





# THE STORY

OF

# PETER LAWLEY.



Lockmaking. Page 29.

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LONDON :

GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW

# The Story of Peter Lawley.

## CHAPTER I.

ABOUT twenty-five years ago, a stranger going through a street in the outskirts of the large and busy town of Birmingham, would have heard the noise of hammers in almost every house. The whole town is alive with the roar of furnaces and the clatter of machinery, but in this street, which was very black and dirty, it was nothing but thump and smite from morning till night, as the nailmakers, or nailers, as they are called, plied their trade. The front door of nearly every house stood open, and it was easy to be seen that not much pains was taken to keep the interior clean and comfortable; women were seated on the step, gossiping with one another about bad times and family affairs, while their children played in the muddy gutters that ran down each side of the street. Looking through to the low workshop at the back of one of these houses, a little boy might have been seen, standing on an old iron pot turned upside down to raise him high enough to reach the anvil, helping his father to make nails. The rods of iron were made red hot in the fire, and then the two, father and son, worked away upon their anvils,

striking off nails as fast as their hammers could go. Peter Lawley, that was the little boy's name, did all that he could to help to earn a few shillings every week; but he was only eight years old, and although from practice his arms were pretty strong, yet after hammering for ten or twelve hours a day, he was often ready to drop with fatigue. His father was not an unkind man, but he was poor, and thought it better to make Peter work, than to send him to school. Sometimes when nails were wanted in a great hurry, the little fellow could not get a minute for play. The father did not know that he was doing wrong by keeping his son at work for so many hours shut up in a smoky forge, nor was he aware that children, to be healthy and strong, should be let to run about, and laugh and shout in the open fields and bright sunshine.

Lawley and his wife had been married about twelve years; they had four children, two girls, one older and one younger than Peter, and a poor little boy under three years of age, who was a helpless cripple, owing to a fall from his mother's arms when he was quite an infant. The girls played about barefooted in the street, and paid no attention to what was said by their mother, and the little lame boy sat fretting at the door or by the side of the fire. Peter seemed to be pretty much like his companions, except that he was rather more willing to stick to work than nailers' boys in general, and was very kind to his helpless brother, and did what he could to amuse him. In other respects he was as ignorant and dirty

as any other children in the neighbourhood. But Peter used to think: at work, when he could get a chance to speak, he was always asking questions of his father about things that he had seen or heard of. The parent answered as far as his knowledge went, but he had never learned to read, which prevented him from talking to his son of many things that would have been useful. Besides he was always in a hurry to make as many nails as possible, and could not spare time to answer Peter's questions; he did not see much good in being over curious, he could not earn money enough for his family's wants; and to struggling people life often seems nothing but a gloomy and dismal object.

Peter's father and mother had fallen into careless and disorderly habits; the few things they had in the house were seldom clean or in their right places. If a dish or saucepan were wanted, it was always found dirty, and had to be cleaned before it could be used. The floor was rarely swept, and the fireplace was always choked with an unsightly heap of ashes. People sometimes think that it is less trouble to let things take their chance, than to spend a little time in setting them to rights. But they are under a great mistake: where dirt is not removed, and weekly earnings are not properly laid out, there must be hardships and frequently sickness in the family. The elder Lawley was not worse than others of his class; he did not know that it was his duty to send his children to school, and believed he was doing no more than fair when he went

every evening to the public house to drink, and sing songs with other nailers of the neighbourhood.

Peter, as we have said, was inclined to be thoughtful. Not far from where he lived there was a large school, and Peter had often peeped in at the door as he passed, wondering what so many boys could find to do sitting for two or three hours upon long forms, and what they wanted with books and slates. Among the scholars were two or three boys and girls with whom he was acquainted, and he could not help noticing that they were always cleanly dressed, their hair was combed, and hands and faces washed every morning before they went to school, and they were not rude and quarrelsome in the streets, as many are who had not been taught better. One day when work was rather slack, Peter got leave to go home with these children, and then he was astonished to see how clean and tidy the house was, so different from his own home. Every thing was clean and in its place; the floor was swept, the fire-place was bright, and there was no heap of ashes under the grate. A few books lay on the mantel-piece, and the eldest boy and girl used to read aloud when their father came in from his work, and their mother was busy with her sewing. Peter listened to the reading with great pleasure, he liked to look at the pictures in the books, and was never tired of asking questions about them. He began to think it would be a very nice thing to know how to read, and talk about lessons and pictures to his little lame brother and his sisters.

Not long afterwards, Peter was helping his father as usual, when all at once he let his hammer rest upon the anvil, and looking up into his father's face, said, 'Father, I should like to go to school.'

'What do you want to go there for?' asked the parent in reply.

'Oh, father,' answered Peter timidly, 'Mary and Billy Jackson go; and they have got books, and they know all about a great many things. Do let me go, father.'

'What's put that into the boy's head!' said the elder Lawley; 'but it's no bad thing to be able to read a bit. I'll talk to your mother about it.' At this Peter plied his hammer harder than ever, and went to sleep that night bewildered with hopes and fears about what his parents would decide.

When the children were all in bed, Mr. and Mrs. Lawley talked the matter over; they were both willing that Peter should get a little learning, but did not know how to spare him from the anvil, where he helped to earn the weekly wages, and they could not afford to give up any portion of the sum which never seemed enough to last from one Saturday to another. At last it was settled that the eldest girl should help her father at the forge, and that the next Monday morning Peter should go to school.

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## CHAPTER II.

BEFORE her marriage Mrs. Lawley had been a neat-handed, active servant-maid at a farm-house, but living for some years in a dirty and smoky street, and the hardships she was obliged to bear when her husband was out of work, had broken her temper and made her careless and fretful. Where everything was so dirty out of doors, it seemed to be of no use to try to keep the indoors clean. The windows at one time used to look clear and bright, with a clean blind stretched across the inside; and the floor was clean swept and the house put to rights once or twice every day; but now you could not see through the windows for smoke and dirt, many of the panes were broken and stopped with paper or old rags, giving the outside of the house a most wretched appearance, and the inside, as we said before, was left to go dirty and untidy from one week's end to another. Perhaps if any kind person had called on Mrs. Lawley in a friendly way, and reminded her of the pleasant days she used to have when living at the farm-house, where all was so clean, with a place for every thing, and every thing in its place, she would have felt how much easier it is to be clean than dirty, and have understood, that even in the worst circumstances, if people have only the will to do right, they are pretty nearly sure to find out a way. The cottages of many of the Staffordshire coal-miners shew that it is possi-

ble to work at a dirty business and yet keep the dwelling in a state of cleanliness.

