

“FOR DEBT.”

FOURTEEN days for “contempt of court”—ominous phrase that between the commas. The county court judge has made an order that a certain debt shall be paid within a certain time. Circumstances have been too strong—compliance has been impossible. You are summoned to show cause why, in default, you should not be committed to prison. The hearing takes place in a distant town. Circumstances are, just then, so strong that you are unable to put in a personal appearance—being without the money with which to pay your fare. Shortly afterwards—you having, in the interim, received no sort of notice as to what has taken place at the distant court—the high bailiff of your district writes to tell you that he has received a warrant for your arrest. He has, he says, written, of his own initiative, to your creditors’ solicitors, asking if they will allow him to suspend the execution of the warrant for a week—to give you a further opportunity to pay. They have complied with his request. He hopes—in his letter—that, within the week, the money will be paid. You go at once to see him. You tell him you would if you could—you only wish you could! You never have been able to pay since the debt was incurred—circumstances have been too strong. He is a kindly hearted man—though a shrewd man of the world. He is convinced, of his own experience, that imprisonment for debt does no one any good, neither the man who owes, nor the man who is owed, nor the onlookers who have to contribute to the support of destitute debtors. In your case he will write again, asking still to be allowed to give you time. You return home, hoping that some miracle may happen so that you still may pay. Four days afterwards you admit a young man at your front door. He has come to enforce the warrant. Your creditors have, that morning, instructed the high bailiff to take his prisoner at once—they decline to concede another hour. You and your wife put a few things in a bag—your wife trying her best not to let you think that she will cry her eyes out directly you are gone. She wishes you to take four and threepence in

your pocket. Argument, at such a moment, would mean hysterics—and a scene. Her breath comes in great sobs as she kisses you. You give way. You take the money—leaving her with just one shilling. A small payment is due to you upon the morrow; it is on that she is relying; you hope, with all your heart and soul, that it will come. You go with the bailiff—to gaol—because circumstances have been too strong.

The bailiff is a communicative youngster, kindly hearted, like his chief. You are only the third one he has “taken.” He is paid by the job, he will receive five shillings for “taking” you. He considers it money easily earned—he would have received no more had you “dodged” him for days. The county gaol is two-and-twenty miles away, in a lovely country, on the side of a hill, on the edge of the downs. You reach it about half-past four on a glorious July afternoon. You and your custodian are admitted through a wicket in the huge doors. The bailiff shows his warrant. The gatekeeper tells you to go straight on. You go straight on, across an open space, up half a dozen steps, under a lofty arch, which has some architectural pretensions, to a room on the left. The room is a sort of office. In it are two warders, a policeman, and a man from whose wrists the policeman is removing a pair of handcuffs. The bailiff delivers his warrant to one of the warders. Certain entries are made in a book. The bailiff obtains a receipt for you—and goes. It is only when he has gone that you realise you are a prisoner. One of the warders favours you with his attention.

“What’s in that bag?”

“Only a change of clothing, and my work. Can I not work while I am here?”

“Don’t ask me questions. You oughtn’t to have brought any bag in here—it’s against orders. How much money have you got?” You hand him over four and twopence—on the way you have expended a penny on a bottle of ink. “Can you write? Then put your name here.”

You affix your signature to a statement acknowledging that you have handed the warder the sum of four and twopence. Another warder enters—an older man. He addresses you—

“What’s your name?” You tell him.

"Your age? your religion? your trade?" You allow that you are a poor devil of an author. He goes. The first warder favours you again.

"Take your boots off! Come here!" You step on to a weighing-machine. He registers your weight. "Put your boots on again. Come along with me, the two of you."

