see the fun of it; he stopped, and the stout ushers in blue flannel sacks commanded silence. Then Lemuel related how he had twice seen one of the beats since that time, but he was ashamed to say how he had let him escape out of that very room half an hour before. He told how he had found the beat in the crowd before the saloon, and how he was chasing him up the street when he heard the young lady hollo out, "There they go now!" and then the officer arrested him.

The judge sat a moment in thought; then said quietly, "The charge is dismissed"; and before Lemuel well knew what it meant, a gate was opened at the stand, and he was invited to pass out. He was free. The officer who had arrested him shook his hand in congratulation and excuse, and the lawyers

and the other policemen gave him a friendly glance. The loafers and beats of the audience did not seem to notice him. They were already intent upon a case of colored assault and battery which had been called, and which opened with the promise of uncommon richness, both of the parties being women.

Lemuel saw that girl who had accused him passing down the aisle on the other side of the room. She was with another girl, who looked older. Lemuel walked fast, to get out of their way; he did not know why, but he did not want to speak to the girl. They walked fast too, and when he got down the stairs on to the ground floor of the court-house they overtook him.

"Say!" said the older girl, "I want to speak to *you*. I think it's a down shame, the way that you've been treated; and Statira, she feels jus's I do about it; and I tell her she's got to say so. It's the least she can do, I tell her, after what she got you *in* for. My name's 'Manda Grier; I room 'th S'tira; 'n' I come 'th her this mornin' t' help keep her up; b't I *didn't* know 't was goin' to be s'ch a *perfect* flat-out!"

As the young woman rattled on she grew more and more glib; she was what they call whopper-jawed, and spoke a language almost purely consonantal, cutting and clipping her words with a rapid play of her whopper-jaw till there was nothing but the bare bones left of them. Statira was crying, and Lemuel could not bear to see her cry. He tried to say something to comfort her, but all he could think of was, "I hope you'll get your book back," and 'Manda Grier answered for her:

"Oh, I guess 't ain't the book 't she cares for. S' far forth's the book goes, I guess she can afford to buy another book, well enough. B't I tell her she's done 'n awful thing, and a thing 't she'll carry to her grave 'th her, 'n't she'll remember to her dyin' day. That's what I tell her."

"She ha'n't got any call to feel bad about it," said Lemuel, clumsily. "It was just a mistake." Then, not knowing what more to say, he said, being come to the outer door by this time, "Well, I wish you good-morning."

"Well, good-morning," said 'Manda Grier, and she thrust her elbow sharply into Statira Dudley's side, so that she also said faintly:

"Well, good-morning!" She was fluent enough on the witness-stand and in the police station, but now she could not find a word to say.

The three stood together on the threshold of the court-house, not knowing how to get away from one another.

'Manda Grier put out her hand to Lemuel. He took it, and, "Well, good-morning," he said again.

"Well, good-morning," repeated 'Manda Grier.

Then Statira put out her hand, and she and Lemuel shook hands, and said together, "Well, good-morning," and on these terms of high civility they parted. He went one way and they another. He did not look back, but the two girls, marching off with locked arms and flying tongues, when they came to the corner, turned to look back. They both turned inward and so bumped their heads together.

"Why, you — coot!" cried 'Manda Grier, and they broke out laughing.

Lemuel heard their laugh, and he knew they were laughing at him; but he did not care. He wandered on, he did not know whither, and presently he came to the only place he could remember.

VII.

THE place was the Common, where his trouble had begun. He looked back to the beginning, and could see that it was his own fault. To be sure, you might say that if a fellow came along and offered to pay you fifty cents for changing a ten-dollar bill, you had a right to take it; but there was a voice in Lemuel's heart which warned him that greed to another's hurt was sin, and that if you took too much for a thing from a necessitous person, you oppressed and robbed him. You could make it appear otherwise, but you could not really change the nature of the act. He owned this with a sigh, and he owned himself justly punished. He was still on those terms of personal understanding with the eternal spirit of right which most of us lose later in life, when we have so often seemed to see the effect fail to follow the cause, both in the case of our own misdeeds and the misdeeds of others.

