

THE ERIE OBSERVER.

THE WORLD IS GOVERNED TOO MUCH.

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Pa.

OH SPARE THAT FADED GEM.

Written for the Erie Observer.

BY ARCHETPAAL.

Oh spare that faded gem for me,
I have it in my eye and soul;
Thou'rt sickly drooping on thy tree,
Yet Lady, tear it not away!
Its fate too much resembles one—
One whose memory is most dear,
And that I still would gaze upon,
And bask it with affection's tear.

In life's young spring, ere care had set
His agonizing draught of death,
Ere yet the ruthless hand of death,
Hath severed 'twixt which love had bound,
One angel spirit grew with me—
And ripened in fair virgin bloom,
But, ah, too soon alas, was she
Called hence to fill an early tomb.

Oh, she was pure as saints above,
And fair as might the stars on earth,
More gentle than the gentle dove,
And sweetly cheerful in her mirth;
And tenderly sweet in her breast,
And ever kindly feeling dwelt,
For she, that others might be lost,
Inspired all the bliss she felt.

But oh, when in life's sweetest hour,
She shone in beauty's brightest bloom,
She trooped to meet me from the east,
The rose departed from her cheek,
And fell disease with tyrant sway,
Completed 'on the lovely wreck,
Then, from the earth, soon passed away.

Then spare that faded gem for me,
I love it most when in decay,
I love it most when in decay.

LIFE OF A FELON.

BY ROBERT F. GREELEY.

"Liberty is born in Heaven,
'Twas man that made the slave."
The life of a felon—What a tissue of crimes
casualties, adventures and misadventures
escapes; what a complication of dark thoughts
and still darker deeds—of wrongs unnumbered
and sins unrepented, are involved in the sim-
ple sentence! The Life of a Felon!

We well remember how, in our schoolboy
days, as grouped with others about the ample
hearthstone of the old mansion, we listened
with sensations of mingled fear and curiosi-
ty to the recital of some thrilling story by
one of our number, who, regarding the
old pedagogic regulations, had contrived to
get hold of a book of desperate adventure, our
heart throbbing with alarm and anticipation,
while at the same time we felt not a morsel of
pity for the hardened wretches, who brand
us outcasts by their atrocious crimes, were
denied the opportunity of reforming from their
evil practices, and compelled by the very society
which had cast them out, to persevere in the
self same courses for which they stood con-
demned. The causes by which they were led
astray never for a moment crossed our mind,
but as we listened with bristling hair and
trembling limbs to the denunciation, a sigh
of gratification escaped us, when we thought
that the scaffold had claimed its victim, and
the felon had met his doom!

It was a cold December night. The snow
which covered the ground to a considerable
depth was hard and crisp, and the wind, which
raged in the broad and narrow streets with all
the fury of a hurricane, blockaded doors and
windows, and tearing shutters, signboards
and tiles from their fastenings, sent them rattling
and clanging down into the street.

But little cared the wealthy and aristocratic
family of Mr. Joseph Scammon, late of the
firm of Scammon, Gammon and Sponger, for
all this. They had no doubt, not the least,
that, out of doors, the weather might be "a lit-
tle uncomfortable or so;" (as the senior Scam-
mon felicitously expressed it,) but there were
they—a happy family circle, consisting of the
aforesaid Scammon, senior, Mrs. Jos. Scam-
mon—Miss Alphonsine and Master Theophilus
Scammon—all huddled around a blazing
fire of Liverpool coal, each employing him or
herself in a manner most congenial to their
several feelings, and all, it is needless to men-
tion, as merry as grigs!

First, there sat Scammon himself in a hand-
some wrapper, which could not have cost less
than twenty dollars, swaying his portly body
to and fro in a heavily stuffed Boston rocker,
and amusing himself by conning over the lat-
est changes in the commercial columns of the
newspaper—varying said amusement, from
time to time, by a glance at the police
reports, or the column containing all the "mel-
ancholy casualties" and "deplorable acci-
dents" of the day.

Then Mrs. Scammon, in another heavily
stuffed Boston rocker, on the opposite side of
the marble-topped table by which her lord
and master sat reading, was deeply absorbed
in the pages of the last fashionable novel—
Miss Alphonsine was at her tambour-frame,
which bore the usual impress of a very fluff-
y, singular looking cat, with a pink body and
eyes of a delicate purple, playing with a ball
of worsted—the ball by the way being more
natural than the cat, only that it was a little
lop-sided. Master Theophilus was trying to
draw a fancy sketch in his own peculiar style
upon his slate, and all looked very comfort-
able and very cozy.

