

The Diary

of

JOHN CASTLE

born Great Coggeshall, Essex, 1819,

founder-member of the

Colchester Co-operative Society, 1861

John Castle, 1819-1889:

Manuscript written 1871.

Original mss. is Essex County Record Office

Extracts (c. 15 pages) from his prison by Essex

Record Office is Essex People 1750-1900 (Ed. A.F.J.

Brown) 1972.

The capture manuscript was duplicated by Colchester
Co-op. Society c. 1961 for their centenary. There was

discussion then of publication of a facsimile

edition of the mss. See I have not been able to
trace when this occurred.

JB

I was born at Great Coggeshall in the Year 1819. My father was a native of Soulbury in Buckinghamshire, my mother of Coggeshall, in Essex. When I was the age of two years and a half my father returned to his native place, taking his family, four in number, with him. After residing a little over two years at Soulbury an attack of Inflammation of the body suddenly caused my fathers death, at the age of 27. My mother and family were left quite destitute and she being near another confinement. During the short time we lived at Soulbury our two sisters, Hannah and Eliza, died, my brother William was about seven years old, myself five. At the death of our father my mothers mother walked from Coggeshall to Soulbury, about 75 miles. When she arrived with my fathers sister from a place called Walkern, in Hertfordshire, he was buried when they arrived. After a few days stay they walked back, taking me with them, leaving my mother and brother behind. One month after my fathers death my mother was confined with a son, whom she named Issac. A few months afterwards my mother returned to Coggeshall. The parish allowed her seven shillings per week to bring us up. We were sent to the Church School on Sundays and to a womans day school. My mother, to get a living, went out as Nurse. At the age of eight I was sent to a writing school, where I filled only two copy books. At the age of nine I was sent to Messrs William and Charles Beckwiths Silk Factory to learn to be what was called a draw boy and to clean the silks ready for weaving. After a few years the Jacquard machine from France took the place of the draw boy machine. I still remained in the factory cleaning the silk for two weavers; one of these was taking his half-pints one day, I had cleaned up the silk ready for weaving and I thought I would try my hand at weaving having been so long in the factory. I had gained a knowledge of the principle and now thought I would practise. I got into the loom and was getting on first-rate, the foreman of the factory John Bartholomew, caught me at it and ordered me to go to the Woolpack and tell the weaver if he did not come to work he would discharge him. Two or three weeks after this the foreman, who used to fill up his time by weaving saw me at play with other boys and asked me if I had a father and mother. I told him I had no father. He asked me to clean his silk, I accordingly left one of the weavers to do his. I soon saw his motive, he told me to go into his loom and see what I could do. From that day I became a weaver at four shillings per week.

After a few months I had the care of a loom to myself, on condition that I earned 8d for my employer and 4d for myself, thus I was to pay dearly to learn weaving. A short time afterwards John Bartholomew died, leaving a widow and ten children. Mr. C. Beckwith took me for twelve months at sixpence out of each shilling; I earned.

This was about the year 1835. This year two very singular circumstances occurred which go to show how bad the drinking customs of our country are and how good it is to receive an education, although it be a poor one.

It was on a Saturday night, I think in the month of May. I had been walking about the town for hours with a male friend who said "Let us have just one half-pint before we part". This was about ten o'clock at night. We went into the Greyhound Tap, which we found full of men, some nearly intoxicated, among them was John Carter, who came up to me and asked me and my friend to go rooking with the party which had been formed for that purpose. He agreed to go, but did not intend to do so. We drank our beer and gave them the slip, as it is called. We had not asked which road they were going, my friend and I walked out to go home. Before we parted up came the rooking party, 8 or 10 in number. "Come on" was their cry. On we went up a road called Robins Bridge Road, and never shall I forget that night. As we drew near to the woods the nightingale sang her sweet notes, but they had no sweetness for me, I was conscious that I was in the wrong path. Just before we reached the gamekeepers' house we formed a circle and consulted what we were to do in case the keeper came upon us. We decided that we would not be taken. The keeper, whose name was J. Goodey, was no favourite. In Coggeshall some year before he killed a man and was tried and convicted only of manslaughter, through influence used in his favour, and sentenced to six months in jail. After agreeing not to be taken we stole by the keepers' house on tip-toe, at last we arrived at the Rookery, which was composed of very high firs from 50 to 60 feet in height. The night was dark. It was agreed that J. Carter and two other men were not to climb the trees, but to pick up the rooks and protect us if the keeper came. The keeper did not come, if he had God only knows what might have been done to carry out our resolution not to be taken. In our folly we might have murdered him. He must have been in a very deep sleep, or what occurred must have aroused him.

As soon as we entered the Rookery each one sought a tree to climb, I embraced a tree and had reached the top when my attention was aroused by hearing the cracking of boughs and the earth as it were shook. What was it? Why, one of our number had fallen from the top of a tree. Who was it? No one knew, no one thought for a moment that it was John Carter, as he agreed not to climb, being the worse for what he had taken. I descended the tree and expected to fall before I got to the bottom, when I reached the ground I heard some one say it was me. I heard as it were the cawing of young rooks. At last I heard a stifled voice say "Pullmy neck". We found it was J. Carter, he had fallen from top to bottom of the tree. His neck was pulled and it came into joint again, so that he could speak plain, and cried aloud "Rub me, there's good fellows, rub me". He rubbed his body but all to no purpose, he was completely paralysed, every limb had lost its use. We dare not carry him past the keepers' house, we took him in our arms, and he slipped about as if dead. We got as far as Jacksons' farm, called Hobbs, there we took a hurdle and covered it with stubble and laid him on it and raised it on to our shoulders. On we went across cut by Squire Hanburys' house till we came out into Braintree Road, nearly two miles from his home. Some times he cried aloud, at others we thought him dead. We arrived in the town about three in the morning, not

having seen a single person on the way. At last we came to his house; before we opened the door we agreed to tell his wife that he had been jumping over a gate and hurt his back, but she had learnt that he was gone rooking, and the first thing she said was "He will break his neck after those cursed rooks". She was not far out. We left the house and went to our homes. As far as I was concerned I felt like one that had done something very wrong, and so I had. In a few hours it was noised all over the town, the doctor was called in and Carter was expected to die before the day was out. He told the truth as to how it came about, and told the names of all that went with him. He did not die then, but lived to become an artist - yes to the Queen, but he never recovered the use of his limbs any more, his flesh all wasted off his bones, so that even small cushions had to be placed in his hands to prevent the finger nails growing through. We must leave him for a time.

A few months after this, about the end of Harvest, as I and my friend R. Seabrook were walking through the street, a youth by the name of S. Hardley came up to us, having a large dog by his side and a poor cat in his arms, he asked us to accompany him to a meadow called Crouchers to hunt the cat, we did so, and it was dark when we arrived. He put the cat down and signalled to the dog to seize it, the cat got into a thick hedge and was lost. Our wicked intentions were at an end, but God, in his overruling Providence had something for us to do. Everything was still, we were out of the noise of the town. I heard a sound as mournful as the cries of John Carter who a few months before had fallen from the tree. We felt convinced someone was in distress, we hunted the sound instead of the cat. First we went to Whites Rookery, it was not there, we turned to the left to an orchard in West Street, it was further towards Braintree. We went into the house of one T. Plumstead, a tanner, and told him what we could hear, he told us it was only the howling of a dog. The cries of J. Carter were still in my ears, so that I could hear no dog, but told my companions to follow me. On we went to the river side, it is the River Blackwater. At length we reached the spot from whence the sound for help came. What did we find? A dog? No. Our cat? No, an old man 60 years of age hanging by the grass, with his head above water. We seized his arms and drew him on to the grass. Who was he? It was dark we could not see him well enough to know him. In a few minutes, however, he came round and told us how he came there. His name was John Nicholas. He declared he was just about to let go his hold in despair and sink, his strength was gone, but no, his time was not yet come. He had been harvesting at a farm over the river; that night the men had been taking their supper or largess, as it is called. We led him home to the town.

When I look back on this event it seems almost incredible that we should hunt for nearly half an hour and nearly a mile from where we lost the cat. But every word I write is true. I did not see those things at the time in the same light as I see them now. We sought the life of a cat and saved the life of a man, a man whom I had known all my life - a man

who was not prepared to die. God in his mercy, spared him.

Soon after this an event occurred in the silk trade which caused a great change - Messrs W. and C Beckwith failed for a large sum, which stopped the trade, throwing nearly 100 out of employment. About this time great failures took place in America, causing the silk trade to be bad all over England. I was out some months, sometimes tramping to Halstead and then to Colchester to seek for employment. I called at the Royal Mortar, Military Road, Colchester, on Mr. Pain, foreman to Mr. Foot and got a promise of employment, but the trade got so bad he could not give me any, I returned home to Coggeshall penniless. My poor old mother would have gone without bread for me, but "I had a stepfather who grudged every mouthful I ate. My brother Williams was married and had one son, he was at his wits end to get bread to eat. At last our mother persuaded us to go to the Board of Guardians at Witham. We went and were asked questions about the parish of our father. We were sworn to our settlement, which was Soulbury, in Bucks, near Leighton Buzzard, in Bedfordshire. We were ordered back to Coggeshall with instructions to go to one C. Smith, a baker, who was overson at that time. We had plenty of bread for a week and then it was stopped, we were told to get work or go into the Union Workhouse at Witham. To get work was out of the question, so we packed up next morning, determined to see it out, we had nothing to lose. We arrived at Chipping Hill Union, before dinner, produced our order and were admitted. We were not the first lot from Coggeshall, there were several families belonging to our shopmates. One James Cox and his wife had become bakers. As soon as they saw us they gave us a hint to put our names in as Dissenters, although he was grave-digger at Coggeshall Church and we had been brought up to the Established Church, yet we turned Dissenters because the church was close to the door of the Union. The Chapel was in Witham Street, a long way off, this gave us a good walk every Sunday.

The first day after dinner we were ordered to strip and put on the regimentals of the Union, which were composed of a pair of thick leather breeches, leather coat, low shoes, ribbed stockings, and a hairy cap with peak. I could but smile at the appearance of my brother, who was very thin, his small clothes hung about his legs. This day made me think of the words of my mother, she had often remarked - "Ah, boy, as you make your bed so you must go to it". This came true literally that day, we were ordered to go to work in a factory where stood two machines, one named the Devil the other a carding machine. Old carpets were brought to us very greasy, we cut them into ribbons and fed the Devil, who tore them into a thousand pieces. We then took them to the carding machine, put them through it, and they came out first rate flocks. Whilst we were doing this some of our shopmates were set to sew up some bed-teanings and we had a capital flock bed, as we did not forget to put plenty of flocks into it. The work in this factory was very dusty.

The next day some one was wanted to clean boots, shoes, knives and so on, this situation I obtained, and thought it a promotion, to say nothing of the emoluments I obtained. I used to come in for a few nubbles, as we called them, which broke off the loaves of bread as they came out of the oven, these were a great relish to a hungry youth of 17. When work was done we had a large room with good fire, and about 30 or 40 of us sat round it, some talking of the days gone by and wondering where the end of this poverty would take us, others were singing or making a poor half-witted man sing, none of us seemed to be thinking that the cloud we so much dreaded was big with blessings, in fact it was a blessing that we could not see the roughness of the road we had got to travel. The days passed on.

One circumstance worth noting occurred whilst here, I was asked to stand godfather to a child whose father was in Chelmsford Gaol, by the name of James Collins. I looked upon it as a mere ceremony as no doubt thousands do, it gave me a short holiday and a pint of beer, and it passed off. I never remember seeing the child afterwards, yet I promised and vowed three things in its name. I was ignorant of the sin I was committing.

