

*Prison*

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# JOHN M. SPEAR'S

## LABORS FOR THE DESTITUTE PRISONER.

### No. IV.

"My friends are gone ! Harsh on its sullen hinge  
Grates the dread door ; the massy bolts respond  
Tremendous to the surly keeper's touch.  
The dire keys clang, with movement dull and slow,  
While their behest the ponderous locks perform ;  
And fastened firm, the object of their care  
Is left to solitude — to sorrow left."

Written by Dr. Wm. Dodd, when a prisoner.

THE third year of my individual labors for the destitute prisoner has this day closed. Although I am not the Agent of a Society, or the representative of a body of men, yet as I am from time to time assisted by humane friends in my work, I owe it to them to make occasional brief statements of what I have done.

For the information of those who are unacquainted with my plan of labor, I will state that I desire to visit prisons, and to seek out the poor and the strangers who may need aid and sympathy. If they need counsel, wisdom, books, or labor, and are unable to pay for them, I wish to impart them. If they have families, or relatives, I will visit them if they are near, or correspond with them if they are distant, and render them such service as they may need in the hour of trouble. When the prisoner is discharged, and comes once more out into the world, I will endeavor to take him by the hand, clothe, feed, lodge, employ him, or, if he desire it, return him to his family and friends. Besides this, I intend to travel to seek out places, especially in the rural districts, where the offender may be employed,—to become acquainted with eminent friends of this cause, and to deliver discourses on prisons, crimes, and punishments, as I have opportunity.

During the last year, ten thousand six hundred persons were imprisoned in the State of Massachusetts alone, saying nothing of those who were imprisoned in the other neighboring New England States. Among these are many young persons, who are arrested and imprisoned for the first time. Some of these may be assisted, counselled, and perhaps reclaimed. An English writer estimates that if a young man is saved from



crime and becomes a good citizen, it is worth to the community from \$1,500 to \$2,500. If I have been the humble instrument, in the hands of God, of saving only a few, out of the great number of prisoners who have come before me, I trust that my friends will not feel that my labor has been in vain.

Several years of experience has satisfied me that in pursuing this peculiar work it is not well to be an agent of a body of men. To be successful, one must move about quietly, and do the work that daily comes before him. If he unwaveringly trusts in God, he will be guided by heavenly wisdom, and will be led in the path of duty and peace.

### MY LABORS IN DISTINCTION FROM THOSE OF OTHER PERSONS.

I discover that persons sometimes confound me with others. It is desirable that the community should be informed precisely what I am doing, in distinction from all other persons. The following carefully prepared article was published last April, in the *Christian Register*, the Unitarian paper of this city, and was written by Rev. F. D. HUNTINGTON, one of its editors. Many kind notices of my labors have been published by various persons, but no writer has so clearly apprehended what I am doing, in distinction from all others, as has my esteemed friend, Mr. Huntington. Here is the article. I omit some statistics which relate merely to my labors of 1849.

"It enriches the world in the estimation of a generous man, to detect the existence of a new form of doing good. Better than the discovery of a gold mine that inflames the cupidity of a continent, far grander than a successful battle that stirs the enthusiasm of a nation; this adds a real and abiding value to life, and multiplies at once the securities, the dignities, and the hopes of our being.

"Probably many of our readers, living in Boston, are not aware that there is daily moving about Court Square and its neighborhood, and especially about the Police, Municipal, and Common Pleas Court Rooms, about Suffolk Jail, and about the purlieus of many of the districts of vice, crime, and wretchedness of the city, a noiseless, unassuming minister of mercy whose charities are as voluntary as they are original. He is the agent of no society. In the ordinary sense, he is responsible to no man or body of men. He is supported by no salary. He is a limb of no philanthropic machine. He is at once the discoverer and sole occupant of the field in which he labors. Mr. John Augustus stands in a sphere contiguous to his, and often their objects coincide; but they are not identical, nor are the two men associated together in their plans. The individual we

