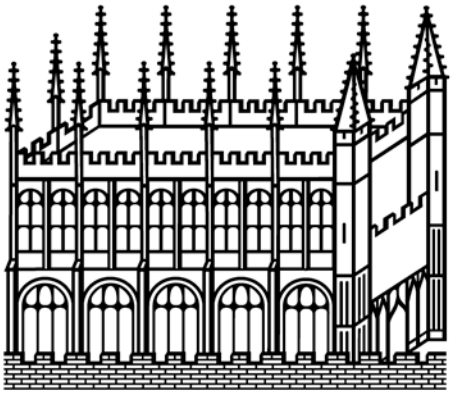

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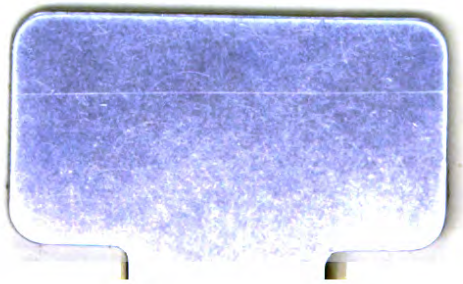
MAY LESTER

OR

THE FRUITS OF SELF-DENIAL

BY

MRS JOHN BRETT



THE BOATING PARTY.

MAY LESTER;

OR,

THE FRUITS OF SELF-DENIAL.

BY

MRS. JOHN BRETT,

AUTHOR OF "THE BELTONS' CHRISTMAS PUDDING," ETC.

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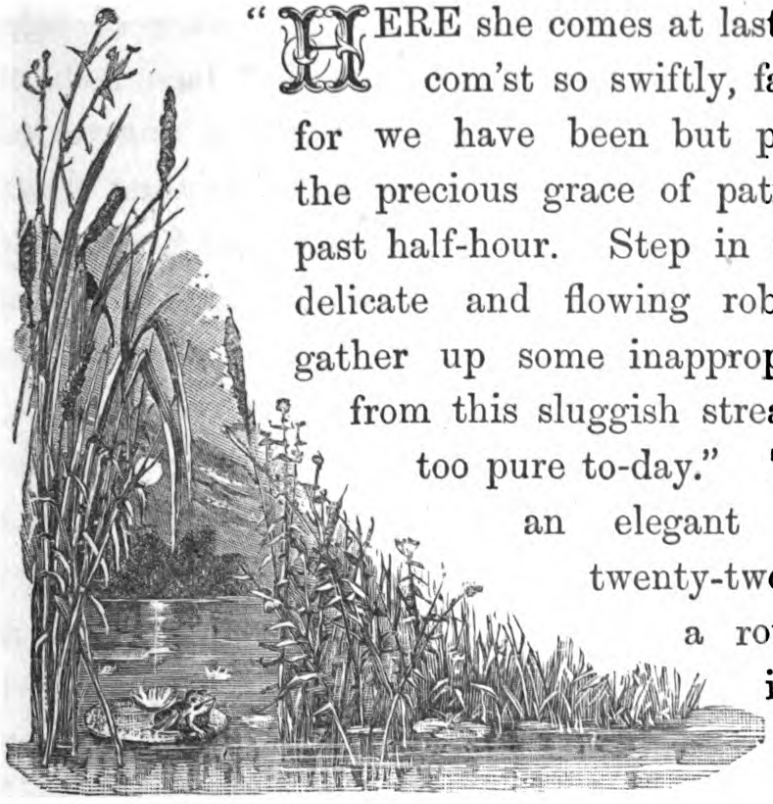
MAY LESTER.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"Here are we all to suffer, walking lonely
The path that Jesus once Himself hath gone;
Watch thou this hour in trustful patience only,
This one dark hour before the eternal dawn."



"HERE she comes at last. 'Tis well thou com'st so swiftly, fairy sister mine! for we have been but poor examples of the precious grace of patience during the past half-hour. Step in carefully, or that delicate and flowing robe of thine will gather up some inappropriate decorations from this sluggish stream, which is not too pure to-day." The speaker was an elegant young man of twenty-two years, attired as a rower, and seated in a dainty little craft of polished ma-

hogany, furnished with crimson silk cushions, and the whitest of sheepskin mats. As he spoke he dallied idly with one of the slim oars, alternately dipping it into and holding it just above the surface to create silvery riplets on the water, which, as he had observed, was anything but pure. The boat was moored beneath a huge willow tree, whose pensile branches formed a natural boat-house. From the edge of the water a trim and velvety lawn stretched over a gradual slope to the house, which was one of the modern mansions to be seen at intervals along the banks of the Thames between Surbiton and Walton. It was Sunday evening, and Gerald Tyrrell with his brother Percy were about to take their usual row, in company with two or three sisters and a college friend, Bertrand Oliver by name. The young lady to whom the remarks were addressed was about twenty years of age. She came tripping airily over the turf, her face radiant with smiles, and her eyes beaming with some unrevealed joy. She paused upon the top of the steps leading down to the boat, and a momentary shade crossed her face as she caught the welcoming aspect of its three occupants. Sylvia Tyrrell was no commonplace girl. She was as charming in character as in external appearance. Gentle and amiable, she was not without spirit; and her sparkling remarks rendered lively any party which might be graced by her presence. So she was always expected with great pleasure on Sunday evenings; but on this particular occasion with a little anxiety, for, at church that morning, a very earnest and touching appeal had been made from the pulpit, on behalf of a Ragged-school in a very poor neighbourhood

not far away from Fernleigh Hall. Only one in the large cushioned and curtained pew belonging to the Tyrrell family had taken particular notice of the thrilling words that had flowed from a heart full of love to the Saviour, and therefore full of love to His little ones.

Sylvia Tyrrell, hitherto untouched by any feeling of interest, either in missions or schools, was impressed with a sudden sympathy with the neglected and friendless children who were described. A strange desire seized her to help and teach, if possible, some of those who were thirsting for knowledge, and many of whom were every Sunday sent away from the school for lack of teachers. She had walked home almost in silence, scarcely heeding the flow of light and frivolous conversation that as usual succeeded to the grand service of the church. This of itself might have caused her brothers and sisters but little anxiety, —indeed, it might have passed entirely unnoticed,—had she not startled them at the dinner table by announcing her wish to become a teacher in the Ragged-school, if she could gain the consent of her parents. Mr. and Mrs. Tyrrell sought to indulge every wish of their children which was not beyond the bounds of reason, and they were quite inclined to grant Sylvia's request at once—although they thought it somewhat eccentric; but Gerald and Percy, Isabel and Dora, were almost clamorous in proclaiming their unanimous dissent from the plan proposed by their sister. She wisely desisted from pressing the matter then, for it was evident that there was but scant chance of her gaining the victory against so many opponents; but

when they were all engaged in preparing for the evening's trip, she went again to lay it before her parents; and finding them alone in the conservatory, gained the desired permission, with the condition of her being accompanied by Croft, Mrs. Tyrrell's maid. This was a very agreeable arrangement to Mrs. Croft herself, for she was a kind-hearted creature, always ready to stretch out a helping hand to the needy, although she had never taught a child in her life, let alone a class of noisy, dirty, ragged brats such as she was destined to have consigned to her care that evening. However, she was charmed at the prospect of a novelty, and ready to the moment to act as body-guard to her young mistress. Sylvia's decision produced the greatest dissatisfaction among the boating party. Isabel and Dora came down just behind her, and found to their utter disappointment that they were, after all, vanquished, and were to be deprived of the one whom they all pronounced to be the star of their circle. The little storm of dissent and dissuasion broke out afresh, and Sylvia was really sorry to be the means of spoiling their pleasure, as they protested she was. But in spite of all they could say, she was so powerfully drawn in the opposite direction that she stood firm to her purpose, and said good-bye to them with the conviction that she was doing what was right. The five she left behind watched her silently as she crossed the lawn, hoping, perhaps, yet to see her turn again and step into the boat. But she did not; she gave one more look towards the river, and seeing them still watching, waved her hand and then disappeared into the house.

"The first and last disappointment of this sort, I should hope," said Gerald, as he handed his other sisters into the boat. "If it were not Sylvia, I should say it was positively disagreeable and ill-natured; but Sylvia couldn't be that."

"It appears to me like aberration of the mind," remarked Percy. "We shall have to consult a physician, if she does not get better, and get him to put a veto upon such proceedings as these, or she will get worse and worse, and slide from a Ragged-school into a strait jacket!"

"Oh! Percy, don't be horrid," cried Isabel. "I declare I am ready to cry with vexation. We have had such lovely evenings, and now they will be just the opposite, for you boys are good for nothing when Sylvia's not with you. You can do little more than tease us, and I wish we were not going at all."

"Well, *don't* go," replied Gerald, with a magnificent air. "We can get along without you; and I'm sure it would be only durance vile to go rowing about with two little girls who are neither old enough nor intellectual enough to interest or amuse us with their conversation."

"Don't let us go!" exclaimed Dora, with tears in her eyes. "They'll only worry us all the way."

"Sit down and be quiet," said Gerald a little testily, as he and Bertrand pulled off, the latter remarking that if the young ladies had nothing to say, they made the boat look very picturesque.

"Especially when Dora is pretending to steer," laughed Percy, "and sets us foul of a bed of flags or a mud bank."

"I don't do anything of the kind," said his sister with a

little pout. So, in anything but a happy humour, the party went gliding out from beneath the graceful foliage of the willow tree.

"Have you any idea of where the schoolroom is?" asked Sylvia of her companion, as they left the well-kept road leading from the river, and turned into a narrower one with cottages on either side, which led them into a narrow and dingy street with irregular paving and dwellings of a very questionable character interspersed with shops—so-called; but which were only dirty little receptacles for a variety of commodities. The oderiferous exhalation from these nondescript marts was overpowering, and if analysed would have betrayed with unmistakable accuracy the presence of onions, bloaters, candles, bad cheese, and very rancid bacon, in addition to many other items less discernible.

"I am almost sure it's a little further down on the other side of the street, Miss Sylvia. It's all right," she continued, as Miss Tyrrell with a start came close to her side. "You need not feel nervous; but if you do it is wiser not to show it."

The man who had alarmed Sylvia was a huge coal-heaver, with a head of uncombed hair, and a week's coal-dust still begriming limbs and features; he was standing in his doorway with folded arms, and a short black pipe in his mouth. The inhabitants of this salubrious neighbourhood were not wholly unacquainted with visions of cleanliness, and even of beauty; for ever since the Ragged-school had been opened, a few ladies had ventured through on Sunday

evenings. But they had been generally attired in a less conspicuous and more substantial style than that which had been inappropriately assumed for the occasion by Sylvia Tyrrell. She had never thought that the delicate flowered muslin dress and rich lace mantle would appear out of place among the shabby and ragged costumes of those whom she was going to teach; and the worthy Croft, mostly ready with a little bit of honest advice as occasion offered, had let slip this golden opportunity, probably too deeply absorbed in her own dress and deportment to observe that of her young mistress.

A crowd of dirty urchins before them, presently betrayed the whereabouts of the Hall, who, as they approached, made way for them to enter, gazing upon them open-mouthed, and with eyes filled with wonder and admiration. The room was capacious enough to hold several hundred scholars, but not a hundred had as yet availed themselves of the privileges to be obtained within its walls. And yet small as was the number of scholars, there had always been a very inadequate staff of teachers, and the teachers themselves had not always been of the most efficient kind. Every appliance for teaching was displayed around the walls. Gay pictures of Scripture subjects with concise lessons attached. Temptatious, coloured alphabets—for the special use of several starched teachers of the old school, who didn't believe it possible that children could be taught to read without them,—with hymns and prayers in bold type, were there in abundance.

Two or three teachers were already surrounded by

their scholars, but several of the classes were quite empty, or the children belonging to them were drumming the floor with their feet, scrambling after dirty sweets or scraps of chestnut dropped by their companions, quarrelling or even singing snatches of the street songs so familiar to their ears.

As Sylvia Tyrrell entered, the superintendent stepped forward to meet her, and a score of youngsters crowded in behind her, filling up the doorway, and eagerly watching and listening.

"I am indeed glad to see you," said Mr. Stanley; "we are unusually short of teachers to-day; will you kindly take the Bible-class? The lady who has taken it lately has gone to Scotland to reside, and if you can spare the time we shall be only too thankful for the help."

Sylvia glanced in the direction indicated, and saw about half-a-dozen girls of twelve or fourteen years of age, perhaps a trifle tidier than the others, but still extremely shabby and slatternly. Several of them regarded her with a bold stare, the rest giggled and whispered as they discovered in her their new teacher.

"You had better raise your dress, Miss Tyrrell," said Mr. Stanley as, leading her forward, he happened to glance down at the trailing frilled skirt that was sweeping up the dust and gathering orange-peel and nut-shells in its progress. "Almost anything is good enough to wear here," he added in a lower tone. "This is the class; some of the girls can read a little. The lesson for to-day is the parable of the Good Shepherd—very simple—but here is a sketch of it if you like to use it."

"I have never taught a class in any school," said Sylvia, who was beginning to feel rather nervous. "Will you tell me what to do?"

"We begin with a short opening service; then we generally let them read the portion of Scripture, each girl taking a verse; then you give the lesson; that occupies about half-an-hour. Then the bell rings, and you mark the roll-book; after that we have a little service, with an address from some clergyman or gentleman, and close with a hymn and prayer. You will soon be at home with us, I doubt not."

Sylvia took her seat with a trembling heart. Whatever had been her imaginings upon the subject of ragged-school, or, indeed, any other teaching, she found the reality widely different. She cast some furtive glances over "the sketch" which she held in her hand, but it did not help her in the least; it appeared to her like a sort of short sermon with a list of questions attached; and how to deliver it with effect, and ask the questions at the right places, became a puzzling speculation.

While cogitating, the bell was rung, and the children started to their feet to sing the opening hymn. Such vociferating had never before fallen upon Sylvia's ears. At times, tune and measure seemed to plunge into an inextricable jumble, and only the sharp ringing of the bell would pull up the offenders, some of whom stopped short with wide-mouthed astonishment, while others went trailing on through a few discordant notes, and then looked up bewildered to find themselves so left in the lurch. Silence

having been obtained with difficulty at the close of the hymn, prayer was offered, after which late-comers were admitted, and the classes reduced to something like order. The moment for beginning the lesson was the crisis to which Sylvia looked forward with increasing dread, as the moment when she would have to fairly launch her boat upon a sea of difficulties. However, there was yet a little respite, for the verses containing the parable had to be read, and the girls were such stumblers that fully half the allotted time for teaching was occupied with plodding through the chapter, and spelling and pronouncing almost every word that contained more than three letters.

But ward off the evil moment as she might, it came at last, and she found herself sitting face to face with her scholars, who were all eagerly listening to hear what this new teacher had to tell them. The moment's hesitation, with all those hungry eyes upon her, resulted in a heroic plunge, and she asked, "Who was the Good Shepherd?"

"Dunno," said a bold girl, whose eye had met hers as she asked the question, and the answer was accompanied by a nudge of her next neighbour, after which they both giggled and stared at Sylvia. Trying hard not to appear disconcerted by this rudeness, she looked at another girl, who, glancing at her Bible for help, said, "The porter." Sylvia was in despair, when the one sitting next her volunteered this piece of information as a hint to her teacher: "We never was asked no questions by Mrs. Barker; she allus telled us about it."

"And she allus giv'd us a story at the end if we was

good; didn't she, Tilly?" added another. With another desperate plunge, and catching at the idea thrown out by the girls as a drowning man at a straw, she once more glanced over the "sketch," and gathering up her scattered wits, she gave the parable over again with as new a dress and as apt illustration as she could; but her face was burning and her lips quivering with excitement, and she was at times scarcely conscious of the words she was uttering. But either her strange manner, or the beauty of her dress and countenance, or both combined, kept the girls quiet and attentive for the rest of the lesson, and Sylvia was greatly relieved when the bell for marking the roll-book sounded; but the girls expressed loudly their disappointment that no story had been forthcoming, and begged that she would tell them a long one on the following Sunday. Sylvia had long before resolved that never again would she show her face there, or make an attempt anywhere to teach a class; but when she told the girls she was not coming again, she was greatly astonished that they each and all expressed their sorrow, and so urgent were they in their request that she *would* come again, that she at last consented, remembering that she had a whole week before her in which to prepare her lesson, and read herself up in anecdotes.

Mrs. Croft waited for her at the door, and looked very nearly as excited as herself. "You won't want to come *here* any more, Miss Tyrrell, *I* know," was her first remark.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Croft; I have promised the girls, and Mr. Stanley, too, that I will come next Sunday. You know I was not prepared with anything to-day."

"My children were only learning their letters," said Croft, "so if they had but been quiet it would have been easy enough to teach 'em."

"Can't we get home some other way?" asked Sylvia, as she saw the coal-heaver still in his doorway.

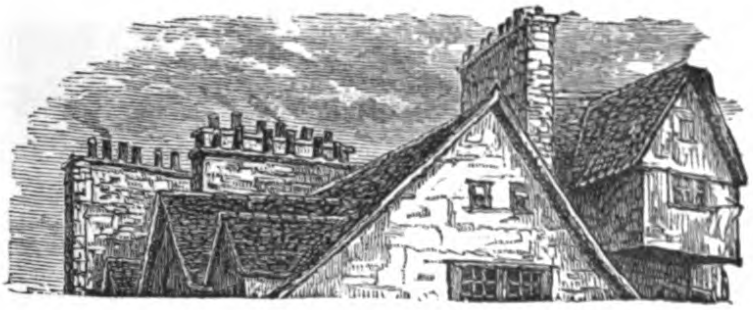
"Not without going more than a mile round, Miss; but we can cross to the other side of the way."

This time the man sat on a chair, and a sickly-looking girl about ten years of age was on his knee, with her thin arms around his black neck.

Crossing the road was a mere farce, as it was so narrow that conversation could be easily carried on from the opposite doors in ordinary tones. The coal-heaver said something in a low tone to his child, of which Sylvia only caught the word "angel," and the child answered, fixing her great dark eyes upon the exquisite figure that went floating by—

"Mamma's an angel now, isn't she? I wonder if she looks like that."

Sylvia turned her head towards them for an instant, just in time to see the man droop his face upon the child's shoulder, and give a great sobbing sigh. The answer she had given him was evidently unexpected, and Sylvia wondered what secret was hidden down beneath those extraordinary exteriors; but there was no excuse by which she might gratify her curiosity, so she passed quickly on, and was with Croft soon out of the sickly, overcrowded neighbourhood, and breathing once more the fresh sweet evening air, laden with odours of flowers.



CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTIVE.

"Who, who is this tyrant? I hear you exclaim;
Go, ask of the drunkard his terrible name!
Go, ask of the drunkard his power to wind
A web of entanglement over the mind—
A spell that has fettered the hopes of mankind."

MISS LANCE.