After remaining at Chipping Mill Workhouse 14 days orders came that I and my brother, his wife and child, were to start the next morning on the Coggeshall coach for Soulbury, in Buckinghamshire. We took off our regimentals and put our own clothes on, and walked seven miles to Coggeshall. We spent the night with our relatives. The next morning which I think was the 7th of February, 1837, we all started on the coach for London, under the care of a Mr. Goodey, who was a parish officer. The weather was bad - it snowed part of the way. We arrived in London after five hours ride in the cold. But our conductor was a jolly fellow when the coach arrived at the Saracens Head, Aldgate, he ordered a good beefsteak dinner. After partaking of this meal we started for Wood Street, Cheapside, to take the coach for the Shires. Whilst waiting in the street to listen to some music, of which I was very fond, who should I see but my old employer, Mr. Charles Beckwith, whose house was in Wood Street, he saw us and kindly enquired our business, and gave us a shilling, which was a large sum in our estimation then. We took coach but beheld our guide had made a great mistake or I might say he had made a "Coggeshall job" of it, as you shall see before my tale is ended. And we went for 40 or more miles, and we found ourselves at Aylesbury, when we ought to have been at Leighton Buzzard, we had travelled that day close upon 90 miles. Our guide spoke for three beds. Whilst at supper we learnt that Aylesbury was a silkmanufacturing town in a small way. Before our guide was up next morning my brother and myself went to the foreman and asked for employment. He spoke very kindly to us, but had no work for his own weavers. He had our Breakfast and then Mr. Goodey told us what a fix he was in - we had nine or ten miles to go and there was no conveyance, it was a cross road.

He asked us if we felt inclined to walk it?. This was out of the question, as my brother's wife had a young child and also some luggage, besides our guide was a man of about 15 or 16 stone. This would have been too much luggage for him to carry. Well what think you? He hired a post chaise with post lad to take us to Soulbury and himself back to Aylesbury. On we went in grand style till we arrived at the Old Boot at Soulbury. Serious thoughts began to arise as we drew near the Church where our father's body was buried - the place we had left 12 years. He was delivered up to Mr. Durrant, the Guardian of Soulbury, and our guide bade us fare well. After a little refreshment we were told to walk to Leighton Buzzard Union, which was nearly three miles off. We arrived at the iron gates just at dusk, rang the bell, and were ushered into a building which appeared more like a gaol than anything I could imagine.

My brother was parted from his wife and child, and a sad night it must have been for a young woman so soon after marriage, to be so far from home and among strangers, it was not so bad for me and my brother, we slept together. The building is four square - the front was the Board Room, Relieving Officer's and Porters houses, the back, Master's house and store tooms, left side for women and children and warehouse, right side for men and boys. On the top of the Master's house was a cistern, which had to be pumped full every few days, a stone balcony ran down left and right leading to the bedrooms, which had brick flooring. The Union was but just finished building as we arrived. We were set to work in a gravel pit to get gravel and make paths round the Union, we had to form a round hill in front and two triangles. Inside the house was an oven to bake all the bread. One evening the baker called for some one to assist him draw the bread, I and my brother went. There a Providential circumstance occurred which was a turning-point in my life. The baker hearing us talk said "you are Essex people, I know, by your brogue, how came you here?" I told him my father was a native of Soulbury, "What name?" he asked, I told him "John Castle" "Why I knew him", he said, "he died some years back", he also added "You have two first cousins living in this town, the son and daughter of old Roger Hedgecock, who married your father's eldest sister Maria. This sounded as a fable, for we had never heard that our father had a sister Maria. But the news was no more strange than true. He added "I sold a side of pork and a sack of potatoes to-day to George, your cousin". He promised to inform them, A day or two after, George Hedgecock came down to the Union and asked to see us, but could not do so without an order. He told the baker to tell us to go to the Wesleyan Chapel on Sunday, where he was a member and a class leader. Accordingly on Sunday morning, as soon as the porter let us out for Church we turned off the road leading to that building, and the porter told us we were going wrong. I told him jokingly that the Church Clergyman were such poor preachers that we were going to Chapel. We reached the Methodist Chapel and took our seats upon the gallery, on looking round I saw a man in the body of the chapel whom I pointed out, telling my brother that I thought this man might be our cousin, as I thought there was a family likeness.

After the sermon was over we were passing out of the Chapel yard when this very man touched me on my shoulder and asked my name I told him, and he said "Is that your brother and his wife?" I replied "Yes" he asked me to go home with him to dinner, I replied "I dare not absent myself from the Union, or I might be turned out" little did I dream that before many weeks it would be my lot to be turned out of a Workhouse. He then told us to get leave from Mr. Bromley, the Master, for the afternoon and evening. Never shall I forget the joy I felt at finding so kind a relative in a strange land - one who was not above us in our low estate. We went to his house and met his wife and eight children. After a short stay of an hour he suggested that I should put on a suit of his clothes and go with him to see his sister, Sarah Grace, for that was her name. We spent a comfortable afternoon and were invited to go and see them every opportunity we could get. About a week after this we had a day's holiday with rations to go and spend the day at the village where our father was buried. The grave was pointed out to us by an old la who knew us when children. When standing over the grave I thought what would my poor mother give to stand here? she was nearly 100 miles off. We returned back to our mansion.

The Clergymans' name who was Chariman of the Board of Guardians and Rector of Hedgerley parish and also a Justice of the Peace was Wroth, and as you, dear reader, shall soon know, he poured out his wrath on me. As I said before, we were set to dig up the front of the Union, which was so trodden down and hard that we had to loosen the ground with a mattock before we could use a spade. My brother, just before leaving Coggeshall had the scarlet fever badly, and was now anything but strong. Our diet, also, was not calculated to give him nor me strength. We had 7 ozs. of bread and about one pint of skilley for breakfast, for dinner, about three potatoes 4 ozs. of meat and 2 ozs of bread, at night, 8 ozs of bread and 2 ozs of Common Dutch cheese - making 17 ozs of bread per day. Well one afternoon as we were working outside Mr. Wroth was going into the Union I suppose to preach what is called the Gospel, he stopped when he got to us "Well, young men" he said, "You are not gone home yet" "No Sir" was our reply, my poor brother just at that moment was standing upright. He said to my brother, "Go on with your work, you are lazy" my brother never spoke, not so with me, I spoke to my sorrow, I looked him in the face, feeling indignant at my brother being so unkindly treated, I said, "We do not have food enough, Sir, to do this hard work" no doubt I spoke rather hastily. He said to me, "Do you know who I am? I am a magistrate and will send you to gaol for insolence" I said no more, but picked away. He went into the house and told the Master. At night Mr. Bromley said "What have you been saying to Mr. Wroth?" I replied "The truth, and nothing more, I told him we did not have food enough to do the hard work outside". He remarked "He would send you to gaol as soon as he would look at you, the Guardians are afraid of him" I said "I am not afraid of him or any other man when I speak the truth". The following day a Quaker, named

Reeves, Guardian for Leighton Buzzard parish, came to me and very kindly said "thee should not have said what thee did to Mr. Wroth" I told him I did not think it any harm to speak the truth. I could have eaten my own and brother's meals any day except the day I first saw my new-found cousin whose kindness was a great contrast to Mr. Wroth. Well Friday came, the day for the Board of Guardians to meet. Mr. Culverhouse the porter, called out "John Castle come before the Board" I looked at my brother, expecting to be sent to gaol by this great man. Such was not the case, but something that seemed at that time even worse. I was taken by the Relieving Officer and placed in front of the table. Mr. Wroth addressed me thus:- "Young man, we believe you are lazy, or you would not be in a Union" I challenged him to write to my late employer, but he would not let me speak, but like a wicked oppressor he sentenced me to be expelled the Union, at 9 o'clock next morning, with the sum of four shillings, I made an effort to ask him what I was to do, nearly 100 miles from my mother, with 4/- "Take him out" was his reply. I was not allowed to speak, but pulled out of the room by Mr. Meeton, the Relieving Officer, who told me going down the stairs to go for a soldier! My heart failed within me, and I wept at the thought of being sent adrift in a far-off country.

But God had provided for the fatherless according to his word of promise I was conscious that I had done nothing worthy of this sad punishment. Trade was still bad. I had no real home to go to, having a stepfather who grudged every mouthful I ate at his expense. Only 17 years old, I felt as though I were in a foreign land. Well, the next morning came it was April 1st, 1837, I was ordered to the front gate before doing so I bade farewell to my brother's wife, who wept, my brother was allowed to go to the front gate with me. The 4/- was handed to me, I took it and passed out of the gate. Again I was told to go for a soldier, I told the Relieving Officer, I should not, as I had a trade and was willing to work if I could get it to do. I also told him when I had spent the 4/- I should be brought back again. He said "We wont have you" I told him he nor any one else could help themselves if I had justice, I shook hands through the iron gates with my brother and never shall I forget that moment, my sorrow was more than I could bear. I wept bitterly I had half a mile to get to the town, I lingered about till I could get composed, but my eyes seemed swollen in my head. At length I reached my Cousin George Hedgcock's house, as I entered the door he said "Whats the matter, John?" I could not speak, but sat down, laid my head on his table, and again wept, I fancy I hear his voice now, "Trust to Providence, there will be a way made out for you John" these were his kind words, I told him my tale, and he suggested that I should go to London and find out my fathers sister Alice, who had married one James Dakin, some 25 years previously. This aunt I had never heard of until I found out my cousin. My courage returned, I started off at once to go to Soulbury to see my Guardian, Mr. Durrant, who promised to do all he could for us when we left, I called on old friend Reeves the Quaker, he told me he could not do anything contrary to the order of Mr. Wroth.

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but he gave me a shilling. This made 5/- I went on till I arrived at Soulbury at the sign of the Boot I found my Guardian with another farmer I told him my sorrowful tale as he was not at the Board when I was sentenced to be turned out, he gave me sixpence and his companion gave me sixpence as you see the Quaker was the best friend. I did not have to go to the Boot to find him, so that he could afford to give me double what the others did. Mr. Durrent persuaded me to go to all the farmers in the parish. I asked him to write me out a note to authorize me to beg, but he as good as told me he feared Mr. Wroth. I went round till I had made my 4/- up to 10/- on going to one farm house the good woman told me I had been there before that day. I was not aware that I had, I gave her a gentle hint that I had been about till I felt hungry. She took the hint and got me a good "stull" of bread and port very fat. This I ate with thankfulness, and then returned to Leighton Buzzard.

The next day was Sunday, I had an interview with my brother and his wife as they came to church, in the evening I saw David Grace, my cousin Sarahs husband, who promised to get me a side by the wagon to London. He was a blacksmith and shoed the wagon horses. He spoke to the wagoner I left Leighton Buzzard on Tuesday afternoon, taking with me part of a loaf of bread. I had threepence in coppers besides 10/- in silver. The weather was so cold that I preferred to walk a great part of the way. The distance was 41 miles. We arrived in London about 3 or 4 o'clock on Wednesday morning, on reaching Smithfield the wagoner went into a night house to settle with a young man who accompanied the wagon, he said to me when I came out "You and I will settle" I could not understand him, as he had told me on starting that my cousin had settled with him, I also thought I had no money to spare, not knowing how long I might have to live on 10/- I began to learn the value of money so I walked down the first street I came to leaving the wagoner taking his drops.

I wandered about London for hours just before daylight I found myself looking at a large Church, I enquired of a policeman what it was. He told me "St. Pauls" I walked to and fro till the clock struck five, expecting the sound would stun me, almost but found it was not quite up to what I had been led to expect, I next found myself on London Bridge, from there I enquired my way to Tower Street at 7 o'clock I was in front of No. 6 Barking Churchyard, over the shop was written "James Dakin, Tailor". This was the house of my fathers sister whom I had never seen, neither had she ever seen me, the old gent was sitting cross legged in the shop window, I knocked, in his Yorkshire brogue he said "Come in, lad, who do you want?" "Mrs. Dakin" was my reply, "Is she any relation?" he asked, I told him "Aunt" "Is your name Castle"? "Yes" was my answer, "John". My aunt soon came down stairs, and she said at first-sight "You are my brother Johns son" and she wept. She took me on one side and questioned me, I told her I was a silk weaver at which she expressed her sorrow, because the trade was so bad, there were supposed to be eight thousand out of

employment in Spitalfields, I rested for that day, not having had any sleep all night, the next day she took me round to the Cheesemongers and other shops to get me a porters place, but could not succeed, she at last said "I know an old lady in Spitalfields who has a Silk Factory, she will give you work". We went to a Mrs. Owens, New Montague Street, Brick Lane, when we got there we found it was winding and not weaving carried on there. My Aunt was disappointed and so was I but Mrs. Owens said she had an old man at work who was too old for it, and if I did not mind it she would give me 10/- per week and one pint of porter per day, but does he understand horses? she asked, my aunt told her I had been staying at a cousins in Bedfordshire where a horse was kept, and that I understood a little about them. True, it was a little, for I had never cleaned a horse in my life, I had led my cousins through the street once. This was Thursday evening and it was agreed that I should enter my new situation on Monday morning.