refer to, has it for his purpose to rescue, counsel, and guide the lowest and the poorest class of persons accused of crime. Many of these are strangers in the city, at a distance from home, recently exposed to temptations that had never tried them before; duped, perhaps, and betrayed by the practised villains that always lurk and keep watch for victims in a great metropolis. Nearly all of them are ignorant. Most of them, as soon as suspected, are quite helpless. Very likely they deserve punishment, but they stand at a crisis. The question with them is, whether they shall go on, plunging deeper and deeper into the course of depravity and disgrace on which they have entered, or whether they shall be arrested by the hand of compassion, as well as the hand of justice; be shown a path of return to honor, and be entreated to walk in it. In other cases, these accused persons want a legal defence; they are guilty, but are liable to incur a heavier penalty than would accrue if all the circumstances of investigation were fairly presented in Court by a considerate friend, and a competent counsellor. In other instances still, the party arraigned is altogether innocent of the charges preferred against him, but needs an intelligent statement in his behalf, to clear up suspicious appearances. Sometimes, too, the prisoner brought to trial, must suddenly leave behind a sick wife, a dependent parent, or tender children, fully deserving, and most urgently requiring the kind attentions of charity. Another evil exists in connection with our criminal code, of which it is difficult to speak with equanimity, and yet of which it may be impolitic to speak with indignation. We refer to the regulation that requires a friendless person, when charged by caprice, by malice, or through honest mistake, with an offence against the laws, to be kept a long time in confinement before he can be proved guiltless, to be thrown out of the employment by which he earns his daily bread, to be torn away from those who live by his industry, to be humiliated, by having his good name sullied with criminal associations, to be corrupted by abandoned companionships, and thus to be set directly in the way to ruin; and yet, when all this is done and his innocence is established, deprives him of all redress for the time, for the property, the opportunities, and the character that he has inevitably lost. We are glad to learn that there is some prospect that this wrong will be remedied at some day, — we hope not a distant one, — when the Legislature of the Commonwealth shall see it to be common justice and Christian duty to listen to petitions to that effect. Meantime, such as are placed in this unfortunate condition demand in the name of 'the dear humanities of Christ,' some disciple's sympathy, some good Samaritan's exertions in their behalf.

"The various offices of benevolence that we have thus designated, are discharged in Boston by Mr. John M. Spear. There are two brothers Spear. Charles is the editor of the 'Prisoner's



Friend," and interests himself by different methods in the subject of Prison Reform; but the two are quite distinct in their modes of operation, means of maintenance, and the whole management of their measures. Mr. John M. Spear is in constant personal contact with persons under arrest, or suffering incarceration. If he has reason to believe they are without funds, he proffers such gratuitous assistance as is consistent with the ends of justice. If they do not apply to him, he seeks them out. He inquires into their history. He writes letters for them. By application to the generous, he is able to save their families from beggary. He provides legal advice for them, either gratuitous, or at the lowest possible terms. He traverses the city to collect evidence, and sometimes obtains witnesses from a great distance. He accomplishes what the officers of the prison have not leisure, or money, or disposition to accomplish. Above all, he gives the prisoner such instruction and encouragement as will tend to secure him from future offences, and restore him to virtue. To do this the more effectually, he often provides for discharged convicts respectable situations in the country. He looks after the family of the imprisoned. We have known him to search out children left wandering in the streets in mere infancy, cold and hungry, in consequence of the abrupt seizure of their parents. He says of himself, 'Disregarding all sectarian lines, party divisions, national boundaries, and complexional differences, I am endeavoring to do from day to day, the work my heavenly Father calls me to perform.'

"No one who knows Mr. Spear personally, can doubt the simplicity, meekness, and truthfulness of these words.

"Besides this, Mr. Spear employs such leisure as he is able to command, in travelling from place to place, delivering lectures, distributing publications, and so enlightening the public mind on the general subject of the treatment of crime and the condition of criminals. He visits jails and prisons, and corresponds with advocates of the cause. In addition to his other tasks, he devotes a portion of his time to imparting moral and religious teachings to the inmates of the Leverett Street Jail. If we are correctly informed, the only direct spiritual instruction enjoyed in that institution, is communicated through him. Is it not worth considering whether provisions for a chaplaincy there, are not as well deserving the consideration of the authorities, as the contemplated erection of a new and costly building? Not such a chaplain as some are: Heaven forbid? But a man of generous feelings, ready tact, unaffected piety, and untiring fidelity. No formalist, nor dogmatist, nor pharisee.

"This philanthropist is by no means without encouragement. Many pulpits in New England have been opened to him. Pecuniary aid has been placed at his disposal. Many eminent persons have given him certificates of their approbation; and more than all, he has had the unspeakable reward of seeing the

idle and dissolute that he has redeemed, living honestly, soberly, and industriously. Mr. Spear depends entirely on gratuitous contributions. The circle of his usefulness will be enlarged in proportion to the resources placed in his hands. His residence is 2½ Central Court.