He snatches up your bag, you follow him, accompanied by the gentleman who wore the handcuffs. Unlocking a door, he leads the way down a flight of stone steps to cells which apparently are beneath the level of the ground. "In there!" Your companion goes into one of them. The door is banged upon him. "In here!" You go into another. The door is banged on you. You find yourself alone in a whitewashed cell which contains absolutely nothing but a sort of wooden frame which is raised, perhaps, twelve inches from the floor of red and black lozenge-shaped tiles. After some three or four minutes the door is opened to admit the older warder. He hands you some books—without a word. And, without a word, he goes out again and bangs the door. He has left you in possession of a Bible, a prayer book, hymn book, an ancient and ragged volume of the "Penny Post"—in its way a curiosity—and a copy of "Quentin Durward"—Routledge's three and sixpenny edition, almost as good as new. Presently the first warder reappears.

"What property have you got about you?"

You give him all you have, he returning your handkerchief. Having given him everything, he satisfies himself that you have nothing more by feeling in your pockets.

"Can't I have my work? It is in my bag. Can't I work while I am here?"

"Ask all questions when you see the governor to-morrow." He vanishes. Another five minutes, he appears again. "Come along. Bring your books!"

You go into the corridor. Another person is there—in a brick-coloured costume, on which is stamped, at irregular intervals, the "broad arrow." You recognise the gentleman who wore the handcuffs.

"Here you are!" The warder hands you a distinctly dirty round tin, holding, as you



"You and your wife put a few things in a bag."

afterwards learn, a pint, filled with something which is greyish brown in hue, and a small loaf, of a shape, size, and colour the like of which you have never seen before. The warder observes that you are eyeing the contents of the tin distrustfully. "That's good oatmeal, though you mayn't like the look of it. But it isn't the body you've got to think about, it's the soul—that's everything."

He says this in a quick, cut-and-thrust fashion which suggests that, behind the official, there is marked individuality of character. With the gentleman in the brick-coloured costume, you follow him up the flight of steps you not very long ago descended. He unlocks the door. "Stand here." Your companion stands. "You come along with me!" He unlocks another door, you follow him down another flight of stone steps into a lofty ward, on one side of which are cells. He shows you into one. Being in, he bangs the door on you. You are in a cell which is own brother to the one which you have quitted, only that this one makes some pretence to being furnished. It is, perhaps, ten

feet by eight feet. The roof is arched, rising, probably, to quite twelve feet. Walls and roofs are of whitewashed brick. The floor is tiled. Opposite to the door, about five feet from the ground, is a small window. Panes of ground glass, about two inches square, are set in a massive iron frame. The only thing you can see through the window are iron bars. If you get through the window, you will still have to reckon with the bars.

The furniture consists of a wooden frame, about two feet by six. An attenuated mattress, which you afterwards learn is stuffed with coir. A pillow of the same ilk. A pair of clean sheets, which, by the way, the warder gave you, and which you have brought into the cell. A pair of blankets, which look as if they had not been washed for years. A coverlet, which, in common with the rest of the bedding, is stamped with the "broad arrow." There is a heavy wooden stool. A table perhaps eighteen inches square. In one corner is a shelf. On it is a wooden soap-box, containing an ancient scrap of yellow soap, a wooden salt-box containing salt, a small comb, and a round tin, very much like a publican's pint pot. On the floor are a tin washing-basin, a covered tin, which you find you are supposed to use for personal purposes, a home-made hand broom, an odd collection of rags, some whiting, by the aid of which latter articles you are required to keep your cell and your utensils clean and in good order.

While you are taking a mental inventory of your quarters a voice addresses you. Turning to the door, you perceive that, near the top of it, is a "bull's eye" spy-hole, covered on the outside by a revolving flap. This flap has been raised, someone is looking at you from without.

"Where are you from?" You vouchsafe the information.

"How long have you got?" You again oblige. "Never say die! keep up your pecker, old chap!"

"Are they going to keep me locked in here?"

"Till you've seen the doctor in the morning, then they'll let you out. Cheer up!"