I cannot describe the sensation I felt at the thought of living in London, I suggested to my aunt, as my mother did not know I had left Leighton Buzzard, that I would walk down to Coggeshall and back in the three days. Truly I shall never forget it I left Tower Hill at 5 o'clock on Friday morning, and reached Romford at eight, where I had my breakfast, so determined was I of reaching Coggeshall on that day, I got to Chelmsford by one o'clock, but before reaching that place the old Wellington Coach passed me I thought there was a chance to get a ride, I hung on behind - but some unfeeling man knocked my hat off, I let go my hold and came down on the hard road upon my knees, cutting through trousers and grazing my knees, I got up nothing daunted, and marched on. On reaching Chelmsford I was so foot sore that I feared to sit down to eat, I stood and got my dinner off bread and cheese and beer, I had then fifteen miles to go. On one heel I had a large blister which prevented me putting it on the ground, When passing Springfield Gaol an old man from Coggeshall passed me with an empty cart, he had come from Chelmsford Market, I asked him to give me a lift but he refused, either from hardness of heart or he did not know me, I had known him for years. Well on I went, hobbling along, about seven o'clock at night I reached Little Coggeshall, just by the mill belonging to Mr. Barnard stood a thatched cottage, where there lived an old man by the name of Cheek, this old man had a daughter Mary - this Mary I was courting, I called at the old house and rested for an hour, and took a little refreshment then went on to my mothers at Great Coggeshall - arriving there about nine o'clock she was gone to bed. I knocked at the door, she let me in, but scarcely believed it to be me, as she did not know I had left the Union. I had not written to her for this reason - a letter from Leighton Buzzard cost tenpence, from London eightpence. After she had asked me a few questions about my brother and I had told her what a good situation I had got in London, I retired to bed, having walked 45 miles that day.

Next day, Saturday, I spent visiting a few friends, and on Sunday morning I made another start for London, foolish enough to think I could

walk 45 miles that day, poor old Cheek the Thatcher and the Thatchers Daughter walked to Witham with me, this was seven miles, I was so foot sore I could not get further, Well, what was to be done? to London I must get by night, as I began my new duties at six next morning I had 7/- left out of the ten I started with from Leighton Buzzard with, so you will see dear friend, I had learnt one lesson - the value of money, for I eked it out as the boy did his good manners, But now I was bound to make a great hole, not in my manners, but in my money, the old Wellington Coach came up, I got on the right way this time, who dared to knock my hat off, now? Two days before I was a poor foot-sore tramp, now I had become a passenger on the old Wellington. The coachman charged me five shillings to ride to Romford, for I thought after a rise of 25 miles I could manage to walk the 12 or 13 it was to Tower Hill.

Well, good bye, Mary, the old Thatchers Daughter, and the old Thatcher who was very kind, the coachman snapped his whip and off we went not to a Workhouse this time, but to that great City to be a porter and clean horses and turn a wheel in a Silk Factory and make myself useful. Well we arrived at Romford about dinner time, the coachman had taken more that the proper number of passengers. I asked him to let me ride all the way to London, but he very kindly told me he could not, as he was too full and I had only booked to Romford. However, he knocked off - but not my hat - he knocked off one shilling of the fare, only taking 4/- I took refreshment and made a start, but a very slow one - it took me till nine o'clock at night to get to London, twice I sat down on a heap of stones by the roadside and had a dose. At last I found my self at Barking Churchyard, Tower Hill. I went to bed, but felt too tried to rest. Well at five I had to get up to reach Spitalfields at six I soon forgot my past trials, the change seemed so great and just suited to me, as I was fond of the idea of living in London I succeeded well in my new situation, got used to the stable work by little, cleaned the horse and got used to driving by degrees.

I had only been in London a short time when the Death of King William the Fourth was announced. This put my horsemanship to the test. I was sent by Mrs. Owen's foreman, Alec Ross to take a horse to Brentford, he was going next day to Windsor to see the King buried, and he wanted this horse to be left at his sister's at Brentford, he rode down on another and changed taking the one I took down to Windsor. I started at six over-night, walking my horse through the streets of London, when I came to a cab-stand at Knightsbridge the cabbies could see I was no horseman they gave my horse a taste of the whip and down I came on to the road they laughing at the fun - it was no fun for me. I got safely to Brentford without broken bones. I thought of Johnny Gilpins noted ride. I was treated to a good supper and started back on foot, I had 12 mile to walk. When I got to Piccadilly a Hackney Coach passed me with two horses. The driver asked me if I could drive? I said "a little" "Jump up", he said, he put the reins in my hands and said "Drive to the Haymarket Theatre"

he got inside with a friend, on I drove, he putting his head out of the window sometimes to direct me. At last I arrived at the Haymarket he got out with his friend, thanked me and I found my way to the Tower about 12 O'clock at night, for this journey I received 2/6.

After being at my situation a short time I sent for the old Thatcher's Daughter, she being a silk winder and having no employment was glad to come to London, and it was company for me, but it did not last long, I found out she had not remained faithful during my absence from Coggeshall. She possessed a very jealous temper and was offended if I passed a joke with the winders in our Factory. After a few months we parted company and she soon returned home to Coggeshall. About this time one of the men at Mrs. Owen's had to leave and go into the Hospital, I then got promoted to be head porter at 14/- per week and to sleep on the premises. I had at this time a suit of clothes made to order, cost five pounds and used to drive the family out on Sundays, sometimes down to Epping Forest or Woodford, nearly every day I had to go up to 19, Friday Street, to Messrs Bridges, Campbell and Harrison's to fetch silk for the winders. Mrs. Owen was their silk winder by contract I will leave these gentlemen, who were large manufacturers, and who about this period made a dress for our Maiden Queen, which she wore at the Guildhall when she dined with the Lord Mayor.

We will leave this firm for ten or twelve years and then see what God has wrought in his good Providence for me, when I had been at my place over twelve months I had a great desire to go and see my cousin George Hedgcock at Leighton Buzzard. One Sunday I got leave of Mrs. Owen for the day and started at eight o'clock from Euston Square Station reaching Leighton Buzzard about ten or half-past. I made my way to the Wesleyan Chapel I entered and stood for a minute when my Cousin saw me and beckoned me into his pew and whispered "When did you come down"? I went home with him and they over-persuaded me to stay till Monday night, I did so. On Monday I paid a visit to the Union Workhouse, but in a different character from the one I was expelled with, I pulled the bell out came poor old Culverhouse, the Porter, bowing at me, thinking I suppose, I might be some Inspector, I smiled at him and said "Don't you know me, Culverhouse?" "Well I declare" he said "It is William is it not?" "No" I said "it is John," he shook hands and said "Come in, Mr. Bromley will be glad to see you", and so he was. They all shook hands and the Master took me into the men's ward there I saw several faces I knew, but they had forgotten the youth who about 18 months before was turned out for defending his brother William. I made myself known to them, gave them a few pence and bade them farewell, never to see their faces again, I returned to London - "but where was my brother William and his wife whom I left in this Union", you will say "What became of them" only one week after the Board turned me out they gave him one sovereign to quit. He took it and his wife and child and travelled on foot across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, through Bishop Stortford, Durnow, Braintree on to Coggeshall and went to work in a brickfield for one

shilling per day. When I had been in London a few months I got him employment at his trade. He went to weave damask down at Twig Folley, Bethnal Green.

Having drawn from the Osborn Street Brick Lane Savings Bank the few shillings I had been able to save, I sent for my mother, who came up to London and stayed three weeks with my brother. After I got promoted to 14/- per week and lived on the premises I found the hours too many - up at half-past five winter and summer, horse and stable to clean, several fires to light, just as it was time to get breakfast I was called to pack silk and put horse to and be at 19, Friday Street by nine o'clock with silks, because our Mr. Ross was a drunkard and seldom missed one night in the week being intoxicated. Many a night after working 15 hours I have been ordered to take the key of the door and find him up-sometimes at one publichouse and sometimes at another, but mostly in Whitechapel. Then he would order me to take a pint of porter and wait for him, getting in about 12 O'clock, often so tired that I have lain down outside the bed, too tired to undress till I had had a sleep, which often lasted till five in the morning. This went on for two years.

One day I met one Stephen Claudius Leveque, a Frenchman, whom I had known at Coggeshall, he came from France to teach our weavers how to work the Jacquard Machine. "How are you getting on John?" he enquired, I told him I had too many hours to work, and was almost knocked over. He persuaded me to go to my trade and said he had got a loom's work (a foot figure to cover buttons) on which I could earn 30/- per week. I believed him and gave notice to leave my place in a week. I left Mrs. Owen and went to the Frenchman, I found out when too late that his wife had been trying to make it but could not get on, it was rough Bengal silk. I could only just get bread and butter and tea and pay him 4/- per week for loom and winding.

After a while I had no more at his, I got work at Bethnal Green for Ratcliff and Dicking at one W. Jennings, I prospered so well that I thought I would take a trip down to Coggeshall to see my mother and friends. I went on a fish wain. I stayed in Coggeshall a few days during which time I visited John Carter who had fallen from the rook tree, what did I find? He had become an artist and could write as well with his mouth as any schoolmaster. A friend of his had made him a small desk, so that books could be laid on it and he could read them. One day he was reading the history of a young woman who had lost the use of her limbs and could write with her mouth the thought struck him that he would try with his mouth. His wife got him some paper and a pencil and put the paper on the desk and pencil in his mouth, and thus God blessed not the work of his hands but the work of his mouth, and he at last became such an artist that the Queen and the Queen Dowager also had a picture each presented to them drawn by his mouth, for which they sent him £10.

I must take farewell of him for awhile and return to London after a pleasant visit to Coggeshall. Things went middling for a few months longer in London, all at once Ratcliff and Dicking failed and my prosperity failed with them. Weaving got bad again and at last I began to feel the pangs of hunger. I will remember one morning I had only one half-penny left and no food, I thought of a plan to get work, as I supposed I put on my rough clothes that I used to work in the stable with and went down to the East India Dock to try my hand as a dock labourer, but after a long walk in the rain I found the Dock yard full if labourers and nothing to do. I was about to leave the Docks in despair and hunger when my eye caught sight of a sailor talking to a carman, I overheard him say to the sailor "I will take you for three shillings", and he left him. I went up to the sailor and asked him where he wanted to take him for 3/-. At first he would not answer me, I told him I was hard up and wanted a job and he told me he had just arrived from America and was going home to Worthing and wanted to go to the Elephant and Castle to take coach, I offered to carry his hammock and show him all the way for one shilling. He gladly accepted my services and gave me some ale. Off we started like brothers, chatting all the way. We arrived at the Elephant and Castle before I was aware of it, he called for bread and cheese and porter and we dined together, I bade him farewell and went home worth one shilling. The next day I got some weaving.

Soon after this one morning I met the postman he handed me a letter to say that my brother had been to Colchester at the request of my poor old mother, and engaged for a loom's work of satin for me, and had bargained for a loom and even hired two rooms. All this they had done without my knowledge or consent. They did not know but what I had work, it so happened that I was out of employment. This seemed to me strange at the time, but after my eyes became opened I could see a good Providence in it, I took leave of my Aunt and Cousins Jane, Hannah, James and John Darkin also of Mrs. Owen, my old mistress and the winders who respected me. Mrs. Owen gave me tenpence, I believe that was the sum, I left then promising to return to London in six months. While I am writing it is over 31 years since I promised this, but I never returned to live in London.

