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THE
Life and Adventures
OF
CHARLES GEE TAYLOR,
OF
Speenhamland, Newbury, Berks,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

WITH A PORTRAIT.

Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged.

PRICE FOURPENCE.

NEWBURY:

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CHARLES GEE TAYLOR.

THE
EVENTFUL LIFE AND TRAVELS
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IT was at Longcott, near Faringdon, Berks, on the 4th of April, 1806, when my eyes first saw the light, and my mother believed that her first-born was a beauty. When quite a babe I was taken to Little Hinton, near Swindon, to live with my grandmother, Sarah Gee, and while living there many things transpired only known to God and myself, although very young, which if known to some would be very pleasing, but disbelieved by others, and for want of space I must pass over. When five or six years old I was sent to Market Ilsley, to live with a woman and her cruel husband; he spent much of his money on strong drink and other wickedness; he was a vicious agent and child of the devil. He, after harvest, took some pounds of his master, and, as his custom was, on Sunday he got drunk, came home, misused his wife, packed up his clothes, left the grocer, baker, shoemaker, and rent unpaid, enlisted in the army, and he very soon fell from the horse and broke his hip bone, from which he died, and the devil claimed his own; for such that do such things cannot enter heaven. From his cruelty I suffered with sores nearly all over. Often neither his wife or myself dared to look or speak in his presence. Strong drink is raging, and whoso is deceived thereby is not wise; but fools make a mock at sin, and are willing to work hard to get into hell. Before I was eight years old I was sent to Kintbury to live with relations.

After a few weeks on a Sunday I was enticed by a cousin which was older than myself, to go with him to a farm, where he had to feed cattle, and in the journey I fell down and soiled my new clothes. When I got home I had a bad flogging from a spiteful, unfeeling monster, not worthy the name of a man, with a staff, on my head, back, and hips; not a good breaking in, before I was eight years old, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

At this time I did not know a letter, but after some months I was sent to a dame's school, but often kept at home to work, so that I had a very poor chance for learning. I was told there was a school on Sunday mornings at the Methodist Chapel, when I got permission to attend, my teacher's name was Thomas Toe, and when he saw that I was willing to learn he encouraged me with kind words. After a while I was sent to work at a silk mill, where the looker-on was an old soldier; whether he had been accustomed to use the cat-o'-nine-tails on his comrades it is not for me to say, but he very sharply used the strap on the poor children's backs instead of teaching them the manner to work the courtly silk, but with all his cruelty the children destroyed it in different ways, which was a very great loss to the proprietor. After working eighteen months, at the mill my drunken governor employed me to drive and look after his horses; and although I was so young an inexperienced with the work, I was expected to clean and drive the horses as clever as a man that had been accustomed to the work; loading hay, corn, faggots, or anything I was put to, and expected to be performed to perfection.

I cannot state the hundredth part of undeserved bad treatment I endured in my youth from a ungodly barbarous man, guided by his father the *Devil*. I was sent two miles and a half with a peck of salt, and was allowed only one hour and a half to walk the five miles; when I delivered the salt I waited some time expecting to take the bag back, but the servant told me the bag belonged to her mistress. I hastened home, knowing if I was not there at the appointed time what to expect, and being half an hour over, my governor would not hear a word about my waiting expecting to bring the bag back, neither did he regard my youth and weakness, for at that time a little exertion brought on a pain in my left side, which at times caused me to sweat with agony, but the child of wrath gave me an unjust thrashing with a walking staff. While I am writing I feel almost overcome with grief. About this time I had to carry a tub of grease and tar nearly four miles, and allowed one hour to walk the distance with a heavy load, but I was a quarter of an hour over the allotted time; at once the slave driver, in the same manner as men

thrash corn with a flail, the earthly fiend thrashed a poor weak helpless, innocent boy. I remember being at plough, at Hampstead, when I was chastised because a little hair was off the horse's shoulder, I was sure that I was not to blame for it was the governor's neglect, and I began to explain the cause, when the wretch told me to go into the copse and hide myself, when like lightning it came to my mind, Go there and hang thyself and have no more of his cruelty, and I believe if I had had a cord I should have done so. Many times I made up my mind to commit self-murder, even left home with full intent to do it, but the good Lord prevented me from plunging into Hell, caused by the wickedness of a drunken wretch. I always worked in dread, the distress of mind I suffered I never can state.

As the governor and me were passing through Aldermaston we met an old toper, a drunken companion of the governor's from Reading. These two children of the Devil entered Satan's workshop, sent me on with the horses, and as my master did with an unloaded waggon, I sat on the front with my feet on the shafts; I met a magistrate who told me for riding without reins, he would have me before the magistrates at Newbury; before my governor came up to me someone had told him what had happened. When the governor overtook me he took the big whip and belaboured me in such a blood-thirsty manner that it frightened the horses so, that they started off and could not be stopped till they got near the end of Crookham Common. Oh, my poor legs swelled in large black lumps, but it was no good to complain. I had but two chances, either endure barbarous treatment, or to put an end to my life. What made the punishment to me worse was, on the same day this monster of wickedness did the same thing, and also each time he went out with the waggon, but no one stopped him. Two days after I went to the gentleman, when he asked me many questions, I told him the truth and he was pleased with my answers and frankly forgave me. I cannot tell what a heavy crushing burden was removed from my mind. If the good magistrate had not cancelled the case I expect the governor would have again severely bruised me with sores from the top of my brain-box to the soles of my feet. When he was driving in the same manner as above, the waggon was overturned on him, broke his ribs, tore his foot out of joint, skinned his head, and nearly killed him; he was confined to his bed for months. On passing through a town I found a £1 note, at once the governor grabbed it, not giving me a penny. I had a nice weaning calf given me, the above robber sold it for a sovereign and kept the cash. Now if he had acted