As the time came on for Peter to go to school, his mother began to think she should not like to see him go out with ragged clothes, and black face and hands, as when he worked at the forge. She, therefore, set to work and patched and darned his jacket, and contrived to buy him a pair of fustian trowsers and second-hand shoes, before the end of the week. Monday morning came ; Peter was up early, and when he saw his sister trying to work with the hammer he had used so long, he half wished that he were not going to school ; but then again the thought came into his mind, that he would not be long in learning to read, when he might come back and take his old place at the anvil. His mother washed his face and combed his hair, and could not help thinking how much better her litte boy looked with clothes and skin clean than ragged and dirty. Any one would have thought that Peter was going away on a long journey, for his mother kissed him, his two sisters ran up and kissed him in turn, and then, after saying good-bye to his father and stooping to kiss his little lame brother, Peter set off for the school.

At first he felt a little afraid when he found himself in the large room among nearly two hundred boys, and he hardly knew what to do for some minutes, until the master caught sight of him, and called him up to the desk. After taking down Peter's name, and asking him the usual questions about his parents and where he lived, he showed him to his place in the

lowest class, where the little boys were learning their A, B, C, under one of the older boys as teacher. Every thing looked strange to Peter; he could not well make out what was going on, so many voices were saying lessons at the same time; and when he saw what hard letters he had to learn, he almost wished himself back again in the forge. Presently, however, he heard boys younger than himself go through their lessons without any trouble, which made him think he should soon be able to do as well, and when it came to his turn, he said the letters, one after the other, as they were called out by the teacher, without making any mistakes. When he went home, he had many things to talk about, and he tried to recollect the names of the letters in his lesson, and say them over to his little brother who sat in his usual place on the floor. This went on for some time, and before many weeks Peter had got over the first difficulties, and knew the names of all the letters. But this was not the best of it; his mother kept up the habit of sending him to school, with hands and face clean, and his clothes as tidy as possible. A good habit in one thing often leads to a good habit in another, and after a time the Lawleys' house began to look cleaner; the ashes were not let to lie for a week under the grate, and the chairs and stools, and pots and pans were sometimes set away in their right places. The clothes of the two girls and the little lame boy did not look so ragged as formerly, and if they were patched, they were at least cleaner than they used to be. At times too the win-

dows were washed, and although Mrs. Lawley would now and then still waste her time sitting on the door step or gossiping with the neighbours, yet there was a general improvement in the whole family.

We need not follow Peter through all his little trials and troubles in beginning to read, write, and spell. He found out what every one is sure to find out if he makes the attempt, that things are not half so difficult as we think, if we only keep a good heart and make up our minds to master them. He was not a slow learner, and was soon able to understand most things that were said to him. He was also careful to make the most of his time, and instead of playing about the streets, contrived to be one of the first at the school, both morning and afternoon. It is not to be supposed that Peter became a very good boy all at once, sometimes he neglected to keep himself clean, or forgot to tell the truth; but he was willing to be taught, and by making the most of his time got on quite as fast as many boys who were older, and could learn quicker, but did not think so much of the real use of knowledge. By the end of a year, Peter was up in the same class with Billy Jackson, whose reading had first set him to think of going to school, and he could read and write as well as any of the boys around him.

From the day he first went to school, Peter had never failed to do what he could towards teaching his little lame brother David, and as soon as he could read and write pretty well, he wished for a slate and books, to be able to

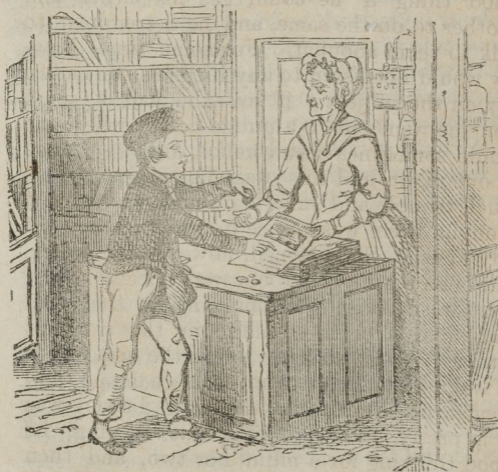
give his brother better lessons in the evenings. But Peter's father could hardly earn enough to buy food and clothing, and pay rent, and the boy was much puzzled to know how to get a little money for what he wanted. At last a thought struck him: he had often felt sorry at seeing his sister in the forge, and made up his mind to go to work again at nail-making every evening, by which his sister would have a few hours' rest, and he would perhaps be able to get together a few pence to buy the books and slate. His father agreed to let him have part of what he could earn in this way, and Peter went to work with right good will, and made nails faster than ever. In a few weeks, he had saved enough to buy a reading book, and the first thing he did on going home from school was to give his brother a lesson. Little David, who could not run about and amuse himself as other children, seemed very glad to have something to do, and very soon knew all his letters, and began to read short words. Peter felt the pleasure of doing good, and was so delighted with his brother's reading, that he never repented the trouble he had taken in teaching him. He could, however, only spare an hour every evening for his supper and the lesson, after which he went to the forge and made nails until it was time to go to bed. The next thing he bought was a slate and pencil; this was a new pleasure for little David, who tried to make strokes, and amuse himself all day with the slate while Peter was at school.

As Peter grew older he began to think of

plans for making the house more comfortable. If ever he went home with Billy Jackson in the evening, he was sure to see the father and mother and all the family sitting down after work was over in a clean swept room, while Billy, or one of his sisters, read aloud from some book. Peter thought it would be a very good thing if he could get his father and mother to do the same, and he detremined to talk to them about it. For some time, Lawley would not listen to anything his son had to say on the subject ; if ever he had a spare hour he went out to a public-house, where he would sometimes spend half a week's earnings in one night, and this wastefulness caused so much trouble and suffering, that his wife often thought there was no use in trying to keep a tidy house. She listened, however, to Peter, and one evening the room was nicely swept, there was a bright fire burning in the clean grate, and a chair standing in the warmest corner. About an hour before the usual time of leaving off, Peter dropped his hammer, and begged his father to go indoors. Lawley was in a pretty good humour that evening, he stood thinking for a minute or two, and then followed his son, who hurried to clean himself before sitting down. The father seemed pleased at finding the room so cheerful-looking, his wife was darning a stocking, the youngest girl and little David had gone to bed, and he sat down without speaking in the empty chair by the fire. Peter took his seat on a low stool in front of his mother, so as to be near the candle on the table ; he waited for

a few minutes, looking as though he had something very important to talk about, and then, bringing his hand from behind him, held up a small printed sheet:—

‘What newspaper’s that, Peter?’ asked his father.