I left London on the Sunday morning by railroad the Great Eastern, as it is now called was only 12 miles long-it only reached to Romford then. I walked from Romford to Coggeshall that day, 32 miles, the next day I proceeded to Colchester and went up to the Royal Mortar to Mr. Elson, Messrs Henderson and Arundles foreman, he told me where by loom was and my two rooms. In a day or two I received my cane and began to weave satin in Colchester and to be a housekeeper, I bought one chair, one table and a bed, also one saucepan all on trust. Thus I lived for two years getting on well.

I had not been in Colchester long before I became acquainted with the housemaid of Mr. Newell a solicitor of Colchester. We had kept company

about 15 months when she was sent into the Hospital, and the doctors pronounced her in deep decline, the physician said she must leave the Hospital - if she lived till the Thursday week it was as much as she would. I consulted her aunt, who lived at service in the town, and lodgings were taken for her by this aunt at Thomas Seaborn's over North Bridge. To this place she was removed, but was not expected to live. I went to see her every night, she was attended by Messrs Nunn and Son, surgeons, but no improvement seemed to take place, neither did she die at the time named. Doctor Nunn had a son-in-law by the name of Blyth, who took her in hand he sent a blister to be put on her left breast and ordered it to be kept on till he called, he came and asked to look at it, he turned it up at one corner, so as to get a hold, and rent it off, skin and all. This was cruel, to all outward appearance, but it set her on her legs again. The cough she was the subject of seemed to come from there, and he ordered it to be kept open. In a week or two her cough left her and she gained strength. Her friends began to get tired. She had no mother, her father was left with ten children, she was the eldest. Her name was Elizabeth Sandford, from Great Waldingfield, Suffolk, the daughter of a ploughman. She had been very kind to her father and her brothers and sisters so that she was quite destitute of money when overtaken by affliction. Her friends persuaded her to call on the parish, she consented, believing that she belonged to St. Mary-at-the-Walls, Colchester, having lived at Mr. Bolton Smiths, wine merchant. Mr. Roger Nunn being a magistrate, she was sworn to her settlement, and it turned out she belonged to Waldingfield, Suffolk, where her father lived. One night when I went to see her, as I thought the Relieving Officer had taken her to the Sudbury Board of Guardians and they settled 3/- per week on her to go and live with her father, I was not at all sorry to think if I ever married her I must take her off the parish. She had been very high-minded and proud, not willing to marry till she had a house such as a silk weaver could not afford, but God knew how to bring down pride, and he brought her down so that she was glad to be in a low place - even the wife of a weaver. She had been home nine days when I walked over to Waldingford on the Saturday afternoon, about 16 miles, I found her improving in health but her father was far from well, I selpt with him that night. He came in on the Sunday morning quite upset a farmer by the name of Vince had blown out his brains, this seemed to play very much upon poor Sandford, I returned to Colchester on the Monday morning. I went again in a fortnight he was getting worse, his daughter was well enough to wait upon him, he expressed a wish to see me marry his daughter so I put in the banns of marriage at the Church I went down every week to escape being published in Colchester. The last Sunday of being published I rode down with her Aunt Chignall. I thought of marrying on the Monday week, but when I went to the bedside of poor Sandford he had death set in his face, his eye-strings seemed broken. The Clergyman advised me to stop and marry next day, as it would be better to go from a wedding to a funeral than from a funeral to a wedding.

We married next day, her father died the very day we intended to marry. When we came from the Church we went up to his bedside and his daughter placed her hand with the wedding ring on to his eyes, he tried to speak, but we never knew what he said. He died and left my wife in charge of the children, the youngest being a boy about eight years old. I agreed for my wife to stay till after the funeral, but advised her to let the parish take charge of all the children. To my surprise she brought a brother and sister home to my house - the Parish Officer had persuaded her, and she had 2/6 each per week to feed and clothe them, she had always had a mother's feeling for them since her mother's death, therefore I could not say anything to her. Her health continued middling for some months, but it soon got bad again during those trials, and I might say they had scarcely began, I was awakened to a deep sense of my state as a sinner and felt should I be called to die that I must be lost for ever. I took to going to Strickwell Street Chapel to hear Mr. Joseph Herrick. When married I took seats there for my wife and self, and we both joined as members. I used to listen with earnestness, hoping to hear something that would inform me how such a sinner as I could be saved. I was ready to go through fire, if so be I could be saved. Sometimes on Sunday morning Mr. Herrick's preaching seemed to give me hope - at other times it drove me to despair. I was told to pray and attend the means. I used to do all these even four times a day all this did not give me peace. At length my eyes were opened to see Jesus Christ as the only way to God, and I could only feel safe when my mind was led to trust in him for pardon and justification. I found my best doings to be bad as compared to God's holy law, and the thoughts of foolishness were sin to me, so that my poor feeble prayers had many foolish thoughts in them which condemned me sometimes. I went to hear different preachers - some preached "that Christ had done His part and we must do ours, or we could not be saved", some said "We may be a child of God to-day and in hell to-morrow", these things tormented me. One Sunday morning I well remember Joseph Herrick was preaching and he made use of an expression I shall never forget - "Some", he said "preach a child of God to-day in hell to-morrow - this he said, "is a damnable doctrine, whom loves He loves to the end", I was glad to hear this, as it gave me hope, I said "I will hope in his mercy, his free grace alone can save a sinner like me" He bore our sins in His own body on the cross, I found

For sinners like me,

He died upon the tree.

My mind was led to ask "How comes it about that one man preaches so diametrically opposite to the other?" Mr. Herrick pronounced the Arminian doctrine damnable, Mr. Someone else preached quite the contrary. Truly I had learnt that God was of one mind and he spoke and it stood fast for ever. "How", thought I, "can these men be taught of God to contradict each other?" I was reading in the Acts of the Apostles that Judaizing teachers had even crept in among the disciples of Christ after His death and taught that to be saved it was necessary to be circumcised and keep

the law - Acts XV., 1 - 31. These things confirmed me in the faith. I rejoiced as did the disciples of old, but the confusion of tongues I could not reconcile. I was forced to come to a decision that something was radically wrong in sect and party religion - truly God could not be the author of such confusion of tongues.

My wife, Elizabeth was taken worse about this time, and gradually sank. Her little brother Isaac I had sent to several schools, but he did not know the alphabet. I found it best to keep him at home, he learnt nothing at school, I undertook to teach him, I bought him a small spelling book and set him one letter per day to learn or no dinner - unless he had learnt that one letter before dinner time, then dodging him till he very soon knew the 26 letters - such a deep impression was made on my mind as to the importance of education that I should have considered it a shame on my part to have any one under my care without learning to read and write. After he had learnt his letters I put him to spelling about three words per day, and in less than twelve months he could read the New Testament, so that he learnt the first chapter of Hebrews by heart and read it to Mr. Herrick and then said it without the book. The girl was the eldest, she was never well, Abscess broke out on her legs and she was in the Colchester Hospital a good while. My wife got so bad that I could scarcely work the noise of my loom in the house seemed too much for her. Some times I was at my wits end to know how to get the bread that perisheth - but the Lord God who careth for his children often opened a way in the desert for us. Once we were reduced to the last penny, but there was one pound due from Sudbury Union for the two children. My wife was too ill to allow me to leave home, as I had done several times before I had walked from Colchester to Waldingfield and back in the day, a distance of 32 miles to fetch the money due. It was about five o'clock one morning we were talking about how we should manage, only one penny left, when someone struck the bedroom window with a whip. I opened the window and found it was Mr. Sargent, the Overseer of Waldingfield, he had to come to Colchester for coal and thought we might be glad of the money, I thought of Elijah and the ravens. Many such deliverances I had which made my heart praise the goodness of the Lord. I used often to say as the Psalmist said "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness to the children of Men". My wife blessed God that He had spared her so long, she became quite convinced that had she died when turned out of the Hospital she was on a false foundation, she had been taught simply to believe in Christ, take the Sacrament as it is called, and go to heaven, not a word as Christ taught Nicodemus "That ye must be born again". The people from Mr. Herrick's were very kind to us in our affliction. When my wife got wholly confined to bed my mother came over from Great Coggeshall to nurse her. At last the time drew near that she was to quit this world in a far better, as she said. Over fourteen days and nights we watched her, expecting every hour her last, I was worn out and ill myself, a few hours before she died she would have me go to bed, I rested from 2 a.m. till 5 a.m. and was then called to see her depart. She tried to sing, I asked if she still felt happy in Christ? "Happy, happy", she whispered, and her

spirit took its flight without a struggle. She was buried in Stockwell Chapel yard, she died Jan. 17th, 1844.

I became a widower at the age of 24, after this my health began to mend. The silk trade was good. I soon began to improve in circumstances, having a house and my wife's brother I could not get on without a woman in the house; I hired a woman as housekeeper at 1/- per week and food and lodgings. I soon found everything going to ruin - bad washing, bad bread. I consulted Mr. Herrick, and he advised me if I found anyone suitable, the best thing would be to marry again. I had thought it would be a long time before I should think of such a thing, but I found "the thought of men to be vain" I was at St. Peters Church one Thursday evening, as was the custom of Mr. Herrick himself some times, to hear Mr. Carr, after leaving the Church, passing through St. Marys Churchyard I passed a young woman by the name of Esther Groves, whom I had seen before but never to know her. I entered into conversation with her, I found she knew my deceased wife and had heard of me. I asked her to meet me, I wrote her a letter and we met. I courted her some weeks. As I had a house and home that wanted looking after I thought it best to marry at once. We were married by Joseph Herrick August, 14th 1844. Before I married however, I gave up my charge of the two children. The boy Isaac was sorry to leave me, the girl Sarah, was ill with her Aunt.

I must now go back to my friend John Carter. I visited him whilst a widower, I found him drawing a picture for old Lord Western, of Felix Hall, Kelvedon. It was being done with Indian ink, and the subject "Moses in the Ark of bullrushes" on the river Nile. No artist with hands could excel it. Pharoah's daughter stood watching with pity in her eye, and with her servants, behind her. The shadows of the Pyramids were shown in the water. When he showed me this picture he told me a London artist had been to see him, Mr. Handbury, brewer, of London, introduced him. The artist had seen an account of him but could not credit that a person with such extraordinary gifts existed. When he saw the picture named above, he expressed a wish to see him draw, John told him he dare not go on with the picture named, as he felt nervous and could not correct an error if he committed one. He asked his wife to place his desk on the pillow with paper. Whe put a pencil in his mouth, after which she got him his coloured paints and he completed a beautiful butterfly of the best sort. The artist told him he was perfectly satisfied, and Mr. Hanbury told Carter never to part with even such a small picture as that under 2/6, and promised to give him 2/6 for every one. He told me Lord Western was going to give him two guineas for Moses in the bullrushes. Poor Lucy his wife, was much afflicted with rheumatism and diseased heart, she had been sent my the great kindness of the Miss Hanbury's to London and Colchester Hospitals but nothing did her good. Thw Miss Hanbury's took delight in comforting both John and his wife, and spent many an hour by the poor artists bed. They bought him an air bed and a cart drawn by hand. Have taken him to Church in his bed myself. He had a general invitation to go to the Hall

to dine when he pleased. Many other ladies and gentlemen took notice of him, so that his poor old father and mother sister and wife did not lose much by him. But poor John was destined to a severe trial. He was doatingly fond of his wife she had nursed him and done for him as she would a child - children they had none. One day his wife was near his bedside his mother saw her falling and caught her in her arms, but she was a corpse. She had died in his presence, and he would fain have died that moment, such was his grief that he could not be prevailed upon to eat food, but declared he would die too. His relations wrote to me to go over and talk to him and console him, I went over as soon as possible but found him composed, Mr. Dampier, the Clergyman who had taken great interest in him, had talked to him and he promised if they would take him into the room where the body of his wife lay and let him see her he would eat. This was a sore trial to him, his mother and sister Hannah carried him into the room where his dead wife laid.