"The question will naturally arise in some minds, whether such a ministry as Mr. Spear's may not interfere with the execution of the law, prevent the just punishment of offenders, and thus weaken the restraints that should check the transgressor. After some careful inquiry, we are satisfied that no such result follows. In this opinion some of the wisest and most judicious men in the community, of various professions, coincide. Among Mr. Spear's most earnest friends, are judges, advocates, and officers of the Courts. All the conservative powers of the State circumscribe his action, rendering it impossible that his humane design should degenerate, even if they were prone to do so, into a lax and indiscriminate sentimentality."

I will narrate some instances of assistance rendered to prisoners and their friends, as illustrations of my labors.

### THE INFANT PRISONER.

Very small children are sometimes found among prisoners. Sitting one day in a Police Court, I observed the door open, and a mere child was ushered in. The officer who accompanied him was a tall man, and the child was so short that he could not easily reach down to take his hand without stooping so low that he could not comfortably walk. With his hand on the top of the child's head, he in that way urged the little fellow onward. Supposing the child was to be used as a witness, I wondered that one of such tender age should be expected to know the nature of an oath.

Addressing a friendly officer of the Court, I said, as I pointed to the child,

"What have you there?"

"A prisoner," he replied.

"But he does not know enough to commit a crime?" I said.

"What is the offence of which he is accused?"

"Assault and battery," he answered.

Turning to the child, I said, "where do you live, my son?"

"In Peggy's Alley, Sir."

While I was endeavoring to ascertain from the little prisoner where Peggy's Alley was, never having heard of the place before, the Clerk of the Court called his name.



He was now arraigned, and the complaint was solemnly read to him, gravely charging him with the commission of the crime of assault and battery, "against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth, in such case made and provided," not a single word of which did the little fellow understand.

"May it please your Honor," I said, "the prisoner is not seven years of age. He does not know enough to commit a crime."

"I cannot help it," said the aged judge, looking over his spectacles down upon the child with compassion, "he has been complained of, and the complaint cannot be withdrawn; and besides, the offence is of so serious a character that this Court has not jurisdiction of the case. I must bind him over to appear before a higher tribunal."

"But if the poor child is sent to Jail," I said, "to be kept until he can be tried, who will take care of him while he is there? He does not know enough to undress himself, and put himself to bed at night."

"A cradle should be sent to the Jail for him," said the Clerk, indignant that a mere babe was to be imprisoned with thieves and robbers.

"I am sorry for him," said the Judge, "but I cannot help him."

"I trust your Honor will not put the bail high," I said, "for I should be exceedingly sorry to have so small a child sent to Jail."

"Put the bail at fifty dollars," said the Judge to the Clerk.

"Will your Honor take me for bail?" I inquired.

"Yes," said the Judge.

I bailed him, took him to my house, gave him food, found his parents, put him to school, and when the Grand Jury came together, I got word to them of his tender age; they refused to find a bill against him and he was discharged.

### THE UNGRATEFUL WRETCH.

Reading a morning paper one day, my attention was attracted to an article headed an "ungrateful wretch." It was stated that moved by compassion, a person in Norfolk County had kindly taken a small boy into his family, and he had robbed him, had ran away with his booty, and now had been arrested and imprisoned. A few days after I found him in prison. He informed me that he was twelve or fourteen years of age, (I am not now certain which,) that he came from New York — that his passage was paid by a boy older than himself — that the boy advised him what to do when he arrived here, and that under his influence, he had stolen from his employer and benefactor.

I said to the little fellow, "have you parents, my son?"

"Yes Sir."

"Shall I write to your father and let him know that you are in prison?"

"Not to my father, Sir. My father is a drunkard, and don't take good care of me. Write to my mother. She is a good woman, and belongs to the Methodist Church."

I wrote immediately to his mother, and received from her the following reply: —

"SIR: — I received your note yesterday evening, informing me that my son, Samuel, was in Boston Jail, charged with stealing money from a man with whom he lived.

"He was, no doubt, induced to leave this city without my knowledge, by a boy who had often advised him to go with him, and who has succeeded in accomplishing his own purpose, regardless of consequences to others.

"I feel as a mother for my youngest and only son, a stranger among strangers, and sincerely thank you for your kind offer of being his friend, and your endeavors to help him all you can; and regret that my situation is such that I have not the means of employing counsel, or even coming on to see him; and shall ever feel grateful to you for your kind letter, and the assistance you may render him. Honesty compels me to offer no expectations of any remuneration of a pecuniary nature. But I trust that a good conscience in doing so kind and benevolent an act, and the blessings of the Lord will fully compensate you for your attention and kindness to the truly helpless.