IT was a bare and dingy little room where the pallid figure of May Lester lay crumpled up among bed-clothes of a very questionable tint; not nestling among soft waves of down, but often twisting and turning to avoid the too-evident knots of straw that formed the stuffing of the old mattress. She was not quite in the dark, for a rush-light stuck in a bottle cast a sickly ray across the floor and revealed the large lustrous eyes that gazed out wistfully, May had crept up to her room—which was but a sort of loft under the roof, and approached from below by a mere ladder—after waiting until she thought from her previous experience that it was of no use waiting any longer with the hope of seeing her father return sober. A heavy peal of yet distant thunder had warned her of a

coming storm, so she had got away to the safest place she could think of. The storm was near now, and heavy rain was beating upon the roof and forcing its way through at many points. The lightning was vivid and constant, and often May's frightened face was hidden among the clothes, and she lay shivering with terror. For several hours the storm raged on. At times May thought her father must have entered the house, the noise of his coming in being lost amid the deafening peals of thunder; but in moments of silence she listened intently only to hear the dripping of the rain upon the floor and the ticking of the old Dutch clock below. By degrees the storm lessened, the thunder rolling away into the distance, and May saw with joy the glimmering of the dawn. Soon after she heard the house door open, but instead of the usual blundering over the furniture—which, scanty as it was, always seemed to afford ample impediments to the tipsy man as he groped his way to his bedroom—she could discover that he was quite firm upon his feet, and called out to him as he came in.

"What, May! Not asleep?" he replied, climbing up the ladder to get a look at her.

"No, father; I've been listening for you all night. Didn't you go to 'The Crown?'"

"No, May, I went for a walk."

"How funny! All in the thunder and lightning. And aren't you just wet? I was glad to snuggle in here and hide my eyes and ears. Weren't you frightened?"

"Oh! well, just a little once or twice. But go to sleep

now and forget all about the storm. The rain hasn't dripped on to you, has it, child?"

"No, only a little bit at the corner; I curled up out of the way of it."

"I must see if the roof can be patched again," and James Lester—"Coaly Jim," as he was usually called by his neighbours—descended to his bed, upon which he lay sleepless until the morning sun streamed in and warned him that it was time to rise and go to his work.

Since the moment when Sylvia Tyrrell saw his head droop, and heard the deep sigh that accompanied the movement, a flood of recollections had been surging over him; and scene after scene of a happy, guileless childhood, a bright, hopeful boyhood and youth—when quiet, plodding school-days were succeeded by the more exciting experiences of the college—and then a couple of years of almost cloudless married life, had chased each other through his brain.

Far away in a northern county was the parental roof, under which, twelve years before, he had stood with his fair young bride leaning upon his arm, receiving the congratulations of a large circle of admiring friends. But, alas! Circling among the joyous groups, with silent but seductive and resistless influence, was a hideous demon. Clothed in familiar garments, and bedizened with fantastic jewellery that sparkled in the summer sun, he was passed lovingly from hand to hand, and boldly kissed the lips of the fairest with the privileged pressure of an old friend.

When the youthful pair returned from their wedding trip

and settled down to their domestic life in a lovely cottage, almost under the shadow of the old roof-tree, the demon was there; and although for the present he lurked in the dim recesses of a cellar, whose iron-bound door was securely fastened, he chuckled to think how soon he should have his liberty, how he should become the most honoured guest in the house, and how he would then weave his subtle web about those who had never proved his power, and how he would weave it skilfully about the willing fingers now toying with the almost invisible threads until they should become successfully entangled with fetters, truly light as gossamer at first, but gradually tightening and getting daily more cumbersome, until at length they should drag down the hapless victims, as with the weight of leaden chains, to the depths of an abyss from whence no human hand could rescue them.

A few months after her marriage, the young Mrs. Lester's health suddenly gave way. A cold caught at a picnic given too late in the season settled upon her lungs, and it was feared for some time that she must succumb to the disease. But tender care restored her, and for a-while all appeared to be going on well, and the demon was content to bide his time in the darkness. He was seldom called upon to add to the happiness of the little home circle, for the young wife had a habit of shuddering in his presence, and never allowed him to touch her lips unless forced to do so, and even then the repugnance she felt to him was so evident that her friends forbore to press his friendship upon her.

Two years passed away, and the summer sun shone upon

a sad and gloomy scene. Closed shutters, mutes at the door, black plumes, and prancing steeds told a tale of woe and mourning. Within the silent house, the heart-broken widower sat apart, and was only forced through the funeral ceremonies by those around him who were not so deeply stricken as himself.

In a distant nursery a wailing infant of six months demanded the constant care and attendance of nurse and grandmother. That it had lived so long was an enigma to everyone, and no one doubted that its days were numbered. But still it lived on, at first a pain and grief to its remaining parent, but daily gaining upon his affections so much that when at home he mostly wanted to have it, where at least he could see it, and often hushed it to sleep himself. But, side by side with his daily growing love for his little one, was growing also a friendship with the demon, who was liberated now that the gentle mistress of the house had passed away, and who used his seductive powers constantly and successfully.

James Lester resorted to the companionship of this supposed friend with the hope of finding comfort in his affliction, and the soothing influence of his society might wile away some of the hours that now seemed so long and lonely. But the invariable result of a close intimacy with him followed, and both James and his friends soon became conscious that a great change had passed over him. He was never happy away from the glittering demon; and his friends, although themselves in partial slavery, condemned *his* weakness, and heaped upon him reproachful and bitter

words. But as time went on there were less of these to bear, for he was shunned and neglected, and even his parents, who themselves allowed the demon to disgrace their table, gave up all association with him. Sometimes there were moments when James Lester could see and feel all these terrible changes, and once, when some slight illness had enforced absolute absence from the demon's society, he had become fully awake to the dismal desolateness of his once lovely home, and to the wreck he had himself become, morally and intellectually. Alone he sat in that dirty and disorderly apartment which in his wife's time had been a dainty and delicate drawing-room. The good old servants, who had rejoiced to do *her* bidding, had long since left disgusted, and those who had succeeded them were dishonest and neglectful, and too free with the demon themselves to be always responsible for their actions. Reflection was intolerable to him, and yet fact after fact forced itself up before him until he was nearly mad. It was a fact that he was now hardly ever sober enough to know what he did. It was a fact that his own father and mother would cross the street, rather than be seen speaking to their staggering, besotted son. It was a fact that his former friends, such as the vicar, the lawyer, the doctor, and other respected inhabitants of his native village, never came even to call upon him now ; although a year ago they were his frequent visitors, and praised and flattered the demon in common with him. It was a fact that his once pleasant home was now the home of a drunkard. There was this redeeming feature about it: James Lester had never replaced his old

friends. He had not drawn around him a circle of drinkers and gamblers as many men do. He had drunk to stifle his sorrow, and he always drank at home, although the effect of such continual indulgence could not be hidden from the eyes of all who looked upon him.

It was a fact that his home now contained but little furniture that was worth looking at. Neglect and carelessness had done their work, and the exquisite things, new three years ago, were now chipped and cracked, torn and disfigured, so as to be hardly recognisable, to say nothing of many a valuable knick-knack in china or otherwise which had mysteriously vanished altogether. How long he would have indulged in this train of thought is doubtful, had not the voice of his year-old babe struck upon his ear, and roused him to a sense of his present position.

Ringing the bell, it was answered, not too speedily, by a smart and saucy-looking maid.

"What is the matter with May?" he said, as the child continued her wailing cry.

"I'm sure *I* don't know; she's nearly always crying," replied the nurse, with a bold stare at her master.

"Bring her to me, Alice."

Alice disappeared, and presently returned with the baby, in a soiled and tumbled frock, and its poor little puny face rendered more repulsive by dirt and tears.

"Do you think you can hold her?" asked the girl, with something like a sneer in her voice—"you dropped her the other day, you know, and perhaps that's why she cries so."

"Did I really?" said Mr. Lester helplessly. "Poor little

mite! I am sorry;" and he hugged the dirty little bundle to his bosom with evident affection and repentance. May's tears stopped at once when she found herself in her father's arms, and she cooed lovingly as she nestled down.

"Can't she be washed, Alice?"

"Why, she's been washed not long ago. Babies won't keep clean like grown people."

"No, of course not. But this frock is really so dirty and—shabby. Surely there must be plenty of others."

"H'm,—well, yes, there are more, of course; but some are at the laundress's, and won't be home till Saturday, and——." Alice might have added: "This collar and cuffs I made myself out of the lace off one of them, and the grand petticoat I wore on Sunday was trimmed with the Indian embroidery off another," but she discreetly left her sentence unfinished, and, snatching up the child in anything but a polite manner, she flounced off to improve its personal appearance if possible. And the forlorn father again pursued his reflections, the sum and substance of which, after a time, took this verbal form: "It's all that cursed drink." He started at his own utterance, for he had said it aloud as he rose from his chair. It may be supposed that this phrase had never before fallen upon his ear, for, in that somewhat out of the way north-country village of which his father had been the squire for many a year, and *his* father and grandfather before him, both squire and clergyman, lawyer and doctor, who were the only grand people in the place—looked upon the demon as a very respectable sort of fellow, and nothing could be done decently or in order

without him. Occasionally these grand people made the mistake of being a little too free with him, but when they did it was only looked upon as a little joke. Nobody would have dared to hint at its being in the remotest degree *wrong* for either the squire, the parson, the lawyer, or the doctor. Of course the villagers were occasionally seen reeling home from "The Haunted Mug," and it then fell to the lot of either or all of the aforesaid gentlemen to administer severe rebuke in due form. And, be it remembered, that there were in those days no Blue Ribbon Armies led by Christ-like, soul-seeking men and women, to allure the tempted and the fallen to a better way. Nor were there any Good Templar lodges, where such rescued ones might enjoy some higher entertainment and purer amusements than they had been accustomed to at "The Haunted Mug." This man had no such helps by the way. Some vague hope that he might find his way back to the path of temperance had seized him. But how?

It never occurred to him that the most direct road to such an end would be to descend to his cellars, turn on the taps of his beer barrels, smash all the bottles containing alcoholic drinks, make up his mind never to touch a drop of such liquor any more in his whole life, and tell his servants that he had banished it from the house for their sakes as well as for his own.

He, however, took the first step in the right direction by coming to this resolve: "I will only drink at meal times." We shall see the result. For a time he rigidly

adhered to his resolve of having a moderate quantity with his luncheon, and a similar potation with his dinner.

The servants laughed among themselves, and several of them looked forward to the well-earned discharge, which they felt sure must result from their master knowing what he was about.

Baby May was happy and growing rosy under the influence of her father's caresses and better care in the nursery. It was whispered about that Mr. James Lester had got over his drinking fits, and some of his old friends ventured to call upon him. He was at first inclined to resent their kind attentions. He did so in the case of his parents, for he was wise enough to see that they should have been the last instead of the first to discard him and his motherless babe. After once again tasting the sweets of social intercourse, he resolved to invite some of his old friends to dine with him. Accordingly, he began with the vicar. Now, this capacious individual could play with the demon very much as a snake charmer in India might play with a boa-constrictor, who could pat and fondle and hug and kiss it, and let it encircle his arms and legs and neck, and then, calmly disentangling himself from its folds, lay it back in its blanket and walk straight home apparently none the worse. But it was not so with James Lester. His resolve to drink only at meal times had hitherto preserved him. But he now found himself at first trying to keep up with the vicar, and was at last found by his servants—long after that worthy's departure—fast asleep, with his head among the empty decanters and glasses upon the table.

The shame and pain of his awaking the next day were so bitter to him, that with but little consideration of the matter, he determined to break up his home and go to some far-off place, where at all events he should not be tempted and snared, and then thrown aside by people who *should* be his friends and helpers. His determination was quickly acted upon, and the end of the following week saw him and his babe and nurse at Manchester. Here he discharged the latter, and sent her back to her home. At Manchester he engaged the services of a trustworthy, motherly attendant for the child, and for several months they travelled about on the Continent, and finally returning to England, settled down in a lovely Devonshire valley. But here the demon had preceded them—indeed he had never left them all through their journeying; but the novelty of the position and the various and exciting scenes through which they had passed had put him rather in the *shade.* Could any fitter title have been chosen for the hiding-place of the demon than "The Shades?" Here in the dark he can sharpen his fangs and strengthen his sting, and make ready to dart forth with renewed vigour to grapple with his victim.

For five years Lester struggled single-handed with the demon. Sometimes he was very nearly, and more often entirely overthrown. Then again he would stand his ground for weeks and even months. But, through all the vicissitudes of the drinker's experience, the demon held his own. He was never *banished, destroyed.*

The good nurse, fond as she was of her little charge,

grew so weary of the perpetual discomfort and the continual changes in the kitchen—for no respectable servant would stay beneath the roof—that after repeated warnings she returned to her own city; and the disheartened drunkard again broke up his home, and wandered forth in search of peace and happiness.

May was now seven years old, and although a great comfort to her father when he was in a right state of mind, she was also a great burden sometimes, and herself very miserable, for she had discovered that there was something very wrong. And she had overheard much in the nursery and kitchen, which, although she was not capable of entirely comprehending, made her childish love all the stronger, and made her cling with greater tenacity to this dear, strange father, who was so often the laughing-stock of his own servants. Their next halting-place was not far from London. But the limits of this little history do not permit us to follow them closely during the next three years. It is as well too that the veil should be drawn over the swift downward course of this once gifted, wealthy, highly-respected man. It is, alas, the history of *tens of thousands.* Now the respect of all who knew him was gone. His own respect for himself was gone. His money was gone. And here, unknown to anyone around him, James Lester, whose fingers in bygone times had seldom touched anything dirtier than the keys of his organ, for he had been an excellent musician in his young days, had been going down, down, down, until for several months he had been actually seeking a scant subsistence by working in a coal merchant's

yard. This, however, suited him pretty well, as the dirt was a disguise. In the midst of all this gloomy way, May's love was the only gleam of light. Many a night would her wretched father have flung his burdensome body into the Thames, but for that one little spark of hope—aye, and of joy also. He was never too much intoxicated to find his way home to his own little den, and once there, he was sure of a welcome from this little, pale, half-starved scrap of humanity.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE'S LABOURS.

"The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask—
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God."—KEBLE.

HEN May got up the next morning she had a bad headache to begin with. This was not at all an uncommon thing, for she was a weakly little creature, and although she had arrived at her present condition by degrees, still she painfully missed the comforts to which she had been accustomed during former years. Then, child as she was, she always had the feeling of a heavy cloud hanging over her. There was *something*—she couldn't have told you *what*—that cast a shadow over everything. She had no idea that a hideous and treacherous demon had followed her father so closely. How should she, when the monster was only revealed to *her* eyes clothed in the garb of a friend and benefactor? For she always had the first sip out of her father's pint on Sundays, and often, too, a *kind* neighbour would spare her a spoonful of something

stronger—a "nip," they would call it—to cheer her up and put a dash of colour in her pale face.

May was a mystery to the people of the neighbourhood. She was so superior in her manners to their children, although not dressed half as well; and although, also, she was never rude to any of the women who sometimes took it into their heads to pay her a visit, she never enlightened them about anything relating to the past. If a question seemed to touch upon her father's past history or present character, she instantly became dumb, and a certain light in her eyes, and determined lines about her mouth, warned her inquisitors that nothing further need be expected in that quarter; and they would retire discomfited, saying among themselves that "That there May was the rummest little customer they ever com'd across. Moll Jones had tried her with a drop o' gin, and Betsy Smykes with a nip o' brandy, but twarn't no manner o' use, for she just clapped up her mouth like a mouse-trap, and there was an end on't."

May was not surprised that her head ached when she got up on this particular morning,—it was only rather worse than usual. This was caused by the long sleepless hours during which the deafening thunder and vivid lightning had terrified her, and a subsequent sleep, during which her brain had been haunted, with visions of angels sometimes, and sometimes of creatures she could not have described, but which horrified her with their dreadful appearance, and followed her through impassable passages into impossible dens, until she awoke with a start and a scream, to find herself alone upon her hard little mattress.

After having her breakfast—her father had his before six, and always left a fire ready for May, and some tea in a little brown pot on the hob—she cleared away everything, and made the place as tidy as she could.

She had keen recollections of other homes, and knew too well, poor child, that *she* had not been born to the squalid wretchedness which she saw around her. Then she seated herself near the window with a pair of her father's socks in her lap, the heels of which had entirely disappeared, and May, with a ball of worsted and huge needle, sat herself to invent a new pair, although by what art she was to arrive at the desired end did not appear. But she was not to be daunted, although, it must be confessed, she sighed as she stretched the vacancy over her thin little hand, and took the first stitch in a loose corner of the knitting. Several attempts were made before the worsted would *hold*, and when it did, consideration was necessary as to where the next stitch should be taken. May decided at last to insert the needle at the farthest extremity of the hole, which she did with a careful hand, drawing the worsted through until to her satisfaction she saw the two sides of the big vacuum coming very close together. The somewhat prolonged contemplation of this first success ended in further attempts to bring into closer contact *all* the jagged edges of the hole, until patience and perseverence saw no hole at all, but in its place a rugged lump of worsted, bidding fair to harass any foot placed within the sock! May, while pulling away at the worsted, had thought only of getting rid of the *hole*. *That* end had been gained, but now, as she gazed with dis-

may upon the great lump her own hands had formed, her eyes brimmed over, and her tired hands dropped helplessly into her lap.

Just then the latch was raised, and the door pushed open far enough to admit the head of Matilda, otherwise Tilly Smykes, who lived next door.

"Holloa, May! wot's the matter now?" exclaimed that young lady, stepping in as May hurriedly tried to conceal the objectionable article of clothing under her pinafore. "Wot have yer got there? Summat pretty to show us?"

"No," said May, sobbing, "it isn't anything at all pretty. I don't know that I mind showing *you*, Tilly. I've been trying to mend one of father's socks, and it won't come right somehow." May drew it forth and handed it to Tilly, who, on viewing it, set up a perfect roar of laughter, which only made poor May more miserable, and the tears fall faster. Tilly Smykes was not a bad sort, considering her surroundings. She had a kind heart underneath, and seeing what a real trouble it was to her little neighbour, she put her arms round her, and kissing her, said, "I couldn't help laughing, 'pon my word. Why, how d' yer think yer dad's agoin' to poke that lump down 'twixt his heel and his boot?"

"Oh, I don't know," sobbed the poor child. "I never thought I could make it so bad. What can I do, Tilly? What does your mother do with big holes?"

"Oh, nothin'," laughed Tilly; "she never mends no 'oles, cos my dad don't wear no socks; he wouldn't be bothered with 'em, and if *he* was, *she* wouldn't. She'd

just chuck 'em away when they was too old to mend, like she do her own."

"Then she'd have to buy new ones," suggested May.

"Not *her*," replied Tilly. "Why, *I* never remember her buying anything new for herself nor dad—though he gits his own things—nor yet for us. She can buy stockin's —old uns—mended strong, for tuppence a pair, an' she wears a pair till she can't poke her feet down 'em no more, an' then she chucks 'em away. But I know when she buys 'em they don't look like *that*—she couldn't wear 'em if they did."

