

THE OUTCAST.

A TALE OF THE STONE-YARD.

*"'Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home ;
'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come."*

CHAPTER I.—WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

A cold, rainy November night. The wind blows in fitful gusts as if it would blow the rain through you and out again, receiving renewed strength from the process, and hurrying on to find a fresh object to play its pranks with. We resent the wind's fun and frolic and hurry home, shivering as we go, thinking of the warmth and lights which await us.

Home! Alas! how many thousands in this vast Metropolis are entirely without one! Alas! again, how many more have only the most pitiful apology for one! Who can gauge the depth of the blessed and holy influence that the "home" exercises upon the whole human family? and when one reflects upon this, one stands aghast at the supineness—not to use a harsher term—of the State in not declaring the home inalienable.

I was hurrying across Westminster Bridge on this night in November, towards the South side, buttoning up my coat and turning up my coat collar to keep as much of the wind and rain out as was possible, when, nearing St. Thomas' Hospital, a most miserable and wretched figure approached me. "Box o' lights, sir? Do buy a box, sir; I want it for my lodging!" My first impulse was to hurry on; to buy a box meant unbuttoning, not a very comfortable process on such a night. However, my better angel was near me, and I did—I am afraid with a bad grace—attempt to produce a copper or two for my benighted match merchant of the street.

As I seemingly hesitated, he ejaculated, "Should be infinitely obliged to you. A bitter night. Very wet, hungry and cold." "Should be infinitely obliged to you!" The words struck a chord in my memory of long, long ago. With where and whom could I associate those words so well remembered now, but so long forgotten? It was a pet remark of an old school-fellow, whom I had lost sight of for some years. I looked narrowly and scrutinously at the woe-begone, pained and famished features before me, whilst fumbling for the coppers I appeared not to possess. I was at the point of dismissing the idea that the figure before me was my old well-remembered chum, his face presenting not one line or feature that I could, under the gas-light's fitful glare, recognise as belonging to Tom Padglass of years ago. A gust of wind at this juncture, however, lifted his hat, and very obligingly lowered it into the black waters of old Father Thames below. The curls upon his forehead did what even his face could not. It was Tom Padglass!

"What! Tom, old man," I cried, almost bereft of my senses. "In the name of Heaven what is the meaning of this?" Tom recognised me I could see. Putting his matches in his pocket he was turning round to get away; but I was too quick for him. I seized him by his shoulders—poor, dear old Tom, many a time and

oft have we had the gloves on—struggled with him fiercely to prevent his escaping me. "It's no good, Tom, old man, you shan't go. I must and shall know why I meet you thus. I can help you, Tom, to a better life. It is my duty to do it. I must do it." I managed to get out during the struggle, "Charlie, old man, I can't accept your help; I'm past it. It is a charity to let me go. I entreat of you to let me pass away into the world. I am sunk too low. My presence contaminates yours. Let me go, Charlie," he cried fiercely, and wrestling again with all his strength—alas! not much. I could have taken him up and crushed out what life he had in his emaciated frame in one hug. He gave up the contest and appeared willing I should lead him away. We turned our steps back to Westminster. I was going to take him to my chambers to rig him out, if possible then, but, if not, to give him the food and rest he stood evidently in so much need. Nearing the Members' entrance to the House of Commons, on the bridge, he gave me one quick glance of gratitude and of love and was off across the roadway towards Parliament Street like a flash of lightning. I darted after him. I could run once, as well as box; but Tom was in better trim than I was. I chased him down Parliament Street, round the Square, out into the Strand, and on towards Drury Lane, in the purlieus of which I lost him.

Puffing and blowing like a grampus, I very sadly retraced my steps, my mind much troubled at the unexpected meeting with my old friend and schoolmate, so much reduced in life's social scale. I knew his father had been almost brought to want by the collapsing of the "Bibliator," which was to raise him so high in the world, but which had lowered him into a gulf of misery, in which he had sunk into his last sleep, a broken-spirited man. I always understood that Tom had been offered a post in Montreal, and had gone out there. My father would have been willing to have helped both father and Tom, but his overtures were respectfully and gratefully declined. How much pain and misery are suffered in this world by people's making a feeling of false pride a virtue, and practising it to their destruction! "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Sleep, as may be imagined, came not to me that night. Restless and ever restless I lay, cogitating and devising schemes for again meeting with Tom, one after another rejected as being useless or impracticable. Daylight broke, finding me no nearer to a solution of the problem. I did, however, find him; the sequel will show how and where.