Some time after this event I was weaving in my loom at Colchester when who should come to my house but this artist J. Carter, in his bed, with his nice cloth cap with peak and cloth waistcoat tied behind, his whiskers combed and curled, anyone might have thought him healthy, he always had a liking to see soldiers, on hearing that a party of horse soldiers would pass the Marks Tey Station from Kelvedon to Colchester he got a man to draw him nearly four miles to see them. After they had passed a coal cart come up which was going to Colchester, he was tied behind and thus he paid me a visit, I got him to promise me he would come again and stay a week, and let the Colchester people see him draw with his mouth, but he never lived to fulfil his promise. One little anecdote I will relate told me since his death by his sister Hannah. Sometimes, with all his kind friends, he ran short of money. He one day called his mother to tell him how much money he had got. His poor mother laughed at him and told him they had only fourpence in the world "Never mind, mother" he said, "I shall have some to-day" She replied "Have you been dreaming"? "Yes" he said "put me on my air bed and place me so that I can see out of the window into the street" He had not been there long before a lddy saw him as she was going to Church, she went into his house and sat down and chatted with him, His mother was in some other part of the house, the lady said, "Carter, I have not paid you for the drawing", and gave him the money and wished him "good morning". He called his sister, determined to have a joke with his mother, he told his sister to place the money between his flannel shirt and his linen one and to call his mother. When his mother came to said "Mother, feel between my shirts - look if there is not a flea, I know there is something" "Why, John she said, "You could not feel a flea if there was one, you know, besides I know we have no fleas" She felt and found some money, "There, mother, did I not tell you God would provide? I dont often believe in dreams, but I had one last night I did believe" and thus he was delivered in time of need. He had a favourite Hymn he used to read to me:-

"Thow pity, Lord, O Lord forgive,
Let a repentant rebel live,
Are not thy mercies large and free
May not a sinner trust in Thee?"

Shortly after this he was being drawn down a hill and the party let go his cart accidentally and he was thrown out on to the bank. This gave his inside such a shock that he very soon died. Before his decease his sister promised to keep one particular picture, and never to part with it, for his sake, that same picture may be seen at his fathers house in Church Street. I saw his father about May, 15th 1871, he had been bedridden for several years - his age was then 88 he could read his Bible and point any one to "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world". This picture has been sent to America by the Rev. Dampier and was gone from his sister months, during the time it had been copied. This truly great man passed out of this world comparative unnoticed, I felt it my duty to mention it, so much was I mixed up with his history that it seemed impossible to write a sketch of my life without noticing his. It will show how heedlessly in our youth we run into evil paths. Truly I can say with the Poet:-

When all my mercies, O my God,
My rising soul, surveys
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love and pride.

Thy Providence my life sustain'd
And all my wants redrest,
When in the silent womb I lay
And hung upon the breast.

When in the slippery paths of youth
With Needless steps I ran,
Thine arm unseen convey'd me safe
And led me up to man.

Through hidden danger toils and death
It gently deared my way,
And through the pleasing snares of vice
More to be feared than they.

When worn with sickness oft thou hast
With health renewed my face
And when in sins and sorrow sunk
Revived my soul with grace.

21

Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.

After ten months with my second wife we had a daughter born. We named her Rachel, after so many ups and downs in the world I had become the father of a fine girl. Trade soon began to get bad again the Irish Farmine came on, bread got up to four shillings per week, sometimes no work for a week or two, sometimes we made our dinner off a pennyworth of skimmed milk thickened with flour. These things did not trouble me much as I had learnt by past experience I was thankful if I could get bread enough I wanted but little and I thought I should not want that little long - but it was hard for the wife who had been used to plenty at service. Time passed away, at the end of three years we had two daughters. My poor old mother just before this time, came over to stay a few days for the benefit of her health. I was taken ill with scarlet fever, my wife and child also took the fever. None of the neighbours cared to come and see us. My wife had to go a mile at least to fetch my medicine, when she was going down with the fever my mother had to work in the midst of this, yet it pleased God to give her strength and she returned home the better for her visit. After this we had another daughter Esther - two years after that a son born and called his name John. He was a beautiful child, but he only lived three months. This we felt very much - to lose our first born son.

End here

I had been ten years working for Messrs Henderson and Co. No. 1 Gutter Lane, trade got very bad - some of the weavers lost 13 weeks at a time, I never lost three weeks at any one time, still everything was going to the bad - behind in rent. At last it seemed the final trouble had some which bid fair to send us to the Union Workhouse. I remembered the days of old. We had notice that the Firm intended to concentrate their trade at Braintree, a town 16 miles from Colchester. We were about 40 families in number and we had the offer to follow if we liked. But this involved an expense of at least twenty shillings and loss of time, very few out of the number could muster 20/- trade had been so bad, I am sorry to say we had not the offer of a loan of 20/- after ten years service this seemed to me and others not the right sort of treatment - in fact many of us could not muster enough money to move to Braintree. We met together and decided not to leave Colchester without a struggle. We decided to send two men to London as a deputation to wait upon the silk manufactures asking them to come and take the place of Messrs. Henderson and Co. I was asked to go, but I declined unless the weavers would promise me to do all they could for my family if I failed in London - my family being my first consideration I knew it was contrary to my present employers wish to lose a body of men like us, and I did not care to make myself conspicuous. Well, two were appointed and then there were funds in hand to pay their expenses

I and two more were appointed to go round to the gentry and tradespeople of the town to lay our case before them and solicit funds. We thought it best to get some competent person to write us a petition explaining our case, a lawyers clerk was thought of, but he was not at home. I asked the question why we wanted such a person seeing we only wanted to write the plain truth? one remarked "We cannot do it grammatically enough." "Hang the grammar", I said; "Give me a sheet of paper." I wrote a plain statement of facts, such as would bear scrutinizing. He first took it to the Mayor of Colchester, which was Dr. Williams. This was in 1850. He read it carefully and asked who wrote it? I told him I did. He said it wanted a little polishing. The contents of it he considered it his duty to attend to, as it involved the loss of a trade to the Borough which if once gone could not be easily replaced. He promised if we left it with him for one day he would copy it for us. I told him I thought an unpolished document would do best, as there were to many well-polished begging petitions got up. However, we left it. Next day we called for it: the Doctor had become quite converted to my opinion - he simply wrote a note at the bottom to give us a good start. He then asked us what amount we thought would do to start it - he would give us a sovereign if we thought that would do, his opinion being that no one would like to give more than the Mayor. We told him we thought half that amount would do. He set his name down at the top and gave us ten shillings. One day was gone, and we thought we were fairly started. We went straight to the Ex. Mayor, Mr. H. Walton. He questioned us very closely and asked how he was to know that to be a true statement? We told him Dr. Williams knew us. "Yes," he replied, "but how does he know that to be true? I cannot sign it unless I have proof of its truth. I want a note from your present employers to certify the truth of your statement." This put us in an awkward fix, as we knew our movement was not liked by them; we knew Mr. Walton also to be a firm man, thoroughly apposed to impostures. We waited till evening and then went up to the Royal Mortar to Mr. Elson, our foreman, and he wrote us a note to take to Dr. Williams. We took it part of the way; it being an open note we read it. It stated that Mr. Elson would call on Dr. Williams. We took it back and showed our petition to Mr. Elson and asked him for a note certifying it to be true. This he very kindly gave us. We took it to Mr. Walton, who sealed it on to our document where it remains in my possession till this day, which is over 21 years. Was this all Mr. Walton did? No; he gave us 10/-.

Two days had been lost, but we had a good start now, better than before because we had a certificate and also a licence from two magistrates to go all over the Borough to solicit funds for a good cause. Next we went to the two Banks, who gave us 10/- each; next to Sir Henry Smyth and Mr. Joseph Hardcastle, our Members of Parliament; they gave us 20/- each, Mr. J. S. Barnes acting for Mr. Hardcastle. We met with great sympathy from nearly all we went to. At the end of a week we had collected eight sovereigns and sent Messrs. J. Collier and S. Spinks

off to London. I returned to my loom.

Our deputation arrived safely in London and went to work. In a day or two we received a letter to say there were hopes that a Mr. Robinson, of Milk Street, would send us work. He set our deputation fast with a partial promise: at the week's end he sent them home promising to send work. We held a Weaver's Meeting to receive the deputation. I had my fears as I had known the firm for several years. We waited till some of our weavers were on the point of finishing their work? No, Mr. Robinson came to our rescue? We called a meeting and found all our funds had been spent by the deputation except a few shillings. What was to be done? Why, we had to subscribe a few shillings which we wanted for bread. There was no time to be lost. We sent one of the deputation up to London at once to ask Mr. Robinson to explain himself and decide - in case he declined circulars were to be printed and left at the manufacturers immediately, and if Mr. Colyer did not feel competent alone he was to write down and we agreed to send Mr. Piddington to join him. Messrs Robinson declined to come to Colchester telling Mr. Colyer that they were just going to write to us. This was a poor re-compense after causing our deputation to spend £8. Mr. Colyer felt himself incompetent to do the talking part of the deputation, which required an experienced weaver. Here seems to me an over-ruling Providence for my good: instead of Mr. Colyer writing down for Mr. Piddington, as agreed, he wrote to the weavers to send J. Castle up at once. A meeting was called at midday: I had gone up to the Royal Mortar to turn on my last cane for Henderson & Co., being behind the rest of the weavers through losing so much time to get up the funds. When I returned home I found a meeting called, and I was asked if I would go to London the same night? I at once accepted the task, although I could see the danger to myself and family if I failed. Parliamentary train at that time, 1850, left Colchester for London at 8. p.m., arriving in London just before 11. No light in carriages. I set a friend to put my cane in the loom while I went to London. On my way to the Station I heard that I had been threatened if I did not get on with my work it should be taken away. This proved to me that I was right at first in requiring the weavers to protect me in case I was discharged for being in London to find a manufacturer to give us employment rather than to march out of Colchester in a body. Well I started for London quite low spirited, with just enough money to take me there and pay my lodgings - none to bring me home; but the weavers promised to send us a Post Office Order, which they did. I arrived at Fetter Lane, Holborn, about half-past eleven, hired a bed at a coffee-house, went to bed but could not sleep, my anxiety was so great and my hopes of success so small. Next morning Mr. Colyer came to me and found me down in spirit. Well off we went to the City manufacturers first. Mr. Colyer had issued circulars to various manufacturers. He took me down Friday Street, Cheapside, to a house nearly at the bottom - the house was closed; no

one lived there. On returning back we had to pass Messrs. Campbell, Harrison & Lloyds, 19 Friday Street, the house I referred to when I first made my advent to London from Leighton Buzzard. I asked Mr. Colyer if he had sent them a circular. He replied "No, are they manufacturers, as there is nothing on their door except their names?" I replied "Yes, I knew them eleven years back, I attended that house every morning, Sunday excepted". I said "Give me a circular and follow me". I opened the door and he followed me up to the front, where stood Messrs. Harrison and Lloyd. I made known to them that we were a deputation from Colchester and our object. I told them that eleven years ago I was porter to their machine winder, Mrs. Owen. They received us very kindly. After a long stay and a long talk we were told that the senior partner, Mr. Campbell, was in the country, and we were to call in two days for a decided answer. When leaving the house a young man, the sales-man, I believe, asked where we were bound for. I told him "to other manufacturers, as I did not intend to be set fast as our first deputation was". He asked us to meet him at his lodgings at Snow Hill at eight o'clock that night, which we did. Off we went to several other manufacturers in the City; at last we reached Spital Square and next to Messrs. Vanner and Sons, umbrella and parasol manufacturers. After a long talk with those gentlemen they promised to consider the matter and write to us at Colchester. Mr. Colyer offered to be their foreman at £20. per year, as he had a pension from the Militia Staff. To be foreman never entered my mind. While in London I offered Messrs. Hickinbottom in the City to take two looms of sarsnett to weave if they would give us all work. Well 8 o'clock came and we were at Snow Hill to meet Mr. Stokes, as appointed. He took us up several flights of stairs - very high up - but his object was not very high. He tried to get us to offer to take work at less per yard than Messrs. Henderson were paying. I told him I had no power to do so, nor should I take it upon myself to do so - I came to London to get employment. My colleague expressed himself that he considered it best to take it a little less rather than lose it. Ultimately I agreed to write down to Colchester and submit the question to the weavers. We received an answer to authorize us to use our own judgment in the matter; but I had experience enough to know if I did such a thing I should have been branded at Braintree and other places as the man who was the cause of a reduction in price. Messrs. Campbell and Co. stood on high I felt sure Henderson and Co. would not pay more than they - so that the question more than concerned Colchester.

