

THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
CHARLES CRAWFORD.

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TO WHICH IS ADDED,  
A MEDITATION,

By J. WHITSON, Esq.

AT THE CLOSE OF LIFE.



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# HISTORY

OF

## CHARLES CRAWFORD.

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THE parents of Charles, though poor, were always respected and beloved in their neighbourhood, because they were quiet, hard-working people. One was a day labourer, the other was a laundress; but they always found time, because they had inclination, to instruct their children. They thought that the only way to make dutiful children, was to set them a good example, and themselves to avoid whatever they would be angry at in their offspring. If all parents observed this, they might expect some comfort in their old age. These parents never spent their sabbath or their money at the alehouse; they knew no good could be gotten there, any more than in strolling about the fields, as they do, who the least confine themselves to business through the week. In short, they regularly attended public worship, they read the Scriptures, and taught their children, and prayed to God every morning and every night that he would sanctify their lives, and save their souls. Though these things were not done so well as they wished, they did them as well as they could. It is sad to say, that these quiet people were derided by an abandoned lodger for being religious. In this case they would say, "Who is he that shall harm us, who can be against us?" The abuse which they received, made them at length determine to seek another apartment. Never did a landlord more grieve at the removal of a tenant; they paid so regularly, by their industry and sobriety. That the sabbath might not be profaned, nor a day's work lost, the furniture was carried away by degrees in



the evening. People scarcely know how much money they might save by a little contrivance.—To be short, they were soon as beloved and respected by the new as they were by the old landlord; for the fact is, people complain that they are slighted, and despised; whereas their idleness, or extravagance, or impudence occasions it to be so.

It happened that James was carrying a heavy load for his employer in a frosty night, (a thing that should, if possible, be avoided), and not observing a slide which some thoughtless boys had wantonly made on the pavement, his feet slipped—his scull was fractured—he was carried to the hospital in an almost expiring state! How thankful we should be that such places are open for the relief of the poor! We must here pause to make an observation. It is most abominable for girls to slide anywhere; but boys never should slide on the pathway, because people are not aware of the danger. That lad who made that slide, and every boy that used it afterwards (and to this hour it is not known but his own son was one of them), were the cause of the poor man's death. James, as we said, was carried to the hospital; and his wife Mary, upon hearing of the accident, became almost distracted. She nearly forgot that reliance on Providence she usually possessed, and regretted that her husband should have been so very industrious, because she forgot that trials and afflictions are liable to the best of men, and that the best of men are profited by them; and that God has not promised to exempt Christians from trouble, but only to make it, in some way or other, turn to the good of those who love him.—But to return. James, as soon as his senses were restored, found his dear wife by his bedside. He soon rectified her mind about the overruling providence of God. The use of religion was seen in James's case. Every person in the ward might see that Christianity is suited for a time of trouble. James mildly said—"Have not we read, and believed that all things shall work together for good, to those who love God? This frac-



ture may be profitable, though we cannot now see in which way. In respect of myself, I know it is the means God is using fully to prepare me for heaven, and to introduce me to it. I shall go but a little while before you, and when we meet again, we shall know that this, as well as our other troubles, have, by the grace of God, worked for us an eternal weight of glory. Even adversity teaches a good man to place his heart on a state after death, where there will be neither sin nor sorrow, sickness nor poverty. A Christian dies only that his soul may enter on that state; but when a wicked man dies, all his false hopes are gone, and his soul experiences for ever the anger of that God, whose sabbaths he has despised, and whose grace he has derided." After languishing three days, this Christian departed from life, and his soul returned to God, who gave it. He now knows that a lingering distemper, to which his constitution seemed subject, was mercifully exchanged for an almost sudden death. As to his family, the compassion of those, for whom himself and his family had worked, was so excited by the affliction, that it is more than probable their worldly condition was rendered much superior to what their father could have made it, had he lived many years longer. To leave a good character behind us, is sometimes more useful than a good estate. Suffice it to say, that the father of our hero was decently and respectfully buried by the club to which he belonged, and a small sum of money likewise came to the widow; so that, though distressed, she was not suddenly destitute of present support, as often happens to the widows of idle and careless husbands. As both of them were known by their employers to be honest and industrious people, and as they were never presuming on the charity of others, except on urgent occasions, the recital of their case was readily credited, and her distress, because it was real, was cheerfully relieved.—Hitherto the two sons had been put to a day-school, and decently clothed by their parents; but now, as there was but one instead



of two pair of hands to maintain them, it was thought advisable to solicit their admission into a charity-school. This plan, however, could not be executed so soon as was expected, because there were so many applications, and so few vacancies. She therefore kept them at school, though with great difficulty, at her own expence. At length a presentation was obtained through the mother's good character, and Charles, the hero of our history, being of the requisite age, was admitted, and comfortably clothed.