(To be continued.)

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BY H. R. G. GOGAY.

CHAPTER II.—DYMCHURCH.

On the main road, a mile or so out of St. Aubyn, in ———shire, stands, or did stand, a handsome and comfortable-looking villa residence, with shrubbery in front and large garden in rear. It was just such a residence that retired tradesmen of all businesses affect when they reach that epoch in their life called "retiring." The owner of the villa in question was a retired baker and confectioner, who had amassed a moderate fortune, and whose only desire, as he thought then, was to live at peace with the world till the end came. Alas for the mutability of human affairs! The commercial instinct, so strongly developed within him, now that he was out of business, was always prompting him to investments, first in this thing, then in that—all sure ventures, of course. I first knew Mr. Thomas Padglass, sen., when a boy at school. Many a pleasant time have I had with Tom, his son, when accompanying him home to stay a week or two together during our school vacation. Tom was an only son and child. His mother spoiled him, like many another fond, foolish mother. Mr. Padglass desired his son should open a business in his trade of cook and confectioner, offering him a good start in the West End. His mother objected; wanted her boy to become an officer in the army. Poor old Tom himself had a longing for the law. Between these stools Tom fell to the ground. He learned no trade, business, or profession, just passing away some of his time in looking after his father's affairs, and literally wasting the remainder, like many another young man similarly placed, looking to his father's fortune to keep him by-and-by, instead of pursuing an honourable career for himself. At this period Tom must have been near twenty-five years old. One night, returning from his club in London, Mr. Padglass told how a friend had advised him to make a very large investment in the Bibliator Building Society, the directors of which were well-known public men, the chairman being a well-known M.P., a mayor, J.P., and ostensibly a very religious man, to boot.

"My dear," he remarked to his wife, "I know it is a large sum; but look at the security! And look at the return!"

Ah, look at the return and the security, indeed! It was a tempting bait.

"But, Tom," replied Mrs. Padglass, "is it not opposed to the principle which you have followed all your life—not to have too many eggs in one basket?"

"But, Mary, this is an exceptional case—a very exceptional case, my dear; a real, live Lord, a well-known and much-respected man, is president of the society. Besides. I am convinced from the balance-sheet the society is in a most flourishing condition. The Bank of England is not more safe. Well, I shall sell out those wretched consols and make the venture. A miserable two and a-half per cent. Bah! it is disgusting. Might just as well give 'em my money."

"But," iterated Mrs. Padglass, with her woman's caution, "what do you want to increase your money for, my dear? We have now much more than we can ever spend, and as for Tom, he will have enough to spare when—when we are gone," looking at her husband affectionately. "Tom," she went on, toying with his hair as of old, "don't have anything to do with this matter. I have a presentiment it bodes us no good."

If there was one thing in the world that Mr. Padglass ridiculed it was this fear of coming evil which many people experience, or say they do, and which is called a "presentiment." He termed it senseless superstition.

"Mary, my love, now don't, there's a good soul, talk to me of presentiments. You know very well of what value superstition is in my eyes. If you have any information, any facts or figures that will show me I am embarking on a foolish course, I will desist, but not otherwise. Please, therefore, don't allude to the matter again, for my mind is made up. Mr. Nogood assures me I shall be elected a director, and that a constituency can be found for me, so I shall soon be Member for somewhere, and you, my dear, will be a Member's wife. We will sell up here and take a house at the West End of London, get into 'Society,' and perhaps—who knows!—Tom will marry a peer's daughter? Lady Mary Padglass sounds well; now, does it not, old girl?"

CHAPTER III.—MY LAST WEEK WITH TOM.