The speaker disappears, the flap descends. You try to cheer up, to act upon the advice received, though, to be frank, you find the thing a little difficult. You taste the stuff in the tin. It may, as the warder said, be good oatmeal, but, to an unaccustomed palate, it is not inviting. You try a morsel of the mahogany-coloured loaf. It is dry as sawdust, and sour. Opposite you, against the

wall, hangs a printed card. It is headed, "Dietary for Destitute Debtors." You are a destitute debtor—for the next fourteen days this will be your bill of fare. For breakfast and for supper, daily, a pint of gruel, six ounces of bread. For those two meals there does not seem to be a promise of much variety. For dinner, on Mondays and Fridays, you will receive six ounces of bread, eight ounces of potatoes, and three ounces of cooked meat, without bone; or as a substitute for the meat, three-quarters of an ounce of fat bacon and eight ounces of beans—you wonder how they manage to weigh that three-quarters of an ounce. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, four ounces of bread, six ounces of potatoes, and three-quarters of a pint of soup. On Wednesdays and Sundays, four ounces of bread, six ounces of potatoes, and six ounces of suet pudding.

Stretching out the mattress upon the wooden frame, you endeavour to digest the circumstances of your situation and the prospect of such a dietary. In the ill-lighted cell the shadows quickly deepen. There is a clock somewhere in the prison. It noisily clangs out the half hours and the hours. Soon after it has announced that it is half-past seven there is a sound of hurrying footsteps, a clattering of keys, a banging of doors. All is still—curiously still. In your cell it is much too dark to read. You make your bed. Undressing, you get between the sheets—immediately discovering that they rival sandpaper for roughness. The bed is just wide enough to enable you to lie flat upon your back—if you turn, unless you are very careful, you either strike against the wall or fall upon the floor. Also, you are not long in learning that it contains other occupants besides yourself. You have heard and read a great deal about the cleanliness of prisons. However that may be, it is quite certain that cleanliness has no connection with that particular set of bedding. It is alive. All night you lie in agony—literally. The clanging clock makes darkness hideous—it seems to accentuate the all-prevailing silence. Your brain is in a whirl—thoughts are trampling on each other's heels. To mental discomfort is added physical. When the earliest glimpse of dawn peeps through the caricature of an honest window you rise and search. There is slaughter. Rest is out of the question. Putting on your clothes you pace the cell. Soon after six the door is opened, an officer thrusts in his head.

"All right?"

You answer, "Yes"—what can you tell

him? He disappears and bangs the door. At half-past seven there is a sound of the unlocking of locks and of footsteps. The warder, reappearing, hands you a tin and a loaf, own brother to those which you received last night.

"Can't I wash?"

"Haven't you any water?" He looks round your cell. "You haven't a water can. I'll bring you one."

He presently does—a round, open tin, painted a vivid blue, containing perhaps three quarts of water. You fill your basin and wash—the first pleasant thing you have done since you saw the gaol. Then you consider your breakfast. You are hungry, hungrier than you would have been at home—but you cannot manage the gruel, and the bread still less. Apart from the flavour, the gruel is in such a dirty tin that you cannot but suspect its contents of being dirty, too. The bread is hard, dry, and sour, bearing not the faintest resemblance to any of the numerous varieties of bread which you have tasted. Hungry as you are, you give up the attempt at eating. Sitting on the bed, you take up "Quentin Durward," which, these many years, you have almost known by heart. About half-past ten your door is thrown wide open.

"Stand up for the governor!" cries a warder.

You stand up. A short man is in front of you without a hat on, attired in civilian costume. Between fifty and sixty, with grey hair and beard, carrying a pair of glasses in his hand, quiet and unassuming—a gentleman, every inch of him. He puts to you the same sort of questions which have already been put to you by the officers at the gate.

"What are you here for? Where do you come from? Have you"—here was a variation—"anything to ask me?"

"Can I not work while I am here?"

"What are you?"

"An author. I have a commission for some work. If I cannot do it while I am here, I shall not be able to get it in time."

"Did you bring anything with you?"

"I brought everything—paper, pens, and ink."

