

Cheap Repository.

THE
CHEAPSIDE APPRENTICE,

OR THE
HISTORY

OF

MR. FRANCIS H****.

*Fully setting forth the Danger of playing with EDGE-TOOLS ;
shewing also, how a gay Life may prove a short
one ; and that a merry Evening may pro-
duce a sorrowful Morning.*



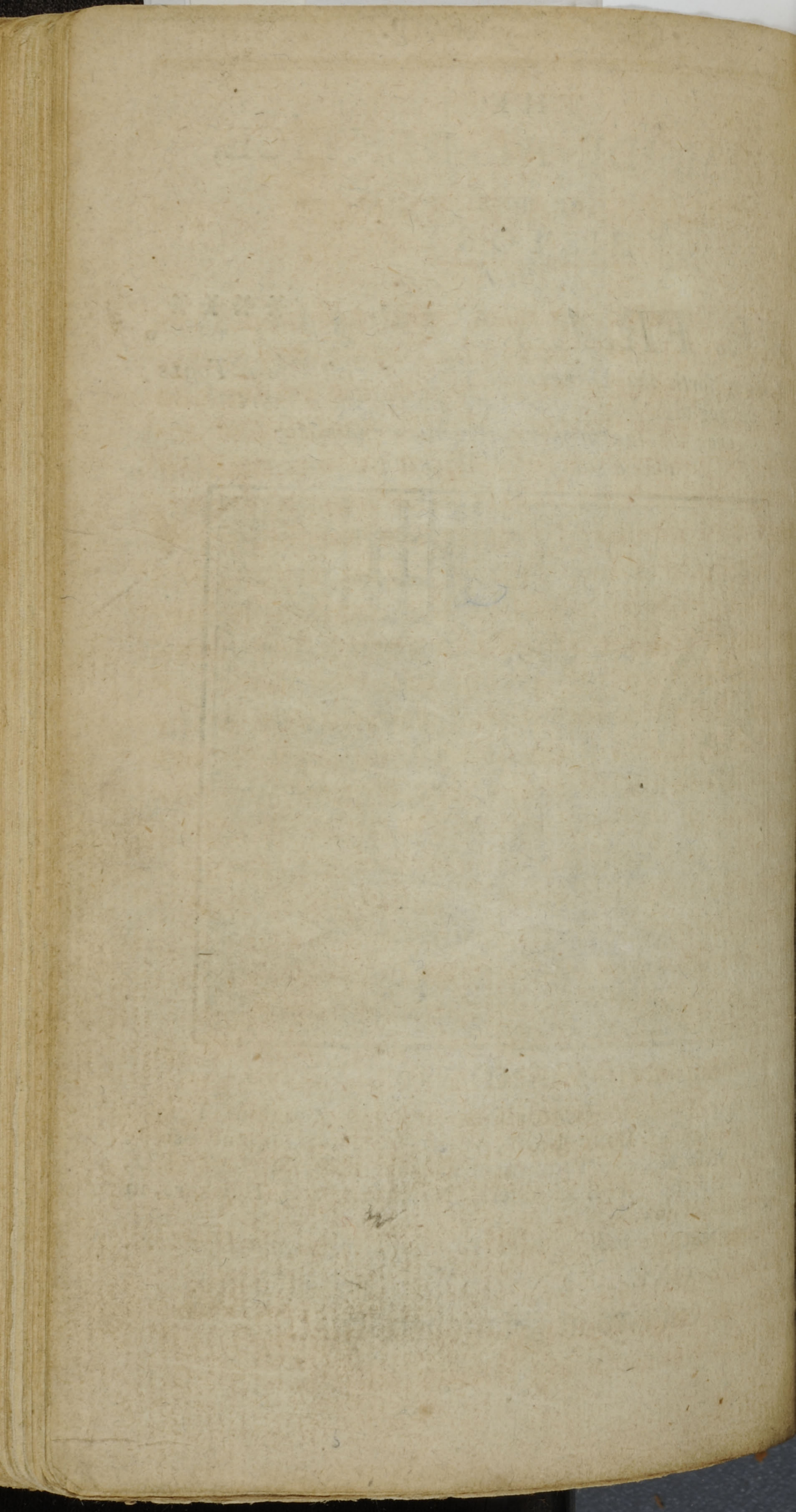
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THE
CHEAPSIDE APPRENTICE.