‘T isn’t a newspaper father,’ answered the boy, ‘it’s the first number of the Penny Magazine; I saw it in a shop as I was coming home from school; I had a penny in my pocket, and bought it to see what it’s all about.’

‘Oh! Peter,’ said his eldest sister, ‘there’s some pictures: do tell us what they be for.’

'Shall I read it, father,' inquired Peter, looking from one parent to the other.

'Ay, boy, read a bit if you will,' was the answer.

Peter did not wait to be told twice; he began, and read the parts of the magazine that he thought would most please his father, mother, and sister. There was something about books and buildings, foreign countries and animals, useful discoveries, and good men. Every body seemed pleased to hear him read, and after he had kept on about half-an-hour his father said all at once:—

'That's a niceish sort of a book, Peter: I'll stop at home to-night, and hear a little more of it.'

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### CHAPTER III.

A LOOK of pleasure passed over Mrs. Lawley's face, as she heard her husband declare his intention of staying at home, instead of going out, as he was accustomed, to the public-house, and Peter thought he had never seen her look so happy; and he felt happy himself at being able to amuse his father. He sat down again to the magazine, and read until bed-time; and when he had put away his book, and his mother kissed him before going up stairs, Peter believed himself to be the happiest boy in the world, and felt glad and thankful that he had learned to read. He lay awake for some time, thinking about



his new magazine: what a nice thing it was to have books to read; how they served to fill up the time usefully, especially on dark and wet evenings, when there was no going out of doors; by and by too, little David would be able to take his turn at the book, and with this thought in his head Peter fell asleep.

After this the boy paid more attention than ever to his school lessons; the pleasure he had felt in his evening's reading encouraged him to go on, and it seemed to him that he now possessed a new power of being useful and making others happy. The cheap magazine was published every Saturday, and Peter hoped to be able to read something new week after week, and have as comfortable evenings as he had witnessed at the Jacksons'. But like many others, Peter's hopes were disappointed: things do not always turn out as we wish at the first trial; and a great many evenings passed by before his father could be again persuaded to stay at home and listen to the reading. There was, besides, another trouble: Peter had heard Billy Jackson talk of the Sunday-school, and the pleasure of learning and singing hymns, and the books lent to the scholars to take home to read, and he wished very much to go to the school. But his father was used to work on Sundays, as well as on any other day; he made Peter work too, and said the boy had schooling enough all the week, without losing Sunday into the bargain. The Sabbath, which ought to be a day of rest for all, was no day of rest for the Lawleys. Peter tried to keep up a good heart, hoping that a

change for the better would soon come ; and one evening when there was no work to be done, he went to talk about the Sunday-school to Mrs. Jackson.

A few days afterwards, Mrs. Lawley was a good deal surprised at seeing some one walk into the house : it was Mrs. Jackson, who said that although it was her first call she did not feel like a stranger, from her acquaintance with Peter. When Mrs. Lawley saw how neatly and comfortably her visitor was dressed, she felt a little ashamed at not being dressed in the same manner. Mrs. Jackson sat down, and began to speak of Peter's perseverance, and the good use he was making of his schooling, in a way that made Mrs. Lawley feel proud of her boy. She then went on to talk of the Sunday-school, and the good her children got there, and the pleasure there was at hearing them sing their hymns at home in the evenings. Mrs. Jackson was not a learned woman, but she made the most of her good sense, and spoke in such a plain and friendly manner about the Sunday-school, and a place of worship, that Mrs. Lawley felt more than half inclined to agree with her. Presently, however, she asked—

‘ But what's the use of going to church or chapel ? ’

‘ Well, I can't tell you all the good at once, ’ answered Mrs. Jackson ; ‘ but we feel all the better and happier for it ; and, as my husband says, no harm can come of being reminded of our duties and having good thoughts put into our minds once a week . ’

‘True enough,’ said Mrs. Lawley; ‘but what’s the likes of us to do, who havn’t got decent clothes?’

Some further conversation took place between the two; and when half-an-hour afterwards Mrs. Jackson rose to go, Mrs. Lawley felt that something might be done if set about in the right way. She talked the matter over with her husband, and he at last consented to let Peter go to the Sunday-school, though, as he said, he did not see how they were to live if nobody worked. This permission was a new pleasure for Peter, who went to the school on the very next Sunday. He wondered at the patience of the teachers, and heard of things which he had not known before; and when the children stood up to sing, he thought he had never heard anything so delightful. After two or three Sundays, he found out that the teachers would be very glad to have his sisters and little lame brother at the school. He ran home with a full heart to tell his mother, and ask her consent. This time his father made no objection; the two girls were willing to go; Peter said he would carry little David on his back, and in this way the whole family went to the Sunday-school, as soon as their mother could prepare some tidy clothes.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

‘UPON my word wife, you do look quite young again; it quite reminds me of old times! Who could have thought it?’

‘A contented mind works wonders,’ was the answer, ‘and then you know, as Peter says, when people try to do what is right, they are pretty sure to feel the better for it.’

‘True enough that, but who would have believed our Peter had so much sense in him? And to think that I was against his going to school, when we have been doing better and better ever since. If it hadn’t been for Peter’s reading we should never have had that nice row of geraniums on the ledge there, making the room look so pleasant,—and besides, look at the lot of books on the shelf.’

‘And the two or three pictures, husband,’ added the wife, ‘how nice they look hanging on the clean wall; and up stairs too, since Peter persuaded us to open the bed-room windows, and let plenty of fresh air in, the house isn’t like the same. When the boy first proposed it, I asked him if he wanted to give us all our death of cold—but instead of that we never slept so well in our lives: he is quite a blessing to us.’

