

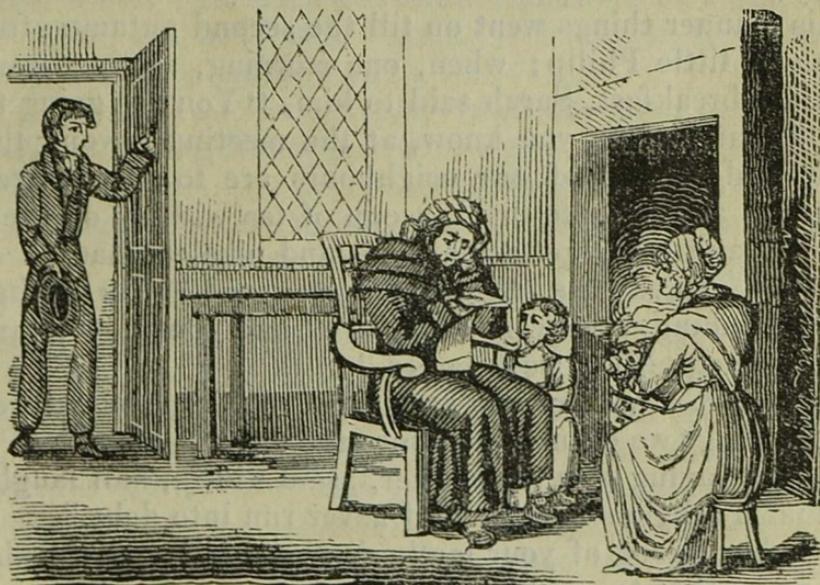
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THE
NOVICE.
PART II.

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THE NOVICE.

PART II.

JOHN ROGERS was now returned to his usual employments, though he had some remains of lameness; and every thing went on for some time in great outward prosperity with Philip, and it was even said that he had many seals to his ministry, but with respect to this there was great doubt. These converts left off some bad practices it is true; but they were full of themselves, fond of talk, and did not shew any very deep sense of sin. But how was Philip to find out this? He who knows not his own heart, how can he know the hearts of others? And all this time Philip had held little or no communion with himself. He had preached long and prayed loud; he had quoted text after text in Scripture; he had discoursed fluently upon religious subjects, whether controversial or experimental; he had sung hymns and talked of heavenly comforts; and yet, he did not know what it was to get alone and think over his ways, and from the bottom of his heart to cry, *God be merciful to me, a sinner!* It is true that he abhorred some sins, and kept out of their way; but with respect to others he was just as heedless.

In this manner things went on till the second autumn after the birth of little Philip; when, one morning, as they were eating their breakfast, Sarah said to him, "You are going to exhort this afternoon, you know, at the meeting beyond the cut-side, and several of our neighbours are to sing there; suppose you ask them to drink a cup of tea with us on their road home, and I will get some cakes and pikelets made."

"Did not you say the other day," answered Philip, "that these tea-drinkings were very expensive? and you know I have been very much off my work lately."

"Well, love, if we are not very forward with money," returned Sarah, "we do not want for credit yet, I hope."

"It was a saying with my mother," said Philip, half laughing, "that a religious man should never run into debt."

"Let's have none of your mother's sayings!" said Sarah: "she's no mother to you!"

"Well, do as you like," replied Philip.

Philip soon afterwards went to his work; and old Sarah and her daughter busied themselves in preparing for the evening.

The meeting was crowded, and Philip exerted himself very much; and when he went out of doors it was raining hard. His companions who were to return home with him were thoughtless and giddy; and they had no mother or elderly friend with them, to watch over them; and their silly ways

occasioned some delay upon the road. And when they reached home Philip felt very cold, and crept into the chimney-corner; yet neither his wife nor his mother thought of enquiring if his feet were dry, though they were busied in drying the young women's bonnets and their wet shawls. They were now all seated, and Sarah was handing round pikelets and tea-cakes. "How shamefully we sang that last hymn!" remarked one of the girls.

"And we are to sing it again this day week," said another.

"Then I am sure we must practise it. Can't you come to our house, John, some evening this week and try it over?" and as she spoke she tapped the young man on the arm.