ATTEND, ye young men, who are about to enter into trade, for to you I write my story. I was bound apprentice to a respectable tradesman in Cheapside. My master, Mr. Vincent, had acquired a very fair character, whilst he was making a comfortable fortune. His wife was a dressy, flashy woman, who liked visiting and jaunting more than taking care of her family, whilst my master was plodding late at night in the counting-house, Mrs. Vincent and her daughters were either making parties abroad, or giving entertainments at home. As we kept no footman, I was allowed, when shop was shut, to run from one public place to another to call a coach, to bring Mrs. Vincent and her daughters home. To lounging about the purlieus of a play-house I owe my ruin. I was generally allowed to be a handsome well-made young man; this unfortunately drew upon me the notice of a set of those wretched women who nightly crowd the theatres; I should have been delighted with the notice they took of me, had not my vanity whispered me that Miss Vincent was in love with me. This suspicion was fully confirmed to me by one Potter, an elder apprentice, but for whose wicked advice I might have lived happily, and died virtuously. The idea that Miss Vincent was in love with me, at once completed me for the coxcomb; I now neglected my business, and to dress out my person became the only object of my thoughts! I began to commit little frauds on my master, in order to ob-

tain money to dress out ; for ever since Potter had laughed me out of my religion, every principle of moral honesty sat loosely upon me.

I am sorry to say the holy Sabbath in our family was only distinguished from other days by the shutting of the shop ; my master spent the greater part of it posting his books, and my mistress and her daughters were either dressing to go abroad, or else to receive company at home. We young men indeed, were sent to church, but as we had no examples set us by the heads of the family going thither themselves, Potter and I generally hired a gig, and dashed away from one tea-drinking place to another ; these scenes soon made me lose all respect for Virtue and Religion. It was at the Dog and Duck I first saw the infamous Miss West, she was many years older than myself, her person was as lovely as her heart was wicked. She was no sooner informed that I was to come into possession of £3000 the day I came of age, than she made use of all her deceitful arts to ensnare both my soul and body, as she often prompted me to defraud my master to supply her extravagance. My attachment to Miss Vincent was now on the decline, for Miss West had so far wrought upon my vanity, as to make me believe that so handsome a young fellow as I was, should look higher than a tradesman's daughter. From that moment I treated Miss Vincent with the most marked neglect, although I saw my conduct cut her to the heart ; yet, at the same time was I base enough, to borrow money of her which I wantonly squandered away on Miss West.

When Potter's apprenticeship expired, instead of improving his fortune by throwing it into trade, he plunged at once into all the vices of the town. He

possessed a plausible kind of prate, which caused him to be appointed Chairman to our club, which was chiefly composed of clerks and apprentice boys. Potter's principal excellence consisted in singing a merry song, telling an indecent story, and teaching his heroes to laugh at morality, and set all religion at defiance; for religion, he maintained, was only an old woman's tale, invented by cunning heads to keep children and fools in order.

There was an honest old porter lived in our family, who for some time had set himself to watch my conduct, and at length he made such a faithful report of it to my master, that he gave up my indentures, and turned me out of doors.

I was too much delighted with my liberty to feel the least sense of shame at the means by which I obtained it.

I was sorry, however, to break off entirely with Miss Vincent, for I still had a lurking affection for her—I told Potter so: his inventive genius soon laid a plan, whereby I might get her into my power, and take a complete revenge on her whole family at the same time. This was by writing her a letter, setting forth the violence of my love, the unmerited disgrace I had received from her family, and at the same time requesting her to grant me a private meeting, in order that I might justify my conduct to her, as otherwise I feared the violence of my passion would drive me to a fit of despair.

This poor imprudent girl met me at the time and place appointed. I will not here shock my readers with relating the vile stratagems I made use of to complete the ruin of this young lady, nor the tremendous oaths I swore to repair her wrongs by marriage, as soon as I came of age, which would

be in a very few months—this somewhat abated her sorrow for the very indiscreet step she had taken.

The day I became of age, I went down into the country. My friends having been apprized of my profligate life, received me very coldly. I practised the deepest hypocrisy on my good mother, to make her believe I was quite a reformed man, in order to weedle her out of a sum of money, telling her at the same time, I had an immediate prospect of entering into a very profitable concern with a partner of great responsibility, if I could but increase my capital.

“ Frank, (said she, with firmness,) “ there is no trusting to your promises, as long as your conduct deserved my love, you ever found me an indulgent mother, but you shall never have cause to say I acted towards you like a weak woman, by robbing my virtuous children to supply the wanton extravagance of a profligate son. Your wicked life, Frank, has nearly broken my heart, but it shall not shake my justice.” The well known steadiness of my mother’s temper, convinced me at once she was not further to be imposed upon by the fallacy of my arguments.