"What can I do?" sighed May.

"I'm sure *I* don't know," said Tilly, as she seated herself on the table and looked over the sock with a profound air. "I think I'd cut out all this mess first."

"That would make the hole bigger still," said May after a pause.

"So 'twould, sure*ly*, but yer dad couldn't wear it *so*."

"No, I suppose it must come out," answered May, slowly inserting the point of a rusty old pair of scissors. By slow degrees the mass of worsted was dislodged, but not without, as May had feared, making the original hole larger.

Tilly was twelve years old, but looked quite two years older than that, and as she spread out the vacant place over her great red hand, it seemed to have considerably diminished since May tried to hold it on hers; but as the former was about, good-naturedly, to try her hand at darning for the first time in her life, a bright thought seized her, "Ain't yer dad got no more socks?"

"Yes, he's got two more pairs, but they're all as bad."

"Let's have a look at 'em, May."

There was not much to choose between them certainly, but Tilly selected a pair with rather more heel, and with the benefit of the experience gained by frequent inspections of the mended stockings from the marine stores, she commenced her work.

"Seein' yer cryin' an' thinkin' how to mend the socks, a'most put out o' my head wot I come in for," said Tilly after a minute or two at work.

"Oh, May, we had the grandest lady to teach us yesterday! Her cloe's was just lovely."

"I know! I saw her!" cried May, brightening up. "Father said she was like an angel. She couldn't have been like a real one though, for I've seen pictures of angels and they always have wings."

"*Hangel,*" said Tilly with a contemptuous sneer. "She warn't no *hangel,* but," she added, lowering her voice to a confidential whisper, "I told mother *I* thought p'raps she *wor* Queen Wictoria—I am sure the Queen couldn't have beautifuller cloe's than *she* had. Lor'! how mother laughed at me. But I *aint* so sure about it *now,* May."

It was May's turn to have the laugh now, as she exclaimed, "Oh, but I am, though; I've seen the Queen, her very own self."

"*You,* May!" cried Tilly, with amazed eyes. "How could yer? Did yer go to her 'ouse?"

"She doesn't live in a *house,*" replied May, with an air of superiority that made Tilly pause and look at her before she

said: "How cur'ous—I thought everybody lived in 'ouses. Do the Queen live in a garding, or wot?"

"She lives in a palace," explained May, which was no explanation to Tilly, who asked in return: "Wot's a pallis; and did you see her in it?"

"No," said May. "I saw her in a carriage. Father took me once to a beautiful park—I don't know where it was, but I saw the Queen and the Prince, and they had four horses to draw the carriage."

"That's the same as Bardsley's coal waggins," mused Tilly. "They 'as four 'osses, one in front of 'tother; they do just look fine."

"Not like *that*, Tilly," cried May, laughing. "The horses were two and two, side by side, you know. But it's ever so long ago, and I can't remember much about it now."

"Well, I want yer to come with me next Sunday night, May, and then you'll see her."

"What, the Queen?"

"Course not—the lady wot you says is like a *h*angel."

"I don't think father would let me go," sighed May.

"Why not?" asked her friend; "it's just jolly, *I* can tell you."

"I've never been anywhere like that. Father says such places are only for children that can't read; and I *can* read, you know, although I haven't got any books now—only one or two old ones."

"Well, I *can't* read, and I aint got no books; but she's agoin' to tell us a story next Sunday, and that'll be a lot

better than learnin' the A B C. You could ask yer father."

"I don't think he'd like me to leave him, and I don't think I ought to; he always wants me with him."

"When he's drunk, does he?" asked Tilly.

Poor May; she shrank and shivered at the word. *Why*, she could not have told you, for she had known him in this condition from her babyhood, but the remembrance was not unmixed; she had known him also in his spells of sobriety, and how different was the recollection of such times to her present experience.

"When my father's drunk," continued Tilly, sewing away at the sock, and taking no notice of the pale, sad little face watching her, "if we don't get out of his way he kicks us out of it pretty sharp."

"Oh, Tilly! my father wouldn't kick me."

"And mother does too when she's drunk," Tilly went on. "Oh they're a rare pair, May. It's a go when they're both drunk together, *I* can tell you."

May did not need this piece of information. Many a night she had lain trembling and listening to the ravings and fightings of Mr. and Mrs. Smykes, often expecting nothing less than the appearance of the worthy pair through the wainscot, which was thin and shaky enough to admit them at any moment, should they both fall against it at once. After a moment's pause, Tilly held out the sock—

"There May, 'taint as good as mother's now, but 'taint such a lump as you made."

"Oh thank you, Tilly, I don't know whatever I should have done if you hadn't helped me," said May, looking round the room. "I wish I could give you something nice."

"I don't want nothink," replied Tilly. "I'm off now; mind and ask yer father to let yer come a Sunday. Good-bye."

All the rest of the day May worked patiently at the socks, folding up each pair as she finished it. She was longing for her father's return, although she had little hope of his consenting to her going to the Ragged-school. However, she had resolved to ask him. Accordingly, when six o'clock, came she began to get the tea ready. A poor little tea it was to look at it when it was all arranged. The cracked crockery and meagre stock of viands were not inviting even to May, who was accustomed to nothing better now. But she had worked so hard that she was really hungry, and she was nearly sure, as it was only Monday, that her father would bring home something to add to the bread and butter which she had placed upon the table. She was sometimes disappointed in this, as Lester would have to "clear out" on Saturday night, to wipe off a long score; or he would occasionally lose half his week's earnings by dropping them through his helpless fingers.

On this particular evening May was doomed to this frequent result. As her father entered she ran to kiss him, and began laughingly to feel one special pocket which he kept for such luxuries as a bloater or a rasher of bacon, and it must be confessed that she drew back with a little sorrowful vexation in her first thought on finding it empty.

Had she not been working all day long at her father's socks until her fingers ached and smarted? Had she not made things as neat and tidy as possible against his return? and now he *had* returned, but had brought nothing to reward her diligence. Her father observed the look, and drew her to him for another kiss—a silent one—for his heart smote him that he should have returned thus nearly penniless.

This had the desired effect, and cleared as by magic the little cloud that had passed over May's brow. Her kind little heart, too, suggested another thought. Had not this dear father, whom she loved so well, been working all day, and was it not worse for *him* to have nothing nice for his tea?

So she tripped off lightly, and had it all ready by the time her father had washed his hands and face. This performance was not a very thorough one, as Lester always had a vague idea that somebody might recognise him if he made himself too clean, and he felt quite safe under his strange disguise.

When tea was over and cleared away, May took her place on her father's knee, and spreading out the socks proudly, explained how Tilly Smykes had done one as a pattern, and how she had worked until she thought her father could now wear them. He was truly astonished at what she had accomplished, but as he took up the little left hand and saw the cruel marks of the needle on nearly every finger, he felt as though he would rather go barefoot than that such pain should be the result of his having decent socks.

"Oh, May! you must never do it again."

"Why not, father?" she asked, looking up in surprise.

"Why not, child? Look at these little fingers of yours. Do you think I could wear socks comfortably that had caused you so much pain to mend?"

"Oh, that's nothing," sighed May, nestling down again. "But I do wish you could buy some new ones; I'm afraid the mends will hurt your feet."

"I wish they *would* hurt my feet and bring me straight home instead of turning into 'The Crown' so often," exclaimed Lester, with a sudden energy that nearly startled May off his knee. Ah! how she wished so too. Many a night she had lain and listened, only to hear him stumble in, in a condition of almost helpless intoxication; and when she was sure he had tumbled to sleep either on the bed, but more often on the floor, how often had she stolen down to wrap a blanket about him and thrust a pillow under his head!

"I wish they would too," she said, after a pause. Then, to get away from the unpleasant subject of "The Crown," she plunged into the chief object of Tilly Smyke's visit to her. Her father would have denied nothing which he could possibly grant her, but this request was a very hard one.

Knowing as he did his real position in life, and feeling that his child, instead of being subjected to such associations as the Ragged-school would force upon her, ought to have been enjoying the society of children like herself, attended by servants, and instructed by a governess, he almost

groaned aloud as he clasped May in his arms, and thought of all that his weak folly denied her.

"Tilly Smykes says she'll call, and take me and bring me back safe," May went on. "And, father, who do you think taught her? It was that lady you said was like an angel. Oh, I *should* like to go and see her!"

"Oh, child, you know I can't bear to say no to you; but they're a rough lot down there, and *you* know, May, you oughtn't to be going to a place like that."

"Only once, then, there's a dear father."

"Very well. Once, May,—just to see the angel, you know."

With May's arms about his neck, and her kisses repaying him, Lester wondered, as he often had wondered before, poor man, how he could ever deny her anything, and how he could let "The Crown" have so much of the money that at least would clothe, if not educate her. The demon, if gifted with speech, could have told him more than he could have told himself upon this subject, and upon every other connected with his downfall. But the wily monster could not speak; it could only "move itself *aright*," and "give its colour in the cup." A wondrous power, truly Satanic, and sufficient to bring strong men to the dust of degradation, and clothe them with rags!

The week passed away much as other weeks had done, only that May had her father's permission to go to the school, as a beacon to guide her through it.

CHAPTER IV.

DUTY OR PLEASURE?

"Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the Mighty to save."

"MAY! May! are yer coming?" shouted Tilly Smykes, looking in at Lester's front door at the appointed hour on Sunday, and seeing no one there.

"Yes, in a minute," called out May, from the back room, which was her father's bedroom. Tilly stepped inside the front door just as May appeared at the opposite one, and she very nearly forgot her manners once more by bursting into a roar of laughter, but she covered her mouth with both hands, and succeeded in partially suppressing the expression of her merriment.

"Why, May, what have yer bin doin' to yerself, child?" she asked, when she could speak.

"I don't know," said May. "What do you mean, Tilly?"

"Well, I don't mean *you;* I mean yer clo'es."

May glanced down, and the colour and tears rose up to cheeks and eyes as she caught the expression of her friend's face.

"I only washed it."

The "*it*" was a very old print frock, having a preponderance of dark blue in the pattern, which, under the cleansing process followed by May, had spread itself indiscriminately, and left the whole affair more like a piece of mottled wall-paper than an orthodox cotton dress.

"I know it's very bad," sighed May, surveying it. "But don't take me with you, Tilly, unless you like; I can't help it, I haven't got another."

"Is *he* in there?" enquired Miss Smykes in a whisper, pointing to the back room.

May shook her head. "Father's gone out for a walk."

"Gone to 'The Crown,' I expect. I *do* say it's a shame! There's him and there's my dad, both on 'em gits a lot o' money every week, and yet here's me and there's you with such precious old rags of frocks as won't bear a stitch in 'em; an' as to *yourn*—well, it looked a sight better with the dirt on't than it do now! But come on, there'll be a plenty wus uns than ourn there."

Mr Stanley was standing near the door when the two children arrived at the Hall. Tilly, he knew, was in the Bible-class, although she could not read, but he had found it best to put the children together who were nearest in size and age. May looked quite two years younger than she was, so he immediately beckoned her to go into a class of children varying from six to nine years old. But Tilly

didn't see that; she kept fast hold of May's hand, and marching boldly up to the superintendent, said, "She's got to sit along o' me."

"She cannot sit with you," he replied; "she is too young, and must go into the fourth class."

"She ain't so young as she looks," answered Tilly. "She's past ten, ain't yer, May? Besides, I've got to take care on her."

"Ten years old are you, little one?" said Mr. Stanley kindly, stooping down and taking May's disengaged hand for a moment. "No doubt you would rather sit with little girls your own age, so suppose we put you in the second class—there, where the lady is dressed in black."

This arrangement would not suit Tilly any better than the former one, so she put her arm round May's shoulders and said stoutly, "We ain't agoin' to stay at all if she can't sit along o' me, cos I said she should."

Such a cogent argument being wholly unanswerable, the superintendent replied smilingly, "Well, I must give permission this time I suppose, as she is a little stranger."

"Now look out," said Tilly, as they took their places in the Bible-class; "*that's* her chair, an' we ain't agoin' to let any of 'em shove us down lower. Keep yer eye on the door and you'll see her come in."

"What will she have on?" asked May in a whisper.

"*Such* a lovely gownd—white musling, with lots o' lace. 'Twarn't all white, though; it had green things—leaves or summat—all over it, an' a lace cape over her shoulders. But here she comes."

"I don't see her," said May.

"More don't I," answered Tilly. "But I know she ain't far off, cos the gals are a rushin' in, an' some of 'em are a-lookin' down street."

In another moment Sylvia entered, followed by Mrs. Croft. Tilly Smykes had imagined that such a magnificent outfit as that displayed by her new teacher on the previous Sunday could need no alteration for a long time, and she was therefore astounded and rendered speechless by what she now saw before her. Sylvia had, in accordance with Mr. Stanley's hint, put on what to *her* was a very plain morning dress of braided white Holland with a jacket of the same material, and a hat simply trimmed with white lace. To Tilly, however, this costume was quite as regal as its predecessor, while to May it was decidedly "angelic," being all white.

Sylvia was much more at home in her work than she was on the occasion of her first visit to the school; she noticed also the new little scholar with the remarkable attire, and also that when it came to the child's turn to read a verse, she did so with a clear voice, and without a mistake.

The teaching that day was quite a success, for Sylvia had not only studied the lesson well, but she had such an increased desire to be of some service to these poor ignorant children, that every word was uttered with that loving earnestness which is sure to find its way to youthful hearts. And then the promised story which followed was so simple and so interesting that their attention was undivided, and the class which had been the noisiest and most troublesome,

was a pattern of good behaviour. At the close of the teaching Mr. Stanley thanked his new teacher, and commended the class generally, apologising for the presence of the juvenile May—stating it was only for once. But Miss Tyrrell had been so interested with her quiet manners and eager attention, that she begged for her name to be enrolled in her class-book.

Before the children were dismissed Mr. Stanley made an announcement that puzzled many of his hearers. It was to the effect that a meeting would be held there the next Wednesday evening for the formation of a "Band of Hope." He went on to explain that children joining the "Band" would promise to abstain altogether from beer, and all intoxicating drinks of every kind, and that they would try to get their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters to give it up also.

"I say! what a lark!" whispered Tilly Smykes. "I should *just* like to catch *my* dad an' mother a givin' of it up."

"Oh, Tilly! you'll try to make them, won't you?" answered May, with such a strange light in her eyes that Tilly checked her reply to look at her, and then said: "Why, I couldn't have any myself if I did. I allus has a drop o' mother's beer when I fetches it—its nice! I likes it," she added, smacking her lips.

"But Tilly, you *could* do without it; you must, indeed you must, give it up."

"Not if I knows it!" laughed Tilly, swinging her legs.

It was time to go home now. Much of Mr. Stanley's little

address had been lost both by teacher and children, for Sylvia had observed the quick, intelligent look that had animated May's pale face and the bright flush that had mantled to her very hair, and the thought suggested itself that probably the child's parents were like many others, given to intemperate habits, and she pitied her. Into May's soul, however, there had suddenly flashed a ray of light. The first few sentences which had fallen upon her ears had revealed to her that *she*, a little child with no money or friends or fine clothes, still had *something* which she could use for the benefit of the only being she had anything to do with. This dear father, who was always kind to her when he was sober, and simply took no notice of her when he was drunk, *might*—who could tell?—*might* some day bring home all his money instead of spending it at "The Crown," and *then*, ah! what could they not have? Better clothes, better food, and a better house. She could look back to the time when they had all these things, and servants as well, but that was long ago—four or five years was a long while to a child of ten. Now, the idea had seized her with a firm grip not to be shaken off,—not that she wished to shake it off, it was too precious to her—that the thing to be done was to give up this drink entirely. What a different world it would be if everybody gave it up! Her own father, for instance—she could imagine the delight of having him always sober, for she could remember such times. And then there were Mr. and Mrs. Smykes—how different *they* would be, and how happy all the little Smykeses, if *they* gave up the drink.

May saw it all as in a vision. This was not surprising. She had had abundant experience even in *her* short life of the pain and misery and poverty brought about by her own father drinking too much; but she had never known him to go quite without, and no one had ever mentioned such a thing in her hearing, even by the remotest hint. And yet, *here* was the remedy. If her father never took a single drop, he never *could* take too much, and to try and persuade him, she must never take a single drop herself. As for the tastes of gin and brandy, with which the women had treated her, she did not like *them;* they burnt her throat, and she had taken them only from a fear of offending. But the sip of ale out of her father's mug on Sunday *had* been a treat to her; but this, for the future, she made up her mind to resolutely refuse. Poor May! How easy it all seemed to her as she sat there with her hands clasped, and looking straight before her, unconscious of the bustle around caused by the departing of the children. A light touch on her shoulder and a sweet voice in her ear recalled her.

"What are you thinking of, dear?" asked Sylvia. May's first impulse was to throw her arms around this beautiful lady and tell her all her thoughts, but the recollection of her father checked it, and with the same old look of determination upon her face seen so often at home, she only sat silent.

"Are you coming on Wednesday to join the Band of Hope?" continued her teacher.

"Yes, I hope so—if——"

"If what?"

'If father will let me."

"Don't you think he will let you?"

"I will ask him," said May. "I think he will let me come with Tilly."

"I dunno as I'm a comin' myself," interposed that young lady, with an attempt at haughty grandeur, for in truth she had felt rather like being "left out in the cold" by their teacher's evident interest in the new scholar whom she had herself introduced—an interest which it was not to be supposed that she could account for. True, *she* could only spell out a few easy words, and that with difficulty, while May could have read off the whole chapter if asked. But *that* was no reason to her. She could not discern, as did Miss Tyrrell, the superior accent and natural refinement that marked the speech and manners of her little friend, and told of her gentler birth. So the spice of jealousy betrayed itself in her remark. "Oh Tilly, dear," exclaimed May with an animation that surprised Sylvia, "*Do* come, say you will come."

Tilly, easily mollified, and flattered by the loving term she seldom heard applied to herself, replied, "I *can* come if I *like* yer know, and you can't if yer dad won't let yer; but if he will, p'raps I'll bring yer."

So it ended, and Sylvia, glad to escape the stifling atmosphere, hastened after Mrs. Croft, who awaited her at a little distance. On the lawn at Fernleigh Hall she found all the family assembled.

"Here comes the missionary!" exclaimed Gerald as she joined them. "How are all the little savages going on? Do you want another subscription to the clothing fund?"

"No, thank you," replied Sylvia laughing. "And they were not nearly such little savages as they were last Sunday; they really were very good children, considering what they are and how wretchedly they have been brought up."

"Let's hope you'll soon make them all so good and respectable that you need not go to teach them," said Percy. "I'm sure I don't see why you were pounced upon for such work."

"Percy! I wasn't pounced upon; I offered to go because I thought it was right, and I could do a little—if only a little—good to them. I'm sure *somebody* ought."