"Joseph, dear—how is your distressing cold
this evening?" inquired Mrs. Joseph Scam-
mon with much seeming tenderness.

"Fair, to middling, my dear," replied Scam-
mon senior, in that certain wheezing, snuffling
tone which is the peculiar property of men in
the possession of very bad colds.

Mr. Joseph Scammon was thinking, not of
his cold, but of the commercial reports of the
Daily Illuminator.

"Fair to middling," echoed Mrs. S. in a
little astonishment. "Why, Joseph, it's worse
if anything."

"What's worse—Sugar?" rejoined Scam-
mon senior.

"Sugar! la! no—what nonsense! It's your
cold I was talking of."

"Oh! getting better, I think. If there's
anything I hate in this world," remarked Mr.
Scammon, feelingly, "it is a cold."

"Unpleasant things!" said his better half,
shuddering from sympathy. "I never could
endure this winter weather. One must either
set moping over a novel all day, or run the
risk of being upset by one of those horrible
things on runners."

If Mrs. Joseph Scammon was so sensibly
alive to the inclemencies of the season, what
must be the feelings of that poor little beggar-
girl, without shoes or stockings, who has set
herself down in the area of that magnificent
mansion opposite, to cry over her own mis-
eries!

"I wonder, Joseph, what makes you so
thoughtful to-night," said Mrs. Scammon,
senior, after a long interval; and as she spoke
she left her seat, and placed herself by the
side of her liege lord.

"Can't you see, my dear?" replied Scam-
mon, peevishly. "It's impossible for one to
read and talk at one time!"

"Now you're not reading, Joe—you know
you're not," persisted Mrs. S.

"I'd like to know what I am doing, then?"
growled Scammon.

"Thinking, Joe, dear—that's what you're
doing. See, now, you've had the paper up-
side-down for the last half-hour, and how you
could contrive to read it in that position, un-
less you turned yourself upside-down, too, is
more than I can imagine."

"Innocent prattler!" wheezed Scammon,
patting her chin and making a ludicrous effort
to look affronted—(his wife by-the-by
weighed not less than two hundred—rather
heavy for an "innocent prattler.") "You've
caught me in my own trap, haven't you?"

"You always were a gay deceiver, Joe.—
But come—tell us what it is that makes you
look so sombre."

"Well, then, Mrs. S. if you must know it
—I was thinking that it is just one year ex-
actly, this night, that some one kidnapped
and still darker deed—of wrongs unnumbered
and sins unrepented, are involved in the sim-
ple sentence! The Life of a Felon!

Mrs. Scammon said not a word. She was
a mother, and with all her fashionable frivoli-
ties, she had not yet lost sight of that sponta-
neous feeling of affection which binds to-
gether in such close unity mother and child.

"Ah! Susy," said Scammon, sighing—"that
was a sad loss to us—a sad loss! I wonder if
there's any little children in the street now.
I'll go and see. Perhaps I might save the life
of some little innocent like our Joey—who
knows?"

"An idea! Would anybody trust their children
abroad on such a night!—Except poor peo-
ple."

"Ah! that's it, my dear: perhaps there's
some in the open air that has no place to go
to for shelter. Poor people have feelings as
well as we, you know." Now don't bother,
Mrs. S. I'm not to be persuaded."

And Scammon with difficulty unrolled him-
self from the embrace of the heavy-stuffed
Boston rocker, stretched himself, and yawned.

"Run, Theophy!" said Scammon, address-
ing Theophilus. "My overcoat, quick boy!"

"Now, dear papa, do be convinced," hissed
Miss Alphonsine, for the first time looking up
from her sewing.

"Convinced, Ally! I am convinced—that I
am only doing what every good Christian
ought to do."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Scammon, faintly—
"perhaps you might get lost, like Joey."

"Then I should perish in a glorious cause!"
replied papa, with a magnanimous look, and
at the same time, enveloping his portly frame
in an overcoat, which rather debared the idea
of such disinterested martyrdom. But Scam-
mon was right—Scammon was right! and he
knew it.

