LITTLE TALES OF FELLOW TRAVELERS.

No. 3. The Man Who Had Gone Wrong.

For the Public.

"He is a jail-bird, that fellow Mike Daley. Served time for theft. I only heard of it tonight. I'll fire him in the morning."

The speaker was the foreman of a construction crew, and the listener was the superintendent. A big company was building a reservoir, which involved roads, mills and all sorts of things.

"Now, Swift, I know just how you feel about it. Suppose you say nothing more, but send him to me. And how did you pick this up? From one of the new men?"

"Yes."

"Well, send the 'ex' to me in the morning, and send the fellow who told you in the afternoon. I want to try an experiment."

The foreman looked frankly disgusted. "I think it's a lot better to let him go quietly, and at once. Perhaps the other fellow had better go, too. But it's all around by now, I haven't a doubt. That 'con' can't live it down."

"You seem to think that I shall keep him on," said the superintendent, laughing. "Perhaps it will not be the best thing. But really, Swift, what I want to do is to take time enough to find out what is the wisest course, considering the man himself. You know that he is a good workman."

"Yes, Mr. Rowland, none better."

Early the next morning Daley came to the office. He was a big, black-bearded fellow, neither young nor old. He had a slouch, and eyes that locked up their own secrets.

The superintendent studied him intently, but invisibly; he liked the man at once.

"Daley," he said, "your foreman says we have no better workman on the job."

Surprise glimmered a little in his eyes, and was banked at once; he had expected a very different salute.

"Now, Daley, I like you myself, and I believe that you have had a hard sort of a fight since you were a boy."

"Yis, sor, Oi hov," the man replied, fully on guard.

"So have I," said the superintendent. "I had to leave school and take care of my mother and sisters. I did all sorts of things. I was awfully tempted to go wrong, but somehow I didn't, though lots of better fellows that I grew up with got off the track. Some of them worked back again, and some did not try quite hard enough."

"Thin," said Daley, with a little twist in his voice, "Ye think a man that runs crooked can get on the thrack agin?"

"I do; of course I do," the superintendent replied.

"There's none knows it, sor," said Daley, "but I served me time for theft. Foive year it was. An' me wife died. Oi hov a bhoy in school, an' he is that innocent about it all. Nivir cu'd I tell him. Now, it is loikly ye'll fire me. Noine toimes this lasht two year thot has happen'd. I kape on at it bekase of the bhoy."

The superintendent did everything his own way; he was ever a law unto himself. He rose, drew a chair close, sat down by Daley, put a hand out on his.

"It's all right, my friend. You ought to be a happy man, because when you did wrong, society found you out, and made you pay the price. You have paid it fully. No one has any right to stick outside expense charges on you, Mike."

Daley looked at the superintendent. Something new and more wonderful than words could describe came up out of the depths of his eyes, and gazed at Rowland. Its name was Hope.

"My friend," said the superintendent, "I mean it all. Go to that shelf, and borrow any books you want. Come in and talk them over with me. You have ability; now study hard, and climb up." He shook hands with Daley and sent him back to his work with the request:

"Please tell Mr. Swift to come in at noon."

Mike Daley went out, in a sort of trembling rebirth, and entered the world of men.

"Twicst he called me his friend, twicst!" he whispered under his breath.

Swift came in at noon, and the superintendent took him into the inner office, looked at him thoughtfully, questioned within himself where to begin.

"I want to tell you about something which happened a great many years ago, Swift, back in Hartford. There was a boy there who became dissipated, fell under the influence of a bad woman, and, —and, Swift, he finally stole quite a lot of money. Then his older brother, who was your own father, came along, and paid the money, hushed it all up, put the youngster at hard work out West, and made a splendid man of him."

"All that is gospel truth," said Swift, "but how in heaven's name did you know about it?"

"The man he stole the money from did not keep his promise not to tell. It became known to a number of people."

"That scoundrel ought to have been thrashed," cried Swift, in rage.

"Certainly," said the superintendent, going on to draw the deadly parallel with the case of poor Daley, and finally sending him out a firm ally in the cause.

