

A PRISON CHAPLAIN.

"I congratulate you, Jim, from my very heart, old fellow, though how you've managed to get so far ahead of us all I can't imagine! Vicar of S—! Why, it's a position even I never dreamed of, and as for you, I always looked upon you, old man, as a regular prison chaplain and nothing else. No offense, Jim; you know what I mean."

It was indeed with a shock of astonishment and almost incredulity that I had read in my morning paper, only an hour before, that the Rev. James Bourn, M. A., of Balliol college, Oxford, at present chaplain of the jail at Smithley, had been appointed by the trustees to the important post of vicar of S—, vacant owing to its previous occupant having been made a bishop. S— was one of the largest towns of the north, and its vicar was always a man of importance in the church. The trustees had had some of the ablest of church clergymen applying for the post, and that my old friend Jim should get it—though no one valued his gifts and zeal more than I did—seemed to me almost incomprehensible. Had it been private patronage one could have understood it, but public competition, and against such competitors!

Jim smiled at my words. We were again seated in my study.

"Yes, Howson," said he, "I thought it would give you a turn."

Then he relaxed into silence, but as I saw he had something further to tell, I simply sat waiting for it, without speaking.

"Howson," pursued he, "you know I've some curious notions and secrets, don't you? You often think them wrong, but, though not boasting, I generally find them right in the end. You recollect my last story and theory, don't you? That came out all right, didn't it?"

I nodded acquiescence.

"Well, old fellow, this is another, and it has come out all right, too, thank God. No secret you can have of mine can be greater than the one you hold, so I may tell you this. It's to be between us only, and another who necessarily holds it but will keep it safe enough. I know you've not agreed with me when I've held that this dogging of prisoners—often only once sinned—by the detectives after their release from jail is altogether bad, but I've always said it was, and I stick to it. As soon as any prisoner really shows penitence and reformation in earnest I do certainly think he ought to have a chance and be left alone. I'm certain there would be fewer criminals."

"I've heard that doctrine before from you, Jim, but what has that to do with your promotion?"

"Listen," said he.

"It was when I was at Lowmarket, about eight years ago, that I set out about 10 o'clock p. m., as my usual custom was, for a walk before retiring for the night. There is, as you know, a footpath that runs all round the jail walls, above a mile long, and it was along this path I always went. The night being fine and starlight, I took my sister, who was visiting us, with me. You remember Muriel, a girl of about 18 then? We walked along, chatting gayly, until we came to the back of the jail, about half a mile from my residence, and then, whether it was owing to the heat of the evening—a hot August day it had been—or probably from natural weakness, for Muriel was not as strong then as she is now, I can't say, but all of a sudden she said, 'Jim, I don't feel well!' and before I could do anything more she had fallen to the ground in a faint."

"I had fancied for some few seconds before this happened that there was a slight noise and rustle on the other side of the prison wall, but had set it down to rats, which were always about the brook which flows past. As Muriel fell I heard another slight noise like a dull thud, but was too anxious then to trouble about it. I bent over and rubbed her hands, supporting her as well as I could. You may guess how delighted I was to hear steps coming toward me, though the walker was yet hidden by the angle of the wall. I needed help badly. The newcomer was a soldier, by his clothes, but he stopped suddenly on seeing us and seemed inclined to turn back. Seeing I had noticed him, however, and observing the situation, after a slight hesitation he advanced. I asked him to help me back with Muriel to my house, which he did. He was unusually quiet, and though I gave him a recital of what had happened said nothing. By the time we got home Muriel was about right again and apologized for giving us so much trouble. We both thanked the soldier for his kindness, and though he would have gone on almost forced him to come inside. We all sat down in the dining room."

"Hark! What was that sound? Again! Again! The soldier grew pale and started, but I knew well what it was, though seldom heard. It was the boom of the prison cannon, telling that a prisoner had escaped. Immediately all was alarm. We could hear the warders and the horses dashing hither and thither after the fugitive, and I went to the door to ask who had escaped. I learned it was No. 285, a young man, doing five years for forgery, his first offense, and a prisoner I had much pitied. His

crim— had been committed to save a mother and sister from almost starvation, which could not be kept off by the 18 shillings a week he had earned, and the judge had, in my opinion, been unusually severe on him. By his gentleness and attention he had gained my friendship, but the imprisonment was telling on him, and his mother and sister were well nigh heartbroken.