"I wish *I* might go," broke in Isabel. "It would be far better than going on the river with those tiresome boys. Bertrand Oliver wouldn't go at all this evening, and we were left to the tender mercies of Gerald and Percy; and you can imagine how comfortable we were! They did nothing but tease and poke fun at us all the time. Didn't they, Dora?"

"Yes; and rowed so furiously that they nearly ran into somebody else, and splashed us all over."

"You really should be careful, boys," said Mr. Tyrrell. "The splashing, of course, was a trivial matter; but very serious to run into other craft—might end fatally you know."

"No fear, my dear father," replied Gerald; "the young ladies' statements are somewhat exaggerated; a little bit of temper mixed up with the facts making them look rather ugly."

"You *did* row too fast," Dora went on; "and we don't mean to go with you next time."

"Oh, dear," sighed Gerald, with ironical pathos; "what in the world will become of us? It's no use to think of going on the river without the two pretty little sisters. We'd better sell the boat, and be good, and go to the Ragged-school, eh, Sylvia?"

"Don't sell the boat till after Wednesday," cried Percy.

"What are you going to do on Wednesday?" asked Sylvia.

"Why, don't you remember it's the picnic?" said Dora.

"No; I remember that it was fixed for to-morrow."

"Ah! but this evening it was altered," said Mrs. Tyrrell. "You know, Dora, Sylvia had gone before Agnes Bedford came. Neither they nor the Olivers can go to-morrow, so we altered it to Wednesday to suit them; it doesn't matter in the least to us."

"I'm sorry," replied Sylvia. "I've promised to go to a meeting at the Hall. But you will have plenty for the boats without me."

A chorus of voices greeted this announcement. It would be difficult to disentangle the various remarks, but the general expression was of dissatisfaction. In fact, they could not and would not go without her.

"My dear Sylvia," said her mother, when she could make her voice heard above the little storm, "you surely need not go to the Hall on a week evening. You go on Sunday; they surely cannot expect any more from you."

"They do not *expect* it, mamma dear. It was quite voluntary on my part, I assure you. To me the meeting

which is to be held on Wednesday appears far more important than the picnic to Hampton Court."

"What is it for?" inquired Mr. Tyrrell.

"It is to form a Band of Hope among the scholars. I met Mr. Alleyne this evening as he was going home from church, and he walked nearly to the gate with me to explain all about the society."

"Ah! he came to me the other day for a subscription—which I gave him very gladly," added Mr. Tyrrell. "He knows he's sure of my sympathy to the extent of something substantial, but I couldn't go in for all his peculiar principles."

"Certainly not," answered his wife. "Mr. Alleyne, as vicar of the parish, is obliged to do many things, and go into many places that *we* need not, as members of his congregation."

"He has signed the pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks," said Sylvia slowly, as if repeating a lesson.

"Well done! good girl!" laughed Gerald, patting her on the back. "Did Mr. Alleyne make you repeat it over till you knew it?"

"No; I repeated it over to myself after he went away; I was afraid I should forget the form."

"You're quite right, my dear," said her father. "The Vicar told me the same thing, and asked me to join him in the movement, but I told him that both he and I took so little, that abstaining was an absurdity, although I saw afterwards from what he told me that it was clearly *his* duty

to do so. As for myself, why, I never have any occasion to go into those dreadful dens that he has in one part of his parish. I have nothing to do with the people living there, and it couldn't possibly matter to them, or to anybody, in fact, whether I take a glass of wine with my dinner, or whether I never indulge in anything stronger than coffee or tea."

"And yet," said Sylvia, unconsciously quoting her pastor's words, "we *all* have influence over somebody, and we should therefore seek to be examples for good. I should like to follow his example, and then perhaps somebody might follow mine some day."

"And, pray, where would be the good of that?" asked Mrs. Tyrrell. "Really, my dear Sylvia, you are *too* absurd. Why, this new-fangled idea of going without wine is not intended for such people as you, or such families as ours. It is only intended for low and vulgar persons who drink too much beer or spirits, and who frequent public-houses. The very mentioning of such habits and places is extremely disagreeable."

"I hope you do not imagine that your influence for good, as you call it, is necessary here," said Gerald, "or that you behold in me or Percy eligible candidates for your new pledge."

"We might be, though," said Percy thoughtfully; "and I think I can guess why the Vicar has gone in for it. Don't you remember how much trouble Harry Alleyne got into last term? He was always in hot water, and I believe it was all through the wine. He and some of the other

fellows, too, used to get so jolly drunk, and kick up such rows, that one was ashamed to be in the same college with them."

"That is just what Mr. Alleyne said to-night," answered Sylvia. "Taking too much to drink is *not* confined to the poor. The upper classes need the pledge *quite* as much, only it is not so generally seen. They have the seclusion of their own homes to shelter them.

"Disgraceful!" said Mr. Tyrrell, whose thoughts were at Oxford. "Poor Mr. Alleyne. Yes, I recollect now that he did mention the trouble his eldest son had been to him. But," he continued, looking around upon his own two fine sons and three handsome daughters, "there is no reason, because one young man has the bad sense to take too much, why everybody else should go without."

"Of course not," said his wife. "If Harry Alleyne has so forgotten himself, his father is the proper person to try and bring him back. We have nothing to do with it."

"But suppose it had been Gerald or Percy, mamma dear," urged Isabel, who had been listening eagerly.

"My dear Isabel, it is not necessary for me to suppose anything of the sort. We may be sure your brothers have been too well brought up to forget themselves in such a way."

"Have they been brought up better than the Alleynes, mamma?"

"Probably not; but we will drop the subject. Dora, dear, fetch me a shawl; I am quite chilly, but the moon is rising so splendidly we must stay out a little longer; and

Sylvia, my love, I hope you will not think of spoiling the picnic by staying at home."

"I will give up the meeting, mother dear, if you wish," replied Sylvia. "Perhaps you will be able to spare me another time. I will send a note to Mr. Stanley to explain my absence."

CHAPTER V.

TRUE HEROISM.

"Be patient, Christian, under trials here;
'Mid slighted love, and wrong unmerited,
Submissive wait, and every grief severe
Shall be through God a blessing on thy head."

MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

LONG before Sylvia had reached Fernleigh Hall, her new scholar had arrived at the little den she called home. Finding it dark and empty, she lighted the candle and sat down to wait and listen for her father's return. She was very weary, for although the school had been a pleasant novelty to her, it had also been very fatiguing, as she was far from being robust. Her efforts to keep awake at last ended in her dropping to sleep where she sat, in the old wicker chair, and her deep slumber was not disturbed by the entrance of her father two hours later. He was not absolutely intoxicated. Strange to say, he never was on Sundays; this was the nearest approach he had made to that condition. His reflections on the past had been too much for him, and the feeling of utter loneli-

ness in May's absence had driven him to seek the deadening influence of the drink. But he was not "too far gone" to see his child when he stumbled into the room, and to realise that she had been sitting up for him when she fell asleep. So, with the greatest tenderness, and balancing himself with wonderful precision—considering his partial tipsiness—he lifted May in his arms and laid her upon his own bed, which was nearest, and carefully covering her with the old quilt, he climbed upstairs to spend the night upon her little mattress.

He was gone the next morning, when she opened her eyes and found herself in a strange place; and she knew she must wait till evening before she could ask him about Wednesday's meeting. However, the day passed quickly enough for her, for, encouraged by her success with the socks, she had set herself to mend several holes in other garments.

Then, at tea-time, she laid her request before her father, but she did not tell the object of the meeting. He looked at her silently for a moment, and then said: "So you want to run away from your father again, May. Well, child, it is not much to be wondered at."

"Oh, father, I don't want to run away from you," she said, coming round the table, and leaning her head on his shoulder. "I want you always—always; but you are never at home on week nights."

"But you left me alone yesterday."

"No; you went out first."

"I shouldn't have gone if you had not wanted to go away from me. I have never left you on Sundays, May."

It was not absolute selfishness that prompted James Lester to wish to keep May at home on Sundays. He could not bear his own society,—that was a fact; but he also loved his child, and always wanted her with him when he was sober, and it was her absence that had driven him to "The Crown" the day before.

With scarcely a moment's reflection, May answered: "I'll not go any more on Sundays," for she had seen in that moment that to go away from him on Sunday was to drive him to the very place from which it was now to be her hope and aim to allure him. So, with her arms about him, and her pale little face pressed close to his blackened features, she realised the first great joy of *giving up* what was to her a great pleasure, for the sake of the one she loved more than all the world.

"You may do what you like on week-days, and on Sundays too, for the matter of that," said her father, kissing her. "It's hard to deny you anything; you're a good little dear. I wish I could do something more for you in the way of clothes," he added, glancing down at the stiff, mottled garment that adorned her figure.

"I don't mind," said May. "Some day, perhaps, you can. It won't look so bad if I don't go on Sundays."

"You shall go on Sundays too, dear. I'll try and wait at home for you; but the place seems so strange without you in it. Ah, May, you don't know what I've gone through, nor what a little comforter you've been to me!"

"I *won't* go and leave you," exclaimed May, with so much determination in her voice that her father wondered at it.

He knew not how tightly she was hugging her newly found joy of giving up something for him, although he was conscious of the extra squeeze she gave him.

May looked forward longingly to Wednesday evening, when she was quite early at Tilly's door, with the hope that she should prevail upon her to go, although she had all along said she shouldn't.

"I ain't agoin' to give up havin' a sup when I can git it," she said in answer to May's solicitation. "And mother says it's all stuff to have sich a meetin'. Nobody here won't go without it, an' why should they?"

"Ah! why indeed?" echoed Mrs. Smykes, whose untidy head appeared at the moment from behind the door, decorated with a pair of blackened eyes and a very red nose. "I'm sure nobody needn't grudge a poor body like me a quarten o' gin sometimes. I should die o' molonchodly right away if I didn't have it. And as to Smykes—what *I* say is, if a man earns his beer he's a right to drink it."

"An' git drunk into the bargain," added Tilly.

"Don't yer be rude, miss!" answered her mother, boxing her ears. "I wish yer was as good as little May."

"She don't git her ears boxed, an' I wish yer'd keep yer hands off mine," cried the dutiful daughter, as she dodged into the road.

"Won't you come just to take care of me and see the angel?" asked May.

"Perhaps I might as well do that as stay at home to git my head punched," replied Tilly; "but I ain't agoin' to be caught—not even by the *hangel*—so there!"

However, this concession was something, and May trudged off delightedly in the direction of the Hall, with her arm linked in Tilly's—the latter young lady being rather silent and much occupied in rubbing her ears.

The meeting was not a very large one; only about forty children were present. Mr. Stanley spoke first, and explained in simple language the objects of the society. Then followed the Vicar, who told some incidents that had come under his own observation, of children who, by abstaining from drink themselves, had been the means of leading their parents to do the same. The Vicar's wife also spoke a few words of encouragement to them, and gave them a text to remember. After explaining the meaning of it, she made them repeat it over several times, until they had learned it. At the close of the meeting every child who wished for it was supplied with a card, which could be returned at any time, but upon which was written a promise to abstain from intoxicating drinks so long as it was retained. May gladly took one of these. Tilly, however, would not go up to the table, but she carried away in her memory the words of Scripture she had learned with the rest. The words were these: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

May carefully stowed away her pledge card when she reached home; an instinctive respect for her father prompted her to do so. She had grown up with the fixed idea that beer, gin, and brandy, and all other drinks of the kind, were just as natural and as necessary as water or tea or cocoa. Everybody *she* had ever known had used them, and

that her dear father should be so poor and so miserable through touching them, never occurred to her till Sunday evening. And yet, now she had promised not to touch any of these drinks herself, she was very doubtful as to whether *he* would ever be persuaded to give them up. He had *always* taken *some*, if not always so much; and the great truth which she grasped now was, that to take *none* was his only safeguard.

Would he ever be persuaded? May could only wait and hope. She would have no opportunity of showing her intention until the next Sunday, and meantime things went on as usual. Thursday and Friday her father was not so bad, and found his way to bed in a decent manner, but Saturday night May lay wakeful and watchful for many hours before she heard the well-known blundering below. After the customary ineffectual attempts to find the bed, he tumbled on to the floor, and poor May slipped gently down and covered him up, as she had done many a time before. Saturday was always his worst night, owing to the thoughtless habit and most injurious practice indulged in by many masters of paying their men at a public-house.

Dinner-time on Sunday having arrived, and the frothing ale in a bright pewter pot having been left at the door by an exceedingly smart young man in a white apron, they sat down to the table.

"Drink first, May," said Lester, according to his Sunday custom.

May was silent for a moment. That moment! How she had looked forward to it and tried to brace herself for the

expression of her testimony to the right! The opportunity must not be lost; so with a stedfast look in her dark eyes as she fixed them on his, she said: "No, thank you, father." The effort was too much for her. The bright flush mounted to her forehead and the tears to her eyes, and burying her face in her hands, she sobbed violently.

"May, May! What's the matter dear? Aren't you well? What is it, May? speak child," said her father, lifting her upon his knee. But she only hid her face in his bosom and sobbed on. In a minute or two, however, she was able to breathe more freely, and then she blamed herself for this outburst, although, poor child, she might as well have tried to stem the tide upon the sea-shore as stop those tears.

"Now tell me," he continued, kissing her.

"It's nothing, nothing very particular, only please don't ask me to drink ale any more."

"Is that all? That's nothing to cry about; you shan't drink ale if you don't like it."

This wouldn't do for May at all. It was not the ground she wished to take *her* stand upon. "Oh, it's not *that;* I *do* like it," she replied.

"Well then, foolish child, why not drink it? It will do you good."

"It does *you* harm."

"H'm, well yes, perhaps it does. But it will never do as much for you. It's considered strengthening, and your pale little face looks as if you needed it. It does you good, and cheers you up on Sundays anyhow. Come, take a sip."

"Father dear, I don't want to drink any more ale or anything of that sort."

"Oh, well, please yourself child," said Lester, putting her down. "You'd better get on with your dinner."

May went to her seat. It was terrible to have him speak to her in that hard tone. She had given up a pleasure for his sake and to do him good, and all she got for her pains was this rebuff and the bitter disappointment of her action being taken the wrong way. Her father seemed offended with her, for he drank his ale in silence, hardly noticing her all dinner-time. But in truth James Lester's heart was as sore as his child's. He was roused from his usual lethargy on the subject in a very unpleasant manner. Was his child going to treat him as all his former friends had? She had already shown a disposition to go and leave him, and now she had refused to share his drink with him, a thing she had always done with so much good nature before.

If his *child* forsook him he would have nobody left to him in the wide world, and there would be no further good done by staying in it.

Poor man! *How* much good he *had* done in it for the past ten years of his life, it would have puzzled anyone to tell.

With the evening came Tilly Smykes.

"Not ready, May! You'll be all behind."

"I'm not going any more on Sundays, Tilly."

"Oh! I say, if that ain't a sell. Why ain't yer? 'As the *h*angel offended yer?"

"No; only I'm going to stay at home with father."

"Oh, my! Catch me stayin' at home with mine, *that's all.* I shall be late. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Tilly," said May, shutting the door.

Her father was quietly smoking his pipe by the window; he had stayed to see whether she would leave him or not, and now, as she turned towards him, and he saw the happy content upon her face, the unconscious result of the feeling that she had done the right thing, he beckoned her to him. May was on his knee in a moment, with her arms around him.

"My darling May," he said, as he put aside his pipe, "it's too bad of me to keep you at home this fine evening."

The feeling of having his love and confidence in her restored was ample compensation to her, and she replied smiling, "I'd *rather* be with you; and I *can* read, you know. I need not go there to learn."

After a pause he said, "Shall we go for a walk, May? I know a quiet way down by the river." This *was* an unexpected joy to her. To go for a walk with her father was a recreation she had not enjoyed for a long, long time. So, making herself as tidy as her poor little garments would allow, they went out in company.

It was a lovely August evening; even in those dirty little streets, the sun shone with gladdening and purifying beams.

People wondered to see the strange man and the pale child going out for a walk, and marked his fine countenance —which he had partially washed—so different to the

generality of the inhabitants in that part of the world. He had never given them the chance before, as he seldom troubled soap and water. Hence his elegant nickname of "Coaly Jim."

The pair, happy for the time, walked on unheeding the curious eyes that followed them. Presently they emerged into a lane with green banks on each side, surmounted by flowery hedges where the wild rose and honeysuckle were festooned, and shed a sweet odour on the air. May was enraptured. Tilly had once brought her a little bunch of flowers she had gathered in the fields, but she had not seen them growing for years; indeed, the recollection of the country had almost faded from her memory. Then they came to some fields and then to some splendid houses, standing in gardens full of lovely flowers; and near one of the gardens ran a narrow lane between high fences, and when they got to the end of it, there was the river!

May clapped her hands and laughed with delight, and then her delight found expression in the words of a line of one of the hymns she had heard the previous Sunday, which, with the tune, had been haunting her ever since. "The beautiful, the beautiful river," she sang in a clear bird-like voice.

"What's that May?" inquired her father. He had only heard her humming snatches of popular tunes, and that rarely, and it had never occured to him that she could sing.

"Oh, it's something I heard at the school last Sunday. It's all I know of it; but does it mean *this* river?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied her father; "but I

should say not. It's hardly likely they would write hymns about real rivers, I think. Here's a nice green corner, May; sit down on the grass. It's quite a cosy nook."

"It's lovely," answered May. "How kind to bring me here."

So they sat for some time watching the lights on the water—now silvery, now golden, now rosy; ever changing as the clouds flitted across the sky, catching a radiance from the sinking sun, or emerald tints from the foliage that overhung the banks.

Boats too, with elegant rowers and gay ladies, went up and down; and May thought she should never grow tired of watching them.

Just near them, upon the bank, sat two young girls. May could only catch an occasional glimpse of them through the bushes that extended from the end of the fence into the water. She could not hear what they were talking about, but she thought they did not look very cheerful.

Presently one of the boats came gliding in under the branches of a beautiful weeping willow that swept the surface of the water, and May heard one of the three gentlemen who were sitting in it call out, "Now, then, girls! come along. I should think you've had enough of sitting there longing for a row."

"We are not longing for a row at all," answered one of the young ladies.

"Get in, and don't be sulky," said another of the rowers. "It's absurd to suppose that three fellows can disport themselves with becoming effect without any girls."

"We are not sulky either," retorted the second lady. "If you really want us, and will behave yourselves, we'll come."

"A most libellous remark," exclaimed the elder of the three, as the girls took their seats in the boat.