"If he should be sent to the Reform School mentioned in your letter, I should like to hear something of his probable treatment, and any further information you may think proper to communicate."

When the lad came into Court for trial, I showed the Judge this letter, and at my request he was sent to the State Reform School, where he still remains, and is doing well. I fondly hope that at some future day his poor mother will be able to press her little son once more to her bosom.

### THE CLERGYMAN'S WIFE.

At one of my visits to a prison I found a young woman. Entering into conversation with her, I learned that she was a milliner, and that she was accused of taking some pieces of ribbon and straw from her employer. She informed me that she had always before maintained a good character, and had never been accused of crime. She confessed that, to some extent, she was guilty, though she had not done all she was accused of doing. She was bailed. I called on her employer and had a free conversation with him in relation to the prisoner.



As far as he knew, she had always before done well. I remunerated him to his entire satisfaction for his loss.

When the prisoner was brought into Court, by my advice, she pleaded guilty. I then informed the Judge (Mellen) of all I had done for her, satisfied him of her previous good character, and desired him to fine her, instead of sending her to the House of Correction, the usual punishment for such offences. He complied with my request. The fine was paid, and she was discharged.

A few months since I received a letter from her, in which she expressed much gratitude, and informed me that she was now well married to a worthy clergyman, and had a good home.

She writes "I don't think that there has a day passed over, but what I have thought of the kindness you have shown to me. Had it not been for you, I have thought many times that I should have sunk under the weight that was laid upon me. How much good a few kind and encouraging words will do sometimes when persons feel they are in trouble, and that more than they are able to bear."

### THE CLERGYMAN'S SON.

Hastily passing one day through the Leverett Street Jail, a young man about nineteen years of age, desired to speak with me. He informed me that he had borrowed an opera glass of a fellow boarder, and being in much want, he had sold it. Pressed hard by the owner to return the glass, he had taken a coat, hoping thereby to raise money to redeem the glass. He was followed to the place where he sold the garment, was soon in the hand of an officer, was taken into Court for primary examination, and was put under bonds to appear at a higher tribunal in the sum of four hundred dollars. Unable to obtain bail, he was committed to Jail to await his trial. Subsequently I learned that he came to Massachusetts from one of the Middle States in search of employment, and that on the first day of his arrival he was induced by a stranger, whom he unfortunately met on the Boston Common, to take his coat from his back, sell it, and give the money to the seducer. He had obtained a few days of employment in one of the low theatres as a copyist. Unable to pay his weekly board, he had committed the crime for which he was imprisoned. He desired me to write to his relatives and inform them of his sad condition. He wept bitterly when he made this request, and especially when he gave me the address of his uncle. I wrote as he desired. His uncle soon came from a neighboring State to see him. I then learned that his father was a Clergyman. I forbear to mention

the denomination to which he belonged, and do not intend to aid in the exposure of the afflicted family.

Having promised to aid the prisoner when he was brought into Court for trial, and having agreed that I would supply him with necessaries, and with suitable books, his uncle returned home to his distressed family.

A few evenings after his departure, when sitting in my office, the kind keeper of the Jail unexpectedly entered, and informed me that the young man was very sick, and that the Physician of the prison had said he would not live more than three days. With much emotion he said, "I cannot bear the thought of having so beautiful a young man die in Jail." Early the next morning I became bail for him. The bonds were \$400.00. I then went to the prison, the keeper kindly took him in his arms, placed him in a carriage, and accompanied him to my house.

Dr. Walter Channing was called in to attend him. Mrs. Spear watched over him day and night, and by the blessing of God, his life was spared. His father came several hundred miles to meet his erring son. On his arrival at my house, he desired to see the child alone. He felt that no human eye must be permitted to look on and witness that meeting. His mother had died when he was but six years of age. I think his countenance was the most beautiful to look upon I ever beheld.

When he had sufficiently regained his strength, he was taken into Court. I narrated all the facts of the case to the Judge, (Hoar) and at my request he was fined. The fine was paid. Immediately he took the cars, returned to the dwelling of his uncle, and subsequently to the quiet residence of his father. In a letter received a short time since informing me that he was with letter received a short time since informing me that he was with his father, and had fully recovered his health, he says, "I assure you that I have daily thought of your own, and your family's kindness to me, — kindness that I never could forget, were there no other (to me) painful circumstances to impress it upon my mind. I feel sensibly that under God's blessing I owe in a very great degree, my present enjoyment to your disinterested benevolence; and am conscious of a debt of gratitude to your endeavors in my behalf, which I can never fully repay."