His mother entertained many fears lest Charles should copy the vices of other children; for, before his father's death, he shewed signs of obstinacy and undutifulness: but his death had so seriously affected Charles, that his behaviour towards his mother was much better. She sent him to school with hopes and fears, and very often cautioned him against the vices of his schoolfellows. If the master at any time corrected him, she never went brawling to the school, to give him offence, or to diminish his authority. She loved her son, but she knew he had his faults. It must however be confessed, to the honour of Charles, that he seldom needed correction. A good example at home made correction less needful at school. His master frequently expressed a satisfaction with his general conduct, which gave great comfort and hope to his mother. Charles was observed for his orderly behaviour in the streets. His mother had taught him the propriety of a decent deportment, and she never sent him to traverse the streets, while she went about gossiping: she hated such practices, and kept her children very strictly on the sabbath, as well as at other times. By these and other means, decency, cleanliness, and good conduct became such a habit in Charles, that the schoolmaster shewed him many civilities, and frequently recommended him to tradespeople, and others, to go on errands after school-hours. By this he not only often carried home sixpence, but, what was of more consequence, Charles acquired an industrious habit, and was introduced to the notice of several re-



spectable and charitable people, who could assist him very much in his future life. When Charles was about twelve years of age, a buckle-maker agreed to give his mother eighteen-pence per week for his services as an errand-boy, when he was not at school; so that from twelve to two, and from five to eight, Charles was a man of business, and became acquainted with many useful circumstances in trade: he became pleased at his progress in trading concerns, at the kind treatment of his master, and at his ability to add any thing to the weekly earnings of his mother, who laboured very hard at washing for her own and his maintenance. And here one thing must be mentioned, which enabled Charles to keep a good place when he had gotten it—his mother's thankfulness whenever she met his master, and her prudence in avoiding to come on frivolous pretences to her son; for it must be confessed that many a good boy and girl have lost an excellent place, entirely by the ill behaviour of a father or mother.

Charles's master was so well satisfied with his conduct, and also with the honest and quiet deportment of his mother, that when he became fourteen years old, he took Charles as an apprentice.

Charles was no more faultless than his master; but of boys he was a remarkably good one. With his experience, his virtues increased. One thing in him, which was a counterbalance for some faults, was, that his master's interest was always at his heart. He considered that tradespeople were necessarily at very great expences, and that to prevent want, there ought to be no waste. The shop might not be swept so early, or so constantly, as it ought to be; the shoes were not cleaned in time: boys often lose much time, and make their master angry by lying too long in bed. It is to be hoped the reader will excuse these faults of Charles during the first year of his time; however, when he was reproved, he was neither sulky nor sullen. His parents had taught him the wickedness of telling lies: so that he rather confessed his faults, and asked forgiveness, than denied what he knew he had commit-



ted; this occasioned a mutual confidence between Charles and his master; or a sad accident which happened, might have proved his ruin. He had been sent with a box of goods to a waggon, which never came to hand; and it was but too late discovered that a thief, who called himself the book-keeper of the inn, had taken the box from him.

This caused very serious enquiry; and if Charles had been given to lying or to pilfering, it is likely that his story, though true in this instance, would not have been credited, but he would have been turned out of doors.—Charles's character for once prevented this; and having promised double care and diligence in future, he continued in his place. The man was really to be pitied, for 18l. is a great loss to a young tradesman. To the honour of Charles it must be said that much more than 18l. was saved and earned for his master, by his extra care and diligence during the remainder of his apprenticeship. Whenever his mistress wanted any thing after his usual work, Charles thought of the 18l. He got up earlier in the morning, and both in his shop and in his person he became more cleanly.

Charles, moreover, was an aspiring lad: he thought more might be gotten by the head and hands together, than by the hands alone, and hence he was always forward to assist those that did the nicest work, and were paid for their judgment. He felt the praiseworthy inclination of earning as much for his master as possible, during his apprenticeship; and he hoped by this means, afterwards to provide for his mother. This emulation made him to exercise himself on the best sorts of work.—An hour occasionally, when he could be conveniently spared, he spent at his mother's, whose industry enabled her to keep a comfortable apartment. Her instructions, and those of his father, were fixed on the mind of Charles: he knew he could only prosper in life by God's blessing, and added to his prayers his honest endeavours. He read the Bible given him on leaving school, and other books to his fellow-ser-



vant, who could not read, in the evening and on Sundays; and he continually desired the grace of God, to prosper his endeavours in this life, and to prepare him for a future world. Charles frequently thought of the pleasure of meeting his father in heaven; and it was his desire so to live, as to be happy in that state where Christians meet never more to be separated. This desire and hope secured him against many evils, into which irreligious young people are continually falling, and enabled him to serve his apprenticeship creditably to his school, with satisfaction to his master, and greatly to the comfort of his mother.

When his time expired, Charles, not like many others, anxious for liberty, and determining at least for some time to be idle, felt an anxiety about maintaining himself, as the cares of life were coming upon him. That he might not be in danger through temptation to idleness or dissipation, and to keep a good place, a month before his apprenticeship expired, Charles agreed for wages as a journeyman. As Charles was known to be uniformly industrious and sober, and never was an eye-servant (only working while the master watches), and as he could execute the best work, on all these accounts Charles and his master were mutually benefited by each other. We shall now call him Crawford.