"I sha'n't be long, Tom. As soon as I have arranged matters with Mr. Smith, our manager, for next week, I can start. I shall be glad of a week's change and rest. We have had a heavy time of it lately. Our business is increasing, as the saying goes, by leaps and bounds, and has necessitated my very close attention; dad, as you know, being long past active work of any kind."

"All right, Charlie, we've got two hours; but we must catch that train."

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CHAPTER III. (Continued).—MY LAST WEEK WITH TOM.

"Do you know, Tom," I remarked, "I don't feel quite sure about this Bibliator Society."

"Nonsense, Charlie!"

"Fact, I assure you. I hear a whisper now and then which, if true, would make me very uncomfortable were I concerned in it."

"Oh, I think your friends must be mistaken; probably they are interested in similar concerns and naturally envious of the Bibliator's success. Eh, old man?"

"No; one is a very old friend of my father's, and who is, I know, not now interested in any public concern at all, and whose information, therefore, is from a purely disinterested source."

"Well, don't say anything to the old man, Charlie, for he has just received his first dividends, and is simply jubilant."

We were soon steaming out of Euston, on to St. Aubyn, which we reached in about two hours. As we stepped from the station, the pure air and the stillness around were very soothing after the bustle and drive, noise and confusion of London life. It was to me simply delicious, the purity of the air and the quietness around me, save for the hum of insects, the music of the birds and the lowing of the cattle drowsily lying in the meadows.

"A fly, sir?" said the driver, touching his hat to Tom.

"No, not to-day, James; my friend would sooner walk; but here's for you."

Tom was always good-natured. By the time I reached Dymchurch Cottage, I felt a new man. Mrs. Padglass made me very welcome as Tom's bosom friend. I noticed a great alteration in Mr. Padglass, however. There was an offensive pomposity, an indescribable keep-away sort of manner, which, up till now, had been unnoticeable in him, and which one could see at a glance was foreign to his real nature, and was, at times during the evening, somewhat ludicrous.

"Well, father," cried Tom, in his hearty manner, "how's the Bibliator?"

"The Bibliator, sir—(I never heard him address his son by this term before)—is a magnificent undertaking. My dear Charles,"—turning to me—"if your father would give up his business and invest his money in this splendid concern, this elysium for idle men with money, firm and sure as the rocks which fringe our coasts, he would be saved a multitude of worries, cares, and anxieties. Look at me now! I have got rid of a quantity of troublesome house property; sold out those wretched consols where I was getting, ha, ha!"—laughing boisterously—"two and a-half per cent., and placed it all in the Bibliator, whence I get a return of twenty per cent."—smacking his lips almost perceptibly—"Twenty per cent., my boy, and no trouble!"

The trouble, however, was to come.

"I do not feel quite sure of the stability of the Society, Mr. Padglass."

Tom tried to stop me by looks and signs; but I felt it my duty to warn him in his over-confidence, so I went on.

"Yes, it is not imagination, nor is it prejudice, the information coming from an old and esteemed friend of my father's, who is now out of the City, and whose former connections—unique for seeking truthful data about any commercial concern of magnitude—assure him that things are not with this Society as the Society would have the public believe."

"My dear sir, Lord Cowplank is president, the directors are men well known in religious, temperance, Parliamentary and social circles—and—I have seen the balance-sheet, which is proof beyond a doubt of the stability of the Company."

(When will we have a department of public auditors and trustees, whose duty shall be to issue a certificate of correctness for every balance sheet issued by public companies, and which shall be attached to the balance sheet ere it is issued to the public? The City sharks would soon have to seek fresh woods and pastures new in which to disport themselves.)

"Yes, Mr. Padglass," I went on, trying to raise a glimmer of doubt in the genuineness of the Society which I was convinced was not in the financial position of security the directors would have the world believe; "but is it not possible for balance-sheets to lie?"

"To lie, sir!" he returned; "you surely would not like to assert that a balance-sheet, issued under the protecting ægis of my Lord Cowplank can lie? Really your experience of human nature, sir, has been unfortunate, most unfortunate. I think we had better change the subject."