### LABORS OF A DAY.

Unacquainted with the kind of labor in which I am daily engaged, some are unable to see how my time is employed. For their information, I will give an account of the labors of a single day. I select the last day of the year 1850.

CASE I. It is an unusually cold day, and the ground is covered with a heavy body of snow and ice. Just as I leave my break-



fast table, and seat myself in my office, which is at 2½ Central Court, a boy enters, and hands me a letter, written by a gentleman of Middlesex County, who has heard of me. The writer begins by saying, "I take the liberty to send to you a poor, helpless, unpitied, friendless orphan, asking you for Jesus Christ's sake, to provide a home for him suited to his individual circumstances." The lad informs me he is fourteen years of age, and his parents have been dead four years. He is poorly clad, and is hungry. He is fed and clothed, and assured that a place, where he can learn a good trade, shall be obtained for him in a few days.

CASE II. A man whom I have known many months now enters my office. His wife and daughter have both been in the House of Correction. They have just been discharged. Formerly he was a drunkard. Now he has become a sober man. I hold a conversation with him on the blessings of Temperance. He is pleased, and shows me the good clothes he now wears, and has earned since he signed the blessed Pledge. He wishes me to obtain a place for his daughter to work in a family. I promise to aid him, if in my power, and I give him a small job of work, by which he earns \$1.25.

CASE III. A lad enters. He has a dog with him. On inquiring, I learn that he has just bought the dog, and had paid seventy-five cents for him, nearly all the money he had. Several weeks ago I found him in the Leverett Street Jail. When he was discharged I obtained a good place for him in Ossipee, New Hampshire. He had left his place, and had foolishly bought this dog. His mother is a poor widow, who lives in Fall River. I gave him a lesson on economy; but I do not feel certain that he can be saved. Sometimes he has fits. He cannot be quiet in one place long. Poor boy! I know not what will become of him.

CASE IV. I now take my horse and sleigh and drive to the Home, an Institution established for the reformation of sinful women. A short time since, when I was in the Boston Police Court, I found there a father, and mother; and daughter, all charged with being common drunkards. Moved to speak to the Judge (Cushing) in behalf of the daughter, I had bailed her until this day. Shoes, a bonnet, and other clothing had been obtained for her, and she had been a good girl. She was seventeen years of age. She was greatly distressed, and wept much, when I informed her, that according to agreement, I must now take her into Court. She was afraid of being sent back to jail, but I assured her I would not leave or forsake her. I carried her into the Court and interested the friendly officers in her behalf. The Judge agreed that I might bring her in again to-morrow, when he would pardon her. Joyfully I carried her back to the Home.

CASE V. The next person who came to me was a neatly dressed man, who resides in the County of Plymouth. Twice

he had been an inmate of a State Prison. While he was there the second time, I became acquainted with his family, and from the lips of his affectionate sister, I learned that when he was discharged the first time, everybody refused to associate with him because he had been a prisoner, consequently he was discouraged, drank, and under the maddening influence of liquor he broke into a building, and was sent back to prison for five years. At the request of his sister, I visited him in prison, and assured him that when he was again discharged he would find a new and more Christian feeling in the community towards him. When he was released, friends gathered around him, he soon found labor, was well married, and in a short time commenced carrying on business for himself. His business increased, and he discovered that he needed an apprentice, and desired me to obtain one for him. I soon found a small, though stout, German boy in prison, charged with stealing a pencil from a lady at the Mechanics' Fair. At the suggestion of the humane Judge, (Wells,) I bailed him when he came into Court, and the same day sent him to live with this friend. He had now called to-day to say to me that the lad was a most excellent boy, and that had he had a chance to select from a thousand, he thought he could not have selected a better person. He wished me to go with him to see the boy's parents. I took him into my sleigh and carried him to their house in Norfolk County. They were glad to hear from their little son, and expressed much gratitude to me for bailing him, and obtaining so good a situation for him.

CASE VI. A poor woman, with a family of children, now comes and informs me that they are hungry, and she has no bread. She is supplied with two loaves.