"I felt sorry he had tried to escape, as it would go hard with him if captured, and I returned sadly to my room and companions. The soldier, almost for the first time, lifted up involuntarily his eyes and looked straight at me. Good heavens, it was No. 285!

"He saw I recognized him, and remained motionless. For a few seconds, though indeed it seemed to me a lifetime, I sat utterly prostrated, not knowing what to do. What would you have done, Howson? I could not call in the warders and say, 'Here is your man, No. 285,' for he was my guest. I myself had invited him in, even against his will. Besides he had remained, even at such fearful risk to himself, to help me and Muriel in our necessity! Could you have surrendered him, Arthur? Moreover, I knew how he had repented—how keen his desire to see those two whose lives were dimmed for ever. Yet my duty to the country, to the government, to the prison—what about that? I sent Muriel to bed, and with an affectionate good night to me and thanks to her benefactor she went."

"It cost me a long struggle, Arthur, and the clock hands pointed to nearly 12 before my decision was settled. Then, turning to the fugitive, who had never spoken so far, I said, as if ignoring altogether the recognition, though I knew he saw it all:

"I thank you, sir, for your kind aid. As it is now very late—I emphasized this—you had better stay overnight and go tomorrow; any time you please"—another emphasis—"and I trust your future career will be as honorable and noble as I should like it to be."

"He bent his head solemnly, said, 'Thank you very much for your kindness, which I shall never forget,' and followed me to the bedroom."

"No one knew he was in the house but myself. I attended to him, and at dusk next evening he departed."

"I need not tell you that the search of the prison authorities, Howson, was all in vain, and of course in a very short time No. 285 was practically forgotten by everybody, the police most of all, though I myself had always half expected to have a note from him some day, saying how he was getting on. But it was a vain hope."

"And now comes the curious part of my story. I have begun lately, certainly more so since my marriage, to get somewhat tired of the dull routine of prison chaplaincy and most of all for Ella's sake. She has found it very distasteful this last year or so. So I have been looking out for a benefice, Howson, but I scarcely need tell you I never dreamed of such a post as vicar of S—. I should as soon have expected being made archbishop of Canterbury. Yet when I heard it was vacant, something within me impelled me to apply for it, and I did so. There were, as you know, a tremendous number of applications, some from men whom I had long learned to respect as lights of the church, and nobody was more surprised than myself when I found I was one of the eight selected candidates."

"It seems, then, that a committee was chosen to go and hear these eight preach, without their knowing it, at their churches, and some of them heard me at St. Polycarp's about three weeks ago. Thus two of us were selected out of the eight and appeared before the trustees some ten days ago. After many questions and explanations the trustees voted, we being in the next room, and it was found there were four for the other gentleman and four for myself. The mayor of S—, who was chairman of the trustees, had been unexpectedly called away that morning, and in his absence the gentleman who had been placed in the chair seemed unwilling to give a casting vote under the circumstances. The meeting was therefore postponed for a week, and we were called up again on Monday. My opponent had the first interview; I followed."

"The mayor was in the chair. Naturally I felt somewhat nervous, but you may imagine, Howson, what I really felt when I saw that the mayor of S— was No. 285! It was not at first I recognized him, but when he spoke the voice seemed familiar, and I gradually traced the resemblance, much altered though he was by his beard and whiskers. It was a mutual recognition, but he was much calmer than I was, and acted as though I was a perfect stranger, in fact as if I acted toward him on that never to be forgotten night."

"I soon found by the way his fellows spoke of him how much he was respected and esteemed. The interview was soon over, and I went out half dazed, I must admit, yet not wholly sad."

"In a few minutes I was called in again, and informed that, by five votes to four, I had been elected to the vacant post, and was asked if I would accept the offer of it. Of course I accepted it, and thanked them all. I need not tell you whose the fifth vote was, Howson, though I may say that I have since learned his mother was dead when he sought her eight years ago, and his sis-

ter died soon afterward."