As soon as I had settled my business, I returned to London to Miss Vincent, who had waited for me with the utmost patience, fully expecting I was come to fulfil my promise of marriage to her. “ I can struggle with want, dear Frank, (said she) but I will never consent to live in shame.”

Nothing I am certain, hardens the heart like vice, for although this poor young creature was brought in a very trying situation by the prospect of her soon becoming a mother, I swore I would never make her my wife, who had disgraced herself by

living with me as a mistress. On hearing this, in all the tender agonies of grief, she urged me to repair the wrongs I had done her, reminding me at the same time of the wicked arts I had made use of to beguile her of her innocence, and then, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, she threw herself on her knees before me, beseeching me to pity the agonies which rent her soul, yet still my hardened nature was untouched by her sorrow, again I solemnly swore I never would marry her.

Through excess of grief she fainted away, in which pitiable state I left her to the care of a servant, went out and spent the rest of the evening with Miss West, whose flinty heart turned into ridicule the sorrowful tale I related to her.

On returning to my lodgings the next morning, I was informed Miss Vincent had left them without leaving behind her the least information where she was to be found, and much did I rejoice when I heard it, that she had taken herself off so quietly.

I now lavished my money as though it would never have an end. By all I was esteemed the most noble spirited fellow in the world, and even little wits would be silent in my presence, because I was sure to pay for the wine upon which they were to riot. My cash at length beginning to run low, as I had been all along drawing from the principal, I advised with Potter how to get furnished with future supplies. He advised the gaming table as a never-failing friend, saying, it had long since been the only resource from whence he derived his subsistence.

I took his advice, and for some months was so successful, that I began to dash away in higher life at the west end of the town. I bought an

elegant phaeton which I drove every Sunday in Hyde Park, with Miss West by my side. One day as I was driving furiously through Temple-Bar, I had the misfortune to overturn a poor man with a heavy load on his back, on his getting up, I perceived him to be Mr. Vincent's old Porter, to whom I formerly owed my disgrace.

"Ah! ah! what is it you, young Hopeful?" cried he, on seeing to whom he owed his misfortune.—"well, he must needs go whom the devil drives; thy prancing nags may die a natural death, master Frank, but verily, I think 'tis more than thou wilt, boy, for if thou diest not in thy shoes, the gallows will be robbed of its due. What is become of poor Patty Vincent, thou profligate dog, hast thou broken her heart, as thou hast that of her poor afflicted parents?"

The sudden recollection of that unfortunate girl caused such a swimming in my head, that the reins dropt from my hands, my horses took fright, and it was almost a miracle that I got home alive.—

The porter's words had such an impression on my mind, that I could not shake them off. Soon after Potter calling on me, I told him of my interview with the old porter, and also the effect it had on me.—"Frank, (said he) if a fellow of thy spirit can be thus easily overcome by qualms of conscience, let us instantly adjourn to the tavern, since good wine is the best remedy in the world to drown all uneasy recollections in." I gladly accepted his proposal, we called a coach, and off we went. He no sooner saw my spirits inflamed with wine, then he drew me to the gaming-table, where before morning, I lost every shilling I had in the world—I applied to Potter to lend me 50 guineas, as he had won more more than 200 of me.

us we should live rent-free, and promised to be a friend to us."—"All does seem for the best now, indeed," interrupted Mrs. Betty. "We shall see," said Mrs. Simpson, and thus went on—

"I now became very easy and very happy; and was cheerfully employed in putting our few things in order, and making every thing look to the best advantage. My husband, who wrote all the day for his employer, in the evenings assisted me in doing up my little garden. This was a source of much pleasure to us; we both loved a garden, and we were not only contented but cheerful. Our employer had been absent some weeks on his annual journey. He came home on a Saturday night, and the next morning sent for Mr. Simpson to come and settle his accounts, which were got behind hand by his long absence. We were just going to church, and Mr. Simpson sent back word, that he would call and speak to him on his way home.— A second message followed, ordering him to come to the farmer's directly—he agreed that we would walk round that way, and that my husband should call and excuse his attendance. The farmer, more ignorant and worse educated than his plowmen, with all that pride and haughtiness which wealth without knowledge or religion is apt to give, rudely asked my husband what he meant by sending him word that he could not come to him till the next day; and insisted that he should stay and settle the accounts then. 'Sir,' said my husband, in a very respectful manner, 'I am on my road to church, and am afraid I shall be too late.'—'Are you so,' said the farmer. 'Do you know who sent for you? you may however go to church, if you will, so you make haste back; and, d'ye hear, you

ing dreamt that I was apprehended, the people of the house, awaked by my cries, ran into the room, concluding some villains had broken in, and were going to murder me.