Scammon opened the parlor door: so envel-
oped he was in cloth, you would hardly know
him. It was chilly in the entry, and Scam-
mon's nose kept up a "running accompani-
ment" to the whistling of the wind through the
keyhole. But Scammon was right, and fol-
lowed by the whole tribe of Scammons, hold-
ing lights, he advanced to the hall door, and
opened it.

"Whirr-r-r! bang! boo-oo!" were the sev-
eral noises made by the wind, the door and the
four Scammons.

"Mother! dear mother! don't die yet!"
The feeble voice of the child at her side
aroused the failing energies of the dying
woman. She turned heavily upon her side and
gazed with a glassy stare upon the child.

"Ah! Willy—I have been a sinful woman,"
she whispered, rather than said. "I have de-
ceived you cruelly, Willy—ah! and others,
too—you are not, Willy—you are not my—
my—"

The words died away upon her lips; she
made out to reach to the child a small, crum-
pled bit of paper, bearing certain inscriptions
which illegible, and then sunk backward as if
to sleep.

"It was a slumber of death!"
Whoever has been compelled to leave his
comfortable fireside on a stormy December
night; the wind blowing a perfect tornado; the
air obscured by huge volumes of snow and
sleet, and the ground in a state corresponding
with that of the weather, will remember how
much resolution it took to face that unyielding
blast and driving storm without a murmur;
how the umbrella would insist on having its
own way, and plunge and carry on divers oth-
er similar antics, like a balloon before the
strings have been sundred, giving its wield-
er the greatest trouble to follow it in its ec-
centric variations. How your hat, seemingly
innoculated with a desire to make a night of
it, essays desperately to release itself from
your frantic clutch, and your "swartrapped" In-
dia rubbers keep constantly threatening to en-
danger your equilibrium by depositing you
without a moment's warning in the kennel.

All these things are peculiar to the season we
are describing, and if therefore we tell our
readers that the night succeeding that in
which took place the events described in a
foregoing section of this story was by no
means as comfortable as might be desired, he
will be prepared, from sympathy, to place en-
tire confidence in the assertion.

Poor little Willie, the beggar's offspring,
(for such it appeared he was) had wandered
all that day—what a long day it had seemed
to him!—without a morsel of food. He had
never been accustomed to superabundance
of that very necessary article, and it may be
imagined that, by this time—what with all
the exercise he had undergone and the sleep-
less nights he had passed—that his appetite
was one of the smallest. For the last two
hours he had taken to begging, but harsh re-
plies or an evasive answer were all that he
reaped for his trouble. What was he to do?

A thought struck him.
He was standing underneath an awning
directly in front of a well stocked grocery,
around the door of which numerous fat tur-
keys and other articles for home consumption
were temptingly displayed. Just at that mo-
ment Willie felt a terrible gripping in the
region of his chest (he did not know but it might
be his conscience, for his idea of that article
was rather indistinct.) At that moment, too,
his eyes alighted upon a tempting piece of
smoked beef which hung near the door. How
it was he knew not, but in another second
Willie found the coveted piece of meat within
his grasp, and almost at the same instant he
found himself in the grasp of a gentleman
with a star on his left breast—a badge of ter-
ror to all evil-doers.

"Ah! have I caught you young one? You
did that cleverly didn't you? You're a fair
candidate for the 'tentative you are.'"

"I didn't mean to take it all," gasped Wil-
lie, nearly frightened out of his wits at what
he had done. "I only meant to eat a little of
it—I was so hungry!"

"Oh, yes! dare say; all very easy talk-
ing, young precocious, but it won't go
down."

By this time a number of persons had col-
lected, and the grocer himself, hearing the dis-
pute, had added himself to the crowd.

"Off with him," said Binns, (that was the
grocer's name) peremptorily. "I'll show you
how to go stealing, you young rascal!"

"I won't do so again—indeed I won't
—I haven't eat anything all day!" Willie
made out to stammer between his tears, as his
unfeeling captor, true to his duty, hurried
him away.

That night little Willie passed in the
Tombs. He had entered on the first day
of his life. The Law had designed a course
for him to follow. The brand was upon him,
and already in perspective those to whose hu-
mane sympathies the lad had been entrusted
could read for the outcast by a Felon's doom.