CHAPTER IV.—I SEEK FOR TOM.

"*Daily, injustice is done, and might is the right of the strongest.*"—LONGFELLOW.

Years have passed away since I spent that last few days with my old friend and his parents, as narrated in the last chapter. Meeting him again as I did so unexpectedly and in such a state of miserable poverty and want, as may be expected. I received a shock, the effects of which I did not throw off for some long while afterwards. When

I parted from him at Euston, on our return to town, I little expected to meet him again under such pitiful circumstances. It was but a few weeks after this I heard of his father's ruin by the collapse of the Bibliator. Although I made every effort to see Tom personally, to lay before him my father's plans for assisting both him and his father, he successfully evaded meeting me. He wrote me, his father desired him to thank me for my father's kind offers of assistance, but that he had sufficient left to maintain him and his wife, and that a friend had procured Tom a situation in Montreal, to which Tom was going out very soon. Save for an occasional thought of my old friends now and again, they had passed completely out of my life.

To find Tom had now become a settled purpose with me. I walked the streets at night in the hope of again meeting him. I sought him in the common lodging-houses in every part of London. I tried to obtain a knowledge of him from that Heaven-sent institution, "The Live-and-let-live-Charity-and-Mercy-dole-it-not-out Organisation Club." Here, indeed, as I expected, I received tidings of him; but the address to which I was sent was one of poor Tom's very numerous and temporary abodes, and I was as far off the scent as ever. This society doubtless means well; but is it impertinent to enquire whether the ladies and gentlemen forming it are quite satisfied that the mere detection and the ferreting-out of our fellow-creatures' shortcomings and failings, the thousand-and-one crimes, so-called, against Society and against one's self—ending and stopping short at this; no attempt or scarcely any, at raising the fallen and degraded soul, sufficient that its sins against morality have been discovered; no attempt to create

"Footprints that, perhaps, another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again,"

are the very best methods of dealing with either fallen or helpless humanity? Are they quite sure that some of these are not as much sinned against by Society itself as they themselves sin against Society? Have these had that full measure of mental and moral training which Archbishop Trench declares "is Society's debt to each one of its members"?

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CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

The Society told me my friend had applied to them for assistance; but they declined to render him any on the grounds—firstly, he had been trained to no business or calling, had never worked for his living; secondly, he was idle and dissolute; thirdly, he was a drunkard.

"And so," I enquired, "you deemed it your duty to Society, and to your subscribers, to the man himself, as a 'forlorn and shipwrecked brother,' to send him empty away into a cold and pitiless world to wage an unequal war against the demons you say possessed him?"

"It is no part of our duty to dispense charity to such a man. We exist for the detection of crime and imposture, not the alleviating or abolition of it."

"The sooner, then, your subscribers know this the better," I replied. "I wish you a good-morning, Mr. Agricola," said I to the local agent, and departed on my weary search around London for poor Tom. The casual wards were not forgotten. I have watched the motley groups collecting night after night outside the various workhouses, and by the courtesy of some of the officials, have inspected the ward when its human contents were in bed and asleep, dreaming, it may be, of the days of their youth, when at home with father and mother—happy, blissful days gone for ever! Perchance of another happy home in later life, shared in by loving wife and little ones—this, too, gone for ever! As I walked through the ward noiselessly and noted the sleeping faces, marked with many a line and deeply indented furrow of care and woe, pain and suffering, mental and physical, I asked myself, "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Yes! I am my brother's keeper," I answered myself; and so are you, too, my reader! The all-loving and merciful Christ came not into the world to cure the whole, but those that are sick. When that dread times arrives for all of us, for us especially who are sleeping to-night upon soft beds, covered with warm clothing, surrounded by day by all that makes life a pleasant dream, every want supplied by more than ample means, whilst doing nothing of ourselves to create or add to these means—when the day comes that we must depart into another and unknown world, will not our thoughts be pleasant ones if we know that we have, as individuals, helped to raise up from the sea of misery, suffering and sin even only one of the wrecks of humanity that I now see around me?