CASE VII. A brother comes to speak to me in behalf of his sister, whom I found several months ago in prison, and obtained a pardon for her, and had provided for her babe, who had been a pawn for her, and had provided for her babe, who had been thrown into the Almshouse by its unfeeling father. The brother now desired me to exert my influence to get the child into the Children's Friend Institution, and she also wished me to write a letter for her (she being unable to read or write) to her native town, in relation to a small property, which she believed herself to be heir to. Promised to comply with her wishes.

CASE VIII. A poor girl next calls. Last March I found her in jail, charged with stealing seventy-two dollars from the man with whom she had lived in South Reading. At the suggestion of the Judge (Bigelow,) I bailed her, and obtained a good place for her in a family sixty miles from Boston, in Bristol County. She had done exceedingly well, and had now been in Boston a few weeks visiting her father. She has no mother living. She wishes now to return to her place, but has spent all her money, and she has come to ask me to pay her fare, which is \$1.50. Agreed to assist her.



CASE IX. A poor, afflicted widow now calls. She has in her hand a note from a good man who has long known her, and he desires me to hear her story. I am informed that she has two sons; both of them are in jail. She desires me to go and see them, and to converse especially with the youngest, who has been fined seven dollars. I go to see him, and learn that his employer owes him some money. I give him encouragement that to-morrow I will obtain the sum due him, and come and pay his fine.

CASE X. In prison with the last mentioned person I find a seaman. He is a stranger in this country. Hearing me converse with his fellow-prisoner, he asks me to help him. He informs me that he came to Boston, a few days ago, in the Plymouth Rock, and that on her arrival the passengers treated the sailors,—he got high, was arrested, fined, and having no money with him, he was thrown into prison. He has a month's wages due him, and he desires me to see the captain, get his money, and pay his fine. I agree to do as he desires to-morrow.

It is now night. I am weary of seeing the wretched, and of hearing tales of suffering, but I resolve to spend the evening in writing this sketch of the labors of a day. The sketch is completed, and it is now nearly ten o'clock, my usual hour of retiring to rest. Thus closed the labors of the year 1850.

Of course I shall not be understood to say that I have had as many and as great variety of calls every one of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year; for mortal man could not attend to as many daily. Sometimes a single case requires several days of labor. I hope also that I shall not be suspected of parading my efforts in these matters. The statements are made simply to draw attention to a hitherto unheeded class of wants.

#### NEWSPAPER ITEMS.

Not unfrequently items in relation to my labors are published in the newspapers. Perhaps the reader will allow me to group some of these together, as showing the feelings with which such efforts as mine are regarded by the officers of Justice and by the Press. After all, one of the greatest encouragements to perseverance is the sympathy and co-operation I find so unexpectedly offered me from these and similar sources.

"*Tis Mightiest in the Mighty.*" — Yesterday a woman was brought into the Municipal Court and pleaded guilty to an indictment containing three counts, charging her with stealing goods from various shops. She had formed the debasing habit of using intoxicating drinks. While partially under the influence of the poison she committed the offences charged against her. At the time she was brought before the Police Court for a primary examination she had a nursing infant. Not being able to give bail for her

future appearance, she was required to go to Jail, and remain until her trial was ready. Her babe was then taken from her and kept several weeks, until yesterday, when it was returned to her. Her husband left her some time since and went to the land of gold. She is very poor, has three children, and it is the opinion of Judge Perkins, who presided, that she was more the object of pity than a victim of law. He accordingly requested John M. Spear to bail her. Mr. Spear complied, and very soon the mother was on her way to the place where her other children resided. Scenes like this are of frequent occurrence in the criminal Courts of Suffolk County. It is well that some one or more persons are constant attendants at these Courts to do such works of Christian love for the weak, the poor, and the erring. It is also fortunate for the unfortunate that the bench of the Municipal Court is honored by the presence of Judges who, in the administration of justice, do not forget to exercise mercy. — *Chronotype*, Dec. 15.

*A Singular Case.* — Last Saturday a lad was arraigned before the Municipal Court by the name of Nathaniel Winter, charged with breaking into a store. He pleaded guilty. The Judge, when about to pronounce sentence upon Winter, inquired if any person in the Court knew him. An officer came forward and said he knew the prisoner, and testified that he was a bad boy, and that his mother was unable to control him. Upon this testimony the lad was sentenced to the State Prison for the term of two and a half years. Accidentally Mr. John M. Spear discovered that the officer supposed he was testifying against James Grady, another boy who had that morning pleaded guilty, and that he knew nothing about Winter. Mr. Spear called the attention of the Judge (Wells) to the case, and the Clerk was directed not to issue the usual warrant to send him to the State Prison until Mr. Spear had time to inquire into the previous character of Winter, upon doing which he was able to show, to the satisfaction of the Judge, that the boy had before maintained a good character. The sentence was accordingly revised on Monday, and Winter was sent to the House of Correction for four months, and thus by the generous aid of the kind-hearted philanthropist, Mr. Spear, he was saved twenty-six months imprisonment! — *Commonwealth*, Feb. 12.