This conversation took place between Lawley and his wife one fine summer evening, about three years after the events recorded in the foregoing chapter. They had not long come in from a walk to the fields beyond the smoky outskirts of the town, where they sat under a tree, on a hedgerow bank, while the children played about and enjoyed themselves.

It was very true, as Lawley remarked, his wife did appear quite young again. From a sloven she had become a pattern of neatness; the careworn miserable look which once clouded

er face, seeming doubly wretched from dirt, and disappeared, and given place to a cheerful and happy expression which gladdened all around her. To the children the mother's eye was as a sunshiny day. The house no longer appeared the same, every room was as clean as sweeping, scouring, and whitewash could make it. There were no broken panes in the windows filled with old rags, or patched with paper, all was sound and tight, and the house, though in a dirty neighbourhood, had an orderly and well-to-do air about it. The neighbours used to twit Mrs. Lawley with being over-particular, but she heard their remarks with good humour, and though trials of some sort would still come, yet she showed how much could be done by perseverance. Lawley, too, was much changed; his temper was not so hasty as formerly, and the gloomy scowl was now very seldom seen on his features. But what most tended to the comfort and prosperity of the whole family was, that he never went out to the public house, but passed his evenings at home, where, as he often said, he found a thousand times more pleasure than he ever had in the tap-room. Peter had kept on through all the discouragements thrown in his way, until his father wished to be able to read as well as the others; his son worked hard to teach him, and in time Lawley could take his turn in reading aloud, or in the singing, whichever it might be that was going on after the day's work was over. The money that he earned was properly laid out: instead of buying provisions from hand to mouth, always the

dearest way, enough was bought on the Saturday or Monday to last the week, and cooked without waste. Now that nothing went for beer, it was found possible at times to lay by a few shillings, and by-and-by there was a nest-egg of eight or ten pounds in the savings' bank. The elder girl no longer worked in the forge; Lawley found that with steady habits he could earn enough without putting his daughter to work at what was not fitted for her. She had learned to sew, and do many other useful things about a house, and was of great service to her mother. The younger girl seemed unwilling to leave her old ways, and profit by the good example before her, and often caused much trouble to her parents; but on the other hand they rejoiced to see the improvement in little David, who, now that he was taken regularly and often into the open air, gained strength in his limbs, and could walk a little on crutches. He was fonder of books than ever; and learned lessons as fast as Peter could teach him.

About this time, Lawley became deeply impressed with the sudden death of a neighbour and companion. This man was a habitual visitor at the ale house and gin shop, and had carried his drinking propensities so far that at length a very dreadful disease, common to great drunkards, seized him. He was taken with it in the presence of Lawley, who assisted to carry him home, where he shortly afterwards expired in the most awful agonies of both mind and body.

This shocking event made a great impression on Lawley; what had happened to his neigh-

bour might happen to him. He remained very thoughtful for some days; and the evening after the funeral, while Peter was reading, he stopped him short, and declared his determination to drink no more strong liquor as long as he lived.

But his resolution was put to a severe trial: all the nailers of the neighbourhood, when they saw him in the street, came to their doors to laugh and jeer at him. They called him 'coward and sneak, afraid of his wife, wouldn't be a man, and drink a jug of beer,' besides many more ill-natured speeches. Lawley's obstinacy, which had often caused him to be severe and unjust, now stood him good part, for it made him firm in doing right, and although he did not like to be laughed at, he determined not to give up. At times he felt such a strong inclination for beer that he was tempted to send Peter for a pint, and drink it at home, but his wife encouraged him to persevere in the good cause, and when he felt tired made him a nice cup of coffee to cheer him. Before long he found that there was a little money to spare at the end of the week, which put them all beyond the fear of being pinched for want of food. This settled the question: let his neighbours laugh as much as they liked, his beer-drinking days were over.

But what was Peter doing all this time! He was now nearly thirteen years old, and had often expressed a wish to learn some regular trade. His schooling, though not much more than enabled him to read, write, and cast accounts, was made the most of. He did not

content himself with just doing his lessons in school, he thought about them at other times, and used them as means towards gaining more knowledge. His teacher at the Sunday-school took much pains to make him understand the Bible stories and lessons which were read in the school; and this he did in so simple but forcible a manner as to make enduring impressions of truth and goodness on young Peter's mind. He learned of this affectionate and earnest-hearted teacher that religion is not that dull and tiresome path, which some who have never walked therein say it is, but that its ways are pleasantness and peace. He learned also that religion is something better than mere talk—that those who are really under its power are greatly changed in heart and life—that the soul grows more lovely and beautiful the more it is fed with heavenly truth. Peter not only learned these things in his head, but he felt and enjoyed them in his heart, and though not outwardly vicious before, his conduct towards his parents and little brothers and sisters became still more dutiful and affectionate, attentive, and obliging. The alteration which Peter himself was most conscious of was, that he felt so much happier now than formerly. His labours at the forge, and the trials of patience and temper which he had to put up with at home—for it was not all holiday and sunshine with Peter any more than with you, my little reader—well, these small trials, I say, were now borne with the utmost cheerfulness and good temper. Like another boy—a very poor and



miserable little fellow to look upon,—who was once asked whether the extreme poverty he endured did not make him very unhappy, he could reply, ‘I love the Lord Jesus Christ and that is the salt that seasons, and the sugar that sweetens the ills of life.’