I pass out from this scene of shipwrecked humanity with heavy heart and mind depressed, thinking of the mass of human wretchedness I had seen since searching for Tom. Never had it occurred to me, when I had read of cases of distress in the newspapers, that the sum total of want and suffering upon which the sun goes down nightly in London alone, was so vast, so incomprehensible in its vastness to all but those who have been amongst it and realised it as I have done! I was about to leave my office one night when a clerk brought in a letter, bearing on the envelope the impress of one of the London Poor Law unions. I hastily opened it, and read: "Dear Sir,—One of the casuals, who is very ill, desires you will call upon him to-night. He says he met you some time ago on Westminster" I did not trouble to read further. I jumped to my feet in an instant, frightening the clerk, who thought I had gone suddenly mad, shouted for a cab, in which I was soon bounding along to ——— Workhouse. The "Institution" was soon reached. Presenting my letter to the porter, I was admitted to the presence of the Master.

"You must know, sir, he is very ill, but much better than he was a week or so ago."

"What is the matter with him?"

"Well, you see, sir, the regulations of the Local Government Board compel us to give all our casuals a 'labour test,' which may be breaking ten hundredweight of granite stones, picking four pounds of unbeaten oakum, or nine hours' work in digging, or pumping, or cutting wood, or grinding corn."

"Yes, yes," I ejaculated, "I know all this. What have you to tell me about my friend?"

"Well, to cut a long story short, a piece of granite struck him on the eye, and—and—he has been very queer. Will you see him? He wants to see you."

I could only nod an answer in the affirmative. Poor, wretched Tom! We soon reached the ward. This place resembled nothing so much as a large, lofty barn, with white-washed walls and beams stretching across the roof—ceiling, there was none. The walls bare of everything but weather stains, some recent, some old, like the beds upon the floor.

Here, indeed, upon a matted flock, reclined poor Tom. If time and suffering had so wasted his features that I could hardly recognise him that night in November, it was now, with his forehead gashed and one eye dimmed for ever by the cruel stone, more difficult than ever to recognise the handsome Tom Padglass of long ago. He soon roused himself from a restless doze, and recognised me, holding out his wasted hand, which I clasped fervently.

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CHAPTER V.—TOM COMES HOME TO DIE.

Before I left Tom that night I obtained a solemn promise from him that he would permit me to bear him far, far away from this dismal place to a quiet and restful spot in the country, where, with good nursing, proper food and perfect peace of mind and body, I might, with the blessing of God, win him back to health and life. I saw the medical officer next morning who said the shock of the injury to his face from the stone, he was afraid, would develop incipient phthisis, and he was afraid Tom's days were numbered. We moved Tom next day to my chambers, which were quiet and where he could have plenty of good nursing and attention.

Having seen my friend made as comfortable as was possible, pending his journey into the country, I turned my thoughts into the direction of the Board of Guardians, in whose Union Tom had met with his dreadful accident. I wrote the clerk requesting an interview at an early date, and received a reply stating the Board would be willing to hear my complaint when they met the day after to-morrow, at five p.m., if I would attend. I wrote back I would attend at the time requested. I reached the offices of the Union at a quarter to five and at five o'clock was ushered into the presence of the members of the Blank Board of Guardians. The chairman, a big, stout man with rubicund face and a somewhat pleasing expression, looking extremely well-satisfied with himself and apparently everybody else, addressed me:

"Mr. Charles Publisher, you have desired to see the Board on behalf of a casual named Thomas Padglass. Will you be good enough to state your business with the Board?"

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen," I began. "I desire, with your kind permission, to lay before you the facts of a deplorable occurrence which happened a few weeks back to a very old friend of mine, who, unfortunately, and from no cause of his own, was an inmate of the Blank Casual Ward."

I was here interrupted by Mr. Thomas Cribb, who said,

"Mr. Chairman, if this gentleman has anything to inform the Board that the Board are unaware of in connection with the casual, Thomas Padglass, perhaps he will say so in as few words as possible."

This was said with an upward movement of the nose and twitching of the mouth which eloquently told of the pugnacious temperament of the gentleman.