*An Interesting Incident.* — We saw, yesterday, a beautiful little fellow in the care of John M. Spear. We learn that, in October, 1848, Mr. Spear found him in the Leverett Street Jail. He was charged with stealing. He informed Mr. Spear that his father was a Judge, and resided in Lower Canada. His father was immediately informed by Mr. Spear of the condition of the lad. By the advice of Mr. S. the lad was sent to the State Reform School, where he has remained until yesterday, when his father came to Boston for him and took him once more to his bosom. This morning the father leaves for home. During the absence of her little son, the afflicted mother refused to be comforted, and has constantly been dressed in black. The Judge expressed himself highly delighted with our State Reform School, and declared himself under the highest obligations to Mr. Spear, who had once more placed in his arms his wayward son. The boy is not now more than thirteen years of age. — *Boston Times*, Sept. 6.

*A Marriage in Jail.* — This morning a couple were married in the Leverett Street Jail under rather novel circumstances. The female was indicted in the Municipal Court, for theft, and had plead guilty. Her case was coming up for sentence yesterday. John M. Spear, the philanthropist, suggested to



Judge Wells that the prisoner was about to be married, and that if a small fine were imposed, her intended spouse would pay it, and he would marry her.

For the purpose of settling the case at once, County Attorney Parker proposed that Mr. Spear immediately perform the ceremony of marriage; but the parties being Catholics, they would allow none but a priest to officiate. Accordingly the woman was remanded to Jail, and Mr. Spear interested himself to procure a clergyman of the "right sort."

A priest at the Franklin Street Cathedral refused to perform the ceremony until certain church rites should be first attended to by the parties, but at length Father Kroes was found, who duly "tied the knot." It remains to be seen how the sentence will stand affected.

It should be stated that the woman had sustained a good character for honesty previous to this offence, which seemed to have been prompted by her undue anxiety "to get ready for house-keeping." — *Transcript*, Feb. 12.

The woman was fined. It was paid. I gave bonds for her good behavior for six months. The couple are living happily together.

*Law and Love.* — Last Autumn, a poor widow — the mother of three little children — hired a cellar in the southerly section of the city, and, by the advice of her landlord, erected an apple stand in front of the passage leading to her humble domicile, and was thus enabled to pay her rent and support her little dependants. Cold weather came, and she was obliged to relinquish her stand. Friends advised her to keep beer, &c. in her own room. She did so, and beer drinkers gathered around her, and, prompted either by friendship for her or a desire to satisfy an unnatural appetite, recommended her to keep other kind of drinks. She followed their advice. The beer drinkers became noisy under the influence of those "other drinks." One day an individual entered the widow's cellar and asked to know her name. She gave it. On the same evening of the above day, while she was putting her little ones to bed, the same man entered again, and tore the woman from her children and threw her into prison. While in prison a philanthropist saw her and listened to her story. He examined and found she told the truth. He became bail for her, and she was released from prison.

He went with her to her miserable home, and afterwards called frequently to see her. On one occasion when he called, he learned that the tide had flowed her cellar. Her children without shoes or stockings upon their feet, were dancing upon the damp chilly planking to keep them from freezing. It was a pitiful scene to witness, under the shadow of so many wealthy mansions, churches, and school-houses. The Philanthropist removed the family to a good room, provided them with shoes, and stockings, and fire, and all the necessities of life. They are now happy.

On Saturday last she was taken before Judge Bigelow, the facts as we have related them were laid before him by John M. Spear, the gentleman who befriended her when in prison and gave her a new home. His Honor ordered the indictment put on file, and the widow, with blessings for the Judge and the Philanthropist, left the Court and returned rejoicing to her children. — *Chronotype*.

#### OLD HONEST'S RIDDLE.

"A man there was, though some did count him mad,  
The more he cast away the more he had." — *John Bunyan*.