Next day after this interview I asked my friend Colyer to go with me to 19, Friday Street, and ask for an answer. I began to get tired, what with the question of reduction and the uncertainty of success. Accordingly we went and saw Mr. Harrison and Mr. Lloyd, who decided at once to establish a trade in Colchester. To the credit of those gentlemen they never breathed a word about paying a farthing less than Henderson & Co. Over 21 years have passed since the above took place

and they are paying 14 per cent more now than then.

Well no one can tell the agreeable surprise I felt at such success. I felt sure we should not be played with by those gentlemen as we were by the others. We were told we might expect them at Colchester shortly. We wrote home to say we should be home next day. We agreed to keep the name of Messrs. Campbell secret as long as possible, fearing that something might be done to spoil our success.

We arrived home full of spirits, thankful to God for His good Providence. But this was a link in the chain of Providence to bring about other events in the life of one who felt unworthy of so many mercies. Well we had not been home many days before we received a letter from Messrs. Vanner & Sons to say that they should be down at Colchester on the following Monday. This caused me great anxiety, for fear Messrs. Campbell & Co. should lose the ground, as I knew they were the most suitable for Colchester. I had meantime been made Secretary to the Weavers. I called the Committee together and they ordered me to write to Messrs. Campbell & Co. to tell them we hoped they would be on the ground before Monday. They wrote to me to say they should be down on Saturday by midday train and I was to meet them. Accordingly Mr. Colyer and myself met them and took them round to a great part of the looms. They expressed themselves satisfied and desired to be taken to see Dr. Williams, the Mayor. We took them: they had a long interview. While sitting outside the door in a small lobby I overheard Mr. Lloyd say to Dr. Williams "The old gent. is out of the question. I fear the young one is not scholar enough, or there would be no question", or something as near as possible to what I have stated. I could see at once that they were discussing the question of a foreman; up to this moment it had never entered my thoughts. We saw those gentleman off and returned home gratified with their visit. One thing I ought to say of them - they began very liberally, for they took us to the Cups Hotel and ordered us a good dinner.

The next Monday I called on Dr. Williams, the Mayor, to hear what was to be done. He informed me that Messrs. Harrison & Lloyd had left it with him to select a few names to choose a foreman from "But" said the Doctor "Don't be disappointed, Castle, it will not be you - those gentleman would have chosen you in preference to any one had you been a better scholar". Here I felt the importance of education - a chance of rising in circumstances but apparently lost from want of education. Who could I blame? My father? No; he died before I went to school. Could I blame a good mother who suffered hunger to give me as much education as cost her twenty-six shillings - or sixpence per week for twelve months? No; I dare not blame her. How many sons have cause to blame their parents for not giving them a common education. When I think of the narrow escape I had for want of education I am forced to be a strong advocate for Compulsory Education.

Well, the thought of rising in the social scale had struck me and I determined to pursue it. I wrote a note to Messrs. Campbell and Co.

offering them my services in any way they thought fit to make use of me, -- wholly in the loom or partly in and partly out -- telling them that I had a pretty good knowledge of the manufacturing districts round about and the men who would be likely to apply for employment. I received no answer to this note direct, but went again to Dr. Williams for information. He told me he had had an interview with Mr. Elson, our foreman, to get a few names of men, the best scholars and good practical weavers, but Mr. Elson was reluctant to have anything to do with it, yet after a long talk he gave him two names -- one was mine and the other S. Spinks, a very respectable weaver, but no better scholar than myself, if so good, and not at all known to Messrs. Campbell & Co. I told the Doctor I considered it not right to judge from the hand-writing a person's competence to keep books, as I considered book keeping laid in the head more than hand. The Doctor tried to ward me off of being disappointed, "for", said he "I have sent up your two names, and I have no doubt but Spinks will be the man." "Will you call in the morning," said the Doctor, "and take the authority to act to Spinks?" I told him I would, but must confess I felt rather mortified; still I was determined to bear it with goodwill towards Spinks. Accordingly I made my way to Spinks's house, which was two rooms upstairs. When I reached the bottom of the stairs I heard several voices, and as is commonly said "listeners never hear any good of themselves". I listened and heard them discussing who should be Foreman. Poor me, who had lost one week getting money for them to spend to no purpose in London and had lost nearly another week going to London and had succeeded; me, to whom the same men would have plucked out their eyes before they said I was trying to get the Foremanship; and was trying to take it from the old man, Mr. Colyer, who was out of the question from the very first; besides, said they, he has three weeks' work in his loom. True, I had; but how came that about? Why, I had lost a fortnight after them; so you may guess how disgusted I was with such men. Did I ascend the stairs after what I had heard? Not I; if I had their word would have been as smooth as butter. I turned away angry, but not without a cuse. Off I went to a Public Meeting at the Room called the Bible Room, Lion Walk -- a meeting called by Mr. W. R. Havens to unseat Mr. Partridge, a member of our Town Council. While there, who should beckon me out of the meeting but those three weavers who one hour before were back-biting me. I went out to them. They asked me if I had any news to tell them? "Yes," was my reply; "you, Spinks, are to be foreman." He replied "not I -- I would not take it -- you are the proper one." "Me," I said, "What right have I to be foreman? have not I got three weeks' work in my loom? and have I not been acting deceitfully to Mr. Colyer?" Thus I flung their own words into their teeth and they stood confounded before me. Spinks said "I won't take it." "Mind you said it," I replied, and I left them disgusted, with everything concluded in my own mind that I would finish my work and go to Braintree, and have no more to do with men so deceitful. But God had something better in store for me. I cut away at weaving a rich satin -- took no more trouble after Dr. Williams nor the foremanship.

Several days after I received a letter from Mr. Harrison expressing a surprise that I had not informed them as to whom among the weavers wanted work. I was surprised at this letter, because Dr. Williams had told me no one could act unless he instructed them. In a few days Mr. Harrison came down with silks and to my house. This was about the beginning of March 1850. Scales and weights were sent down and my house was used for a warehouse till Mr. Elson removed to Braintree, when Messrs Campbell & Co., hired the Royal Mortar and I removed into it. Thus you see what the changing scenes of 13 years had brought about - at that time I was a poor tramp calling upon the foreman at the Royal Mortar asking for employment and failed to obtain it; now here I am blessed by the good Providence of God to be living there as Foreman. Many had been my trials and afflictions, but out of them all the Lord had delivered me up to that time. One thing used to be a trial to me - that was, I could not keep my rent paid up, I owed my landlord several pounds and other small sums. I had often wished some kind friend would lend me about five pounds so that I might pay all my debts and have but one creditor. Even this friend I found in Messrs. Harrison & Lloyd, they lent me the money and it was deducted from my wages. Thus I entered upon a new life of bookkeeping and a variety of things quite fresh to me - forty or fifty weavers had to be got to work, winding machines to be set to work. The responsibility was great and almost overcame me at times; and some of the men before spoken of tried from envy to put all the stumbling blocks in my way possible. I was like the Poet who said -

"Ahead, then, keep pushing, and elbow your way,
Unheeding the envious who wish you to stray;

All obstacles vanish, all enemies quail

In the path of their progress who nev'r say fail."

With all the obstacles I had had to contend with, I had gone ahead, and was very thankful for mercies received, but I had not got beyond the troubles of this life. My poor old mother was sinking and never likely to recover. I was so full-headed in my new occupation that I could not devote myself to her affliction as I could wish, she being about 10 miles off. She died two months after I had got my situation. I went to see her several times and hope and believe she died simply trusting in Him who died for sinners: she felt her need of a Saviour.

Mr. Harrison had two rooms fitted up for his accommodation at our house and used often to come down, and for several years I and my wife and family used to count the hours when we expected him and Mrs. Harrison to spend a few days at the house - their kindness was enough to win any one, especially one who had seen the adversity I had. When I looked back from whence I came and thought of the contrast between Mr. Wrath and Mr. Harrison I felt thankful that I had passed through the road I had - it was rough, but it learnt me to appreciate when I was well off. Once I was so concerned in mind about Mr. Wrath's treatment that I wrote a long letter to remind him of God's goodness to me, in contrast to his hardness of heart in sending a poor faithless.

lad into the world with 4/- not caring what became of me. I did not send it after writing it.

Three or four years after settling in my new situation I paid a visit with my wife to my Cousin George Hedgcocks; he was then living at Billington, in Bedfordshire. We spent two days with him with great pleasure. In 1851 I had the pleasure of conducting all my weavers to the Exhibition in Hyde Park, our employers paying the expense. We stayed in London several days and returned home pleased with the liberality of our employers. A year or two after this our first born Rachel - being played with by a friend's girl - was let down on the corner of a hard bottomed chair, which injured her back. It soon began to grow out. We took her to the doctor, who ordered her to lie on a hard board on her back for twelve months - he feared the injury would cause an abscess. She laid on a board for some little time, but she fretted so much that we could not find heart to force her thus to lie. Very shortly an abscess formed on the thigh, and when it broke it discharged over one pint of matter. The doctor told me to make up my mind to lose her. This was a severe blow to me: I was sorely tried at the thought of losing one I loved so dearly - the loss of wife and mother seemed a trifle compared with the thought of losing my Rachel: my daughter Esther was about two years younger than Rachel, and as the old saying is, "one trouble never comes alone," a young woman that worked for me took up Esther and twisted her round. She cried out that her back was hurt. After this her back fell inwards and continued to give way till it seemed nearly to touch her chest. At one time both daughters lay bad together. At this time we had five alive and one dead. For a time poor Rachel got about with crutches; at last she was confined to her bed and her very life ran from her - she wasted to skin and bone; her skin had to be kept together by plasters; She was only twelve, scarcely that - yet she was as considerate and more so than many twice her age. She would often remark to her mother and me "What a trouble and expense I am." We got her everything she could fancy as far as our means would allow. She was not unmindful of Him who died for sinners, although so young. At last we had to watch her night and day - my wife and I and a woman who worked for me took turns. I had lain down to try to get some sleep, when about eleven at night I was called to see her die. When I got to her bedside she was too far gone to bid me farewell. What would I not have given if I had been able to kiss her and hear her bid me adieu? But this was not to be. For years after every time she crossed my thoughts sorrow filled my heart.

Before these events we had to leave our country house, the Royal Morter. The government decided to make Colchester a military town again, and Messrs. Campbell & Co., were offered £50 to give up possession of the house. They allowed me to hire No. 2, Abbey Gate Terrace and a small Factory in Stanwell Street. We had all our machinery removed too.

Our second daughter, Esther, got worse every week-- no doctoring seemed to do her good; her breath got worse and she took to her bed. She was a girl that read the Bible and often seemed in deep thought. Once she heard the doctor say she was drawing off. At one o'clock I went to her bedside to sit by her while the mother and family got their dinner; she asked me if the doctor meant that she was dying? I said "Yes". She said "Let me look at myself in the looking-glass". I did so. I shall never forget her earnest look at me. She said "Oh, father, pray for me". I said "I always do, dear; but you know it is needful for you to pray for yourself". She said, with great emphasis "I do pray from my very heart". I read a chapter upon the death of Christ and a Hymn

"And did my Saviour bleed

And did my Saviour die

Could he devote his sacred head

For such a worm as I".

At this time her mother came to sit by her whilst I got my own dinner. Before leaving the room I asked her if there was anyone she would like to see? She expressed a wish to see her Sunday School teacher, Miss Goody, as she had been constant for years to Head Gate School. I was about to leave the house to fetch her, but was called to make haste back or I should not see her die. I hurried to her bedside, but was too late to say farewell; she was on her mother's arm and her mother near fainting. I took her on to my left arm and asked her to press my hand if she was sensible. But she was too far gone and died on my arm. This all took place in one hour; she was past all affliction and sorrow and safe landed on Zion's happy shore, where no more parting can take place. I had been called to part with two dear children who were kind and affectionate, as thoughtful as grown-up persons would be and more so than many; but these afflictions had drained me down to my last sovereign. I asked my employers for the loan of £5. but they sent me that amount as a gift. Here were friends in need which I have proved to be friends in deed many a time.