He sat down on a bench, and he sat there all day, except when he went to drink from the tin cup dangling by the chain from the nearest fountain. His good breakfast kept him from being hungry for a while, but he was as aimless and as hopeless as ever, and as destitute. He would have gone home now if he had had the money; he was afraid they would be getting anxious about him there, though he had not made any particular promises about the time of returning. He had dropped a postal card into a box as soon as he reached Boston, to tell of his safe arrival, and they would not expect him to write again.

There were only two ways for him to get home: to turn tramp and walk back, or to go to that Mr. Sewell and borrow the money to pay his passage. To walk home would add intolerably to the public shame he must suffer, and the thought of going to Mr.

Sewell was, even in the secret which it would remain between him and the minister, a pang so cruel to his pride that he recoiled from it instantly. He said to himself he would stand it one day more; something might happen, and if nothing happened, he should think of it again. In the mean time he thought of other things: of that girl, among the rest, and how she looked at the different times. As nearly as he could make out, she seemed to be a very fashionable girl; at any rate, she was dressed fashionably, and she was nice-looking. He did not know whether she had behaved very sensibly, but he presumed she was some excited.

Toward dark, when Lemuel was reconciling himself to another night's sleep in the open air, a policeman sauntered along the mall, and as he drew nearer the boy recognized his friendly captor. He dropped his head, but it was too late. The officer knew him, and stopped before him.

"Well," he said, "hard at it, I see."

Lemuel made no answer, but he was aware of a friendly look in the officer's face, mixed with fatherly severity.

"I was in hopes you had started back to Willoughby Pastur's before this. You don't want to get into the habit of settin' round on the Common, much. First thing you know you can't quit it. Where you goin' to put up to-night?"

"I don't know," murmured Lemuel.

"Got no friends in town you can go to?"

"No."

"Well, now, look here! Do you think you could find your way back to the station?"

"I guess so," said Lemuel, looking up at the officer questioningly.

"Well, when you get tired of this, you come round, and we'll provide a bed for you. And you get back home to-morrow, quick as you can."

"Thank you," said Lemuel. He was helpless against the advice and its unjust implication, but he could not say anything.

"Get out o' Boston, anyway, wherever you go or don't go," continued the officer. "It's a bad place."

He walked on, and left Lemuel to himself again. He thought bitterly that no one knew better than himself how luridly wicked Boston was, and that there was probably not a soul in it more helplessly anxious to get out of it. He thought it hard to be talked to as if it were his fault; as if he wished to become a vagrant and a beggar. He sat there an hour or two longer, and then he took the officer's advice, so far as concerned his going to the station for a bed, swallowing his pride as he must. He must do that, or he must go to Mr. Sewell. It was easier

to accept humiliation at the hands of strangers. He found his way there with some difficulty, and slinking in at the front door, he waited at the threshold of the captain's room while he and two or three officers disposed of a respectably dressed man, whom a policeman was holding up by the collar of his coat. They were searching his pockets and taking away his money, his keys, and his pencil and pen-knife, which the captain sealed up in a large envelope, and put into his desk.

"There! take him and lock him up. He's pretty well loaded," said the captain.

Then he looked up and saw Lemuel. "Hello! Can't keep away, eh?" he demanded jocosely. "Well, we've heard about you. I told you the judge would make it all right. What's wanted? Bed? Well, here!" The captain filled up a blank which he took from a pigeon-hole, and gave it to Lemuel. "I guess that'll fix you out for the night. And to-morrow you put back to Willoughby Pastures tight as you can get there. You're on the wrong track now. First thing you know you'll be a professional tramp, and then you won't be worth the powder to blow you. I use plain talk with you because you're a beginner. I wouldn't waste my breath on that fellow behind you."