Amongst other valuable lessons Peter learned at the Sunday School, the importance of always telling the truth was a prominent one, of not only avoiding positive lies, but also breaking off the disposition to excuse and wriggle out of a fault, instead of confessing it in a frank and open manner. Peter was some time before he could clearly make this out—it had always appeared so easy to make some excuse to hide a fault, without caring whether it were true or not. But by and by his own observation began to confirm the truth of his Sabbath lessons, for he saw that those who spoke the truth were the most trusted, that however humble their station they were always believed and respected, and so much more contented in mind than those who cheated or told lies. At last he made up his mind to try for the best; and happen what would from that time he never uttered a falsehood. He was very industrious; got up early in the morning and worked in the forge till breakfast time; this gave him money for various things which he wanted to improve himself with. He bought paper and pencils, and learned to draw; at first he tried to copy the pictures in his magazines, and afterwards met with an old drawing book for a few pence, which was very useful to him, and by keeping on with a determina-

tion to succeed, he at last could copy buildings, machinery, almost everything that he saw. He contrived little machines for play-things made of iron, drawing the plans first on paper; and by his reading had picked up so much information, as to be quite a handy boy about the house. He fitted up shelves, fixed pegs, mended the floor; in short, all sorts of little jobs to please his mother and make the house comfortable. Sometimes the things he bought were wrapped up in pieces of old newspapers, in which he generally found some scraps worth cutting out, these were then pasted in a book made of a few quires of wrapping-paper, and in this way he got together many useful facts which otherwise would have been lost. Peter, however, did not like the thought of continuing to be a nailer, as he said to his father, he could turn to nail-making at any time if other work failed. He wanted to get forward in the world, and thought that a trade requiring more skill would be the most likely means. He wished to be a lock-smith, and after some trouble and inquiry, a master was found willing to take him, who lived about ten miles from Birmingham, at one of the manufacturing villages common in that part of the country. His mother felt sorry at parting with her boy, who was such a comfort to the whole family, but Peter reminded her that it was all for the best, and some day she would rejoice to see him come back a skilful workman. And it was with a determination to try to do what was right, that he said good-bye to his father, who had walked over with him to his new place.

## CHAPTER V.

IT is a fine thing to go out into the world, to see new places, make new acquaintances, and learn a trade by which we may raise ourselves to independence, if not to fortune. With skill in the hand and knowledge in the head, every man possesses a power of advancement of which he cannot be deprived ; it always remains as part of himself. So thought and felt Peter for the first day or two after going to the place which was to be for a time a new scene of labour for him ; but things turned out very different from his expectation. Peter's father had either been deceived as to the character of the man with whom he apprenticed his son, or he had not attached sufficient importance to the subject. For this poor Peter had to suffer. Instead of the clean and cheerful home to which he had of late been accustomed, his master's house was always in a state of confusion ; all the household duties seemed to be carried on in a general scramble. It was only in the work-shop that any thing like order prevailed, and there not constantly, for whenever the employer was absent, the workmen and apprentices took care to work as little as possible. Beyond their trade they knew nothing, and Peter soon found that his prospect of adding to his stock of knowledge was not so promising as he had looked forward to ; and had it not been that there was one steady man among them, his

situation would have been very discouraging. The master was a coarse, uneducated man, who, provided that the work was done to time, cared for little besides. He was one of those who thought that learning made working-men dangerous and dishonest, or set them above their business; and one day that he saw Peter reading during part of the time allotted for dinner, he snatched the book from the boy's hand, and with an angry threat, forbade him ever to read again in his presence. This was a heavy trial for Peter; at first he felt as though the brightest part of his life had become suddenly clouded, but he was not easily cast down, and instead of giving way to discontented thoughts, worked on as though nothing had happened. But where there is a will there is a way: and by getting up at four o'clock while mornings were light, Peter gained two hours for reading, without disturbing any one in the house.

It was now that Peter felt the value of the habit of steady perseverance, of turning small opportunities to account, which he had been silently acquiring at home. The few books which he had brought with him supplied him with matter for thinking about while he was at work. Not that he was a dull boy; on the contrary, when the time for play came, he was always ready to take part in a hearty game of leapfrog, cricket, prisoners' base, or any other sport. And this healthful exercise in the open air, while affording real diversion to Peter and the other boys, removed any ill effects of confinement in the workshop. Oftentimes, how-

ever, the sport grew mischievous, and ended in trespass or depredation on the neighbours' property. With this Peter would have nothing to do; on such occasions he walked out by himself, and wherever there was a steam-engine to be seen in the neighbourhood, he contrived his walks so as to visit them all one after the other. Parker, the steady workman, took a great liking for Peter, and taught him how to go through his work in the best manner, and knowing the boy's fondness for reading, frequently invited him to his house in the evenings, and lent him such books as he had. Among these was a work on the steam-engine, with which Peter was delighted; the same love for ingenious contrivances which led him to choose the trade of a locksmith, now made him feel pleasure in studying machinery; and thus it was that, after reading about steam-engines, he walked out to see them at work, and made drawings of them, the better to understand and remember the differences in their construction. In this way he gained a tolerable knowledge of machinery, without at all neglecting his trade of lockmaking, and he was not long in finding out the truth of what Parker often said, that the more a man knew the better workman was he likely to be.

Peter profited so well by the instructions given him, and worked so diligently as to be able in the course of a few months to make all the parts of a lock in a very creditable manner. Notwithstanding his steadiness, and being always true to time in the workshop, his master often said the boy was too quiet to be

good for much. Peter, however, though often wondering at his employer's harshness, knew nothing of these suspicions; but he underwent much annoyance from another quarter. Among the apprentices, there were two or three who disliked and envied him on account of his skill and general good character; they could not understand why he should refuse to join in their brutal sports or ribald talk, and they persecuted him accordingly. Peter did not feel inclined to quarrel with persons in whose company he would have to work probably for several years; he reasoned with the other boys, and endeavoured to make them comprehend that ill-nature and strife were more likely to injure those who displayed such feelings, than the person against whom they were directed. 'Study your master's interest,' he would say to them, 'and you will best serve your own; he who will not do his duty for another, will hardly be able to do it for himself.' One or two of the boys would perhaps have listened to Peter, but they were afraid of being laughed at by the others, and where people stand in fear of ridicule for taking pains to improve themselves, it is a difficult and almost hopeless task for them to do right.

Among the apprentices, there was one boy for whom Peter felt much compassion. He was a poor little fellow, an orphan, without any one to care for him, and he was made the drudge of all the shop. In fact, as is often the case, what with running here and there, bringing this and fetching that, Bob worked a great deal harder than many of the men.

And if, when worn out by fatigue, he ventured to complain, he was answered by a blow, or some equally severe punishment. Peter often felt his blood tingle as he saw this treatment, but he kept his temper down, and one day interfered in the youngster's behalf. Nearly every voice was raised against him, but Peter stood firm, and spoke so feelingly on the subject, as to silence, if not convince, the opposition. It was a work of time, but he succeeded at last, and the poor little boy, who came to look upon Peter as his best friend, when relieved from the persecution under which he had so long suffered, proved to be not less expert in such work as he was able to perform than the others. So true it is that oppression tends to blunt the natural faculties and make people appear vicious and stupid.