Thirty years! how rapidly they glide! Men
come and play they allotted parts, each laying
plans of his own for the future, as if life were
dure forever. Yet these plans are hardly ar-
ranged to their maker's liking, ere—presto!
the glass shifts and he is hurried from the
bustling scene. Some men are like stars,
which appear when least expected and shine
with surpassing brilliancy for a brief period;
then, departing as suddenly as they came, are
heard of no more! Others are like precious
ores which wait for the world, to determine
and set their value; and some again are like
those frail wild flowers which bloom within
the deepest recesses of the forest—opening
and shutting their leaves, and shedding deli-
cious perfume, and fading out as silently as
they came.

But what has the life of a Felon to do with
flowers!

As we have hinted, thirty years had come
and gone since Willie was first introduced to
the reader. It was winter once more—cold,
dreary, comfortable winter!

Three nights yet to come, and Christmas—
"heavy loving, home!" Christmas, with its
welcome store of cakes and presents—its
heavy gripes of the hand and cordial inter-
change of friendly sentiments, would be here.

Time has winged his flight swiftly and stead-
ily, yet not a leaf of evergreen has old Chris-
tmas lost from his brow.

It was at a late hour of the night that two

men stood conversing in low tones beneath
the shadow of an unfinished building located
in one of the by-alleys of the slumbering
city. Although extremely cold, there was a
clear moonlight, and—somehow or other—
you might look up and down the street for
many a rod, and scarce discern a living being.

"Come—come; Will, right's right all the
world over," said one of these men, softly
to the other. "If I'm to share the danger
equally with you, it's no more than fair that
I should likewise partake, in an equal degree,
of the spoils."

"Is it not an established rule that the lead-
er should have the largest half?" growled the
other in a surly tone. "However, I'm not
so grasping as some men, and so, you shall
have one half. I say Tom," he continued, as
they advanced into the moonlight, which they
did just as the clock of a neighboring church
was chiming twelve—"there's a singular in-
cident connected with this little adventure of
ours to-night, that's worth repeating, as it
may account in some measure for the manner
of life I lead."

"What's that?"

"You see the sign over your jewelry store
we are about to try?"

"Yes."

"What name does it bear?"

"Binns."

"Just so; Binns. Well, Tom, years ago,
when I was a child—did you know to remem-
ber an injury, however, that man was the keeper
of a small grocery. I recollect the time well;
the only being that had ever cared a jot for
me—she who had been to me, Tom, as a moth-
er—who had fostered and cherished me, al-
though so poor that she was obliged to beg
from day to day, and from door to door the
scanty and miserable food upon which we
subsisted, died! That was a sad stroke, Tom
for me. When they had laid the cold corpse
in the cheap coffin which had been provided
for her, I turned, crying, childlike, and stole
noiselessly from the wretched garret wherein
she lay. That night I slept—cold as it was
—within an exposed area. The next day I
resumed my wanderings. My little feet were
almost bare, and I felt the inclemency of the
season bitterly. Night came, and though I
had begged from house to house, no food had
passed my lips. I came before the grocery
kept by this very man whose name you may
read on your gilded sign. A piece of meat
hanging at the door tempted me; I took it,
hardly knowing what I did, but being detect-
ed in the act, was carried to the Tombs. This
step decided my destiny. Now, Tom, do you
think I should have been a minister of jus-
tice (term it) with so good a pomposity—do
you think, I say, that they fulfilled their whole
duty toward society when they consigned me
to that narrow cell, and after many days cast
me forth once more, with a brand upon my
brow, again had within its walls an institu-
tion for the reformation of its inmates. I
question whether there would be half so many
criminals. I wonder our wise heads never
thought of that, Tom."

"It's because people never takes an inter-
est in nobody but themselves, I suppose," Tom
replied, bluntly.

By this time they had crossed the way, and
were in front of the jeweller's—which was
concealed by the shade.

We need not detail what means the two
made use of to effect their purpose. Suffice it
that the door was finally opened, and Tom,
eager to clutch the spoils was the first to en-
ter. Suddenly, he stumbled and went down,
with a deep groan.

"You clumsy booby!—can't you avoid stum-
bling, when so much depends upon your bal-
ance?" growled his comrade, following him.
No sooner had he fairly passed in, however,
than the door was violently closed behind
him, and he felt across his breast the blow
of a heavy cudgel.