Lemuel looked round, and almost touched with his a face that shone fiery red through the rusty growth of a week's beard, and recoiled from a figure that was fouler as to shirt and coat and trousers than anything the boy had seen; though the tramps used to swarm through Willoughby Pastures before the Selectmen began to lock them up in the town poor-house and set them to breaking stone. There was no ferocity in the loathsome face; it was a vagrant swine that looked from it, no worse in its present mood than greedy and sleepy.

"Bed?" demanded the captain, writing another blank. "Never been here before, I suppose?" he continued with good-natured irony. "I don't seem to remember you."

The captain laughed, and the tramp returned a husky "Thank you, sir," and took himself off into the street.

Then the captain came to Lemuel's help. "You follow him," he said, "and you'll come to a bed by and by."

He went out, and, since he could do no better, did as he was bid. He had hardly ever seen a drunken man at Willoughby Pastures, where the prohibition law was strictly enforced; there was no such person as a thief in the whole community, and the tramps were gone long ago. Yet here was he, famed at home for the rectitude of his life and the loftiness of his aims, consorting with drunkards and thieves and tramps, and warned against

what he was doing by policemen, as if he was doing it of his own will. It was very strange business. If it was *all* a punishment for taking that fellow's half-dollar, it was pretty heavy punishment. He was not going to say that it was unjust, but he would say it was hard. His spirit was now so bruised and broken that he hardly knew what to think.

He followed the tramp as far off as he could and still keep him in sight, and he sometimes thought he had lost him, in the streets that climbed and crooked beyond the Common towards the quarter whither they were going; but he reappeared, slouching and shambling rapidly on, in the glare of some electric lights that stamped the ground with shadows thick and black as if cut in velvet or burnt into the surface. Here and there some girl brushed against the boy, and gave him a joking or jeering word; her face flashed into light for a moment, and then vanished in the darkness she passed into. It was that hot October, and the night was close and still; on the steps of some of the houses groups of fat,

weary women were sitting, and children were playing on the sidewalks, using the lamp-posts for goal or tag. The tramp ahead of Lemuel issued upon a brilliantly lighted little square, with a great many horse-cars coming and going in it; a church with stores on the ground floor, and fronting it on one side a row of handsome old stone houses with iron fences, and on another a great hotel, with a high-pillared portico, where men sat talking and smoking. People were waiting on the sidewalk to take the cars; a druggist's window threw its mellow lights into the street; from open cellar-ways came the sound of banjos and violins. At one of these cellar-doors his guide lingered so long that Lemuel thought he should have to find the way beyond for himself. But the tramp suddenly commanded himself from the music, the light, and the smell of strong drink, which Lemuel caught a whiff of as he followed, and turning a corner led the way to the side of a lofty building in a dark street, where they met other like shapes tending toward it from different directions.

(To be continued.)

W. D. Howells.

PREMONITION.

IN a still chamber, a white bed of sleep
 With soothing pillow, and a dream so deep,
 That it alone reality did seem,
 And all reality was but a dream—
 I woke as children waken, in surprise,
 With soft bewilderment of lips and eyes
 For I had felt upon my eyelids pressed
 One darling baby kiss; upon my breast
 A passing breath as of an angel-wing
 Poising above me, fragrant, fluttering.

And then I breathed the subtle, sweet perfume
 Of lilacs, purple lilacs in full bloom:
 Lilacs so cool and fresh, the flowers I knew
 Just plucked, pale purple lilacs damp with dew.

In ecstasy I to the window flew,
 Charmed with the garden of my dreams; but no!
 There coldly fell the moonlight on the snow,
 The snow that lay like moonlight far below.

Was it a memory that chose to bring
 From my dream-garden a forgotten flower?
 Was it a spirit that forestalled the hour
 And woke me with the first faint breath of spring?

Charles Warren Stoddard.