"I don't know that I can," replied he: "but it was your fault and Nancy's that we were out: you are always sure to raise your voices when you ought to fall them."

"Nobody ever found fault with my singing as you do," returned she, half pouting. "I have a great mind I'll never sing again along with you, John!"

"That's as you please," returned the young man, beginning to whistle.

In a few moments the young woman began to speak again. "Nancy," said she, "can you come to our house and practise?"

"I'll see if I can," replied Nancy; "but it must be if my uncle is out. He does not know I am here to-night."

"Does not he?" said Sarah. "I take it, love, that your uncle is a very carnal man."

"Do you call him carnal," said the first young woman, "for not letting Nancy go out to sing? Then what do you say to Betty James? she never lets Maria go to a prayer-meeting, or to sing, or any thing of the sort, unless she goes with her."

"Betty James is no great favourite of mine," replied Sarah. "If you want to hear her good word, you must talk to Mary Rogers about her, for they are hand and glove."

"I am sure," returned the girl, "she is a very good woman, and Maria is a very nice girl; they never miss chapel, let the weather be what it will; and Maria is the best girl to a mother I ever saw, and very industrious and quiet she is. And as for her not going to sing, I think she is very wise for that; for I believe there is more noise and nonsense among us singers than any thing else, as things are managed. I have a great mind I'll never sing again, John."

As she spoke the last words, she looked hard at the young man; but he, fixing his eyes on the ceiling, only replied, "Well, do as you like, it is your look out, not mine."

"But now, Sarah," said Nancy, "why do you call my uncle carnal?"

"Why look you, love," replied the old woman, "I will give you a hundred reasons in a minute."

Sarah now began to repeat tale after tale respecting Nancy's uncle; and not only about him, but about almost every body in the neighbourhood: and all this was mixed up with religious phrases and idle jests.

Meanwhile, Philip sat by in silence, for he was so used to the censorious and idle discourse of his companions, that he hardly seemed aware of what was passing.

The next morning, Philip was so extremely unwell with a severe cold, that he could not get up, and he kept his bed several days. During this time, his acquaintance were always coming to see him; so much so, that it was difficult for him to get a few minutes' sleep: and one would ask him how he felt himself, and another would ask him if he found himself comfortable. And Sarah Prichard, who loved gossiping beyond every thing, could not find out that he was tired, except when his mother called; and then, "Philip had just settled to sleep, and must not on any account be disturbed."

In spite, however, of very bad nursing, he was, in the course of ten days, sufficiently recovered to return to his usual employments: but he still suffered from the effects of his illness. A greater trial, however, than this was preparing for Philip: his wife was always a sickly woman; and, on the day that her second child was born, two years after the birth of little Philip, she died, after a very short seizure.

Philip's wife had never been a very particular comfort to him, for she was an indolent woman, entirely governed by her mother: yet her sudden death was a great grief to him. With his present feelings of bodily weakness, and the charge of two young babes, he was indeed desolate. His proud thoughts of himself seemed for a time to sink; and yet not so to sink that he could bring himself to go to his father's house for help.

Mary was not forgetful of him; and, during the first two or three days which followed the young woman's death, she was continually in Sarah's house, trying to comfort her son, and rendering every assistance in her power to Sarah. She took little Philip to her own house, and made him a complete suit of mourning; and gladly would she have kept him with her, for she was grieved to see that he was as much spoiled as the child of heathen parents who had never heard of the doctrine of original sin. But when the funeral was over, and things were beginning to fall into their old train, Sarah seemed to be more averse than ever to Mary Rogers, and gave her to understand that her company and assistance were no longer wanted in *her* house; and she fetched little Philip back.

Mary found that she could be of no further use at present; but she patiently waited for the time when her son's heart should be drawn towards her again.

John had now fully forgiven his son, and was on very good terms with him; but he did not know the particulars of his present situation, for he was not a man who made much observation, and Mary spoke but little to her husband respecting Philip's affairs. Thomas, however, knew as much, and perhaps more of the way in which Philip was going on than any one else. Though Philip had always treated him as a person very much below himself in every thing, and though of late old Sarah had filled Philip's heart with such jealousy of him that he could hardly speak civilly to him when they met, yet Thomas still loved his brother, and, with feelings of brotherly love, he took notice of every thing that befel him.

