

effects of habit, we briefly noticed* the gradual weakening of conscience, as the indulgences of vice were persisted in. Its remonstrances, however ineffectual, may, at the first, have had a part in that train of thought and feeling, which commences with a temptation, and is consummated in guilt; but in proportion to the frequency wherewith the voice of conscience is hushed, or overborne, or refused entertainment by the mind, in that proportion does it lift a feebler and a fainter voice afterwards—till at length it may come to be unheard; and any suggestions from this faculty may either pass unheeded, or perhaps drop out of the train altogether. It is thus that many a foul or horrid immorality may come at length to be perpetrated without the sense or feeling of its enormity. Conscience, with the repeated stiflings it has undergone, may, as if on the eve of extinction, have ceased from its exercises. This moral insensibility forms, in truth, one main constituent in the hardihood of crime. The conscience is cradled into a state of stupefaction; and the criminal, now a desperado in guilt, may prosecute his secret depravities, with no relentings from within, and no other dread upon his spirit than that of discovery by his fellow-men.

6. And it is on the event of such discovery that we meet with the phenomenon in question. When that guilt, to which he had himself become so pro-

* See Chap. iii, 6, of this Part.