"Damnation! discovered!" he exclaimed,
drawing his knife.

"Watch! watch!" shouted a voice, thick
from fright.

"If I watch you if I can catch you!" shout-
ed 'Bill' groping for the owner of the voice.
"Ha! I've got you now, my friend! Oh! don't
struggle and bawl in that way! I'll soon put
a stop to that."

"Spare me!" muttered the voice again.
"I'll give you half my wealth—you can take
what you like—only spare me!"

"What—are you the jeweller himself?"

"I am."

"And your name is—"

"Binns!"

"Then die, wretch!" shouted 'Bill,' and as
he spoke, there was a heavy fall. The ruffian
turned to fly, but it was too late! The door
burst open almost at the same moment that
the jeweller fell, and in an instant he found
himself a prisoner.

Some months had passed. The trial was
over, and who, thinks the reader, pronounced
sentence upon the murderer? Scammon! Yes;
it was he! Scammon, that worthy indi-
vidual had merged into an alderman and final-
ly risen to the judiciary chair. Yet, with all
his talents, we feel constrained to say, Scam-
mon knew more about carving a surlion of
beef, than he did about the law!

"My overcoat—quick!—no—never mind
that. My God! what am I doing! Only
twenty minutes from the time, and I told them
to be punctual!"

Starting suddenly from his seat, he seized
his hat and rushed like a distracted being into
the street.

The prisoner stood upon the scaffold. The
ropes and cap were adjusted—the law's victim
was praying.

A sudden commotion without—a wild out-
cry—the sheriff, apprehensive of an outbreak,
giving the word—the little crowd is parted,
and the Justice, hatless—his white locks
streaming in the wind—breaks through their
midst, waving in the air a paper! Reprieve!
reprieve!

Too late! the drop has fallen!

The package which Scammon had perused
with so much intensity, and which had thus
unaccountably agitated him, contained only
a few lines.

The original who had just undergone the
extreme penalty of the law—his last son.

THE VIRTUE OF A SHAKE FROM A
WHITE HANDKERCHIEF.

A party from one of the volunteer regiments
shortly after the landing of the army at Vera
Cruz, was sent on a search of cattle, but in-
stead of finding the beasts of their pursuit,
they came across a man whose enemy much
superior in numbers.

For some time they debated whether they had better re-
treat into camp and report their discovery, or
give them the best fight they could. The
party was about equally divided as to the best
course to pursue. Some were for fight as
long as they could—while others contended
that it was not bravery to unnecessarily at-
tack a superior force. At length one of them,
who had not said anything previously, but
had been busy examining his gun and ammu-
nition, to see if they were all right, stepped
up and said—"Boys, don't you recollect, as
we were coming away from home, then 'ere
ladies what were shaking their white hand-
kerchiefs at us, and said they hoped we'd
never turn our backs to the enemy—and we
all said we'd die first? Well, it's my opinion
I'm not agoin' to show the white feather after
that. I didn't come from a running stock, ex-
cept to the enemy—not before him—and
dad's not agoin' to see my name in the news-
papers for takin' the back track. I come all
the way out here to fight—this is the first
show I've had, and I'm goin' to take one
chance, certain. Here, eggs for victory and
good luck, and as for the women, as soon as
possible." So saying he started off in the
direction the Mexicans were first seen. His
remarks operated like an electric shock on
his comrades, and all followed. They had not
proceeded far before they found their foes; a
short skirmish ensued—the balls flew by
them whizzing as they passed through the air—the
little party, except one, who never stopped
running until he got into camp, fought gallantly
and drove off the Mexicans. After a
short continuation of their search, they found
cattle, killed them, and brought what beef
they could carry into camp. As soon as they
had laid down their loads, search was made
for the fellow who had left his associates in
the fight, and retreated into camp. He was
found in his tent, brought out before the com-
pany, called "a coward," "a runaway," etc.,
etc. and by the company, unhilted a beef-hunt.

The poor fellow hung his head, seemed
much mortified, and for some time very quiet-
ly listened to their denunciations; but at
length, slowly raising his head, and with dif-
ficulty of utterance, said, "Well, now, fellows,
I ever set myself up as a fightin' man! I
ever say I was a brave man! and I never
seed them 'ere galls in town shake