Very soon after his wife's death, reports began to be spread abroad that Philip was very much in debt.

One morning, soon after these unpleasant rumours had reached the ears of Thomas, he went to purchase something relating to his business, at a shop to which he had seldom, if ever, gone before. The shopkeeper was busily engaged in casting up a long account at a desk, and Thomas waited till he had finished. At last, he got up from his high stool, where he had been sitting, and, taking off his spectacles, he came towards Thomas, saying, "Well, Sir, what do you please to want?" He looked hard at Thomas as he spoke; then wiped his spectacles and put them on again, and, looking up in his face, "Why surely," said he, "you are the man himself!"

"What man?" asked Thomas.

"Why, Philip Rogers," returned the shopkeeper.

"No, I am not," replied Thomas.

"Then you feature him very much," said the man.

"And what of him?" asked Thomas.

"Why, only I have just been casting up a long account of his; and now his wife is dead I must send it after him, or he will be changing his quarters, perhaps."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Thomas.

"What, do you know the man? he is one of your professors, is he not? To tell you a bit of my mind, I do not like these sort of persons; I have many of them in my books. A grain of morality is worth, in my opinion, a pound of religion."

"In my opinion," returned Thomas, "*that* morality is not to be depended upon that does not spring from religion; and *that* religion is not worth having that does not produce morality."

"I believe you have hit it, and very cleverly, too," said the shopkeeper.

"And perhaps," returned Thomas, "you may find Philip a better paymaster than you take him to be."

"We have never come to a settling since he has been married," added the shopkeeper; "and, to tell you the truth, he

is got into a bad set. He will never do any good as long as he lives with that old woman, take my word for it. Many and many a pound does she owe me; but I'll take care that I lose no more by the family: and the young man may look to himself, though I am sorry for him."

Thomas made no reply; but, having done his business, he wished the old man a good morning, and walked away.

When Thomas came home at night, he found his mother alone, and crying; and when he asked her what was the matter, she said to him, "Oh! Thomas, your brother is ill again, and Sarah Prichard will not let me see him! Your father is very willing to have him back here if I could persuade him to come, and what to do about it I cannot tell!"

"I shall not go to work to-morrow morning," replied Thomas, "and I will try to see him myself."

Thomas said nothing to his mother of what he had heard at the shop, but continued in thought all the evening. The next morning, as he sat at breakfast, he saw the old shopkeeper pass the door and take the turning which led to his brother's house, and he guessed his errand. About an hour afterwards, he walked up to Sarah Prichard's house, revolving in his mind the steps he intended to take, and looking up for divine assistance.

The weather was cold, and he found Sarah Prichard's door shut; but, having knocked, he half opened the door. On one side of the fire was old Sarah, with the infant sleeping on her lap; on the other sat Philip, in an arm-chair. He had his great coat on, and a handkerchief tied round his head. He leaned his pale cheek on one arm, and in the other hand he held a long bill, at which he was looking with so much intentness that he did not hear Thomas knock. Sarah, however, did, and, turning round, she looked at him from head to foot, saying sharply, "Pray what's your business here?"

"My business is with my brother," replied Thomas.

"I tell you he is ill," replied the old woman, "and must not be fatigued!"

"He cannot fatigue me more than I am already fatigued," returned Philip, looking up with a very languid countenance. "If you have any thing to say, Thomas, come in: but I shall go through this with you, mother, first of all."

Thomas waited for no further invitation, but sat himself down near his brother.

"And here comes this long charge in May last," said Philip, going on with his bill; "and goods again in June--no items. What are all these, mother?"

"You must call down that dear blessed angel out of heaven to answer you, as I told you before!" replied Sarah in a melancholy and whining voice.

“Now there, mother,” returned Philip, “you are deceiving yourself and me too; for you know, except during the time that you were in Staffordshire, she never ordered any thing, or did any thing in the house without you.”