I never afterwards went into the street, but my fears told me I was the subject of conversation of all the people I met. Once I happened to hear one man say to another, pointing to a third, "that's he, that's he," I took to my heels, concluding that I myself was meant, and ran from one street to another, without knowing whither, till my sight failed me, and through loss of breath, dropped down in a fit. Some humane people, however, recovered me, and put me into a hackney-coach which carried me home.

One day, a sudden gust of wind blew open my chamber-door, again I concluded the officers were coming to take me. Snatching up the poker to defend myself, I swore I would not be taken alive, when turning about suddenly, I saw a glimpse of myself in the glass, my eyes looked wild, my lips quivered, my jaws dropped, my teeth chattered, and my body shook, as though the last agonies of death were upon me. On finding I was once more become the dupe of my fears, my spirits rallied again, I dressed and went to the play, there I met Sally West, whom I had not seen for some weeks, for to say the truth, I dreaded to meet an old acquaintance, from the time I committed the forgery—after the play, we went off together to sup at a tavern, we had not been there a quarter of an hour, when she made an excuse for quitting the room, in about ten minutes she returned to me, expressing in the tenderest terms the satisfaction she had to see me again.

We were, as I believed, just going to sit down to supper, when the waiters came in followed by two of Sir John Fielding's men. Immediately, with the greatest coolness, Miss West arose, and laying her hand on my shoulder, exclaimed, "the Philistines be upon the, Sampson.—Gentlemen," continued she to the officers, "this is my good friend Mr. Francis H——, of whom you have been some time in search. Perhaps, Frank," continued she, "you do not know that your forgery is discovered, and that 100l. reward is offered for taking you, when I left the room just now it was to write a note to these gentlemen, signifying to them where you were to be found—I see you are terrified, but hear me for the last time, perhaps, and you will less wonder at my conduct. Early in life, Frank, I was betrayed to ruin by a base designing man; my reputation once blasted, I was deserted by all the virtuous part of my own sex; by having bad examples always before my eyes, I soon became hardened in sin and abandoned to shame. I have lately contracted debts; if they are not immediately discharged I shall be sent to jaol; this jaol I know not how to avoid but by sending you thither in my stead, as the reward offered for taking you will just set me free from my creditors."

I was struck motionless with terror, and fainted away on the officers approaching to tie my hands behind me; nor had I the least recollection of what passed, till I found myself safe locked in prison. About a week after this, the keeper came to tell me there was a prisoner lately brought in who was very desirous of seeing me, as she appeared an object of great pity, he offered to conduct me to her. On entering the chamber, I saw a young woman

very shabbily dressed, lying on a miserable bed, in a very weak condition.

“Dost thou not know me, Frank? (said she in a hollow broken voice)—Hast thou lost all remembrance of Patty Vincent.” I felt instantly as if struck with a thunderbolt. “Merciful heaven! (cried I, falling on my knees by the bedside) I am unable to bear the punishment my crimes have brought upon me! O God of mercy support my troubled soul.” She kindly urged me to be comforted, said she wished not to see me to reproach me for the evils I had brought upon her, but only to tell me with her last breath, that she forgave me. “It is not an hour since, Frank, (continued she) that I heard you were my fellow prisoner, and what is worse, at my father’s suit. I will not reproach you, Frank, I tell you again, for all the miseries you have brought upon me, because you are a prisoner and in chains. If my breath will hold out, I will endeavour to give you a short history of myself since we parted. On your refusing to make me your lawful wife, I quitted your lodgings, resolving by my labor to eat the bread of industry, rather than follow a course of vice for a wretched subsistence. I hired a garret in Holborn, where I applied for needle-work, and soon obtained it. In about three months after our separation, my infant came into the world. I sold my cloaths for my support during my confinement, but that resource soon failed me. My health and strength declined—I was seized with a constant fever and cough, and quite unable to supply the scanty morsel of bread for the day, yet resolved to die rather than afflict my dear parents with the knowledge of my misery. At length being too weak to labor, I contracted several small debts,

for which I was seized and brought hither. I have, however, since been prevailed upon to send my poor half famished baby to my parents, hoping they will afford her that bread which her dying mother dared not ask for herself," Observing I was speechless with agony, poor Patty, went on.—"I did not wish to see you, Frank, to afflict you, I wish only to warn you with my dying breath to repent the evil of your ways, and humble your soul before God. Repentance for sin, Frank, though bitter for a moment, yet I have found healthful to the soul, and however the wicked who are at ease, may deride the God who made them, yet the sighing and sorrowing heart will flee unto him, as the only present help in time of trouble—I shall very soon lay down my heavy burden of sickness and sorrow, and escape from a darksome prison, as I humbly trust to everlasting rest——O Frank! Frank! it is far safer to die a penitent in a gaol, than to live in a palace, with a heart untouched by God's grace."