"I have no desire to waste the time of the Board," I peacefully remarked, "and will certainly be as brief as I possibly can" (bowing to Mr. Cribb). "Briefly, then, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen," I continued, "my poor old friend, the casual——"

"Does the gentleman mean Thomas Padglass, Mr. Chairman; if so, why does he not say so?" here interrupted Mr. Cribb.

"My poor old friend, Thomas Padglass," then I continued.

"Mr. Chairman, I must protest against this gentleman's use of the words, 'my poor old friend'; if he has got anything to say about Thomas Padglass, in the name of goodness let him say it! Casuals have no friends but the Guardians," again interrupted the militant member.

"Well, gentlemen, Thomas Padglass, whilst engaged in that noble pastime of stone-breaking at the Blank Casual Ward, met with——"

"Mr. Chairman, if this individual," ejaculated the pugnacious Guardian, "has come here to insult the Board, I beg to tell him he will get ejected out for his pains, and if the porter can't do it, I will!"

"Mr. Cribb, I must beg you will restrain yourself, and hear what Mr. Publisher has to say," remarked the Chairman. "I think it would be as well, though, if you withdrew the words, 'noble pastime,'" appealed the Chairman to me.

"Certainly, sir, I will; but as one of the public who has to pay a large sum annually in rates, I feel a trifle warm on the subject. Well, gentlemen, to cut a long story short, this poor old friend of mine—(Here Mr. Cribb glared and rolled up his coat cuffs)—whilst engaged in stone-breaking and being unused to the work—(much laughter from some of the Guardians, and a few expletives from Mr. Thomas Cribb)—and being unused to the work, a piece of the granite flew upwards and struck him in one of his eyes. He has entirely lost the sight of his eye, and the doctor fears he will lose the sight of the other also. But I am sorry to say the shock following the want and privation which my poor old friend—(Demonstration on the part of Mr. Cribb)—has suffered during the last few years is developing phthisis, and the doctor fears his end is near."

I paused here, giving Mr. Cribb an opportunity of relieving his feelings.

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CHAPTER V.—(Concluded.)

"Mr. Chairman," he remarked, "I do not know what we have got to do with Thomas Padglass dying of consumption! He is not the first casual who has met his death in this way."

"Only inasmuch," the Chairman replied, "that I suppose had it not been for the accident, Thomas Padglass might have lived many more years."

"I am ashamed of you, Mr. Chairman," retorted the gentleman, "playing into this individual's hands in such a way, and pandering to the cry of the herd outside!"

"Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order; has the honourable member a right to address the chair in such language?" said a member, Mr. Hinzane.

The Chairman: "Mr. Cribb, I really must ask you to withdraw. You will see your remarks are very personal to the chair and very——"

"Oh, I withdraw, Mr. Chairman; but let this individual be careful in his slanderous utterances, or I will throw him out!" (A chorus of "Hear, hear!" groans, cries of "Shame!" "Withdraw!" "Put him out!" etc., etc.)

For at least fifteen minutes the Board was a perfect Babel. Everybody was on his feet, speaking, or rather shouting and gesticulating wildly. The pugnacious gentleman, with his coat off, striking a scientific attitude, was challenging everyone to "come and have some." Order at last reigned, when Mr. Hinzane rose to address the chair.

"Mr. Chairman," said he, "I have listened with some amount of interest to the remarks of Mr. Publisher, and I have come to the conclusion this stone-breaking business is bad and should not go on. (Murmurs.) It is useless as a test, seeing men endeavour to break it, even at the cost of their eyesight—nay, even their life. In London and other large towns the broken stone is almost unsaleable, and even when sold, a very large loss occurs. Yes, Mr. Chairman, you know, sir, we buy the granite for 11s. 3d. per ton. At the lowest computation it costs, exclusive of salaries of officials and other establishment charges, just upon 10s. per ton to break. This totals up to £1 1s. 3d. per ton alone. We sell it, as you know, when we can sell it, for 10s. and 12s. per ton. But owing to its being a drug in the market we have serious thoughts of selling it at a lower figure than this."

"What about that?" interrupted Mr. Pulverize "I protest."