The old woman held up her hands and made no answer. Philip went on. “Goods again in July, and August, and again in September. And pray where did all my wages go?”

“Wages!” returned the old woman, sharply, “why, you know you have often been ill; and you have often been engaged so that you could not work: besides, I have taken pounds and pounds of money to the shop, or, let me tell you, your account would be a pretty deal longer than it is!”

“I have often told you,” said Philip, “that we have been living too fast.”

“And what should you know of living?”

“I know how my mother used to manage.”

“I do not pretend to carry on all her stingy ways.”

“I wish you did though,” said Philip; “for here am I, more fit for my bed than any other place, and a great bill to pay without sixpence in the house to do it; and all through your extravagance and mismanagement!”

Here Philip, in a sort of passion, threw his arms on a table by his side; then, stooping forwards, he covered his face with both his hands; while the old woman, bursting into tears of vexation and anger, cried out, “And is this the return for all the care and trouble I have taken about you? Oh! if your blessed wife had been alive I should never have been served in this way! I am sure the neighbours will never believe how you have treated me! They all know that I never laid out a sixpence but to keep up your credit; they know that I have lived upon a crust, and have slaved myself to death for you and your family!”

On saying this, she rose from her seat, and, folding her apron over the child, she was going out, as Thomas supposed, to tell her troubles to some of the neighbours; but, getting up in haste, he placed himself against the door. “You are not going,” said he, “to publish abroad this quarrel between yourself and Philip, and to disgrace religion in this way! What a shame it is that there should be quarrels in houses where prayer-meetings are held! It is things like these that make religion held so cheap in these days. Come, come, make the matter up, or at least keep silence about it, and I will see what I can do for Philip: only let me talk to him for half an hour by himself.”

It was a good while before Thomas could by any means prevail with Sarah to remain within the house: but at last she became more calm, and grumbled to herself that she would

let it be for a bit; but as for making it up with Philip, that she never would; and he might go and preach in somebody else's house, for she would never give her countenance to such hypocritical doings as his.

To this Thomas made no answer, and continued silent till the old woman took the child up stairs; and, as she turned her back upon Thomas, she said, "Now you may have your talk out; and when you have, I hope you will both of you take yourselves off, for harbour or lodging in my house you shall not have."

"Is she gone?" said Philip, a few minutes afterwards, raising his head, and looking round him: for while the dispute had lasted between Thomas and Sarah, he had never spoken or looked up once.

"Yes, she is," replied Thomas. "And now, Philip, be open with me, and tell me all your troubles."

"And what good can you do me by hearing them?" asked Philip, giving him at the same time the bill.

It was indeed a very long bill. "Is it a correct statement?" asked Thomas.

"I believe so. I have had my mother-in-law to maintain, and I know we have lived too fast; but she knows no more what we have had than the babe unborn."

Thomas looked over the bill again, and cast it up. "Is this all you owe, Philip?"—"It is," answered Philip.

"Do not that clock and dresser belong to you?"

"They do."

Thomas was silent for some time. "Philip," said he, at last, "I will make a bargain with you: are you willing to go home?"

"Home to my mother! she will never look upon me again; I have behaved ill to her: besides, she never loved me."

"Your flatterers have told you so," said Thomas, "because she spoke the truth to you. But don't you now believe that she always loved you a thousand times better than they ever did?"

"May be," said Philip: "but I have behaved undutifully to her, I know I have."

"It is one of the greatest difficulties in religion," returned Thomas, "really to believe that the God we have offended is reconciled to us; and we have the same feelings sometimes towards our earthly friends: but this comes from pride."

"A pride I can never conquer," returned Philip. "I can never go home. I cannot acknowledge my faults to my mother. I can never go home a poor, sick, diseased creature, unable, as I feel, to do any thing for myself. I have exerted myself, Thomas, far beyond my strength. No; if I cannot stay and die here, I had better end my days in the workhouse."

"You a preacher and a Christian! and can you talk in this

way?" said Thomas, "—that you cannot humble yourself to your mother? Then you have not learned the A, B, C, of religion. If you cannot humble yourself to a fellow-creature, you cannot humble yourself before God: and where, then, will be your hope in death?"