#### THE EXTENT OF MY FIELD OF LABOR.

Few persons are aware of the extent of my field of labor. A city like Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, is the place for a person to live who wishes to engage in my kind of labor, but he will soon learn that he will be called on to help comparatively few persons who live and have for any time been settled in the city of his residence. They will usually have some friend or acquaintance who will be able to assist them in the hour of trouble. Those who will most often need his aid, and will call for his sympathy, will be strangers. Looking at the list of towns from whence persons have come whom I have aided, I find the following distant places mentioned. Liverpool, (Eng.) Montreal, Three Rivers, (L. C.) St. John, (N. B.) Bangor, (Me.) Burlington, (Vt.) Auburn, (N. Y.) Columbus and Sandusky, (Ohio.) New Orleans, (La.) Prince Edward's Island, etc. Besides those who come by other conveyances, not less than ten thousand persons come to the City of Boston, by the various Railroads daily. Among them are many young men and young women from the rural districts, who are unacquainted with city temptations, and before they are aware of their danger, are ensnared and imprisoned. It is for such as these that I would labor, forgetting all party lines, sectarian divisions, national boundaries, and complexional distinctions. Feeling that every human being is my brother, I would do good to all, as I have opportunity.

During the past year, from March 1, 1850, to March 1, 1851, I have labored as follows: —

I. I have delivered eighty-nine Discourses on Prisons, Crimes, and Punishments, in the following towns, namely: — Somerville, Abington, Gardner, Provincetown, Charlestown, Dighton, Barre, Charlton, Medford, Hubbardston, No. Chelsea, Worcester, Holden, Hyannis, Harwich, Weymouth, Malden, Danvers, Boston, Watertown, Brighton, Framingham, Milford, Melrose, Dorchester, Hingham, Nantucket, Woonsocket, Salem, Pawtucket, St. John, (N. B.) Ipswich, Newburyport, Westboro'.

II. I have become bail for prisoners to the amount of two thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars. These, with a single exception, (a poor woman who was brought into Court with a sick child,) have all been true to me, and have appeared for trial at the appointed time. In the case of the poor woman, the bond, which was \$30.00, was not exacted.

III. I have distributed, among prisoners and others, eight thousand two hundred and forty publications.

IV. I have travelled, to assist prisoners and to lecture, seven thousand miles.



V. I have made seventy-three visits to prisons.

VI. I have written ninety-four letters, for prisoners, to their friends, mostly to inform them that I had found them in prison.

VII. I have assisted three hundred and fifteen persons, by furnishing them with food, clothing, lodging, counsel, employment, or by returning them to their friends.

VIII. In prosecuting this work, I have received from known and unknown friends, \$1,746.59; and have expended (including the debts which I had contracted for the last year,) in sustaining myself, in boarding my horse, in travelling to assist prisoners and to lecture, and in various ways helping the needy, the poor, and the sinful, \$1,733.33, leaving a balance of \$13.26 with which to commence the labors of another year.

It would afford me great pleasure to mention the names of many excellent persons who have, in various ways, assisted me in carrying on my work, but I know they do not desire it. I cannot, however, forbear to mention that, unexpectedly, a donation of \$50.00 was handed me by a gentleman of this city, another of \$100.00 came to me from Jenny Lind, and one of \$50.00 from the people called Shakers. A good woman, of Leominster, cheerfully made collections for me. A venerable clergyman, of the Unitarian denomination, kindly called on some of his parishioners, at a time when I was in great need of help, made collections, and forwarded them to me. I am also under renewed obligations to the little band of women, in Dorchester, who have nobly associated together to aid this cause. Had it not been for these, and others like these, I should have been compelled to cease my efforts to seek and save the lost.

Encouraged by the generous confidence which has thus far been reposed in me by my friends, I now commence another year of labor. I hope to do more, and better, in the coming future, than I have in the past. As heretofore, I wish to devote all my time to this work. I am wholly dependent on the donations which come to me. Should any contributor desire to become acquainted with the items of expense, or desire to see my daily record of labors, my books are open for his inspection. The funds, kindly placed in my hands, are used for purposes named in these pages, and for no other purposes. To labor cheerfully and successfully, it is desirable that I should not only be free from pecuniary embarrassment, but that I should always have something in my hands to aid the poor, in cases of necessity. Should any person, into whose hands these pages may fall, desire to assist me, or need assistance, they will call on me, or address me, at No. 2½ CENTRAL COURT, Boston, Mass.

Central Court opens at 238 Washington Street.

JOHN M. SPEAR.

2½ Central Court,  
Boston, March 1, 1851. }