Before Swift left, the man who had told on Daley came in. The superintendent neglected him a while, watched and studied him, then suddenly turned loose:

"Malby," he said, "how long did you serve time?"

"Six—no, sir. Never!"

"Where was it?" said the superintendent, overriding the denial. The man told him, yielding to the inevitable.

"That's where you heard of my friend Mike Daley, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't you feel just a little mean about all this? Mike is a better man than you are."

Malby began a series of voluble protestations and explanations. "It was an accident; it won't happen again."

The superintendent turned to Swift: "Send this man to the other end of the reservoir. If he talks any more about any of his fellow workers on this job, fire him quick. If he behaves, give him just the same sort of a square deal that the rest are having."

"Come on, Malby," said Swift.

CHARLES HOWARD SHINN.

THE FOOL.

G. K. Chesterton in the London Daily News of March 30, 1912.

For many years I had sought him, and at last I found him in a club. I had been told that he was everywhere; but I had almost begun to think that he was nowhere. I had been assured that there were millions of him; but before my late discovery I inclined to think that there were none of him. After my late discovery I am sure that there is one; and I incline to think that there are several, say, a few hundreds; but unfortunately most of them occupying important positions. When I say "him," I mean the entire idiot. . . .

He was very well dressed; he had a heavy but handsome face; his black clothes suggested the City and his grey moustaches the Army; but the whole suggested that he did not really belong to either, but was one of those who dabble in shares and who play at soldiers. There was some third element about him that was neither mercantile nor military. His manners were a shade too gentlemanly to be quite those of a gentleman. They involved an unction and overemphasis of the club man; then I suddenly remembered feeling the same thing in some old actors or old playgoers who had modeled themselves on actors. As I came in he said, "If I was the Government," and then put a cigar in his mouth which he lit carefully with long intakes of breath. Then he took the cigar out of his mouth again and said, "I'd give it 'em," as if it were quite a separate sentence. But even while his mouth was stopped with the cigar his companion or interlocutor leaped to his feet and said with great heartiness, snatching up a hat, "Well, I must be off. Tuesday!" I dislike these dark suspicions, but I certainly fancied I recognied that sudden geniality with which one takes leave of a bore.

When, therefore, he removed the narcotic stopper from his mouth it was to me that he addressed the belated epigram, "I'd give it 'em."

"What would you give them?" I asked; "the minimum wage?"

"I'd give them beans," he said. "I'd shoot 'em down—shoot 'em down, every man Jack of them. I lost my best train yesterday, and here's the whole country paralyzed, and here's a handful of obstinate fellows standing between the country and coal. I'd shoot 'em down!"

"That would surely be a little harsh," I pleaded. "After all, they are not under martial law, though I suppose two or three of them have commissions in the Yeomanry."

"Commissions in the Yeomanry!" he repeated, and his eyes and face, which became startling and separate, like those of a boiled lobster, made me feel sure that he had something of the kind himself.

"Besides," I continued, "wouldn't it be quite enough to confiscate their money?"

"Well, I'd send them all to penal servitude, anyhow," he said, "and I'd confiscate their funds as well."

"The policy is daring and full of difficulty," I replied, "but I do not say that it is wholly outside the extreme rights of the republic. But you must remember that though the facts of property have become quite fantastic, yet the sentiment of property still exists. These coal owners, though they have not earned the mines, though they could not work the mines, do quite honestly feel that they own the mines. Hence your suggestion of shooting them down, or even of confiscating their property, raises very——"

"What do you mean?" asked the man with the cigar, with a bullying eye. "Who yer talking about?"

"I'm talking about what you were talking about," I replied, "as you put it so perfectly, about the handful of obstinate fellows who are standing between the country and the coal. I mean the men who are selling their own coal for fancy prices, and who, as long as they can get those prices, care as little for national starvation as most merchant princes and pirates have cared for the provinces that were wasted or the peoples that were enslaved just before their ships came home. But though I am a bit of a revolutionist myself, I cannot quite go with you in the extreme violence you suggest. You say——"

"I say," he cried, bursting through my speech with a really splendid energy like that of some noble beast, "I say I'd take all these blasted miners and——"

I had risen slowly to my feet, for I was profoundly moved, and I stood staring at that mental monster.