For a time all went well, and they passed up and down among the other boats, often exchanging courtesies and jokes with their occupants. But gradually they appeared to increase their speed, until the spray flew from the sculls, and the boat cleft the water, leaving a foaming track behind her. May thought it was the most splendid sight she had ever seen; but she heard her father say in a low voice as he eagerly watched its progress, "They will have an accident as sure as fate." The girls now appeared to be beseeching the young men to desist, and by their movements they caused the boat to rock very much. At last one of them rose up suddenly, but in an instant pitched headlong into the river. This was what Lester had been evidently expecting, for he had already slipped off his heavy boots, and throwing his coat and hat on the bank, he said, "Mind those till I come back to you," and plunged into the water. At first May was terribly bewildered, and she was tempted alternately to scream and shout and follow her father into the water, but having some of his clothes, and the assurance that he was coming back, she tried to be quiet, but her heart beat wildly as she watched him striking out across the river towards the boat. Somebody else was in the water as well; one of the young men had jumped in to try and rescue the girl; and by the much screaming

and loud calls for help, it was evident that they were very much frightened. Now May could make out that the rower who had leaped out of the boat was being dragged back into it, and then, just as the white dress of the young lady was disappearing, she saw her father make a desperate plunge, and the next moment he was making his way to the shore bearing her safely. May also observed that on the bank close by there were several people—a grey-haired gentleman and handsome lady, and three or four servants, greatly alarmed and distressed, but now quietly awaiting the arrival of her father.

A few bold strokes brought him ashore, and amidst the joyful exclamations of her family, he deposited his dripping burden on the lawn. By this time the boat had arrived, and others also; their occupants having witnessed the accident from a distance, came rowing up to know the rights of it if possible. May rose up, and pulling aside some of the branches of the bushes that impeded her view, could plainly see all that was going on. She saw the young lady who had been rescued, and noted her long golden hair and lovely countenance; and she could see that the grey-haired gentleman was holding her father's hand. Among the many voices she could not make out what was said. Then the young lady, who seemed to be recovering, was placed in a garden chair and carried away to the house; and her father and the gentleman were advancing towards the bushes, so she dropped back out of sight and listened.

"If you would only go into the kitchen and dry your clothes," she heard the latter saying. "It is quite disap-

pointing that you will take no compensation, and I greatly fear that you will suffer from the cold and wet. Think, if it had been *your* child, my man, would you not be ready to pay any sum to the one who had rescued her from a watery grave ?"

"And if *you* had rescued her," replied Lester, "would you not feel it sufficient compensation to have done so ?"

"Probably. But in this case it does not seem quite the right way of looking at it. Come," he added, in a persuasive tone, "you don't look as though a five-pound note would do you any harm."

"It would do me no good," he answered, with a touch of sadness, as he began striding down the bank.

"Where are you going ?" exclaimed the gentleman.

"I am only going to wade to the other side of these bushes ; I left my coat and boots there."

"You will do nothing of the kind. If you *won't* go through the house, why, pull aside the bushes, or pull them up by the roots, rather than endanger your health still further."

"Thank you. I can go through without disarranging them very much. I am thankful to have rendered you any service."

"Good-night," said the gentleman, with a hearty shake of Lester's hand. "Take with you my warmest thanks, if you will take nothing else."

"Good-night," replied Lester, as he disappeared behind the hedge.

May sprang to meet him, and hugged him with joy.

She wanted to *feel* that he was back again all right, for she had never seen him in the water before, and had hardly yet recovered from the effect of seeing him plunge in.

"Now, we must make haste home, little one," said her father. "Can you walk fast?"

"Oh, yes; I can run."

"You needn't do that, May; but I want to get home to dry these things if possible."

"I mended the holes in that other old shirt, father; and you've got socks, you know."

"Ah! well; I shall do." And the two passed away, unconscious of the watchful eyes of the grey-haired gentleman who, hearing May's shout of welcome, had stepped back and peeped through the branches.

CHAPTER VI.

CONVICTION AND COURAGE.

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

IN the drawing-room of Fernleigh Hall, on the following morning, several members of the Tyrrell family were gathered,—Mrs. Tyrrell, with Sylvia and Isabel, the latter partially reclining upon a couch near the window, with a fur-lined carriage-rug thrown across her feet. They had just received a visit from the doctor, who gave a satisfactory verdict upon his patient's progress, and congratulated them that she had not even taken a chill. This visitor was succeeded by two others—the Vicar and Mr. Stanley. These gentlemen had business with Sylvia, and both were surprised on seeing Isabel looking something like an invalid.

"I was not aware that there was illness in the family," said Mr. Alleyne, as he shook hands with the ladies. "I *thought* I saw Miss Isabel at church yesterday morning."

"Oh, yes; we were all there," replied Mrs. Tyrrell.

Then followed an awkward pause. Mr. Alleyne had been so short a time at the head of the parish that he was still called "the new Vicar," but he had been there long enough to discover that the Tyrrell family was only represented in their servants' pew at the evening service. The previous Vicar had certainly not made the services attractive. He had read the driest of sermons in the hardest and most monotonous of voices, and had not troubled himself at all as to the number of occupants in the pews. He called upon the most wealthy members of his congregation at the allotted periods, and sometimes graced their tables at dinner-parties or other special gatherings, such as weddings or funerals, and this was the extent of his interest.

But his successor was an earnest worker in the Master's vineyard, and he was determined by all means in his power to seek to draw young and old, rich and poor, to the Saviour.

Mr. Alleyne sought not the people to fill the pews and go away lost in admiration of the preacher. Neither did he uphold the Church and her claims—he was too well aware of her many errors—to the exclusion of every other system. Some of the old church-wardens and others whispered it among themselves, that he was "a *terrible* radical." He was always ready to further schools and missions, teetotal societies, and bands of hope; to encourage meetings for any or all of these good objects, and attend them anywhere, whether in his own schoolroom, a public hall, or a conventicle!

Anything that would bear the golden gleam reflected

upon it from the mirror of the Word of Life was accepted by him as being of the Lord of life, and therefore not to be put aside by him, but accepted in the full belief that the Master could bring out, even of apparent contradictions, the good He had designed for His children.

Mr. Alleyne had been deeply grieved to find so little real Christianity among those to whom he had been appointed. He did not despair however. With such high aims, his hopes could not grovel in the dust; and with such an Almighty Friend and Helper, he dared not doubt that many of all classes would respond ere long to the call of the Gospel trumpet.

Mr. Stanley had been for years striving to work for the Lord in this dark spot, but he had found it hard rowing against the stream, and was indeed rejoiced and thankful when circumstances placed at the head of the parish a man whose words and work and character were all those of a Christian.

The awkward pause in the drawing-room at Fernleigh Hall was filled up in the minds of the three ladies with awkward thoughts. Conscience whispered that there was a great difference between the way in which their Sunday evenings had been spent, and the way in which they *ought* to have been spent; although Sylvia had the added satisfaction, that she had broken through the old custom and begun upon the right track—only the consciousness that she was the only one in the family who had done so kept her silent. Dora, stepping in from the conservatory at the very moment with her apron full of flowers, created a

diversion. She dropped them into Sylvia's lap as she passed to shake hands with the visitors. She could not conceal the fact that she was vexed about something, for her face was flushed and her eyes red. Had she been aware of the presence of the Vicar and Mr. Stanley in the drawing-room, she would have escaped in the opposite direction; but now she stood with awkward irresolution which, however, was dispersed by Isabel's incautious inquiry of: "What is the matter, Dora?"

"Oh, nothing particular!" exclaimed Dora, excitedly. "Only Gerald is such a horrid tease. He will have it that *I* made you fall into the water, and of course it was Bertrand's fault—he was so cross."

"Bertrand's temper *is* very disagreeable, but——" began her sister.

"My dear Isabel, we need not discuss Bertrand Oliver's temper just now," said her mother. "They had a slight accident with their boat, Mr. Alleyne," she explained, turning to the Vicar; "it is scarcely plain *how* it happened. Isabel fell into the water and Percy jumped in to try and save her, but he cannot swim, and had to cling to the boat. Some man, who happened to be not far off upon the bank, swam out and brought her ashore. Fortunately she is none the worse for her dip; but Percy is in bed, although we do not fear any serious result. His nerves seemed a little shaken, and Dr. Adams thought he must take some quiet rest to-day."

"I am glad to find there is nothing serious likely to follow," replied Mr. Alleyne. "I am very fond of rowing,

but it really requires a good deal of skill to manage a small boat, especially if some of the occupants are lively young ladies."

"Oh! we were quite still, I assure you," exclaimed Dora. "It was Bertrand——"

"Dora!" said her mother in a warning voice.

Mr. Stanley had a suspicion that the "slight accident" had taken place on Sunday, and wishing to bring it out for the Vicar's information, he remarked quietly, "Rather a dull morning for the river."

"Oh, it was *yesterday* evening," volunteered the irrepressible Dora.

"Dora, my love," said Mrs. Tyrrell, with heightened colour and warning gravity of tone, "just relieve your sister of that lapful of flowers, and take them to the library until they are wanted."

Dora was silenced, but Isabel took up the theme by remarking, "If we had been with Sylvia yesterday evening *I* should not have met with such a dip."

"Or if you had been in church," suggested Mr. Stanley.

"We have not been in the habit of attending church in the evening," said Mrs. Tyrrell, with a slight haughtiness in her voice. "Although *why* we do not, I am sure could not be explained. I fear we should find it rather warm this weather."

"The church *is* extremely warm," said Mr. Alleyne; "but we are hoping to get it better ventilated, and indeed renovated altogether. Then we shall hope to induce many to join us in the evening service."

Mrs. Tyrrell safely acquiesced in this hope—the evil day was afar off.

"Had we known of the peril your son and daughter had been in," said Mr. Stanley, "I am sure we should have called to inquire after their health, but we did not; and our visit this morning is mainly to Miss Tyrrell to advise as to the possibility of allowing any other children than those attending the Sunday-evening school to join the Band of Hope."

"I fear I am not at all competent to give an opinion in the matter," replied Sylvia; "especially as I was not present on Wednesday at the first meeting."

"Perhaps Mrs. Tyrrell can help us," he suggested.

"I fear it is still more useless to apply to me," replied Mrs. Tyrrell, "for I have never been into a *Sunday* school, much less a *Ragged* school."

"Indeed! Have you really never been into—our National schools for instance?" inquired the Vicar.

"Never," she answered. "We live some distance from them, you see, and—well—there is so much to do for one's five sons and daughters at home, and so many engagements abroad, that one seems to have but little time to bestow on such things."

Mr. Alleyne bowed in silence as the thought passed through his mind, that Mrs. Tyrrell, with five sons and daughters, had more than five servants to assist her, while many who gave their time on Sundays to the Schools had perhaps only one or two servants, and some even had to rise early and do their own work at home before going

forth to the occupation they most loved. Ah ! there was the magic difference. Love was the ingredient that gave zest to all the actions of those whose work was efficient and acceptable.

"It is not," continued the Vicar, after a pause, "that we wish to coerce anyone, either parents or children; but there is a large number of the latter who would no doubt crowd into the hall, if they thought there was any amusement going on, or any benefit in the way of cake or oranges to be had, who would never come for any other purpose."

"It is more than probable that such would be the result," replied Mrs. Tyrrell. "Sylvia was telling me something about the object of the—Band of Hope, I think she called it. I'm sure we shall be most happy to do our part in the way of subscribing for refreshments when you wish to give the children a treat."

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Stanley. "Our present proposal is to have a meeting every week. We hope to teach the children to sing, and to give them instruction by means of easy lectures on various subjects. Once a month we should try to add some amusement, such as the magic lantern or music, and once a-quarter we should invite them to a substantial tea."

"How delightful!" exclaimed Sylvia, whose experience in the squalid neighbourhood where the hall stood had shown her that the children were quite unused to privileges of the kind described. "They will fully appreciate the quarterly meetings, if they do not any of the others."

"You will see from this," said Mr. Alleyne, "that it is

quite necessary to place a boundary somewhere; so we think it will be better to allow only such children who are regularly enrolled as scholars to hold the cards which entitle them to all these privileges. There will be plenty of public meetings which all may attend."

"No doubt it would be the best plan," replied Sylvia; and *yet* I feel sorry for *one* child."

"Who is that, may I inquire?" said Mr. Stanley.

"That strange little creature who was in my class yesterday-week. I feel sure she is very different to the other children. She can read well, and has a very intelligent countenance, but looks pale and ill."

"But why are you sorry about her?"

"Oh! she was absent yesterday, you know; and the girl who brought her—Matilda Smykes, I think, is her name—told me that she was not coming again on Sunday evenings; she could not say why."

"The only thing to be done in that case," remarked the Vicar, "would be for you to call at the house, and, if possible, persuade her parents to let her continue to come on Sunday evenings."

"Would that be quite safe?" asked Mrs. Tyrrell anxiously.

"Oh, yes; quite safe," said Mr. Stanley. "Any one connected with the Hall may pass through without the slightest fear. Although the people are so very low, they are not quite bereft of good feeling towards those who are trying to raise them. I suppose the worst they would do for us is to give us a nickname. I have heard the boys

talking of "old Stanley," and Mr. Smith, the secretary and librarian, they call "Mumbles,"—I presume on account of the poor fellow being *minus* a tooth and rather nervous and faint in the voice when he has to read anything. And you also have a nickname, Miss Tyrrell."

"Have I really? What can it be?"

"Not a bad one—'The *H*angel.'"

The announcement of Sylvia's nickname produced a good laugh; and Dora, who had returned to the drawing-room, remarked as it subsided—

"Sylvia's the *H*angel at home as well. If she had been with us yesterday evening, we should not have got into any trouble."

After a little further conversation, the two gentlemen took their leave, Sylvia having promised to visit May. Isabel also begged to accompany her, as Mrs. Croft could not be spared.

So on Wednesday morning they went. May let them in, wondering much what could have brought such grand and beautiful ladies to see her; but her eyes were attracted, and fixed upon Isabel almost instantly. At first she could not think where she had seen that lovely golden hair and sweet face. Then Sunday evening's scene came back to her, and she remembered how this very lady had been nearly drowned, and brought safely ashore by *her* father. Then the fact forced itself upon her that she was the sister of the "angel," for they were dressed alike. While all this flashed through May's mind, her face assumed the strange dreamy look that Sylvia had noticed at first. As for Isabel, she

would have been inclined to resent what she considered a very rude stare, had not May withdrawn her gaze as Sylvia's voice recalled her.

"I have heard that you are not coming to school any more on Sunday evenings. I thought, perhaps, I could persuade your mother to let you come."

"I haven't a mother," answered the child.

"Poor little thing," said Sylvia. "How long have you lost her?"

"I don't know,—a long while. I believe I was a baby when she died."

"And who takes care of you?"

"My father," said May, dropping her eyes and colouring. This was a tender point, and she hoped she would not have to say any more; but Sylvia went on, "Then you will ask your father to let you come, will you not?"

"I can come if I like without asking him," replied May.

"Then surely you will? I should so like you to. Besides, unless you come on Sundays, you will not be able to be a member of the Band of Hope."

"Oh, but I am!" exclaimed May brightening. "I have the card. Mr. Stanley gave it me, and wrote my name upon it."

"I am afraid, then, you will have to return it; for the rule is, that only those who come on Sunday evenings can hold a card admitting them to all entertainments and other privileges. But if your father would let you come, why cannot you?"

Unnoticed by the ladies, Tilly Smykes had slipped in.

Curiosity had led her to follow them, and finding the door ajar, she had stood just inside the room, partially hidden by an old coat that depended from a peg close by. She now startled them all by coming farther in and saying, "*I* can tell yer why she wont come a Sunday night. If she did, her father would go and git drunk; but if she stays in, he don't. Ain't that it, May?"

"Oh, Tilly, how unkind you are!" cried May, covering her face with her hands.

"Am I though? Yer didn't say that when I took yer to school a Sunday; nor yet to the meetin' a Wedingsday."

"I didn't mean that, Tilly; but please don't tell anything about father."

"Whew!" answered Tilly, with a toss of her head. "*I* shouldn't a' thought nobody wanted no telling."

"You are right, Matilda," said Sylvia. "We do not want to be told anything more than little May wishes us to know."

Miss Smykes had not intended her remark to be taken in that way, and looked rather confused. May came to the rescue.

"Tilly's *very* good to me indeed; she did not mean to say anything unkind, I'm sure."

Tilly, thus encouraged, came forward another step and said—

"And yer father's very good to yer, ain't he, May? He never beats yer as mine do me, eh?"

"No, indeed," replied May. "But *your* father only does that when he's ——."

"Oh, go on, May; *I* don't mind yer tellin' as my dad gets drunk, and mother too."

"Have *you* joined the Band of Hope?" inquired Sylvia.

"Not I."

"Will you not? You might persuade *your* parents to become sober."

Tilly laughed as near a little roar as she dared: "They wouldn't care for me if I *did* jine it, and I should lose my share."

"But surely *you* do not take anything of that sort," said Isabel, surveying Tilly with surprise.

"Not much, I don't," she replied. "They wants too much theirselves. There's mother a callin' of me!" she added, as she made a dart to the door and disappeared. The truth is, she was beginning to feel herself in an awkward position, and so escaped. They were all glad when she went, and Isabel remarked that she thought she was a very ill-behaved girl; and May defended her by saying, "she did'nt know any better, and had taught her to mend her father's socks."

"That's strange," said Sylvia. "Her own dress is most untidy, and she had *no* stockings on."

May did not feel at liberty to divulge what Tilly had confided to her on that subject—not even to the "angel"—and Sylvia went on: "I am very sorry, dear, but I am afraid I must give your card back to-night; will you let me have it?"

May fetched it, saying as she gave it up: "Then I mustn't come to the meeting to-night."

"Oh, yes, you may come to-night, because it is to be a

public meeting. You can always attend those without a card; but this would admit you also to the lectures and amusements, and the quarterly tea-meetings. If those were public, you see, there would be such crowds."

"Yes, I understand," answered May, looking far older than her size warranted. "But if I can't go to those and have to give up my card, I need not drink beer again, need I?"

"Certainly not, my dear," replied Sylvia, smiling. "But I should think that at *your* age you have not had much *beer?*"

"No, not much; but isn't it better that people should not drink any?—not take a single drop, you know?"

"Decidedly. If they take too much it is *quite* right that they should go without altogether."

"But they never *could* take too much if they never tasted a single drop," argued the child. "And if they take *any*, they may take too much some time, mayn't they?"

"Perhaps so," said Sylvia. "And perhaps also, you may some day be able to come to school on Sunday evenings, and then you can have your card again. We must go now and say good-bye for the present. Would you like to have this?" she continued, taking a half-crown from her purse and putting it into May's hand.

"Oh, no! Thank you," she exclaimed, putting it back.

"Why not?"

"I am sure my father would not let me have it."

"Do you mean that he would take it away from you?"

"Oh, no! But he would not like me to *take* it."

"Then I will not ask you to do so," answered Sylvia.

As soon as the two sisters got beyond the crowded neighbourhood, and could converse freely, Isabel said; "Do you know, Sylvia, what that child said just now is right. I *do* think people ought not to drink wine and other things that intoxicate at all. As she says, they *might* take too much sometime if not at first. *I* should like to sign the pledge."

"I am so glad and thankful to hear you say so," replied her sister. "I have been longing to do the same thing, but I felt as if I couldn't very well go against everybody at home. But if there are two of us—'Union is strength,' you know."