"Certainly you can work, you are entitled to work at your trade. I will see that the things are sent to you."

He goes, leaving, somehow, an impression behind him that you are not entirely cut off from the world, after all. Another half hour passes; the officer who received you at

the gate fetches you "to see the doctor!" "Seeing the doctor" entails the unlocking and locking of doors, and quite a journey. You are finally shown into a room in which a young man sits writing at a table. He looks up. "Is this a debtor?" Then to you, "Is there anything the matter with you?"

You tell him that, to the best of your knowledge and belief, there is not. He looks down. You have seen the doctor, and he has seen you; you are dismissed. The officer escorts you back to your ward.

"Now you've seen the doctor," he tells you, as he unlocks the door, "you needn't go back to your cell, if you don't like."

He lets you through, re-locks the door, and vanishes. You go down the steps alone, and at your leisure. You perceive that the ward is larger than you last night supposed. It is paved with flagstones. On one side there are two tiers of cells—one tier over yours. The upper tier is on a level with the door through which you have just come. An iron gallery runs down the front of it the whole length of the ward. Strolling along the flagstones, you find that an open door, almost opposite your cell, admits you into what, were the surroundings only different, would be quite a spacious and a pleasant garden. There is grass in the centre—in excellent condition—flower-beds all round. Between the grass and the beds is a narrow pathway of flagstones. Three or four men are walking on this pathway. At sight of you, with one accord, they come and offer greeting. It reminds you, in rather gruesome fashion, of your schooldays, of your first arrival at school—there is such a plethora of questions. You vouchsafe just so much information as you choose, eyeing the while your questioners. There are four of them—as doleful looking a quartette as one would care to see. These men in prison because—they could pay, but wouldn't!—or can, but won't! Upon the face of it the idea is an absurdity. Apart from the fact that the clothes of all four would not, probably, fetch more than half a sovereign, there is about them an air of depression which suggests, not only that they are beaten by fortune, but that they are even more hopeless of the future than of the past. Yet they strive to wear an appearance of jollity. As to their personal histories, they are frankness itself. One of them is a little fellow, about forty-five, a cabman. He is in for poor rates, £1 12s. It seems funny that a man should be taken twenty miles to prison, to

be kept there at the public expense, because he is too poor to pay his poor rates. Another is a hawker, a thin, grizzled, unhealthy-looking man, about fifty; his attire complete would certainly not fetch eighteenpence. As he puts it, there is something of a mystery about his case—a moneylending job—two-and-twenty shillings.

"The worst of it is, I paid two instalments. The judge, he ordered five shillings a month. I pays two months; then I has a slice of bad luck; then I gets here; and there's ten bob thrown clean away."

A third is an old man—he owns to sixty-six—unmistakably an agricultural labourer. He is the healthiest looking and the best dressed of the lot. He has evidently put on his best clothes to come to gaol, the chief feature of the said best clothes being a clean pair of corduroys. The story he tells is a queer one. He was away harvesting. His "old woman" bought a dress from a tallyman. She said nothing of her purchase to him, said nothing even when two months afterwards she died, aged sixty-eight—she must have been a dress-loving old lady! It was only after he had buried her that he

learned what she had done. The tallyman presented a claim for eighteen shillings.

"This here dress wasn't no good to me; it were as good as new, so I says to this here chap, 'You can have it back again'; but this here chap he wouldn't have it, so here I be."

The fourth man appears to be the clearest-headed member of the party. He is a bricklayer's labourer, aged thirty-four. He is in for £1 16s., an ancient baker's bill. His story also has elements of queerness. The bill was incurred nearly four years ago. He fell from a scaffold, was in hospital six months, his home was broken up; the baker, taking pity on his misfortunes, forgave the bill. Later on the baker himself was ruined. A speculator—you are destined to hear a good deal about this speculator; it seems that he sends a regular procession to the county gaol—bought up the baker's book debts. He immediately "went for" the bricklayer's labourer, who had the worst of it, and who, in consequence, is here. When in full work the labourer earns a pound a week. He was out of work for four weeks before he "came in." The day after he did "come in," his

wife and six children went upon the parish. A pretty state of things!

