



Narrative of the Life of James Allen, Alias George Walton, Alias Jonas Pierce, Alias James H. York, Alias Burley Grove, the Highwayman: Being His ... Massachusetts State Prison (Classic Reprint)

James Allen

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Excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of James Allen, Alias George Walton, Alias Jonas Pierce, Alias James H. York, Alias Burley Grove, the Highwayman: Being His Death-Bed Confession, to the Warden of the Massachusetts State Prison*

I was born in the town of Lancaster, Worcester County, and State of Massachusetts, on the 16th of November, 1809. My parents were in indigent circumstances; and it was my misfortune to lose my mother, by death, when I was three years of age. Shortly after her death, my father removed to Clarendon, Vt, and left me in the care of my grand-parent, with whom I resided until their death. I have never seen my Father since he left Lancaster for Vermont, and do not know whether he is living or not. After the death of my grand-parent, I lived with several different persons in Lancaster, and was employed at farming in summer, and attended school during the winter months. I was naturally hasty in my temper, active and ambitious, and inclined to have my own way in most respects. At eleven or twelve years of age, I lived with Capt E. Carter, a blustering and intemperate man: he treated me well when he was sober, but was fond of being late at the tavern and usually called me up to let him in when he returned home. Not liking the place I ran away from Mr Carter's, after being with him about three years, I went to Chester, Vermont, a dull place, and after remaining there a few months, returned to Lancaster again. - On being paid for my services, I received two counterfeit five dollar bank bills, which was nearly one half the whole sum due me. Whether the bills were put upon me intentionally or not, it was a serious misfortune to me at the time, and tended to sour my mind and cause distrust of the honesty of my fellow men. After this, I was employed by a man in Lancaster at the rate of twenty five cents per day. On settling at the termination of the month, he paid me all into one dollar, which sum I never afterwards received. Another affair which under my straitened circumstance, was not much calculated to soothe my already irritated feelings.

In June 1824, I went to Charlestown, Mass, and obtained a situation with a person who was employed in ship building. It was my intention to have learned the trade; but the weather being very warm, and as I was almost constantly subjected to a severe headache, I gave up all hopes of succeeding at that employment and left it in the course of a month. While at the ship yard, I was often sent into the front yard of the State Prison for water. Little did I think, at that time of being confined a prisoner within its dreary walls.

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