Soon after this trade got very slack, and I had read a deal about politics and Co-operation; I had raised a weavers' Club and it had done good, but through bad trade it had broken up. I felt tired of taking a leading part in politics or anything else among the working people - they did not seem to appreciate what anyone might do for their good, especially if they saw anyone advance themselves above them in the social scale.

A friend named Band used often to call and see me: he was a man who desired to see working men raise themselves in the social scale. He often discussed Co-operation and urged me to call a meeting of the working people on the subject, but I would not. At last, he prevailed on me to say I would attend a meeting if he called one. He accordingly called a meeting of about 12 respectable men at Thompson's Coffee Room, Short Wyre Street. This was the beginning of 1861. Mr. T. Rawlings,

H. Arnold, myself, Mr. Dand, R. Taylor, with several others were present. We discussed the desirability of a Co-operative Society in Colchester and decided that it was quite necessary that something should be done to elevate the people this was not the only reason why it was necessary to raise a Co-operative Society - some of the Bakers were selling what they represented to be a 4 lb loaf, but which I proved more than once only weighed 3 lbs 10 ozs. This dishonest system seemed to me to arise out of unfair competition one with the other. We also discussed the evils arising from the "trust" system, and many other reasons justified us in starting a Society. But the shopkeepers might say and often have said to me "You did not take into consideration the customers you would be likely to take from us." "No," I replied, our chief aim was to benefit ourselves and families. I calculate that is, or should be, the motive of all persons who set up in business - every new beginner must take his customers from some other tradesman - such is life that no great good can be done without a small amount of injury. We adjourned our meeting to the Committee Room at the Public Hall. We mustered 28 about the third meeting and agreed to pay down one shilling each as an entrance fee. This was our first capital 28/-.

We chose a Committee to get up the rules to submit to the body. Mr. James Paxman invited the Committee to meet at his house: we accepted his kind offer. Mr. W. Munro, our Secretary, wrote down to the Parent-Society at Rochdale for a copy of their rules, which having received we commenced in good earnest, and when our rules were forward enough we submitted them to the members, who, with a few alterations, adopted them. They were sent up to Mr. J. Tidd Pratt, and Certified. Our subscriptions by this time amounted to enough to have them printed. We gave the printing to Mr. J. B. Harvey, Printer, High Street. Mr. D. R. Hunter, who was a member, then offered us the use of his room, for our Committee meetings; we accepted it for a few weeks, when the Committee requested me to see Mr. John Taylor, proprietor of the "Essex Standard" newspaper, and ask him to let us some empty premises in the Back Lane, or Culver Street. These rooms Mr. Taylor and several other gentlemen had devoted for a working man's club and reading rooms, the work people only paying one penny per week for every privilege the Club afforded. A good deal of money was spent about the Club, but it failed, the people not appreciating so good a boon. I was one of the Committee of this Club. As I expected, I was kindly received by Mr. J. Taylor, who was ever ready to listen to anything that would do good to his fellow man. He very soon saw that our motives were good-intentioned and capable of raising our fellow-creatures, however low their position in life. This makes me think of what our Co-operative song says -

"What might be done if men were wise

What glorious deeds, my suffering brother

Did we unite in love and right

And cease our hate of one another.

"The meanest wretch that ever trod

The lowest sunk in grief and sorrow

Might stand erect in self-respect

And share the teeming world to-morrow."

Well Mr. J. Taylor let us his premises at 4/- per week. We very soon got capital enough to commence business. About the 2nd of August, 1861 we bought a sack of flour, borrowed scales and weights - I lent a basin which answered for a flour scoop. Thus we started in a small business, which was destined to grow very fast. The first week we took about five pounds, the week I am writing, June, 1871, we took over one hundred and forty pounds. I was made one of the Trustees, and the Committee asked me to buy the goods. I had no wish for office - this I declare; but did not like to refuse to try my hand at anything that might tend to help on the Society. We only opened at 5 o'clock in the evening - one of our members, R. Lee, who understood a little about grocery, helped us. We bought a little grocery, but we grew so large we were forced to look for a better shop. We had a social Tea Meeting, several addresses were given upon Co-operation. This gave an impetus to the Society - over fifty joined us at one time. I saw some premises at the back of St. Nicholas Church; it looked a tumbled - down old place, called "Blomfield's Butchery." But the site was good. We discussed the hiring of it, some being opposed to it. At last I hired it at £24 per annum. The old shop contained eight rooms and a Butcher's shop and good slaughter house. After a while we opened all day as other tradesmen, employing a Mr. James Nevard as our shopman, a conscientious servant who had been employed many years by Mr. Moore, grocer. We increased both in members and takings. Our dividend rose to 1/6 in the £. We soon found the necessity of baking our own bread, therefore set on a determination if possible to buy the old premises, which were freehold. I was appointed to wait on Mr. R. Blomfield for that purpose. After several interviews the property was offered to us for five hundred pounds. We decided to have it on condition that it was conveyed free of all lawyers fees. The bargain was struck. We called a large meeting, who sanctioned our proceedings. Our Bankers, Messrs. Mills, Bawtree, Errington & Co. offered to lend us two or three hundred pounds if we should want it; but to our astonishment shares came in so fast that we had enough to pay for our Building and two or three hundreds over, so that we invested the surplus shares at the Bank. Mr. J.S. Barnes kindly consented to inspect all deeds, conveyances, or anything needed as to title deeds or mortgage deeds for the sum of two guineas.

Mr. Henry Wittey, Magistrates' Clerk, solicitor of Colchester,

was the owner's solicitor; both those gentlemen acted well and were very courteous to me as the representative of the Co-operative Society. Many were the journeys I had before it was finally settled. Once I wanted to see Mr. R. Blomfield to hasten on the conveyance. He lived at Cold Hall, Bromley. Off I went from 12 to 14 miles there and back. There I found out that it was necessary to advance £250 to release the poor old house from bondage. This we did and the title deeds were soon handed over to us. We turned the slaughter-house into a bakehouse, built a large oven, and commenced baking our own bread. I had declared that when we got our oven I would know what the bread was made with; for I would get in the oven and look but what I would see that the bread was pure and sold full weight. Some of the Committee caught me one evening in the bakehouse and demanded, in a joke, that I should keep my word and get in the oven and look round. I was not to be done in joking, so I got a wisp of straw to sweep away the dust and in I went.

About this time we had a social cup of tea at the Public Hall, and to my astonishment an address was given by Mr. W. Munro, our Secretary at that time, and a beautiful Timepiece was presented to me as a token of the goodwill of many of the members and others who were not members had subscribed for, with a silver plate on its front, dated August 22, 1862, with a suitable inscription on it. This was very cheering to me after so many ups and downs in life to receive such a testimonial from the working men. I felt thankful to God that with others I had been able to accomplish something - I say with others for I had many who stood firm to the principle of Co-operation, or more properly Self Help - T. Rawlings, J.F. Goodey, R. Taylor, J. Beals, T. Stone, J. Paxman, and many others; had it not been for their support I could not have accomplished what I did. I did not court the smiles of the private trader, if I had I should not have had them; as a proof of this I will give an illustration. We took care to build our oven shaft or chimney it really is, we built it forty feet high so that it might draw well and be as little nuisance as possible - but it was not high enough to overcome the prejudice of Mr. C - ; our near neighbour, a grocer. He told Mr. Nevard he wanted to see Mr. Castle about the nuisance of the oven chimney. I made haste to meet him, and very soon discovered that it was the idea of the working people daring to set up in business that annoyed Mr. C -. I asked him to come to the point and tell me if it was the oven or the workpeople that was the nuisance? and he confessed it annoyed him to see first the Railroad cart, then Mr. Moore and others' vans stop at our Stores. "I thought so" I replied. After pointing out to him that Co-operation avoided many evils which the private trader fell into - such as Bankruptcy Courts, County Courts, etc. I invited him to indict us before the Town Commissioners for a nuisance. He admitted we had a right as Englishmen to put our shillings and pounds together and set up in business. I wished him good night, highly gratified at having the opportunity to

to discuss the right of men to do good for themselves and their fellow workers, so long as they did not interfere with the rights of property. Our object in establishing Co-operation was to do away with unfair competition, monopoly, and the improvident habits of some of the working people, and teach them to rely on self-help rather than look to others or the Poor Rates. Many have been the proofs, since the establishment of this Society, that Co-operation will do this for men if they will put their shoulder to the wheel.

About 12 or 13 months after we had started, Mr. J. Nevard, our much-respected shopman, was taken ill with a fever, and died; this was a great loss to our Society. The Quarterly Meeting voted five pounds to his widow. Afterwards we had various shopmen and bakers, and, like most Co-operative Societies, we had to trust our business to the management of men who had no sympathy with the movement, and several times had it not been for a Reserve Fund, we must have paid a small dividend. On this account we had to get rid of several men.

Our shareholders increased and our capital flourished, so that the Management Committee considered it time to build New Stores. A shareholders' meeting was called and it was decided to form a Building Committee, and our Mr. J.F. Goodey, the Secretary, being a builder, was set to get out plans for New Stores. His plans were approved, and we set too in good earnest. At this time I had become Treasurer, Purchaser, and Manager. I felt over-anxious that the undertaking should be a success, but in spite of all our efforts bad men got among us with questionable characters, although well recommended. While our new Building was going on we came to a very large deficiency in profits, and I acted as a detective and traced two of our shopmen to houses of ill fame, so that they had to leave us.

I was at this time taken ill with a bad fever, according to the doctor's account brought on by over anxiety. I got worse every day. I wrote to my employers in London, and they sent down a gentleman to do my work at the Factory. Two of my children took the fever. I still daily got worse till my life was despaired of. Mr. Johnson, my doctor, seemed to despair of my life. Mr. Bawtree, the gentleman sent down by my employers, wrote up to them to say I was not expected to recover. They at once telegraphed down to him to call in a physician. My doctor brought Dr. Williams, an old experienced physician, to see me - this same Dr. Williams who was Mayor when I was sent to London to obtain our employers. He came to the side of my bed and kindly asked me a few questions. My doctor told him I had over-taxed myself about Co-operation and Dr. Williams asked what was meant by co-operation. I rose up on my elbows and gave him a short lecture on Co-operation. He cautioned me to be quiet, and Mr. Johnson poured me out a glass of old Port. I had no desire for wine or anything, but I found the Doctor's orders must be obeyed, so I drank it. My doctor remarked to me that I drank like an Alderman. Dr. Williams being an Alderman I turned round and told the Doctor that was a hint for him. Dr. Williams reported

that there was hope for my life. I had a large blister on my body. In spite of the fever I was inundated with friends - kind friends, religious friends. Political friends, all came to see me and sent me anything I could take. But the kindness of my employers knew no bounds. I got better, slowly, but my dear little Alice got worse. She bid me good night and I never saw her any more: she was parched up with fever, and her poor mother nearly worn out, having no rest night or day. Next day she died. My heart nearly broke: my sorrow at losing her was great. I wept bitterly, at the same time I knew all things were ordered for the best and I could say "Thy will be done", but my flesh groaned under the affliction. She had to be screwed down at once - I could not see her dear little face, but no one was able to prevent me seeing her coffin. I crawled downstairs on my hands and knees and saw her name on the coffin plate, and up again. It pleased God to restore me, slowly, as soon as I was able my doctor drove me out into the country. My employers wished me to go down to Walton-on-the-Naze as soon as possible to the seaside. I and my daughter Martha, who also had been ill, took the omnibus about the 16th of September, 1865, and stayed by the seaside 13 days. On the Sunday we went to a small Chapel, and a Minister who was staying for the benefit of his health preached. His text was from Psalms - "I was brought low and the Lord helped me" - truly this was me. I had been brought low, the Lord had helped me. When I arrived at the seaside I staggered from weakness - at the end of 13 days I could have run a race: thus the Lord blessed the means used, and I was made to live as a gentleman for 13 days eating and drinking of the good things of this life. Many ups and downs I had seen and was now a companion of many I knew by the seaside. How wonderful, I thought, are the ways of God - once turned out of a Union broken-hearted and alone in the world now kindly cared for by many. Was I not cared for when apparently alone in the world? Yes, He that feedeth the young ravens cared for me, as it saith in Psalm LXXVII, 10 "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up". He did take me up, and provided me with many kind friends. I grew tired of being from home and the East wind blew so cold from off the German Ocean. On the 1st of October we returned home to Colchester much benefited in health and nothing the worse in circumstances, for I had a good Club called the "Surrey Tabernacle" held at the Baptist Chapel, Swansea Street, Walworth Road, London; from this I received twenty shillings per week, and my employers paid me my full wages all through my illness.