Here she was interrupted by the unexpected entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent. O ye who shall hereafter read my story, drop a tear of pity at the agony I now endured! They no sooner beheld their child, than each by turns tenderly embraced her, assured her of their forgiveness, and gently chid her for having concealed herself so long, adding, that as a penitent child they would most gladly have received her, though they would have shunned her, if they found her living in prosperous wickedness. She thanked them, and said,

"Mourn not my death, my dearest parents, but rather rejoice that I die penitent for my transgression—and since I have received your blessing and forgiveness, I have but one favour more to ask in

life, which is, that you, my kind father, will extend your pity towards that young man," pointing to me. "O save him, if possible, from an ignominious death, and remember that my child is also his. My business in life is done, and now, O heavenly Father! receive my spirit, and pardon my sin, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer." Here her speech failed her, and after a few convulsive struggles she expired.

Great Heaven! is there any punishment for me to suffer hereafter beyond what I endured at the moment? A dread silence succeeded for some time, my groans only were heard. As soon as Mr. Vincent had somewhat recovered the shock, he raised himself from the body of his child, and spoke to me as follows:

"Behold, O young man, the calamities which thy crimes have brought on my family! Behold my departed child lying on the bosom of her fainting mother; yet I am not insensible to the agonies which rend thy soul, and sorry am I to add to them, by telling thee, thy excellent mother went out of her senses on hearing thou hast committed a crime by which thou hast forfeited thy life to the laws of thy country. O Frank! Frank! what deep distress can one profligate child bring on whole families! Thy crimes, alas! have brought on thy own destruction, for I fear it will not be in my power to befriend thee on thy trial, much as I am disposed to do it in consideration of thy relations. Too late, Frank, thou must now see how fatal an excessive love of pleasure must prove to a young tradesman. Honest industry is generally a sure road to wealth; as a sober religious life is to happiness. To thy cost thou must already have experienced, that the wicked can have no dependance upon each other,

since thou art betrayed and brought to shame by those very friends who first led thy youth astray."

"O, Sir," cried I, "few and evil have been my days, but the great God above, who knoweth the secrets of all hearts, can alone judge of the sorrows of mine; it is not, Sir, the punishment of death which I fear, but the just vengeance of offended Heaven which must follow it; for though a very young man, I am a very old sinner. Alas! my dear and honoured mother, is it then true that the crimes of your own child have robbed you of your senses? And yet the merciful hand of God has hitherto withheld his vengeance from striking me dead. To whom shall I fly for mercy and pity in my distress? from the law I cannot expect it, and from the offended Majesty of high Heaven, I dare not hope it, since my present punishment is but the certain wages of my sin." Here I am told I fell into strong convulsive fits, and in that condition was conveyed to my cell.

Written the night before my Execution,

It is a month since I was put on my trial, and my guilt being fully proved by the Court, I am condemned to hang by the neck till I am Dead!—Dead!

O, ye thoughtless young men, who have forsaken the God of Heaven to follow after the enticing pleasures of this world, attend to my words, as to those of a man speaking to you from the grave, since the dawn of that day is now breaking on the world in which I shall be numbered with the dead. Although, at the instant I write, I am in all the prime of youth, and all the vigour of health, I shall

this day die a just victim to the broken laws; and my precious soul may be consigned over to everlasting torments, unless the great judge of all things will be graciously pleased to accept my sorrow for my sin, through a gracious Redeemer.

My days are numbered, my hours are few, and the solemn tolling bell will soon be summoning me to meet my God in judgment. The convulsive struggles of death are already upon me before I reach the gallows, whereon I must shortly hang as a warning spectacle to gaping thousands, and from whence I must shoot the great gulph which parts

TIME FROM ETERNITY!

O, blessed Lord, have mercy on my soul!

The above story was found in the young man's pocket after his execution.

THE HYMN.

FATHER of light, O cleanse my stains,
 Look on a sinner vile;
 In dungeon dark, oppress'd with chains,
 Deign thou on me to smile.

Condemn'd to die by human laws,
 I own my sentence just,
 With mercy mild judge thou my cause,
 Who art my only trust.

Tho' great my crime and short my race,
 My faith and hope receive;
 Since souls enrich'd with pard'ning grace,
 With thee shall ever live.

Then farewell all beneath the skies,
 The sting of death is o'er;
 O may my trembling spirit rise,
 Where sin shall be no more.

THE END.