If change of situation brings new pleasures and opportunities of improvement, so does it bring new trials and temptations. Peter's greatest want was useful and instructive books; as an apprentice he received no wages, and the only money he had was the few shillings given to him, from time to time, by his mother, when he had a holiday and went home. He had read his own books, and those lent him by Parker, over and over again, until he knew them nearly by heart, and he could borrow no others in the village, so little did the people around him care for reading. Peter often said to himself, that if he had a little more money, he would then be able to buy such books as he wanted, for he could not stop short in his pursuit after knowledge.

He only felt what many others have felt, that when we once get a little knowledge, it gives us a desire for more, and we cannot rest satisfied until we have gained more. He noticed that several of the apprentices who, as he, received no wages, yet appeared to have always plenty of money, and one day he asked them in what way they obtained it. At first they laughed, and refused to tell, thinking he could not be ignorant of their practice of appropriating and carrying off whatever they could lay their hands on any where in the neighbourhood. One of them, however, called Peter a fool for not taking care of himself; it was all fair, he urged, to cheat a master who did not do much for his apprentices. Besides, it was so easy to get a little money in this way, and nobody would be the wiser. For a moment Peter was tempted to believe that the circumstances in which he was placed would justify him in following this advice, and the thought of getting new books made it appear less blameable. It was, however, but for a moment: the lessons he had learned and treasured in his heart years before at the Sunday School came to mind; the love of truth prevailed, and happen what would, he would not give way to the temptation. Just at this time, Parker, who had been to Birmingham, brought back with him a few second-hand books. Among these was one on arithmetic; Peter had long wished to make himself acquainted with some of the higher rules which he had not learned at school, and with this book he filled up his leisure hours during several months.



Time went on : Peter's way of life remained much the same as we have here described it, up to the end of his second year of apprenticeship. His persevering steadiness was not altogether lost upon his master ; the latter had begun to think that the youth was what he appeared to be, and now that Peter asked for a holiday, to go home and see his parents, he obtained leave with less demur than formerly. It was on a fine Saturday evening that Peter started with a bundle hanging to a stick on his shoulder. Being summer, there were several hours of daylight before him, and he walked on, glad to leave the black village behind, and to find himself under green hedges and leafy trees, undisfigured by smoke. With what pleasure he looked forward to meeting his father and mother, his sisters and little David, how much they would be grown, how many things there would be to talk about, something worth telling since last they met. The Jacksons, too ; he would not fail to call upon them before he returned on Monday morning. Animated by these thoughts, Peter stepped briskly forwards until he came to a steam-engine factory, which had not long been built, standing a little way out of the road. There was an engine at work at one side of the building, of a construction different to any that he had before seen, and he went up to get a nearer view of it. His book and pencil were in his bundle, and Peter determined on adding the one he now saw to the number of those which he had already copied. While he was drawing, a gentleman who had come quietly up without being seen

by Peter, stopped and looked over his shoulder. After watching the movements of the pencil for a minute or two, he said, 'Well done, my boy, that is a very creditable drawing.'

Peter started and looked round, and when he saw who had addressed him, replied, 'It is kind of you, sir, to say so; but I am only a learner.'

'And a very promising one. Where did you learn to draw?'

In a few words Peter explained that his knowledge of drawing was self-acquired, and that the book lent him by Parker had first led him to think about steam-engines and how they were put together. He opened his book, and showed the drawings which he had made during his apprenticeship. The gentleman turned over the leaves, and commended the youth for the correct and workmanlike style in which they were executed, and after some further questions as to his position and prospects, inquired whether he would like to be a draughtsman in a manufactory of steam-engines.

'I should like it better than any thing else,' answered Peter, 'but I have another year of my time to serve.'

'It would be a pity that your abilities should not be brought out,' said the gentleman, 'have you no friends who can bring you forwards?'

'I have only myself to trust to,' returned Peter, 'and if blessed with health and strength I hope to make my way yet.'

That is well spoken,' added the stranger, who then, to Peter's surprise, informed him that he was the owner of the factory, and invited him to go in and look at the works.

While the delighted youth is thus employed, a strange uproar breaks out at his master's, the locksmith. The time for paying the men's wages had come, and a small bag, containing between two and three pounds in silver, was missing. The master was positive that he had locked it safely in the small closet where he usually kept his money, only the day before, and now, after searching in every hole and corner, it could not be found. The alarm of the robbery soon spread; all the men and boys were called in from the workshop, and questioned concerning the lost money. They all professed entire ignorance, except the two boys, who regarded Peter with particular dislike. One of them said, that he was wakened that morning by a noise in the room, where he and some other of the apprentices slept, and saw Lawley dress himself, and go quietly down stairs. He then woke his companion, and after a little while, they both saw Peter come up again and put something into his box, which he locked, and then sat down to read, until the hour came for beginning to work. They had almost forgotten the circumstance, but now, on being questioned, it had come back to their memory.

'I always thought that smooth-spoken Lawley to be no better than he should be!' exclaimed the master when he heard this, and gave orders that Peter's box should be

brought down. In a locksmith's house there is no lack of keys, and, in less time than is required to describe it, the box was opened, and there, sure enough, lay the bag with the money, concealed under a shirt in one of the corners.

Peter's having asked for a holiday was looked upon as an additional proof of guilt; the locksmith broke out in a furious rage, and swore, that if law could be had, the skulking thief should smart for it. He sent one of the boys to summon the constable, and mounting into a cart, both started in pursuit, hoping to overtake the culprit before he reached home.



Under the guidance of the kind stranger, Peter had walked from floor to floor, and from one end of the factory to the other, meeting with something at every step to excite his curiosity and astonishment, and his hope of being one day able to comprehend all that he saw. His conductor seemed pleased at witnessing his enthusiasm, and when the youth took his leave, spoke a few words of encouragement to him. Peter was soon in the road again, nappy at the thought of having so much additional news for his friends at home. All at once the noise of a vehicle was heard rapidly approaching; when close to him it stopped, two men jumped out, and before he could well recover from the surprise caused by the sight of the locksmith, he found himself handcuffed and seated in the cart between his master and the constable, driving back at a hurried pace.

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## CHAPTER VI.