Crawford had a mother, and he thought it his duty to board and lodge with her, because by that they could both live comfortably; otherwise he should have boarded, if possible, in his master's house. The old woman did not give up her business as a laundress, although her son requested her to do it, because she knew not how long he might remain unmarried. She thought it proper to preserve the means of supporting herself, if he should take a wife, and not be able to assist her so much as he now did. Thus they lived most comfortably for three years; Crawford spending his evenings at home, thereby committing less sin, and spending less money.



After about three years, his master became dangerously ill, and, being unable to attend his business, he deputed the management of it to Crawford. In this situation, his knowledge, care, civility, and fidelity pleased the customers, satisfied the workmen, and most assuredly comforted his master. He became every day worse, and at length his life was despaired of. One day he called Crawford to his bedside, and taking him by the hand—"Charles," said he, "you have done credit to your school, and been a comfort to your good mother; you have been a faithful servant to me. Regard to God, I do believe, has been your ruling principle—I wish I had regarded the Bible, and my parent's advice, as you have done!—My views of eternity had then been clearer than they now are!"—"Hannah," said he to his weeping wife, "if you keep the business, let Charles have part of the profits, that he may manage it for you; but if you dispose of the trade, let it be first offered to Charles, and give him credit for a good part of its value; because we know he cannot have much money in hand. He is an honest man!—When I am dead, settle these things as you think best."—He lived but four days after, and the concerns devolved to his mourning widow.

Mr. Crawford, for so we shall call him, with constant diligence continued the business on behalf of his mistress and himself; and his accounts were most explicit, exact, and faithful. After two years' observation, his conduct proved that prosperity had not made him less honest, nor less active; and that an increase of advantage by trade, did not make him covetous or uncharitable, but disposed him to be affable and condescending. No tradesman kept better order among his workmen than Mr. Crawford; but no master was ever more kind than he, to the deserving. Some envious people would sneer at his being brought up in a charity-school; but he was thankful that he had such a good opportunity. The first annual subscription he made, was to the charity-school in which he was educated; for, under God's providence, he owed all he had



to that school. As he employed many work-people, some of whom, or their families, needed medical advice, Mr. Crawford subscribed to a Dispensary for their relief. After two years, with the approbation of friends on both sides, Mr. Crawford and the widow entered into the holy state of matrimony. He then brought his mother with him to the house of his late master, where religion, industry, and God's blessing dwelt with them.

In order further to encourage the exertions of duty and diligence in our young readers, we conclude this Tract with the following

### MEDITATION,

- Written near the close of life by JOHN WHITSON, Esq. who twice served the office of Mayor of Bristol, and was four times chosen Member of Parliament for that City. About the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, he came over the River Severn to Bristol, a poor, friendless boy, and was taken (out of mere compassion) into the service of a cooper in Nicholas Street; and, by the divine blessing on his honest industry, he attained to the above honourable distinctions. He died at Bristol A. D. 1629, in the 72d year of his age, *rich in grace, and rich with the blessings of Providence*, and was the founder of several charitable institutions in that place.

“As to the two great blessings of health and long life, I have my portion in them according to God's good pleasure, and am thankful for them; yet I must at length bid them farewell, and am ready to give them up when God shall demand them back.—My health he hath been graciously pleased to continue in the midst of a contagious sickness\*; I have seen “a

\* During Mr. Whitson's Mayoralty in 1603, the plague raged in Bristol, and 2600 persons died of it between the 28th of July, 1603, and the 20th of February, 1604; but this good Magistrate, like the benevolent Bishop of Marseilles, stood to his post, and gave every possible assistance to his fellow-citizens in that time of awful danger.



thousand fall on my right hand, and on my left;" yet by his goodness only, "*the arrow did not come nigh me.*" And though my sins deserve no less than others, his providence has lengthened my life to the time of old age; wherein, though I find some decays of strength, yet he has given me health of body, and ability of mind. The sorrow and infirmities incident to old age, he hath withholden from me; and hath not bowed my back, nor taken away my eyesight, nor smitten me in my understanding, nor weakened my limbs nor my senses; but hath preserved me to do him service: "*blessed, therefore, be his holy name!*" How can I sufficiently praise him for his goodness? He hath prospered all my travels and endeavours, and raised me from the dust of poverty, to a fortune much greater than my father's. He has guided me in the course of my worldly affairs as he did Jacob, and as wonderfully hath been pleased to increase me from a small beginning: so that the thankful acknowledgment which that holy Patriarch took up, will well become me—"With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands:" for I may truly say, to the glory of God, that with my staff I passed over the Severn, and now I am risen to a wealthy portion; God hath enriched me with great abundance, and comforted me on every side. He hath given me *wealth*, and the heart to use it; *honour*, and the happiness to value it.—And now what have I more to desire of him, but with David, that he would vouchsafe to stand by me, and "not forsake me in my old age—when I am grey-headed, till I have shewed his strength to this generation, and his power to those that come after me." I desire no longer continuance here than to testify my thankfulness to him in the sight of the living; and then welcome that blessed hour when he shall call me to himself!"

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