My Co-operative friends and others cheerfully welcomed me home to my duties, and it is now seven years since, and I have been blessed with a better state of health than ever I knew before. While in deep thought on my pillow this very morning, Sunday, July 9, 1871, I composed the following verses, and penned them at once, lest they slipped my mind; they are my own and true. I thought of God's promise "I will be a Father to the fatherless and a Husband to the widow":-

What shall I say of God the Lord
He hath fulfilled His promised Word;
What'eer He saith that will He do
His Word hath proved for ever true.

A Witness to His Word I'll be
Who hath through life protected me,
Oh may I ever sound His praise
While I have voice and heart to raise.

A sinner vile I will confess,
Yet shall my praises be no less,
But raise my praises higher and higher
Till I have seen my heart's desire.

Then in that world of spirits bright
I'll sing His praises with delight,
My song shall be unto the Lamb
Who hath declared the great I AM.

A sinner saved, washed in His Blood,
Who on the subtle serpent trod,
Then to His Father's throne arose,
His children for to interpose.

We completed half our New Stores, leaving half standing to do business in while we built. We then had a social cup of tea at the Public Hall, Mr. Henry Pitman came up from beyond Manchester to Colchester in one day; he was quite exhausted. He had travelled that long distance to address us upon the subject of Co-operation, yet was not able to say much, but his very presence did us good. We found him to possess a spirit rarely met with - one that is destined to have a good influence over those it comes in contact with, if they have a kindred spirit especially none could fail to see his self-sacrificing spirit.

We went on increasing for a year or two, at last we determined to complete our Building. We did so, erecting a large Assembly Room, 45 by 26 feet at least, also a Reading Room with Library to which Mr. J. Taylor presented altogether 80 volumes. At the completion of our Building we decided to have an Opening Day. The Committee deputed me to see the Mayor, Mr. P.O. Papillon, and ask him to take the chair, and declare the Co-operative Building completed. We also invited Dr. Brewer, Member of Parliament for Colchester, to our opening, as well as Dr. Williams, the gentleman whom I have had occasion twice before to mention. The whole affair passed off well. After tea we all adjourned to the Town Hall, kindly lent by the Mayor, Mr. P.O. Papillon. This was a great success, our trade increased, our capital also, the 28 shillings subscribed the first meeting night had become as many hundred pounds. We had a noble building with every convenience. Our great drawback was the want of right men in the right places - I refer to the shops in

particular. The success that we had accomplished did not fail to produce enemies as well as friends; About every three months I received an anonymous letter calling me all the foul names they possibly could - accusing me of robbing the Society. It got to such a pitch the shareholders discussed it and passed a vote of censure on the head of the coward whoever he might be. I felt as though born to punish cowards who smite in the dark. After several years of this cowardly treatment and receiving Postal cards of the most foul and libellous nature. I succeeded in tracing two men to be the authors of all the foul matters. I travelled a distance of 84 miles at various times to catch them, determined not to be done. At length they overshot the mark. I put the affair into the hands of a Solicitor, who wrote to one of them intimating to him that unless he made an ample apology within three days a summons would be taken out and that he would most likely be committed for malicious libel. That brought the coward down: he was begging for mercy before two hours. I met him in the presence of the Solicitor and he confessed that he had libeled and slandered me without a cause. There was one particular card which he declared he did not write, but confessed that he posted it for another coward if possible more base than himself. This brought the other one before the solicitor and I agreed to accept a written apology and bound the last one over for twelve months. The first one signed a document never to libel, slander, or molest me nor the Committee and members of the Co-operative Society any more. Those documents, the most humiliating possible, were printed in the local papers and also in the Co-operator. Thus two of the most mischievous men in the Town of Colchester were quited and I had peace. But why record these things? Does it not generally fall to the lot of those who endeavour to raise their fellow men in the social scale to be slandered and misrepresented such is the selfishness of man, especially those men who have failed after many years in this life to accomplish anything creditable to themselves or beneficial to their fellow men; those men envy another who makes headway in spite of a scanty education.

At this time the silk trade had become so diminished that I thought if I could succeed in gaining an appointment as Rate Collector it would fill up my spare time. At length the Collectorship of the First District, comprising the parishes of St. Mary's, St. Giles' St. Leonards and part of St. Peter's Colchester, became vacant, I canvassed the 24 commissioners with great success; and sold one of their wives a silk dress at the same time; when coming from this latter commissioners, I met Mr. Sayers Turner, the Town Clerk, who called me to him and told me the commissioners had elected me twelve to one to fill up the vacant Collectorship and gather the outstanding rates, which had been neglected by the last two Collectors; Between £300 and £400 remained to be collected and the time had expired when the rate ought to have been all got in. I was taken by surprise when told I had been elected so suddenly. Mr. H. S. Goody, the clerk to the Commissioners sent for me to commence collecting at once. This I did not

feel at liberty to do, as I had not had time to consult my employers, who had consented for me to take such an appointment if I could get one. I at once went to London and informed my employers what had taken place. Mr. Harrison readily consented for me to fill up my time as Rate Collector, and gave me a letter to the Commissioners to stand Bond for any loss on my part. I returned home thankful to think I still had the confidence of my employers and also of the Commissioners who had elected me to fill such a responsible office. My memory recalled back the days long passed away when I seemed alone in the world tramping over the hills in the Shires - when cast out from the poorest of the poor; like poor Jacob, all things seemed against me. The good Providence of God, which I did not see, was still watching over me; although I was unmindful of God. He was not unmindful of His promise "I will be a Father to the fatherless."

What shall I say after so many proofs of the goodness of God in His Providence? What shall I say of myself? Guilty of forgetting the Hand that hath sustained me and led me through many snares and temptation-guiltily of forgetting my best Friend! Well might the Psalmist say "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Again he cried out "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His wonderful goodness to the children of men." The Psalmist knew from experience how slow we are to praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Well I set to work in earnest to gather in the Lighting and Paving Rate. I was elected July 3rd 1871, consequently there were only 28 days for the Commissioners, the Rate Collectors, Surveyor, and all Officers to remain in office, anyone being at liberty then to contest any of the offices. I soon found an organized opposition to myself. A certain Baker stirred up the bakers and other tradesmen against me, putting it about that I was the cause of the Co-operative movement in Colchester, which was against the interests of the bakers and others; such was their spite they sent circulars to the bakers calling a special meeting to consult as to how they could overthrow me at the Annual Election on July 31st. The Commissioners encouraged me to go on and collect as much of the back rates as possible, telling me that they never knew the Ratepayers to upset an arrangement made by the Commissioners, especially after two Rate Collectors had been chosen by the Ratepayers who had both become defaulters; it was thought high time a Collector be found that would carry out the duties with credit to himself and to the Commissioners that chose him. I am proud to think I had their confidence. A month's experience proved to them they had not misplaced that confidence. I had collected £137.8.4. of small rates, some of two years standing. While I was doing this my enemies were busy seeking my downfall, and four other candidates were busily canvassing every £30 Ratepayer, I had 400 circulars printed and sent one to nearly all the voters offering myself for re-election;

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I could not feel right to neglect collecting rates to make a personal canvass. No doubt this was a part of the cause why I did not succeed in being re-elected, but I found another cause - one candidate was going to his friends the Conservatives setting before them his father's long standing as a tradesman and the support he had always given the party. The Conservatives took him by the hand with the exception of about a dozen, who, to their everlasting credit be it said of them they acted for what they considered the good of the Ratepayers, and shut their ears to those who would upset a town - yea, a whole nation - to answer their own selfish ends. It was suggested to me to make a party canvass, but I scorned to act as a party man where a whole town was interested. I can say with truth I preferred to lose rather than make a political question of it. Some of my Liberal friends acted liberally, but one in particular promised me he would vote for me and falsified his promise. This was anything but liberal. The chief baker who exerted himself against me was called a Liberal - God forbid I should be guilty of calling him so. He does not live far from the baker's whom I found out cheating me six ounces in every four-pound loaf at a time when I had eight in family and my consumption was at least eight quarters per week. This was cheating me to the tune of over 40 quarters of bread per year, and yet as a working man I ought to have held my tongue and worked on and said nothing, leaving the bakers to undersell each other and cheat the public. I hold my tongue! No, not I - I dare not. I and a few more like myself met, as I before stated, and formed a Co-operative Bakery. This cured their short weight as far as we were concerned. Hence, you see, comes this enmity to me. Well, God forgive them; I hope the Chief Baker who acted against me will not come to the same end that Pharsah's Chief Baker did.

Well, I was voted out and I have no doubt but my opponents rejoiced to think they had done me evil according to their way of reckoning - but I have a strong impression it is for my good. I feel thankful to God in His Providence to allow me to attain to such a position of trust. I had the confidence of the Commissioners and the goodwill of many of the Ratepayers. It was the general belief that I had lost the office through my connection with the Co-operative movement. Be this as it may, I rejoice that my fall from such a position was because I had aimed to raise my fellow-man morally, socially, and physically!

Car for John Carter

17.

I became a widower at the age of 24, after this my health began to mend. The silk trade was good. I soon began to improve in circumstances, having a house and my wife's brother I could not get on without a woman in the house, I hired a woman as housekeeper at 1/- per week and food and lodgings. I soon found everything going to ruin - bad washing, bad bread, I consulted Mr. Herrick, and he advised me if I found anyone suitable, the best thing would be to marry again. I had thought it would be a long time before I should think of such a thing, but I found 'the thought of men to be vain'. I was at St. Peters Church one Thursday evening, as was the custom of Mr. Herrick himself some times, to hear Mr. Carr, after leaving the Church, passing through St. Marys Churchyard I passed a young woman by the name of Esther Groves, whom I had seen before but never to know her. I entered into conversation with her, I found she knew my deceased wife and had heard of me. I asked her to meet me, I wrote her a letter and we met. I courted her some weeks. As I had a house and home that wanted looking after I thought it best to marry at once. We were married by Joseph Herrick August 14th, 1844. Before I married however, I gave up my charge of the two children. The boy Isaac was sorry to leave me, the girl Sarah, was ill with her Aunt.....

After ten months with my second wife we had a daughter born. We named her Rachel, after so many ups and downs in the world I had become the father of a fine girl. Trade soon began to get bad again the Irish Famine came on, bread got up to four shillings per week, sometimes no work for a week or two, sometimes we made our dinner off a pennyworth of skimmed milk thickened with flour. These things did not trouble me much as I had learnt

John Cusack:

John Cusack was born at Great Coggeshall, Essex, in 1819. His "days" - in fact, an autobiography - was written in 1871, eighteen years before his death. The manuscript is in Essex County Record Office, but a typewritten version has been prepared by Colchester Co-operative Society ~~1941~~ for their centenary in 1961, from which these extracts are taken.

For these, Cusack describes the poverty of his childhood during the uncertainties of the sick industry - in which the town largely depended, his sufferings ~~being the~~ in the workhouse under the rigours of the New Poor Law. His return to employment in the two marriages he contracted by the time he was twenty-five. Major Thomas is ~~the~~ ^{his} Landisignity are the importance of family connections, ~~and~~ his moral questioning of eventual religious conviction. In later life Cusack became ~~for some~~ of a sick work in Colchester and manager of the Colchester Co-operative Society. His life was working out of his own hand was a first effort of the liberal party and a strong believe in education as self-improvement.