It would be hard to describe Peter's feelings at this sudden change in his prospects: a few minutes before he was walking along with the cheering expectation of soon seeing his parents, brother and sisters—of having a talk with the Jacksons. They did not know that he was on his way to see them, so there would be the additional gratification of a surprise: his walk round the engine-factory, too, had been a new and unexpected pleasure, and all these circumstances made the anguish of his mind the

greater. He was so bewildered as to be for a time unable to speak ; at last, certain that he had done nothing which deserved punishment, he looked up and inquired, ' Master, what have I done ; why am I treated in this way ?'

' You'll see that soon enough, you sneaking villain,' was the answer, ' I thought we should find you out some day ;' after which, not another word was spoken during the remainder of the ride.

The boys and men were waiting for the cart's return : they wanted to see how Peter would look when brought back a prisoner. As the vehicle drove up and the unfortunate lad was led towards the house between his master and the constable, some of the lads cried out, ' there goes the thief.' Bob, who was standing with a sorrowful face by Parker's side, asked him if he thought Peter were guilty. ' I can't think he is,' answered the man, ' poor boy : time will shew.'

When within the house, the locksmith set Peter's hands at liberty, and questioned him about the missing money. The boy, although at a loss to understand what was meant, positively denied all knowledge of it, and when the charge against him was repeated, persisted in his denial, appealing to his past conduct whether such a change in his character would be likely to take place all at once. ' It's all very well to talk,' replied his master, ' but the money was found in your box ; I suppose you'll say you didn't put it there.'

On hearing this, Peter was in greater consternation than ever : grief and indignation

overcame him by turns ; he did all that he could, however, and vehemently denied the accusation, and insisted that his father, or Parker, or some one should be sent for to speak in his behalf.

‘ All in good time my lad,’ rejoined the locksmith, ‘ come constable, we’ll lock him up till Monday in the little back room at the top of the house.’

It was with some difficulty that Peter restrained his impatience at this unjust treatment ; he walked up and down his narrow chamber in a state of mingled doubt and indignation. How could the money have got into his box ? It must have been put there by some one who owed him a spite ; beyond that all was a mystery. But his conscience was clear in the matter, and he could and did look up with cheerful confidence to Him who hears the prisoner’s sigh, and breaks the oppressor’s rod. He re-called to memory many cheering promises of Holy Writ ; ‘ Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’ And the verse

‘ With cheerful heart I close my eyes,  
 Since thou wilt not remove,  
 And in the morning let me rise,  
 Rejoicing in thy love,’

was still pleasant and suitable. The night passed away : the next day as he was looking from his window to the fields beyond the village, he saw Bob walking in the bright sunshine, and his own imprisonment seemed the more irksome from the contrast. Monday

morning came : he was again placed in the cart between his master and the constable, and driven to the magistrate's residence, about three miles distant. On arrival here they were shewn into an apartment where two gentleman were sitting engaged in conversation at a table covered with papers. Peter started, and felt ready to drop for shame and sorrow, when he recognised in one of them the stranger who had so kindly shewn him over the engine-factory only two days before, and the gentleman himself seemed much astonished to see Peter come in as a prisoner. The magistrate turned round ; the locksmith proceeded to state his complaint, and brought forward the two boys as witnesses, who, as we have seen in the previous chapter, declared Peter to be the thief. The constable in turn deposed that he had been sent for in great haste on discovery of the robbery, and explained in what way the culprit had been pursued and captured, and ended by saying, 'he didn't think the boy was any better than he should be.' The case seemed clear enough against Peter, and when called upon for what he had to say, he was so confused by the evidence brought forward, and the disgraceful situation in which he was placed, as to have all the appearance of a guilty person. He began, however, by stating that on the Saturday morning he had as usual risen early, and having forgotten the night before to bring up with him two books which he had placed in a corner of the kitchen to be out of the way, he crept down stairs so as not to disturb any one, and on coming up again put one of the books into his



box, on which he sat down and read until it was time to go to work. He positively denied having been near the room in which the money was kept, but was quite unable to account for the bag of silver found in his box. He ended by saying, that as he was all alone, he hoped time would be given for his father to be sent for.

As Peter ceased, the stranger who had listened attentively while he was speaking leaned across the table and said a few words in a low tone to the magistrate. The latter nodded, and after a pause observed, 'Peter Lawley, appearances are certainly against you. Here are two boys who swear as to your having gone down stairs at an early hour, before any of the household were stirring, and that you came softly up again, and locked something in your box. But why you should have left the silver there, instead of taking it with you, I cannot understand. This gentleman tells me he met you by chance on Saturday, and formed a favourable opinion of you; I trust he may not be deceived, but for the present I can only say that you must be detained. It is, however, desirable that your father should be sent for; meantime, you will be left in charge of the constable who will bring you up again on Wednesday. I will take care that your father shall see you before that time.' The magistrate spoke in so kind a tone as to make Peter feel a little more at ease in his mind; the party were just leaving the room when the door opened, and Parker and Bob entered; they both looked hot and dusty, and were out of breath with

running. Parker took off his cap, and stepping towards the magistrate, said :—‘ Please your honour, don’t let them go away, I’ve got something to say in the matter.’ The locksmith, however, was in no hurry to depart, for he thought some further evidence was coming out against Peter. ‘ According to Parker’s statement, Bob had told him on going to work in the morning, that the day before he went out to walk in the fields, feeling a good deal troubled about what had happened. Coming to the edge of an old stone quarry, he lay down in the grass, and soon after hearing voices in conversation about Peter, he peeped over, and saw the two boys who had been brought forward as witnesses, sitting in the hollow beneath.

They were talking and laughing about the clever way in which they had contrived to steal the bag of money and place it in Peter’s box. Something more was said about the pleasure of seeing him punished, but this was enough for Bob, he stole quietly away ; yet for some time he could not make up his mind what to do as he was ‘ put upon ’ by the other hands in the workshop, and feared the effects of their displeasure. On seeing Parker, however, he at once told him what he had heard : Parker said not a minute was to be lost, and both started hoping to arrive in time to clear up the case. Bob was called forward and questioned ; while he was speaking a change came over Peter’s face, the look of shame disappeared, his eye brightened, and he stood up in proved integrity. The locksmith and constable seemed puzzled at the unexpected turn of affairs, and

the two boys who had sworn to the robbery tried to brave it out, but their confusion was such as to prove them guilty even before examination : it was now their turn to be placed under charge of the constable.