It seems that there are four other prisoners for debt. But just now they are shut off in a room at the end of the ward, having an exercise-ground of their own; there is apt to be too much noise if the prisoners are all together.

Presently a warder appears, not only with your writing materials, but also with your bag, its contents left untouched, with all your property, indeed, except your watch, your tobacco, and your



"Here you are!"

money. Almost simultaneously dinner appears, at noon. You are presented with two tins and a tiny loaf. The door leading to the exercise-ground is closed. With your dinner in your hand you troop up the stone steps with your companions. You discover that there is a large room at the end of the upper tier of cells, "First Class Misdemeanants" being painted on the panels of the door. There being, for the moment, no prisoner of that particular class, you have the use of it. It contains tables and stools, all sorts of things—among others, wooden spoons. Armed with a wooden spoon, you investigate your tins. It is Wednesday. At the bottom of the large one, which is dirtier than ever, is a slab of suet pudding, brown in hue. With the aid of your spoon and your fingers you eat it; though lukewarm and sticky, it is grateful to your anxious stomach. In the smaller tin are two potatoes, in their jackets, said jackets having, apparently, never been washed. You eat the potatoes, too; but though you are hungrier than ever, the bread you cannot manage. On your mentioning that you could dispose neither of your supper nor of your breakfast, the labourer and the cabman tear off to your cell downstairs, immediately returning in possession of your despised food, which they eat with voracity. They assure you that you will be able to eat anything after you have been here a few days, even the tins. You learn that if you make your wants known to an officer, he will purchase whatever you choose to pay for. Your chief anxiety is to work. You know from experience that you cannot do good work upon an empty stomach. Slender though your resources are, you resolve that you will devote at least a portion of them to the purchase of something which you will be able to eat for breakfast and for supper.