There was silence in my study for a minute or two, then I got up, shook his hand again in congratulation, and said: "You're right again, Jim, old man! It is better to give them a chance than to be everlastingly dogging at them till life is a curse. Don't fear your secret, and may God bless the new vicar of S—."—London Tit-Bits.

No Tick Here.

"Why don't you wind that clock and set it going?" asked a bad customer at a country grocery store.

"That clock is a sign," said the grocer, and the customer studied it out for himself before he left the store.—Detroit Free Press.

LOSS OF THE PRESIDENT.

Strange Story of the Scuttling of a Great Steamship by Pirates.

What a strange story is that communicated by the Duke of Newcastle to The Globe concerning the loss of the President! He says that a trustworthy informant in the United States assured him that a sailor, dying in an American port, had confessed to having formed one of the crew of a pirate vessel which captured the great steamship. "Every soul on board was made to walk the plank, and the ship was scuttled."

The story seems incredible, yet it may be true, and the possibility of it gives one quite a shock. It is 50 years ago and more since the President disappeared from human sight, without, I believe, leaving a trace. The loss of no other vessel—for it was the first of the great passenger ships to go—has caused so great an excitement. How those at home clung to hope, some of them for years—for the notion of the crew being wrecked on some out of the way island was eagerly adopted—and how many a heart was broken by the intolerable suspense! At last it was generally concluded that the ship had collided with an iceberg and foundered. And now comes this terrible story, which, it is fortunate, was not conceived of when it would have had the power to make those at home more miserable.

It is not to be forgotten, however, that more than one story has been recently written upon this subject—the capture and scuttling of a passenger steamer—and it seems more likely that they have suggested the idea being adapted to the loss of the President than that a solitary pirate should have revealed such a long kept secret of the seas.—London News.

Mystified by an Abbreviation.

Among the stories told about the experiences of police telegraph operators by the attaches of the electrical bureau is one which relates to an ex-special officer, who is now a regular operator at a substitution up town. While acting as "sub" in a West Philadelphia district he received a call from the central, which he promptly wrote on his slate as he received it. At the close of the message he found that it read: "Send wagon to Phil. Ahsop, and learn condition of Hen. Coop." He was completely stalled. He could not imagine who Phil. Ahsop was, nor where he was to be found, nor what particular hen-coop the central was interested in. He felt that there was a mistake somewhere, but was satisfied that it must be at the other end of the wire. As the hour was near relieving time, he decided to wait and consult his relief before sending the wagon on a wild goose chase or asking the central to repeat. On the arrival of his relief he was informed that the operator who had sent the message generally abbreviated his messages, and probably the one received would read: "Send wagon to Philadelphia hospital and learn condition of Henry Cooper." This proved to be the proper solution.—Philadelphia Record.

SELF JUDGED AUTHORS.

Whittier regarded his war lyrics as the best of all his writings.

Hume thought more of his "Essays" than he did of his "History of England."

Gibbon declared that when the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" was completed, "I felt my fame to be secure."

Bailey, the author of "Festus," said that his book was his life, and contained the whole experience of the human race.

Montgomery rested his fame on his "Pelican Island," a work now forgotten, and thought little of the hymns by which he is best remembered.

Adam Smith, the author of the "Wealth of Nations," regarded his book with the genuine love of an author. He was often seen reading it with apparent satisfaction.

Locke fancied that he was a great writer on the subject of education and seems to have valued his educational writings more highly than he did the "Essay on the Human Understanding."

Richardson, like many other novelists, considered his first work as his best. Late in life he said, when speaking of one of his then recent works, "I shall never be able to excel 'Pamela.'"

Thomson always declared that he had done his best on the "Castle of Indolence," a poem that is now known only by name. He said that "The Seasons" was written in a hurry and did not represent his best thoughts.

Moore thought "Lalla Rookh" was his best, but relied on his songs to carry his name down to posterity. He was fondest of the Irish melodies, and sang them to perfection in a rich voice that brought out the full significance of every word.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

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