The stranger who sat by the table appeared to be pleased at this result, and speaking again to the magistrate, the latter asked the locksmith, if he were aware that Peter deserved some compensation for the grief and disgrace he had been made to suffer. The locksmith demurred to this ; some further conversation took place, which ended by the stranger telling Peter to go and make himself happy at home for a week, at the end of which he would hear something further. Peter's joy at being addressed in this way may be imagined ; he shook hands with Parker, and started off homewards brimful of news of all that had happened to him.

There are times when what appears to be a hopeless misfortune, proves in the end a lasting benefit. So it was in the present case ; before the week was over, the Lawleys were visited by the gentleman according to promise. The well-ordered arrangements of the little household made a favourable impression on him : after talking sometime with the parents, he asked Peter, if he were willing to go and work at the factory, the sight of which had pleased him so much a few days previously. Peter jumped at the offer ; his father and mother expressed their thanks for their visitor's kindness ; and at the end of the week the boy entered his new situation. Here his pleasure

was complete : on taking possession of a little bed-room in the foreman's house, in which it was arranged that he should live, he found his box and the books which had been left at the locksmith's ; and in addition a good stock of clothes.

Peter's industry and perseverance in self-education now met with their reward ; he was at once placed in the draughtsman's office, where several young men were always at work upon drawings of machinery. In the course of his studies he had met with many things which he thought would never be of any use to him, but now he found out their value ; these odds and ends of knowledge enabled him to understand many things about which he would have been at a loss, and so helped him forward in his daily tasks. Above all, he felt the benefit of his arithmetic, for there is no business in which a knowledge of calculation will not be useful. The factory was a very busy one ; engine after engine was turned out as fast as they could be made, so that there was always plenty of work for those who made the drawings. Peter exerted himself to the utmost, to show that he was not ungrateful for the kindness which had placed him in such an improving situation. He was never tired of admiring the order that prevailed through the whole of the works ; every man and boy about the place was bound by a system of punctuality, very different from the loose way in which work had been carried on at the locksmith's. Although Peter worked diligently at his own part of the business, he

found opportunities of getting an insight into the way of constructing machinery, and at last knew how to put a steam-engine together from beginning to end.

When Peter first went to the factory, he thought he had reached the height of his wishes, but as he advanced in knowledge and skill, so did he aim higher and higher. He saw no reason why he should remain a third-rate draughtsman, when he might rise to be second, or perhaps first. At all events, there was nothing like trying, and this thought encouraged him to conquer many a difficulty. Among the numerous workmen employed at the factory, there were many about his own age, with some of whom, as was natural, he became acquainted. Notwithstanding the regular hours they were obliged to keep through the day, no sooner was work over than their spare time was altogether wasted. They never thought of the morrow, made no attempt to improve their minds, or to better their condition. Peter, after a little talk, succeeded in persuading some of them to meet in the evenings two or three times a week, and try what could be done towards gaining knowledge. The foreman promised his assistance, and a small spare room at one end of the building, was lent for the meetings. Some of the young men could not read, those who could took it in turn to be teachers, and Peter was always present to give his help wherever it was wanted. The principal of the establishment took notice of their proceedings, and after a time, finding them determined to keep on, he supplied the school-

room, as it came to be called, with books, maps, slates, and drawing materials. In this way a class of improving young workmen rose up, and they found the truth of what Peter had often declared, that the more knowledge they gained, the better would they be able to perform their work, and as they obtained a clearer knowledge of their duties, so did they become more trustworthy, by which they profited in more ways than one. Peter, in turn, felt that doing good to others was one of the best means of getting on in the world. It is not to be supposed that he was without his trials, difficulties, or temptations; but he had made up his mind to do his duty whatever might happen. He was not above asking for information on subjects with which he might be unacquainted; what he lacked in genius he made up by industry. Before the end of two years, he was the most able draughtsman in the establishment, and in the absence of the principal, took the management of the office, where his unassuming manners and cheerful disposition gained him the esteem of every one.

At one of the evening meetings, a young man from the finishing shop, whom Peter was encouraging to persevere with his arithmetic, as a means of getting forward, replied, 'It's all very well to talk about getting on, but 'tis luck that does it after all.' In answer to this remark, Peter gave to the class a short statement of his own history, such as the reader is already acquainted with, and concluded—'thus you see, I was left to make my own way. I

could not well be poorer than when I started, yet little by little I got on, adding one scrap of knowledge to another, and making the most of every opportunity for improvement. Had I not made up my mind to go to school when a boy, I might now have been a drunken nailer. Had I not persevered in learning to draw, I should not have been taken notice of by our generous employer: there was no luck in that. We cannot hope to get good situations unless we qualify ourselves for them. And even had I not risen into my present place, I should have been more skilful, better able to fulfil all my duties, and more contented as a locksmith, with knowledge, than without it. The means that I made use of are within the reach of every one: have a real desire to get on in the world, and you will soon find out the way.'

Here our story may properly be said to end: we have followed Peter long enough to know that with trust in Providence, and the exercise of such principles he had every hope of a prosperous and successful career. But as some of our readers may wish to know something more of his after history, we shall by way of conclusion, relate in a few words what came to our knowledge respecting him, on a recent visit to the scene of his labours. 'Young Lawley,' said our informant, 'is now first draughtsman, and for activity and intelligence no better is to be found in the neighbourhood. His salary is £300 a year, and it is not unlikely that he will work himself into a still better position, for he is a most persevering fellow; success has not spoiled

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him ; in fact he never seems to be happier than when he is lending a hand to help others forward. That is his house there by the side of the foreman's, and a comfortable place it is, under the care of his wife. She is of an excellent disposition and quite worthy of him ; her name was Mary Jackson ; they had I believe been acquainted with each other many years ; a happier couple you will hardly find. Lame David now keeps a school in the village where Peter went to learn lock-making, and his youngest sister lives with him to look after his house. The rest of the family still reside in Birmingham, the father and the mother are getting into years, and not so well able to work as formerly ; but as they often say, they have enough to keep them above want. It is no small pleasure to Peter to reflect on all this prosperity, the result of a trustful determination to overcome difficulties.'