"I knew you wanted to sign," answered Isabel. "But I can tell you a secret that will make you wish to do so still more."

"What is that Isabel?"

"I believe it was *brandy* that sent me into the Thames on Sunday evening, and *might* have cost me my life."

"*Brandy!*" what can you mean?"

"Why Gerald had a 'pocket pistol,' as he calls it. He took some brandy to keep out the cold."

"Oh, Isabel, are you sure?"

"My dear, I saw him drink it, and Bertrand Oliver too. He offered it to Percy, but he would not touch a drop, which made Gerald very angry. But I think it was the brandy and not Percy's refusal that made him so wild and frightened me so that I started up. I know it was very foolish of me; it would have been all right if I had sat still. I cannot bear to think of it; my want of presence

of mind might have been the death of Percy. Oh, what should I have done if we had lost him in his attempt to save me!"

"It would have been dreadful indeed; but do not dwell upon it, dear, it is all right now. We ought to be very thankful that somebody was at hand to rescue you. I *should* like to know who that strange man was."

"And yet," Isabel went on, "it would seem better almost to have lost a brother that way—it would have been a nobler end—than to lose one by brandy-drinking."

"Yes, indeed!" replied Sylvia, earnestly. "I wonder if Gerald drinks more than he ought when he is away from home. The pocket pistol has a very suspicious look."

"I fear he is not so careful as he ought to be," said Isabel, "from hints dropped by Percy; but, of course, *he* would not betray him to papa, it would make him so angry. And yet papa might think it very silly of us to sign the pledge, and mamma seems to think it proper for vulgar people and for them only."

"We must bear that, dear Isabel, and opposition, if not derision, from other quarters also; but it is clearly our duty, in spite of all that, to give up taking wine, if only for Gerald's sake."

"Yes, for Gerald's sake," echoed Isabel.

The sisters agreed that dinner-time would afford the most fitting opportunity for the avowal of their newly-formed resolve. So when the wine was offered they both refused, and took water instead.

"Shall I or shall I not?" said Gerald, with pretended

hesitation. "If I *do*, I shall seem to reflect upon the wisdom of those who do not; and if I do *not*, I shall run counter to my own convictions, not to mention such every-day commodities as inclinations, besides appearing to vote with the miserable minority, which is always a conspicuous and offensive thing to do. One should try and be civil, and go with the crowd."

Percy filled his tumbler with water, at which Dora laughed and exclaimed, "Now, where are you, Gerald? Four to one. How about your 'miserable minority?'"

"We do not reckon babies of fifteen, if you are including yourself, my child; and if not, I cannot do better than follow in the footsteps of my most excellent parents—port, if you please, Tomkins."

"What are you talking about?" said his father, glancing up from his plate.

"Only the crushing fact that the majority of your hitherto dutiful children have turned "*teetotal*," said Gerald.

"Nonsense," replied Mr. Tyrrell, as his eyes rested upon the four tumblers of water; "their taking water upon one occasion does not prove that fact."

"But if we take water always it will," laughed Sylvia.

"Yes; but you will not do that, I presume."

"We wish to do so," she answered. "We do not take anything now but a little wine sometimes, so may as well give it up; and as I shall be engaged in the Band of Hope, I can scarcely take myself what I advise others to abstain from."

"Worthy occupation," said Gerald, as Tomkins refilled

his glass. "If you should fail of an advocate at any time, Percy Tyrrell, Esquire of Fernleigh Hall, might be solicited to fill the vacancy."

"I might do worse than that," said Percy.

"Talking of advocates," said Isabel, "the little girl we were visiting this morning made a remark that convinced me at once. Where the Vicar himself failed, this child-advocate succeeded. She was simple enough, but had evidently grasped the truth."

"What was the remark?" asked Percy.

"She said that people should not taste a single drop of intoxicating drink. She didn't use that long word though, but that's what she meant; and added very truly, that if they never took a drop, they could never take too much."

"Very good and proper for people in her position," said Mrs. Tyrrell, who had kept silence up to this point—she hated discussion of any kind; "but quite unnecessary for us. Still, if the girls like to drink water, it cannot matter to anybody. Is the child you spoke of, Isabel, the one you asked me to give you a dress of Dora's for?"

"Yes, mamma. She is really a very intelligent child, but she stared at me so when I first went in, that I was prepared to dislike her very much. She had on the queerest frock you ever saw—very old of course; but it had evidently been washed by some novice in laundry work; it was as stiff as paper, and looked as though the blue-bag had been squeezed over it."

"Had it a sort of mottled appearance?" asked Mr. Tyrrell.

"Exactly," said Sylvia; "and she is not only an intelligent child, but reads well, fluently, compared with the others in the Sunday-evening school. Poor little May, I am sorry she cannot come to the school any more."

"May! is that her name?" inquired Mr. Tyrrell, pausing and waiting with an earnest look upon his face.

"Yes, May; May Lester."

"That's it, then!" he exclaimed; "I thought it was when you said she was dressed in that peculiar frock."

"Thought it was what?" asked his wife in some surprise.

"Why, it must have been her father who saved Isabel's life on Sunday. I couldn't get him to take a penny for what he did, and I watched him after he went through the bushes, and there I saw that child, I feel sure. She called him 'father,' and he called her 'May,' and she had on the very dress you describe. It was such a queer affair that the most cursory observer could not fail to recognise it again."

"That accounts for her staring at you so," said Sylvia to her sister; "and another mark of identity, I think, is that she most decidedly rejected a half-crown I offered her to-day."

"She's her father's child by *that* token," said Mr. Tyrrell. "I never saw anybody so poor as he so resolutely refuse what *I* should have thought would be a great boon to him. Why, I offered the man a five-pound note. Five hundred wouldn't have been too much for what he did, but he rejected it as firmly as if he were a rich man whom I was insulting with the offer of charity. I'm sorry to say he bore unmis-

takeable signs of drinking too much, but he spoke as well as I do, and his manners were not those of a working man. There is some great secret about him and his child."

"I am afraid a very common one," said Sylvia gravely. "There is no doubt, from what we heard to-day, that Drink is the cause of the poverty and unhappiness of that man and his poor little girl. It is for such as these that the Vicar and Mr. Stanley have established the Band of Hope, with the desire that some may be led by the example of their children to give up entirely that which is so fatal to their well-being."

CHAPTER VII.

FALSE FRIENDS AND TRUE.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—1 Cor. x. 11.

THE "Angel's" visit filled May with feverish excitement for the rest of the day. She was anxiously watching from the door when her father came home to his tea, and with flushed face and her dark eyes glittering, she was not long in relating all that took place in the morning, suppressing only the matter of the card. Her father, as he watched and listened to her, thought she was growing quite beautiful after all—he had always rather pitied her on account of her appearance—but as she rattled on excitedly, so very rare an occurrence for her, with her funny little, old-fashioned ways, he could only admire and love and wish the same old wish that she were in her proper sphere, side by side as to social position with the elegant visitors she had been describing.

"And you did not tell the young lady that you knew anything about Sunday night?"

"I never told her a single word about it. The other one—the Angel you know—wanted me to have half-a-crown, but I didn't like to; I thought you wouldn't let me."

"I'm very glad you refused it, May. We don't want people to bestow charity upon us just yet, do we?"

"No, father. It *would* have got something nice for your tea, though."

"And yours too for the matter of that. But see—here's a half-crown; you shall have this all for yourrelf. Buy what you like with it."

May took the coin, and looking at it a little thoughtfully, said: "I don't know what I could buy—I know what I should like."

"Well, May, what?"

"I should like one of the hymn books they use at the school. It would have in it about the river, The Beautiful River. I could get that to-night, but it is only a penny."

"You can't change a half-crown for that—here's a penny for a hymn book. Couldn't you get a frock from the place where the girl next door gets hers?"

"Oh, yes! And Tilly could go with me to choose it; but I can't to-night. I am going to the Hall, and I'd rather get the book, you see; for if I don't, I can't till next Wednesday, and perhaps not then; and I can get my frock to-morrow. You must mind my half-crown for me; there's no where to put it here, and there's no pocket in this frock."

"May!" said her father after a pause, "I think we shall have to go away from this place."

"'Tisn't a nice place, is it, father? I shouldn't mind, only I should never see the 'Angel' and Tilly again."

"You might, some day; but now I don't want to see them again, and I'd rather they should not see me. It's very awkward to have money offered like that. I think I'll take a look round in another neighbourhood this evening; we pay dearly enough for these old sticks, perhaps I could find something better for the same money."

"Then you'd not be obliged to go to 'The Crown.' Would you, father?"

"I don't know, May; it might be too far away. But there are plenty of 'Crowns.'"

"Are there?" said May, with a disappointed look on her face.

"Oh yes; but I expect you would like them all to be turned into *half-crowns*—wouldn't you?"

"That couldn't be—could it?"

"No, I expect not. I'm afraid it's the other way round. But I've been thinking, dear, that when we get away from here, if we can find a place with a cupboard and a lock on the door, I'll buy a money-box, and you shall take care of it, and I will try to bring home more money than I do now—to buy you clothes, you know, and other things. Why, May, you ought to be living in a house better than the 'Angel's.'"

"I know, I remember," sighed May.

"You can't remember much about it," replied her father. "You've had too much trouble, poor little thing; I wonder you don't hate your father."

"Oh, father! I love you dearly—*dearly*," she repeated, hugging him; "I wish poor Tilly had such a good one."

"Now I'll be off," he said; "and mind you take care of yourself, and go to bed early if I'm not in."

So, with a stout resolve—how many such had Lester made before!—that he would go straight *by* "The Crown" on his way and not go in, he set off. But alas! the wily monster that had been his ruin was not going to let him off so easily.

The pale-coloured sparkling liquors, in their handsome bottles, looked unusually attractive, standing tier above tier in the window. It was of no use for him to turn his steps in any other direction, for at every corner he would be assailed by the same fascinating display; if not at "The Crown," it might be at "The Rose and Crown," or "The Crown and Sceptre," "The Crown and Mitre," or "The Crown and Keys."

There, too, upon the step, stood the jovial master of the establishment in his shirt sleeves, and smoking a fragrant cigar.

"Good evening, Jim."

How the salutation grated on Lester's ear! This low, bloated fellow to call him by a nickname that none of his own friends would have thought of using to him.

"Good evening," he replied, with another step forward.

"You're coming in?"

"I think not, this evening; I am on important business."

"The greater reason why you should take a little some-

thing to keep you up. Come, you'll find one or two pals here already."

Seeing that his words caused Lester to hesitate, this considerate Boniface added in a lower tone—

"And there's that little score; perhaps you have forgotten. It doesn't matter, you know, only you asked me always to remind you. You're such excellent company, you see; so generous!"

"How much is it?" asked the victim.

"Only a trifle, I believe, not *more* than two-and-six; step in and I'll tell you."

Lester stepped in, and having laid poor May's half-crown on the counter, presently received *twopence* in change! Even now his better nature strove to turn him towards the door, to escape from the chain the demon was throwing about his feet. Boniface poured out a glass of something sparkling, and handing it to Lester, exclaimed cheerily, tossing the half-crown into the till—

"That's the stuff to make a man of you!"

The temptation was too strong for one so weak. Lester raised the glass to his lips, and in another moment had swallowed the fiery dose; and the demon, with a grim chuckle, tightened his knots and drew him easily into the tap-room, from whence he did not issue forth until, having been aroused from his drunken sleep upon one of the settles, he was shown into the street by the obliging barman.

Alas, for the quiet home in the better neighbourhood that May had pictured to herself over and over again that evening! Even at the meeting she could not fix her

thoughts on anything. Various scenes—past realities and dreams of the future—mixed themselves up with the hymns and addresses.

Sylvia Tyrrell was there; May saw that she entered the Hall very late, and knew by the sound of wheels outside that she had come in a cab. After the meeting was over, she spoke kindly to her, but noticed a strange flush upon her face, and asked her if she was well.

"Oh, yes," May said, "very well—and see, I have a hymn-book all my own."

"I am glad of that; but where is your friend Matilda?"

"She had to go somewhere for her mother," replied May. "She said she would be here in time to take me home, but she isn't here. It does not matter though, I can go alone."

"There are plenty of girls here who can take care of you."

"Oh! I don't know any of them," answered May, with quite a shrinking in her manner.

"Well," answered Sylvia, "you shall walk by Mrs. Croft and me. It is getting rather late for you."

So May trotted along by the side of her protectors, and feeling very tired, was glad to arrive at her home—a dark little home it looked to all of them.

"Good-bye," said Sylvia; "you're not afraid, are you?"

"No; there's a candle in the cupboard, and I can soon get a light."

"We shall come and see you again very soon," Sylvia went on.

"Oh, please don't!" exclaimed May, excitedly. "Father

said he didn't want to see you, and—and he's gone to look for a place where we can be quiet and people won't find us."

"How very extraordinary!" said Mrs. Croft, as they passed away, "I never heard of anything so rude."

"I don't think she meant it rudely," answered Sylvia; "I fear she is not well; and there is no doubt some mystery about her father, and that accounts for his wanting to go away from here. I wonder what it is. If they go away we shall never know. If he is the man who saved Isabel, and I believe he is, we ought to do something for the child, if he won't let us do it for him."

"What a pity you didn't ask her, Miss!" remarked Mrs. Croft.

"I thought it would want a lot of explanation, especially if it turned out to be a case of mistaken identity, and we were all in a hurry. I must come again soon to bring her some things, and it is hardly likely they will leave to-morrow."

When May lighted the candle her hands trembled so that she could hardly accomplish the task, and, when it was done, she found that she could not see anything distinctly. She felt sick and giddy, and disappointed at not finding her father at home. She was so ill that she thought it best to go to bed. So she crept up in the dark—she could not hold the bottle with the candle in it—and lying down, intended to listen as usual until her father came in. But she soon dropped into a restless slumber, and the inebriate entered his wretched home at midnight unheard. When he

awoke in the morning he found himself unusually cramped and sore, and terribly mixed up with the legs of the table.

Having slowly assumed a more natural posture, he became aware that no loving hand had thrust a pillow under his head nor covered him up with quilt or blanket. And his reflections on the subject, as he presently lighted the fire and prepared his breakfast, were not pleasant.

It was perhaps after all as he feared: May was tired of him. *That* was not to be wondered at; everybody else had got tired of him; he was tired of himself,—*how* tired, none but he could tell. Ah! if only he could do with less of the stuff that the publican had said would make a man of him, perhaps his child would love him again. Resolves had ever proved futile, and yet he made another to be more careful in the future and not exceed the bounds of moderation.

Lester was startled in the midst of his reflections by hearing May's voice. She was speaking and then moaning, and her father hastened up, finding she gave him no answer when he called to her. She was tossing from side to side, with her eyes extended, and breathing heavily.

"Oh, May! what is the matter?" he cried, bending over her as he knelt on the floor beside her mattress.

She moaned and muttered incoherently for a moment, and then springing up, she exclaimed, "I did it for him, and then he was angry with me. I won't drink it! I *won't!* I never will; I gave it up for him. Oh, father, don't be so angry, I love you dearly."

She fell back, and Lester put his arms about her and

kissed her, startled to find that her face and hands were scorching.

"What is it, dear? Don't you know me?"

"He'll never do it," she went on, making no response to his question. "Oh, don't let him drown! He can't get out of the river. The beautiful—the beautiful——" Then she closed her eyes and moaned as if in pain, but only to open them again almost instantly, and continue her ravings. "He mustn't have a single drop—not a single, single——. Oh, father, don't do it again. It's a deep, deep, dreadful—beautiful. It's all poison! Don't have a single drop."

There was no doubt in her father's mind that her reference to his being angry with her was founded upon what had taken place at the dinner table on the previous Sunday, and the other scenes of that day appeared vividly before him. Remorse that he should, even for a moment, have appeared cold towards her, made him almost wild, as he clasped her again in his arms, and exclaimed, "Oh May! darling child, speak to me. Say you have forgiven me for my unkind thought of you. I know how you love me."

But May only answered with incoherent sentences and painful moanings. "I gave it up for him," and "He mustn't have a single drop," being most frequently repeated. Lester at last awoke to the fact that his child was very, very ill, and he promptly acted upon his first impulse, to rush off to the nearest doctor. This gentleman was not yet up; and upon his servant describing the early visitor's appearance, he said: "Tell him he'd better go to the parish doctor; *I* can't be bothered with such people."

"And where shall I find the parish doctor?" asked Lester, upon the reception of the first part of the message—the servant was wise enough to suppress the latter half of it.

"In Cumberland Street," she said, "about half-a-mile away."

He rushed off again, vexed at having to prolong his absence from the child, and presently found the object of his search. The doctor had just returned from a visit to some patient at the other end of the parish, to whom he had been summoned at midnight, and was now resting in his surgery, indulging in an impromptu cup of tea. He was very tired, but listened to the case with kind attention, and taking down his hat again, started at once with Lester. When they arrived, they found May still repeating over the same sentences, which seemed burning themselves into the heart of her father.

"She is dangerously ill," said the doctor, after examining her. "This is the result of severe cold and some extraordinary excitement. Have you any one here who can look after her?"

"No one," replied Lester. "I would rather do it myself; but I must go to my work. What can I do?"

His agony of mind was intensified by every word uttered by the doctor. "Severe cold," "extraordinary excitement." How well he knew what had produced both! Rain dripping through a rotten roof upon the bed of a tender child was likely to produce cold, so also was such work as having to descend at all hours of the night to cover up a tipsy father. The excitement of Sunday

evening, too, was enough to have upset stronger nerves than hers. "No one to look after her!" Ah! whose fault was that?

"I can send you a nurse from the Union in an hour or two, if you can stay at home till then."

"I must, I must!"

"Well, then, you could lay some cloths dipped in cold vinegar and water upon her forehead, and keep her as quiet as possible, and well covered up until I can send a soothing draught."

"I am quite sure there is no vinegar in the house," said Lester, diving into pocket after pocket, as though he expected to find some stowed away there.

"And unfortunately I have not any money left."

Such a confession would not have fallen from his lips had not his extreme grief and repentant remorse wrung it from him.

"You couldn't send for it if you had the money either," suggested the Doctor. "But perhaps you could borrow a little?"

Lester looked doubtfully and shook his head.

"Mother's got a drop o' winegar. I 'spect she'd give it yer," said a voice on the ladder. They turned and saw the shaggy head of Tilly Smykes, who was peering up at May. The unusual noises in Lester's house, and the early arrival of the Doctor, had aroused her, and she had cautiously stolen in to find out "wot was up."

"Run off and get it, my good girl," said the Doctor. "If she is a neighbour of yours," he continued, turning to

Lester, "she could probably look after the child for a time. There will be nothing to fear. When she has taken a dose of what I will send for her, she will be much more quiet."

"I must go to my employment," said the father with a sorrowful look at May. "She must have food, and my last week's earnings are gone, *all* gone."