"I beg to inform you, sir," remarked the Chairman, "that Mr. Hinzane is in possession of the chair."

"And I beg to inform you, sir, that Mr. Publisher is present."

"Oh, dear me!" said the Chairman, "this is quite irregular. Mr. Publisher, I must ask you to withdraw while the Guardians discuss the matter."

When attention was drawn to the fact that I had been sitting quietly in a corner, and had not withdrawn as was supposed, the wrath of some of the Guardians was fearful to hear.

"Abominable! All your fault, Mr. Chairman! Shocking! Disgraceful! Some one must answer to me for this!" cried Mr. Cribb, etc., etc.

From the waiting-room I could hear the proceedings were getting noisier and noisier. At this juncture Mr. Mildman came out and bade me good-day, saying, "Bedlam was let loose inside," and advising me to go. In a short time an attendant was summoned for a new hammer, the chairman having broken his in attempting to quell the disturbance. I left disgusted. I take the following from the newspapers of the following day:—

"The proceedings of yesterday at the Blank

Board of Guardians were of a disgraceful character. It seems a casual has recently lost his sight whilst engaged at 'stone-breaking,' and a gentleman friend came to lay the facts before the Guardians. The Guardians came to no decision, as the meeting broke up in confusion.

* * *

A few days after my attendance before the Board of Guardians, we moved poor Tom to my country house in —shire. The doctor said it was a hopeless case: he was dying fast. I could not, however, bear the idea of Tom's dying amidst this wilderness of bricks and mortar, the scene of so much of his misery and suffering. He was always fond of the country, poor Tom. So I determined he should go, and, if die he must, he should breathe his last amidst the songs of the birds. I sat up with him night after night till he slumbered. One evening he begged I would go to rest and not wear myself out.

"You can do me no good, Charlie. Nurse is very kind. I do not think I shall be long before I follow dad and mother. I am very easy to-night. I shall soon go to sleep. Do go to bed, Charlie!"

About three in the morning the nurse woke me.

"He is very bad; I fear the end is near, sir. Will you come?"

"Yes," I said, immediately. Indeed the end was near! This could plainly be seen. He grasped my hand, but was unable to speak. At five his soul fled this world to a better, where guardians and stone-yards trouble not; where the oppressed and the oppressors meet on an equality, and man cannot injure his fellow; where the naked are clothed and the hungry are fed, and the sweater no more worries his victims; where the "financier" has lost his power over the widow and the orphans!

Next week we buried poor Tom in the pretty burial-ground amidst the incense of the flowers and the chants of the birds.

It was pitiful to read, in a letter he left, of his unsuccessful efforts, in almost every direction, to obtain employment. How his poverty sank him lower and lower, day by day, in the social scale, until he became at last a vagrant—an out-cast; his hand against every man, and every man's against him; sleeping at night (when he had the coppers) in the common lodging-houses of the town—hotbeds of disease, vice, and wickedness!

When will our legislators and administrators do their duty to the homeless throughout Great Britain and Ireland? When? Echo answers: When these gentlemen are tired of hearing themselves talk! Nothing stands between a homeless wretch to-night and the infamous casual ward system—the incorrigible casual should be either in a prison or an asylum—and the pavement, but the Salvation Army's Shelters, for which God be thanked. Here, although the accommodation may be humble, they are at least treated as human beings, and not as a species of wild beast!

"What I have gone through," his letter said, "no human tongue can tell!"

* * *

I have just received a letter from the Blank Board of Guardians, in which I am informed that they "have no power to alter the rules and regulations governing the casual wards, those places being under the control of the Local Government Board, but they had determined in future to send all their able-bodied men to the Salvation Army farm, having no space or means at their command to employ these men at remunerative or useful work. This is good news, for the men will not only be trained to some useful occupation by which, in the future, they will be able to earn their living, but they will be assisted to raise themselves spiritually and morally, becoming better citizens, better men, fathers and husbands, and, above all, "paupers" no longer!

THE END.

Next week will be commenced "Joe Angus: A Story of Gambling in the North."