Philip uttered a deep sigh, and there was a very long silence. Philip was the first to break it. "But what," said he, "if I could bring myself to go home, what is the bargain you have to make?"

Thomas took up the bill again. "These two pieces of furniture, if they were sold, would pay above half the bill, and I have a few pounds by me. Perhaps you do not know, (indeed, I believe I have only told my mother,) that I have some thoughts of Maria James, when I have saved a little to furnish a house; and this money," he added, with some little agitation, "I will lend you, and it will pay your bill. I cannot bear that my own brother, and a Christian preacher, should be in debt; and when you are able to work you may repay me."

Here he stopped; and Philip, who was very warm hearted, got up in haste from his seat, and, taking his brother's hand, while a faint colour brightened his pale face, "O, Thomas!" he said, "you have conquered. I *will* arise, and go to my father and my mother, and say that I have sinned. It is you that are the preacher, you that are the Christian. You have preached me a sermon indeed. I have never, indeed, learned the A, B, C, of religion. I never knew that I was poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked."

Thomas was so deeply affected, that the tears rolled down his face; and he looked at his poor brother's pale cheeks, and hearkened to his hoarse voice, with feelings of pity he could not describe. "Come, then, my brother," said he, "let us finish the work we have begun: come now to your mother; she is longing to receive you."

Thomas dreaded lest his brother's mind should change, and, without a moment's delay, he urged him to take this step, perhaps his very first step in real religion.

Leaning on his brother's arm, and holding the little Philip by his hand, he returned to his parents' house to ask their forgiveness. It is impossible to describe the meeting between himself and his mother, and we pass it over: he was scarcely allowed to utter one word of self-condemnation.

By the time John returned to his dinner, Philip was comfortably laid on a couch, near the fire; and the little boy, neatly dressed, and his brown hair brushed, had taken possession of a little chair, which had once belonged to his father and uncle.

While all this was going on, Sarah began to suspect that

Philip had taken her at her word, and was really gone: and, whatever she might have said in her passion, yet it was by no means her real intention that he should leave her; for while he had inhabited her house she had lived in plenty; therefore, being now able to consider calmly, she made haste to Mary Rogers's house, soon after John had come in to his dinner. Without taking notice of John and Mary, she walked up to Philip. "O my dear son!" said she, "I hope you are not really gone from my house because of one unkind word. You know that I love you as much as I did that blessed angel in heaven, and I would die to serve you. Dear creature! to have you exposed to rough language and unkind treatment, is what I cannot bear to think of!"

She was going on with a great deal more of the same language, when John interrupted her. "Dame Sarah," said he, "we are much obliged to you for any good wishes you may have for my son, and for any past kindness you may have shewn him; but it is not likely, I fear, that he will be able to work and maintain himself for some time to come. And as I am willing to take charge of him till he recovers, I must have him in my own house, and under my own eye; and he is likely to meet with no hard language or unkind treatment from his own mother: and I will take charge of the little boy also. As for the baby, if you like to keep it for the present, I will see that you are properly paid for it; and when Philip recovers, he will manage his own affairs as he chooses."

Old Sarah stood still for a time, quite at a loss what to reply. She then broke out into a passionate flood of tears, crying out, that she expected to have received more love from Philip.

"Remember," said John, standing up, "that you desired my son yourself to seek a lodging elsewhere."

Sarah was now still more enraged, and, turning her back on Philip, she went muttering to the door.

"Stop, my good woman," said John. "Mary, reach your bonnet: we shall return with you to your house, and you will please to give us what belongs to Philip and the boy; and the two pieces of furniture must be removed to pay the shop-bill."

Old Sarah was afraid of John, as he was a man of some consequence in the works; and he remained in Sarah's house while all necessary business was done. In the course of the same day, the bill with the shopkeeper was put in a way of being speedily settled.

It was a great comfort to Philip to find all his affairs arranged, and himself settled in his father's house; and his mother's kind care of him seemed for a time to restore him. But when the doctor, who was sent for, had seen him several

times, he gave it as his opinion, that his disease had been too long neglected to allow of much hope of recovery.