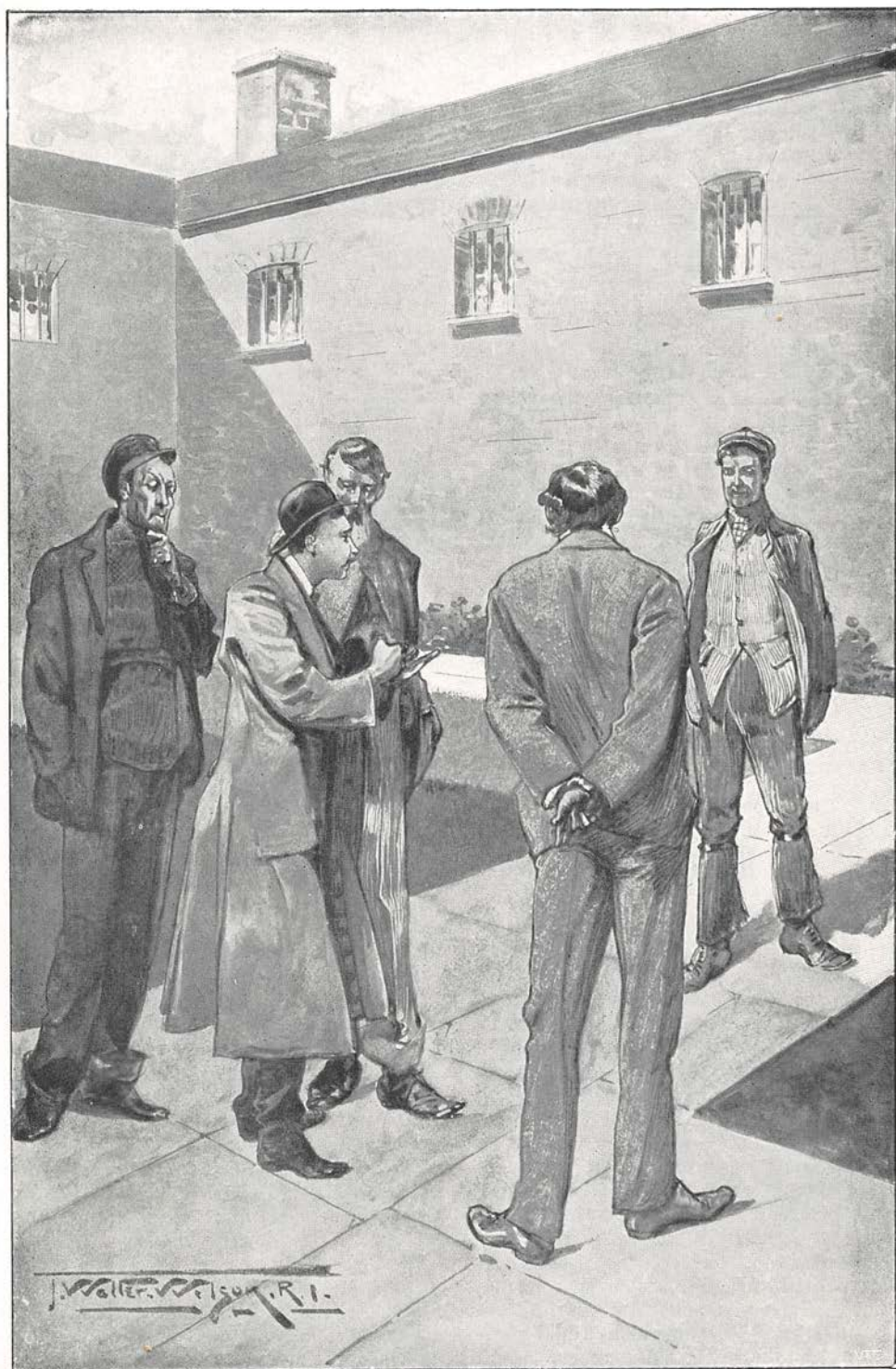
In the afternoon, as you are working in your cell—with the door open—a warder enters the ward. You make known to him your wants. He says he will send you the officer whose duty it is to make purchases for prisoners. When the officer comes, you request him to lay out two shillings for you to the best advantage, and learn, to your dismay, that on the day on which you make a purchase you are supposed to be keeping yourself, and therefore receive none of the prison rations. It is too late to recede, so you tell the officer to make the best of your two shillings. You work till half-past four, then go into the exercise-ground, which was opened again at two, till five. At five it is

closed for the night. Supper is served. You dispose of the greater portion of the gruel, this time you even dispose of some of the bread. Work in your cell till past seven, then stroll with the others up and down the ward. The room at the end of the lower ward has been unlocked. The prisoners are all together. The four you have not seen prove to be very like the four you have—two of them are here at the suit of the speculator in old and bad debts, who is responsible for the presence of the brick-layer's labourer; for poor rates another. A small calculation discloses the fact that a little over ten pounds would set all the eight men free. Shortly before eight you are locked in your cell till the morning. Another night of agony! When at half-past six the warder looks in to ask if you are all right, you answer "No"—you have not closed your eyes since entering the gaol—you have been eaten alive.

"I'll bring you a change of bedding." He does. "You'll find these all right, they've never been issued. You can't keep things clean this side—most of them wear their own clothes, you see, and they come in all alive, oh!"

You exchange your bedding for that which he brings, thankfully, wishing you had spoken before. About seven the same officer reappears. He brings your "things." There is a half-quarter loaf, two ounces of tea, quarter of a pound of butter, half a pound of cheese, tin of corned beef, couple of lemons; you never knew what good food was till you found yourself in possession of those supplies. Directly his back is turned, breaking a corner off the loaf, you rub it against the butter. If they would only allow you the use of a tin knife, what a godsend it would be! A kettle of boiling water is brought at breakfast time. Putting some tea in your pint pot, with a piece of lemon peel, you fill it from the kettle. Although you have to drink your tea from the teapot, you make a sumptuous meal.