"Excuse me," said the Doctor, who knew Lester well by sight. "But I fear you have *wasted* them. I have often seen you coming home from 'The Crown' in the night."

"It's quite true," he answered; "I'm a fool. I've drunk them, and let others drink them too. It can't be helped now. I must go and work for more."

"And *do* try and bring them home, that that poor child may have the nourishment necessary, as well as a few comforts which would help her on wonderfully," said the Doctor kindly, as he made his way down the rickety steps.

The first thing that suggested itself to Lester's mind on the score of "comforts" was to take May in his arms and carry her down to his bed, which was a trifle more decent in appearance than the poor little mattress in the loft. She was greatly exhausted by her ravings and tossings, although the fever was fed by the excitement of her brain, and she was still almost too strong for him; but he succeeded at last, just as Tilly re-appeared with the "drop o' winegar" in a broken cup.

"What shall we do for a cloth?" said Lester, surveying the room helplessly.

"I know!" exclaimed Tilly. "May's *h*old pinnyfore. 'Taint nothink but 'oles."

At any other time he would have been amused at the suggestion of using a cloth that was "nothink but 'oles," but as it was, he clutched thankfully at the rag, tore it up, and dipping it in the vinegar and water prepared by Tilly, laid it tenderly on May's brow.

"Could you stay with her a little while?" he asked, "just until the nurse comes."

"I'll stay if yer like; but s'pose she comes to and wants summat to eat or drink, wot'll I give her?"

"I don't know. I am afraid there is nothing fit for her to eat or drink in the house just now,—nothing but bread and butter. But I'm going to see if I can get some money."

"There's lots o' money gone *somewhere,*" remarked Miss Smykes, with a toss of her shaggy head. "Gorn arter my dad's, I s'pect."

Lester was too much occupied with his own reflections to answer. A bright thought had struck him, and he immediately strode away to act upon it. Instead of going straight to his work, he hurried off in the direction of "The Crown." He there found the barman polishing the handles of the beer-engines, and through the half-open door beyond he could see the publican and his family seated at the well-spread breakfast table.

In answer to the "Wanted, sir" of the man, the master stepped out to speak to Lester.

"Good morning, Jim. You're an early bird—we're all early birds here you see. What sort of a worm would *you* like?" he said, placing his hand upon a bottle of whisky.

"I don't want anything of that sort," said Lester gravely. "My child is dangerously ill, and as you know, I spent my last penny here last night."

"Oh, indeed! Did you now, really?" replied the publican, putting his hands down deep in his pockets and chinking some loose coins that lay there. "Well you see, that's not *my* affair, I can't tell how many pennies a man has got in his pockets. I treat my customers as a gentleman ought; when they cease the ready money, I run them up a little score. Of course, I don't let it stand long—my customers wouldn't like it if I did. They like to be treated as gentlemen, and pay their debts sharp. You, for instance, ran up a trifling matter of five shillings last night."

"How is that? I thought I'd cleared it."

"Well, so you did, and made another."

"I'm sorry it is so, but you'll be paid. You've had my earnings, nearly all of them, for the last three months. I'm in a great hurry; will you oblige me with the loan of a half-crown?"

"I'm not in the habit of *lending* to my customers," replied the publican coolly; "there would be no end to it, you see. I don't mind the score; but *loans*, no thank you. And besides, if even I broke the rule for *you*, it would make it seven-and-six. I wouldn't have minded considering the matter if it had been a *clear* half-crown."

"It's a special case," urged Lester, "and you know I have always paid you."

"Can't help it," answered his creditor. "I've got a wife and family to support, and heavy rent and taxes to pay, and

I make it a rule to keep my money in my pocket as long as I can. I don't mind loaning a little in liquor, but could'nt do it in hard cash, you see."

He turned whistling into the cosy bar parlour and shut the door, and Lester turned sadly towards the street, not heeding the barman, who had darted outside as he crossed the step. "I want you to have this shilling," he said hastily, pressing the coin into Lester's hand. "I'm so awful sorry that little gal is so bad; she's a real little lady, bless her; she was always so perlite to me when I fetched the Sunday beer, and I hope she'll get better soon."

"I don't like to take this from *you*," said Lester looking and *feeling* greatly astonished.

"You must, you must! It won't go far. I wish it was more. I don't want it. My mother's a widder; but she takes in washing, and I hope some day I shall get a business of my own; but although I'm savin' up, I shouldn't like to feel stingy, especially when there's illness."

"Thank you very much," said Lester; "I shall hope to return it shortly."

"Don't think of it; you're quite welcome to it," answered the man as he disappeared.

Lester hesitated but a moment, and then moved on. The kindness had overpowered him; but, as the man had said, the shilling would not go far, and he felt it was necessary to make a further effort to increase the sum for present necessities. The only thing left to him now was to hurry on to the coal-yard, hoping, he did not know why, that he might succeed in getting a few shillings of his week's wages

in advance. He had only been at Bardsley's about three months, and he naturally feared lest his application should be refused, and perhaps himself dismissed. He had never spoken to the master and seldom seen him, and therefore had not had the slightest test of his character. But the foreman, who always paid him, was a kind-looking man, and it was to him that Lester intended to make the appeal for a small loan, and did so on arriving at the yard.

After apologising for his late appearance, he stated his errand. The foreman looked at him inquiringly, and then said—

"You'd better go and ask the master; he happens to be here early this morning."

Had he received such a reply under any other circumstances, he might have declined to go, for he purposely avoided contact with people in general, and with his employers in particular; but his necessity was too great, and his misery and remorse too strong, to admit of any second consideration. So he stepped across to the master's office and once more gave utterance to the humiliating confession of his utter poverty, closing with an urgent appeal for a small advance.

Mr. Bardsley narrowly watched him from his first word; and the natural ease of his manner, which dirt and rags could not alter, and the correct phraseology, so unlike the ordinary workmen, impressed him strangely. After a moment's consideration he said—

"It is not a usual thing to do, of course. We might have to make advances daily if it were known that we did

not object to make them. Your case is evidently a pressing one, and, if I mistake not, you have not *always* been under the necessity of earning wages in this way."

"Nor in any way," answered Lester bitterly; "I have no one to blame but myself that I have to earn wages now."

"I know you are in haste to get back," said the coal merchant; "I will advance you what you wish of this week's money."

"A few shillings will suffice—five, if you like."

"Take ten; you will need them, and I will add another five—not as an advance, you know."

"I couldn't take it, indeed," answered Lester, "I ought not to be in this position, and have no right to receive that charity which should only be given to those whom real misfortune has placed in need."

"Well," answered Mr. Bardsley, "I am sorry you look upon my offer of help as 'charity,' but perhaps I might do the same were I in your circumstances. I won't detain you now; and don't hurry back; take the day if you won't take anything else."

"Thank you, that is the greatest boon you could bestow upon me just now."

"And if the little one doesn't get better, and you want any little thing, don't hesitate to let me know. I have children of my own, and can sympathise with any one who has a sick child, even if surrounded by every luxury; but it must be dreadful to *want* under such circumstances. Don't let her *want* for anything."

"Peculiar man, that," continued the coal merchant to his

son after Lester had gone out. "I wonder whether his refusal of the five shillings arose from pride or the proper feeling he attributed it to. I can't make him out at all; I was fairly astonished to hear him speak."

"He's a fine-looking fellow," answered the lad, pausing in the row of figures he was adding. "I've noticed him before, and thought how unlike he was to the other men. Perhaps he's a lord in disguise."

"No, he's not that, I expect; but I can't help thinking I have seen him somewhere years ago. Lester, Lester; I feel certain I know the name."

"There are lots of Lesters in London."

"Ah, but 'tis not London I seem to connect with the name. There was an old family of Lesters in the north. I went to school with one of them. We were great chums, but 'tis more than thirty years ago. I may be wrong, of course, but I shall keep my eye upon him."

"8, 14, 16, 20, 24, 25—2 and a penny—if he ever comes back," said his son; "but you know how often you have made an advance to a fellow and he's never shown up any more."

"'Tis their sin and not mine," answered his father.

Lester hastened back to his home; he had only been away one hour, and yet it seemed ages to him. The nurse had not arrived, but the medicine had, and Tilly was just in the act of holding the cup to May's lips when he entered the room.

"I didn't know when you'd come back, so I was just agoin' to give it to her to make her a bit quiet, as the doctor said."

Lester picked up the empty bottle and read, "One teaspoonful to be given every two hours." "What a good thing I came back at once—you might have poisoned her!"

"Pisoned her! Why I thought 'twor physic," exclaimed Tilly.

"So it is, but not to be taken all at once; she may only have a teaspoonful at a time; it is written on the label,—see here."

"I can't read," said Tilly, with a shake of her head.

With some difficulty they got May to swallow the dose, and very soon she became quieter, although quite unconscious.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRUE REMEDY.

"The mistakes of my life have been many,
The sins of my heart have been more,
And I scarce can see for weeping,
But I'll knock at the open door.

"The mistakes of my life have been many,
And my spirit is sick with sin,
And I scarce can see for weeping,
But the Saviour will let me in."

"ANOTHER pilgrimage?" inquired Gerald Tyrrell of Sylvia, as she came towards the spot where he was lying under the willow tree on the bank.

"And yet another," she replied, laughing.

"To the same shrine?"

"Yes."

"What offering is to be laid upon the altar this time?"

"Grapes. Dora has gone to cut me the best bunch she can find, and I came here—not to see you, of course—but to wait in the shade until she brings them."

"Considerate sister!"

"If you were a considerate brother, you would walk with me and carry them."

"Ah, yes, no doubt. And I should enjoy the progression towards your mystic fane *immensely*, but I fear I should run to oil on the road, and you would be bereft of your choicest relation."

"Then pray stop where you are."

The next moment Dora came running across the lawn with some lovely grapes in a basket, nestling among their fresh green leaves.

"They do look pretty," said Sylvia. "But, Dora, you *should* not run on such a hot day."

"I thought you were in a hurry, my dear, and papa is waiting for you."

"How good of him to come all the way; he said he would meet me on the road."

"Why is the parent going?" asked Gerald lazily, balancing his straw hat on a twig.

"Don't you know?" exclaimed Dora, "papa is going with Sylvia to see if the father of the sick child is really the man who saved Isabel. No one saw him but papa. I mean to notice him."

"And what will result from the identification? If the man would not take compensation at first, he's not likely to do so now."

"Not personally, perhaps," said Sylvia, "but he may let us do something for his child—if she recover, which, however, is doubtful."

MAY'S ILLNESS.

This was Saturday; May had now been ill since Wednesday night, and gave no sign at present of returning to consciousness.

The kind-hearted and indefatigable Tilly had been constant in her attendance upon her little neighbour; although the nurse from the workhouse, a clean and quiet woman, who had been carefully selected by the doctor for this special case, took all the actual nursing, yet Tilly was seldom absent for many minutes together, and proved herself very useful in many ways. She opened the door in answer to Sylvia's tap for the third time that day.

"My gracious! Ain't they just jolly 'uns," she exclaimed, as she took the basket of grapes. Sylvia could hardly refrain from smiling at the rough praise bestowed upon her present, but she was getting used to Tilly's ways and phraseology, and was gratified to find that the girl had a really kind heart beneath the rude exterior in which circumstances had enclosed it.

"You will take care that no one has any of them but May until fresh ones are brought," said Sylvia, adding in a lower tone, "Is her father at home?"

Tilly nodded and pointed to the back room. "He's a settin' agin the bed. Nuss has gone out to fetch in some things."

Miss Tyrrell stepped in silently, beckoning her father to follow. One glance over his daughter's shoulder was sufficient to show Mr. Tyrrell that his surmise had been a correct one; and nodding at her with a pleased smile, he stepped back as noiselessly as he had advanced, and the two

retired to the street, Sylvia taking the opportunity of slipping a shilling into Tilly's hand, which that young lady made no show of refusing, but received with a broad grin of delight.

Lester had no idea that anyone had looked upon him as he sat by May's bed. He was filled with sorrow and remorse, which only grew greater as the hours passed away leaving his child still unconscious, and therefore unable to speak the words of forgiveness his soul craved. With his arms folded across his breast and his eyes fixed upon her face, he watched every movement, only rousing himself to help tenderly when help was needed.

Here he was still sitting late in the evening of the same day when Tilly's head came round the door to announce "The Doctor," adding in a loud whisper, "He've got the parson along of 'im."

Lester had been absorbed in reflections on the past, and the word "*parson*" grated on his ear. The "parson" of his native village had been one of his chief enemies. He had neglected him when he fell; and when by his own efforts he raised himself again, he was the first to entice him beyond the boundary he had placed around himself, and then alluring him to the very edge of the pitfall, not only allowed him to drop in, but left him to flounder out as best he could. "They are all alike, doubtless," was the thought that passed through his mind, as he rose from his chair to make way for the Doctor. Mr. Adams gladly pronounced a favourable verdict upon his little patient. "Less fever and restlessness, to be followed shortly, he

trusted, by a restoring sleep." As he turned towards the door he said, "Mr Alleyne, the Vicar of the parish, is very anxious to make your acqaintance; he came in with me, and is waiting in the other room. Will you allow me to bring him in that you may be introduced to each other?"

Lester hesitated a moment, and then, in spite of his wish to make some return to the Doctor for his evidently extra attention to his child, he said—

"Thank you; I would rather not, I think. I presume he could do her no good; and from my former experience I know he could do me none; so perhaps it will be better for us not to meet."

Mr. Adams was astonished at the cold, almost bitter, answer; but he laid his hand on Lester's arm, and said kindly—

"If I mistake not, my friend, you need a helping hand morally as well as socially. Such help you would obtain from him. You have nothing to fear from your association with so good a man. Come and speak to him."

The thought that this would be the shortest way out of the difficulty prevailed, and Lester stepped into the front room, where Mr. Alleyne stood chatting kindly with Tilly Smykes. One glance at the calm, benign countenance before him dispersed the cloud of prejudice that had over spread Lester's mind. He could see that *this* Vicar was no facsimile of the one he had known ten years ago at Cherryfield; and the Doctor was relieved to notice the change in his manner as he responded to the salutation of the clergy-

man. A few moments' conversation seemed to set him upon a different footing altogether with the two gentlemen to that which one might have thought was the only one such a shabbily-clothed, dirt-begrimed man could occupy. He had been working hard in the coal-yard from six in the morning until noon; but the blackness of his visage could not entirely hide the well-cut features and intelligent brow, and his refined accent and gentlemanly manners came to the surface, and belied the evidence of the ragged clothing, which would have stamped him as a drunken vagabond.

"I will not intrude upon you now," said Mr. Alleyne, "nor, indeed, at any time if you do not wish it;" for he had overheard Lester's remark in the inner room. "I would only say, consider me your friend. I wish to be so. Miss Tyrrell and her father came to me to-day, and it is in accordance with their request that I have called at this rather late hour. Had I known you were in such deep trouble, I should have come to you before."

"Miss Tyrrell?" said Lester, inquiringly.

"The young lady who has been to see your little one to-day. She teaches in the ragged-school. I presume, the acquaintance began there?"

"Her wot brought the jelly and grapes," chimed in Tilly Smykes.

"Ah, yes! I did not know her name. She has overwhelmed us with kind gifts. I cannot make it out, and but for May's illness I could not have accepted them; but it is for her, and she deserves it all, if you did but know."

"I will try and come early next week," said the Vicar.

"In the meantime, if you would like to make a friend of me, and you think there is any way in which I can render you service, be it never so small, come to me. I shall esteem it an honour to be made useful."

That evening Lester dismissed Tilly with many thanks for her kindness, and another shilling in her pocket, and insisted upon the nurse going up to get a night's rest upon May's mattress. He felt that he could not leave the child, especially as there was a hope held out of her returning to consciousness. He wanted to be with her when this should come, if it came at all.

She was so emaciated and colourless that it seemed impossible that she could live; and yet the Doctor had given a hope, and the anxious father tried to rest upon it. All through the night he sat by the bed; and as hour after hour glided by, so glided by again the scenes and experiences of his past life, until he was brought to the moment when, kneeling by May's mattress in the loft, he had listened to her agonised ravings, and the burden of her piteous utterances rang again through his weary bráin. The truth at length began to dawn upon him.

He had heard of "*Teetotallers*" only at "The Crown;" and it needs no explanation that he should have thought they were a set of obstinate and stingy fanatics who would not drink because they grudged the publican an honest living. This was not the fact as pictured to his mind by his own child. *She* had denied herself a little luxury—and how few she had now—not that he should have *more*, certainly, but evidently because she thought it did him

harm, and hoped her refusal to drink might be an example to him.

"Not a single drop!" "He mustn't have a single drop!" This then was the secret of her self-denial. She hoped he would be brought never to touch the smallest possible quantity—*never*, NEVER! No one had ever before suggested such a remedy to him.

Had he not hoped and striven continually during the last ten years of his life to keep rigidly to the small quantity that could do him no harm, and had he not signally failed on nearly every occasion, until here he was, an outcast from his friends and relatives, slaving for a less sum weekly than he used to pay his own coachman, simply that he might waste it as soon as it was earned in rendering him incapable of returning the caresses of his child, unfit to associate with any decent member of society, too poor to supply himself and May with the commonest necessaries of life, and by a mistaken, and at times a tipsy generosity making other men as bad as himself? and for what?

The landlord of "The Crown" had shown him this. Nearly *all* his weekly earnings for the last three months had been dropped into that man's till, and yet he had refused him the loan of a half-crown when his child was apparently lying at the point of death.

"Not touch a single drop!" "Could he ever do this?" As he sat there with all the bitter past before him, and his eyes fixed on the pallid face of his little one, he resolved to *try*. But, had he not tried? Did he not resolve only half-a-week ago that he would not enter "The Crown" that

night, and yet had he not done so, and worse than that, had he not come home in a state of drunken imbecility?

The very *appearance* of the stuff fascinated him, and the *smell* of it produced an unconquerable desire to drink it.

When the first glimmer of morning light came stealing in at the little window, Lester extinguished the candle. He had bent his ear down often during the night to assure himself that May was really breathing; she lay so still, that at times he could hardly persuade himself that she still lived. All night long there had been plenty to prevent him from falling asleep. Noises of every kind, and particularly those emanating from drunken brawls, were plentiful enough in that squalid neighbourhood. But the calm of the early morning fell upon his troubled spirit, and the calm was followed by sleep. His weary head drooped forward upon his breast, and for the first time since Thursday morning he became oblivious of all external things.

For several hours he slept, and then something awakened him partially, and he gradually realised that May's large dark eyes were looking at him. He had fallen asleep with one hand lying near hers, and it was the feeble touch of *her* little hand that had aroused him. The warm rays of the August sun were shining into the room, revealing its poverty, but they also lighted up the little table by the bed, upon which stood a handsome shape of calves' foot jelly and the basket of rich purple grapes which Sylvia had conveyed thither with her own hands.

There followed a moment of deep silence, broken only by the distant chime of church bells, telling that it was the

Sabbath day. Then Lester stooped down and kissed her. "Do you know me, May?" he whispered.