Philip was greatly affected when he heard this: but this death-blow to all his worldly hopes was as it were life to his soul; for from this time he began to display a deep humility, entirely contrary to his natural character. He employed himself much in reviewing his own life. He would say, "I have been like the hypocrites who pray in the corners of the streets: in the midst of all my religious duties I have been a stranger to God and myself." He was thankful to see any religious person who would speak plainly to him, but begged that his old companions who used to flatter him might never be brought to him. And he would say to his mother, "*You* never flattered me; and at one time it was the only interruption to my self-satisfaction that you did not approve of my conduct: and, whatever people might say, I secretly felt that you loved me, and that you were right."

Some time after Philip returned home, William Parnel heard the report of his grandson's illness, with some confused accounts of his being much in debt; and he undertook a journey to see him. Philip had then taken to his bed; and the old man had no sooner refreshed himself a little after his journey, than he desired to be taken up to his grandson. On the first glance of his countenance, William perceived that he had exchanged the ruddy, lively look of perfect health for an expression of humility and gentleness, the health of the soul, and he was confirmed in this idea by the affectionate welcome which Philip gave him; and though he could not say much, he held his grandfather's hand for some time, and looked up earnestly in his face. "I have often feared," said William, "that, when we last met, I spoke harshly to you, through my desire of impressing important truths on your mind."

"O that I had attended to those truths, grandfather!" replied Philip. (Here he sighed.) But I am in peace now. I am at peace with all I love on earth; I am at peace, I trust, with God, through the merits of Him who laid down his life for me. But, grandfather," he added, after some pause, "it is my favourite wish that my little Philip should be brought up to that sacred employment which I so rashly took upon me. Grandfather, direct his education for him, and keep him from thinking himself to be something when he is nothing."

"If it appear to be according to the will of Providence," returned the old man, deliberately, "I will endeavour to comply with your wishes."

After some further discussion on this subject, and others connected with Philip's past and present circumstances, the old man produced a pocket-book, from which he took several

notes, and, as he offered them to Philip, he said to him, "I have understood that you have some debts; and it is hard that your parents should be troubled with these."

Philip looked at the notes with eagerness. "Yes, I have a debt! O! call him here! is he in the house?"

"Who? what do you mean?" said the old man.

"I was so overjoyed," said Philip, "to be able to repay his debt, that I quite forgot you did not know all about it. Surely this is an answer to my prayer!"

He then related to his grandfather all the particulars of Thomas's conduct in the affair of the debt to the shopkeeper.

The grandfather was now in as great a hurry as Philip to call for Thomas; and as Philip bid him come to his bedside, he said, "I have lived to see you repaid, Thomas:" (and with that he placed the notes in his hand:) "how good is God to such a worthless being as I am!"

Thomas looked round for an explanation; which being given him, he said, "Grandfather, but this is too much; it is more than I lent Philip."

"Keep it," said the old man: "you lent it to the Lord, and He repays you; and when He repays it is always with large interest!"

William Parnel remained a fortnight with his children; but before that time had passed away, Philip had resigned his mortal life, in the full and lively hope, through our Saviour's merits, of exchanging it for an everlasting inheritance; and the sorrow of those who survived him was mixed with abundant consolation.

Almost immediately after Philip's death, Sarah brought the baby to Mary; for, finding that she had no further interest in keeping it, she did not wish to have the trouble of it. And Mary took the little ewe lamb in her bosom, and it became a daughter to her. And when Thomas had removed to another house with his wife, Maria James, and little Philip was placed in a distant situation, little Fanny was the nurse and handmaid of her grandfather and grandmother. Thus did John and Mary spend the remnant of their days in peace, and conclude them in joyful hope; and while they remembered Philip with much comfort, yet they had still a higher satisfaction in perceiving that their other children were preserved from his faults—for their religion was sown in humility; it sprung up in a holy, consistent life, which avoided even the appearance of evil; and it promised to bear the fruits of true honour in this world, and to be crowned with eternal glory in the next.

L.

FINIS.