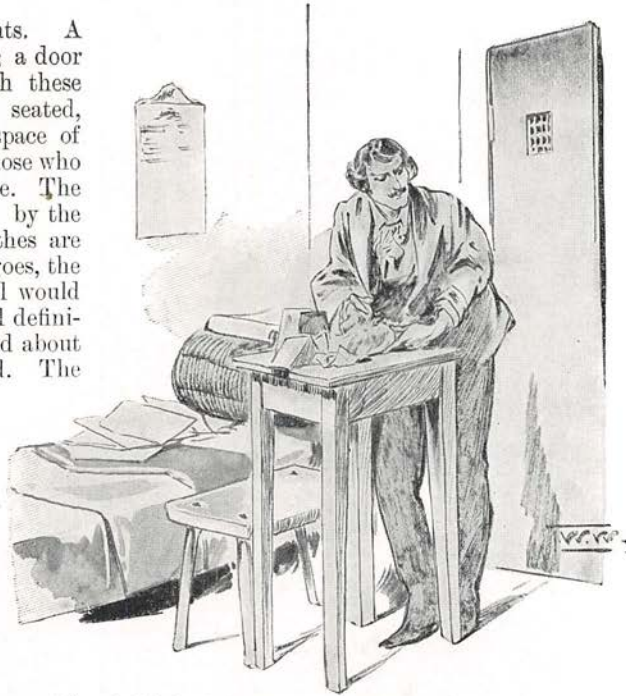
At half-past eight you go with the other Church of England prisoners to chapel, a large room, which would probably seat five hundred, allowing to each person the same amount of space which he occupies outside. The debtors occupy the back seats. There is a gallery overhead. There are four raised seats on either side, against the walls; a warder sits on each of them. A pulpit is at the other end, an altar of rather a nondescript kind—which it need be, seeing that the Roman Catholic service is held here, too



"As to their personal histories, they are frankness itself."

—a couple of screens, more raised seats. A warder is standing before the altar; a door is at either side of him. Through these doors, so soon as the debtors are seated, begins to enter a stream of men, a space of several feet being between each. Those who are awaiting trial are the first to come. The prison costume of blue serge worn by the majority means that their own clothes are unfit to wear. So far as appearance goes, the four or five men in their own apparel would come within the scope of the immortal definition of a gentleman. You have heard about some of them in the debtors' ward. The slight young fellow in black is a post-office clerk; he has to stand his trial for stealing a letter which contained a cheque. So soon as he reaches his place he falls upon his knees and prays. He wants all the help which prayer can bring him; in all human probability there is penal servitude ahead. The highly respectable-looking individual, with carefully trimmed black hair and whiskers, who sits on the bench in front of you upon your right, is charged with stabbing his wife; luckily, she is not dead. The big, sandy-haired fellow upon his left, right in front of you, has rank murder to answer for. The story of his crime has been for weeks the talk of the countryside; a dramatic story, with glimpses of livid tragedy. He and his paramour, being shut out one night from the workhouse, took refuge on the hills under the shelter of an overhanging rock. In the night they quarrelled; he slew her with a stone. In the early morning a shepherd met him running across the hills, wet with her blood. Stopping, the man told the shepherd what he had done. Returning together, they found the woman under the rock, dead, her head and face battered and broken, the stone beside her.

The trial men are followed by the convicted prisoners, in brick-coloured costumes; some with knickerbockers—those sentenced to penal servitude, who are waiting to be drafted to a convict station; some in trousers—those who are sentenced to not more than two years' imprisonment. The warders stand up as they enter, watching them as cats do mice. Each man is careful that he is a certain distance behind the man in front of him. They sit five on a bench which would comfortably accommodate twenty, in rows, each man exactly behind his fellow. While the procession continues, a woman passes behind



“Directly his back is turned, breaking a corner off the loaf, you rub it against the butter.”

one of the screens—a female warder. She commences to play a series of voluntaries on an unseen harmonium—“The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden,” “There is a Green Hill”—airs which seem strange accompaniments to such a procession. The chaplain is away for his holidays. The schoolmaster reads the service—an abbreviated edition of Morning Prayer. He does not read badly. The congregation seem to listen with reverent attention, which is not to be wondered at, with the warders eyeing them like hawks. They join heartily in the responses, which is, again, not strange, considering that the only chance they have of hearing their own voice is in chapel. At the end a hymn is sung—“Thine for ever! God of Love”—under the circumstance, an odd selection. The congregation sing with the full force of their lungs, perhaps strangely; the result is not unpleasing. The female prisoners are in the gallery overhead. A woman's voice soars above the others, clear as a bell. You wonder who it is—officer or prisoner. After the hymn, the schoolmaster pronounces the benediction. The service is over.

You work nearly all that day. How your companions manage without work is beyond your comprehension. This is an excellent

school for the inculcation and encouragement of the Noble Art of Loading. In the afternoon another prisoner is introduced. He calls himself a blacksmith, is about sixty, has scarcely a shirt to his back, and is here for poor rates! Later on, two more. One is in prison clothes; the other covers in a corner of his cell, refusing to have intercourse with anyone. Presently the story goes that he is crying. The fellow in the prison clothes has been brought from a town more than thirty miles away, sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment, for a debt of twelve and sixpence.

When, shortly before five, ceasing work, you go into the exercise-ground for a breath of air, you find a warder with a bundle under his arm. In the corner is a brick erection, with, fitted into the wall, a thermometer to register over 300° Fahrenheit. It is the oven in which they bake the prisoners' clothes. In the bundle under the warder's arm are the clothes of the twelve-and-sixpenny debtor. A debtor's clothes must be in an indescribable condition before they constrain him to wear the prison uniform. This man's rags—the warder, who is in a communicative mood, declares that you cannot call them clothes—are about as bad as they can be. It is only after the thermometer has continued, for some minutes, to register a temperature of over 230° that their unmentionable occupants are effectually destroyed.

You sleep better that night; the new bedding—from, at any rate, one point of view—is clean. The next day you come again upon prison rations, eked out, if you choose, with what is left of your own supplies. It is Friday. The Litany is read in the chapel. With what strenuousness do the members of the congregation announce that they are miserable sinners! After chapel you are beginning work, when a warder calls your name.

"Put your things together—bring your sheets and towel—your discharge has come. Don't keep me waiting; come along!"

In a maze you ram your things into your bag. You follow the warder. He takes you to a room in which the governor is seated at a table. He addresses you.

"Your discharge has come." To the officer: "Get this man his discharge-note, and such property as you may have of his."

Bewildered, you question the governor.

"But who has paid the money?"

"No one. You are discharged at the instance of your creditors. I will read you my instructions."

He does. They are to the effect that your creditors having made an application for your release, the registrar of the county court from which you were committed directs the governor of the gaol to discharge you from his custody forthwith. When he has finished reading, he hands you a letter which has come to you from your wife. Still at a loss to understand exactly what has happened, a few minutes later you find yourself outside the gates.

You have been a prisoner not three whole days. As you look around you—realising that you are once more your own man—you wonder what a man feels like, in his first moments of freedom, after he has been a prisoner three whole months. And years? Think of it!

On reaching home you find that your wife has received a letter from your creditors. Somewhat later in the day they have been making inquiries into the truth of your statements. They have ascertained that it is a fact that circumstances have been too strong for you, that you have been unable to pay. That being the case, they tell your wife, being unwilling to keep you any longer in gaol, they have given instructions for your immediate release. So here you are. It seems strange, in these days of abolition of imprisonment for debt, that creditors should still have the power of sending their debtors to gaol when they please—and, when they please, of letting them out again.