A faint smile and a fainter "Yes" gladdened his heart. He could have caught her up and given her a good hug, but he felt that such a mode of procedure on his part would be very unwise, so he restrained himself and carefully administered a spoonful of the jelly instead.

As the day wore on, there was a marked improvement in the child, and when the doctor came he pronounced her much better, saying that the good nursing and nourishment had been the means of her restoration so far. Mr. Adams was also much pleased at the difference in Lester's appearance, for he had had a thorough wash, and shaken and beaten out as much as possible of the coal dust that filled his clothes; and having been perfectly sober for several days, was beginning to lose the heavy appearance which marks the habitual drunkard. In the afternoon he heard May softly repeating to herself "The beautiful, the beautiful river," and the thought occurred to him that he might find the hymn in the new penny book which he had seen lying about. So he hunted the book over until he found it, and then going to her, he said:

"Would you like me to read to you about 'The beautiful river.'"

"Oh, yes! please do," she answered. So he read—

"Shall we gather at the river
Where bright angel feet have trod;
With its crystal tide for ever
Flowing by the throne of God?

"Yes, we'll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.

"On the margin of the river,
Washing up its silver spray,
We will walk and worship ever,
All the happy, golden day.

"Ere we reach the shining river
Lay we every burden down,
Grace our spirits will deliver,
And provide a robe and crown.

"At the shining of the river,
Mirror of the Saviour's face,
Saints whom death will never sever
Raise their songs of saving grace.

"Soon we'll reach the silver river,
Soon our pilgrimage will cease,
Soon our happy hearts will quiver
With the melody of peace."

May had fallen asleep again before he got quite through, but he sat thinking of the simple words. They had charmed him as no words had lately done; they were not associated to him with any see-saw tune to take away the effect, only the few notes which May had trilled out on the bank of the Thames floated through his head with its refrain. The hymn throughout seemed to present to his mind's eye such a blissful scene of peace and purity and rest, that all else—especially the long experience of the scenes and associations with which he had been acquainted in the haunts of drunkards—passed before him in contrast, and made him feel how entirely unholy and degraded

had been his life. Ah, what a "pilgrimage" had his been! And how had he heaped up the burdens of sin upon his own back until he was now crushed beneath their weight as he sat face to face with his child and with these pure words. Could *he* ever lay "every burden down?" And would *his* hardened, blackened heart ever "quiver, with the melody of peace?"

About six o'clock Tilly appeared, on her way to school. Finding the front room empty, she peered into the back one.

"Come in, Tilly," said Lester; "May is a trifle better, and will know you now."

But Tilly stood transfixed; eyeing him from top to toe, she exclaimed, "Well, I never!"

"Never what?" he inquired.

"Oh! nothink — leastways, nothink pertikler," she answered, but continuing to stare at him.

"What is the matter, Tilly? Isn't my face clean?"

"I should just think it is *so*. Yer do look stunnin', an' no mistake."

Lester couldn't help laughing, but he was thankful for the recognition of his improved appearance from even this poor child,—such a child as, in former years, he would not have taken the trouble to converse with, much less to look upon as the friend of himself and May. Tilly looked half-ashamed at what she had said, for, in spite of the shabby garments, Lester appeared to her as different from the Lester of yesterday as—well, as she felt *herself* to be different,—when her thoughts came back from him. She glanced down at her dress, and then up at him, as she said—

"I thought maybe yer'd like to see what I done with the shillin' yer give me. The '*hangel*' give me one as well. I didn't let mother know nothink about it, 'cos it 'ud soon a-gorn you know where," she said, indicating the action of "tossing off" liquor. "So I goes straight down to ole Molly Jones, her as keeps the stores yer know, and she picked me out this 'ere gownd for hayteenpence. It's a stuff 'un, but Molly she say it'll last a sight longer nor cotting, and won't want no washin'. An' then, this 'ere 'at—well it *wor* a bob, but, as I'd bin a good customer, yer see, and bought the gownd, why, ole Molly, she left me 'ave it for a tanner."

"I'm very glad," replied Lester. "I trust the improvements in us both will not end at this. Come and speak to May."

Tilly stooped down and kissed her, and May's eyes brightened as she too recognised the change.

When the nurse came home from church,—whither she had been at Lester's request, as he preferred being with his child as much as possible,—he took down his hat, and kissing May, told her to go to sleep, as he was going out for a little while.

"To 'The Crown?'" she whispered anxiously.

"No, darling child, not to 'The Crown.' *Never* again to that place, nor to any other of the same sort."

She closed her eyes contentedly, and her father went away. He was not long in finding his way to his destination, which was the Vicar's house. He was shown at once to the study, where Mr. Alleyne was resting after his day's work.

"I am ashamed to come to you at such an hour," he said, as the Vicar rose to shake hands with and place a chair for him. "But you did not mention any particular time, and to-morrow I must face the world again."

"Did I not? I think I said whenever you felt that I could be of any service to you. I rejoice that the moment has arrived so soon."

"I am not sure that you can help me," said Lester; "I have made so many resolves that I *will not* drink too much, and yet I have always failed. I am entering upon the subject somewhat abruptly, but I feel certain you have detected the cause of our poverty, and need not that I should tell you."

"It is, alas! a common—I might say *the* common cause of poverty," replied Mr. Alleyne, "and I can see but one cure for it."

"What is that?"

"*Total* abstinence from every kind of intoxicating drink."

"Ah! no doubt that is what my poor child meant when she was delirious; but I cannot guess by what means she arrived at the solution of a mystery that has puzzled me for years, nor has *that* way out of the difficulty ever been suggested to me by any one."

"I think I can tell you the means by which yonr child arrived at it. She was present at one or two of our juvenile Temperance meetings in the Hall, and would hear there that the remedy for taking too much was to take none."

Lester sat silently for a few moments, and then, as if

taking up the thread of his thoughts aloud, gave the Vicar a brief account of his miserable life during the last ten years—of his attempts and failures in the pursuit of sobriety, of the continual abhorrence in which he had held himself, and of the sweet patience and loving care of his child, which had been the only star which had shed light upon his path.

"So you see," he said, "how weak and foolish I have been; and I fear I could never withstand the many temptations I shall have to take the drink that I saw plainly years ago was the curse of my life. I have come to you hoping to gain the strength which I feel I need."

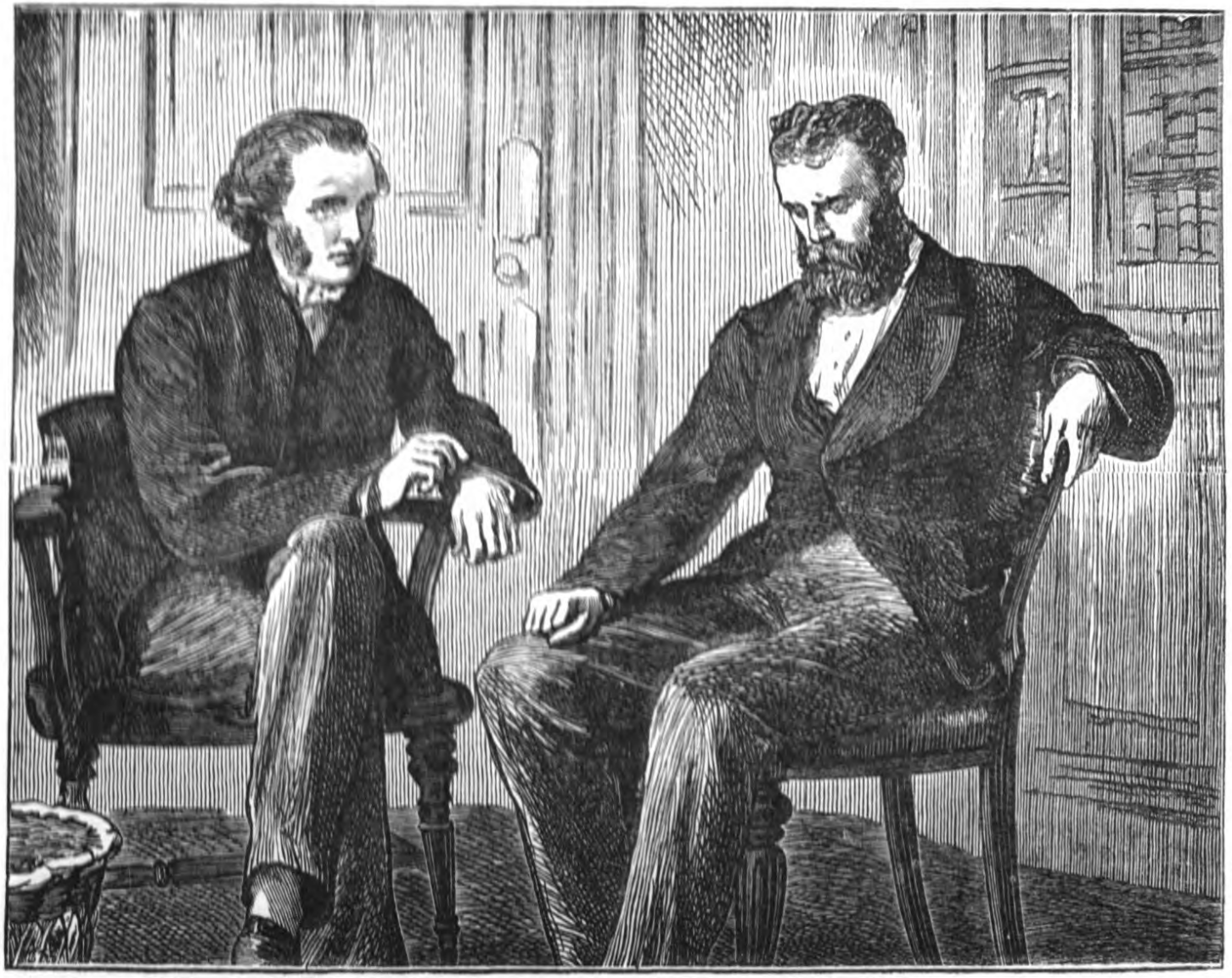
"No man can redeem his brother," replied the Vicar; "and however willing I might be to communicate to you grace to lead a new life and strength to stand firmly in times of temptation, I am only a recipient of such strength and grace myself; it must come from the One source of all blessing, the One who is mighty to save and whose grace is sufficient in every time of weakness. Have you ever asked Him to give you that grace? Have you ever asked Him to save you from sin—to save you from *yourself?*"

"No, never."

"Will you not do so now? You cannot take one step without Him. You dare not go into the old way to-morrow, relying upon anything else. Neither could I or any other Christian; but I can do *all* things through *Christ* who strengtheneth me. Shall we kneel together now and ask Him to give us what we need?"

"Pray *for* me," whispered Lester, as they knelt together

by the table. He had never in his life prayed in any other way than to give in church the appointed responses or to follow the Lord's prayer as led by the minister; he could also recollect that, as a child, he had been taught to *say* a little prayer of some sort, but he had dropped *that* when he went to school; and he felt, as he bowed his head upon his clasped hands, that his had been indeed a prayerless and sinful life. He had now a vague idea that he was about to listen to something out of the prayer-book, and he was greatly astonished when the simple, heartfelt utterances of this Christian pastor fell upon his ear—*so* simple that it might have been his own May's language asking him for some longed-for privilege—and yet with such deep reverence was every word spoken that he felt as he had never felt before. Was *this* to be in the presence of that Lord of all, of whom he had thought so little? Whose name had of late years been only heard by him when used profanely by ribald jesters or awful swearers. He had often before felt sad to think of his past and present condition of life; sad indeed to think of May, neglected and poor; but his sadness had never been the godly sorrow that worketh *repentance.* That sadness, however deep, which would lead a human being to contemplate the termination of his existence by his own hand, would never lead him to cast his sin upon the great Sinbearer, nor teach him to trust in Providence for help and direction. But now, the recollection of the years of his depravity and all the miserable consequences attending them, swept over his spirit like a huge wave and seemed to crush him before the Holy Presence that was



IN THE MINISTER'S STUDY.

revealed to him. He was hardly conscious of the cessation of Mr. Alleyne's voice; but after a moment's silence he heard the words, "Pray, my brother, pray for yourself." And from his heart welled up the petition that fell from his trembling lips, "Lord, save me! Lord, help me!"

When they presently arose from their knees, Lester said—

"I cannot undo the past, but I sincerely trust that the future may prove how deeply I regret it. But *what* if I should fall again by the same temptation that has levelled me before so many times."

"Whenever such temptation assails you," replied the Vicar, "cry again, 'Lord, save me.' You will find that His grace is sufficient for you in every time of distress. Only trust Him—*trust* Him. Having made a full surrender of yourself to Him, leave yourself in His hands; as, for instance, that young lady on Sunday evening left herself in *your* hands; she did not doubt your power nor your willingness to save her; she simply *let* you do it, and you *did* it. So it is with the Saviour."

"And is it so simple as *that?*" asked Lester after a pause; "It seems almost too good to be true. Of the Saviour as *my* Saviour I have known nothing. I have been struggling single-handed to get back to a better life, but it has just been like walking on ice with no support, or climbing up the face of a precipice. But how could *you* know that I saved a young lady on Sunday evening?"

"Mr. Tyrrell, her father, saw you and your child on the bank, and yesterday recognised you at your house; he only took a glance at you, but it was sufficient."

"It's all very strange," replied Lester. "On Wednesday evening I went out with the intention of looking for a house in another neighbourhood, because I feared recognition; May's illness put aside that; and now I feel that a new life has been opened up to me, certainly for this world, and I trust for the next also."

"If you have accepted the Saviour as *your* Saviour, He will never forsake you, either in this world or the next," said Mr. Alleyne. "And now there is one thing I should like you to do before you leave me to-night, and that is to put your name in my pledge-book."

"I beg your pardon, I don't quite understand," said Lester as the Vicar opened a book and placed it before him.

"I will explain," replied Mr. Alleyne. "We find it helpful to sign our names to this promise of total abstinence, in some cases to ourselves, and in others to those around us. You see it is headed by St. Paul's words in Romans xiv., 'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' You will agree with me, my dear brother, that you have often both stumbled and been made weak by the use of intoxicating drinks. I have pledged myself to total abstinence therefrom, for the sake of every one of my brethren thus stumbling. See, here is my name at the head of the page. Will you not add yours as a safeguard to yourself, and that you may be enabled to use your influence for the benefit of others?"

"I will indeed, and trust I may ever stand true to my promise, and that I may never fall again."

"The pledge will not keep you from falling. There is only One who can do that, and He will keep all those who put their trust in Him. But it has been a great help to many to feel that they have made this simple promise in writing, and that they have enrolled themselves among those who are striving to establish peace and happiness among their fellow-men, and to banish from their midst that which is the source of almost every crime under heaven, and the cause of untold poverty and wretchedness."

"Who but I should sign such a pledge?" said Lester as he wrote his name, while the Vicar sent up a silent prayer that grace might be given him to keep it.

May was not asleep when her father returned rather late, but of course entirely sober; and as he stooped down to kiss her before climbing up to the loft to her mattress, he whispered: "Not a 'single drop,' darling. I have taken a pledge that I will never—so long as I have the grace of Jesus Christ to keep me—taste a single drop of anything that can intoxicate again. You were my little angel who revealed that way to me."

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD NEWS.

"Heed we the Steward's call,
Work, brethren, work:
There's room enough for all,
Work brethren work."

FAR away in the north of England the little village of Cherryfield was all astir one fine October morning, nearly two months after the incidents related in our last chapter.

For five years temperance work had been going on in this once dark neighbourhood. Through the persevering endeavours of a man who had at first come from Cornwall to work in a North country mine, a little circle had been formed which had widened and widened until, from consisting only of pitmen and agricultural labourers, it now included pitowners, rich farmers, and country gentlemen.

A few months before the time of which we are writing, it had been represented to one of the latter class that a room was sorely wanted in which to conduct further work than could be carried forward in the barn where the

meetings were held, and which had done good service in its time. This gentleman had, with his wife, joined the Temperance ranks about two years before, and they now readily responded to the application for help in this good work, so far that they not only granted land from their own estate, upon which also the barn stood, but headed the list of contributions with £200 and promised to make up all deficiency when the building was complete.

The day had now arrived when the building—consisting of a large central hall, surrounded by smaller rooms to be used as library, committee, and class rooms—was all complete and entirely free of debt; and the chief actors in the affair had decided to make the opening as far a success as possible.

The beautiful park and gardens surrounding Cherryfield Hall were to be thrown open, and the barn, which had been used for the meetings for two years, was decorated, and a substantial luncheon laid for any who liked to partake of it.

Large numbers were expected to respond to the numerous invitations that had been sent out in all directions. About the middle of the day, on the lawn before the house, stood the Squire of Cherryfield Hall with his wife, surrounded by a group of people, all chatting cheerfully, but evidently in expectation of another arrival, for their heads were often turned in the direction of the road.

"Hadn't we better go down and make a beginning?" said the lady; "I fear that some of the people who have come a long distance will be sadly in want of refreshment."

"I think we may wait another five minutes," replied her husband. "These local trains are so uncertain; and it would be a pity to begin without Dexter, he is such a capital talker, and so used to this sort of thing. Why it's half the battle to have Dexter in the field."

"But why on earth need he have gone racing away to Ilkley last night? Surely he could have deferred his visit until we had done with him here."

"Hardly. But you were out yesterday when the letter came asking him to go and meet some London friends there. It's rather a queer place, you know, for London people. They didn't want to go to Ben Rhydding, so he went over to find a suitable place for them and to meet them at the station; they were to arrive about five o'clock."

"I think I see signs of the carriage," said the squire, after a pause. He was a fine-featured, middle-aged man, but with silvery hair and lines of thought and care deeply graven.

"Yes. Here it comes; but there are three in it. Perhaps he has brought his friend over with him."

And so it proved; when the waggonette drove in at the gate, Mr. Dexter sprang out followed by a gentleman. Shaking hands with his hostess, he said—

"Allow me to introduce my London friend, whom I have persuaded to join us to-day,—Mr. Bardsley—Mr. and Mrs. Lester."

Words of hearty welcome and a few minutes' lively chat followed, and then the party made their way towards the Barn. They were greeted with round after round of true Yorkshire cheering, after which the pleasant business of

refreshing the body began; and the hundreds of people, many of whom had come a long distance, entered heartily into this part of the programme also, partaking of the liberal bounty before them with corresponding liberality.

Luncheon being duly disposed of, the people dispersed themselves about the park and gardens until they were to assemble again to tea, after which there was to be the grand public meeting in the new Hall.

Mr. and Mrs. Lester remained among them for a time, speaking kindly to those whom they knew personally, and enhancing by their presence the gay scene in the park. But they were not so young as they were once, and presently turned towards the house to indulge in a little rest. Upon the steps they met with Mr. Dexter and his friend, who were waiting for them.

"We want to have a little talk with you," said the former. "Bardsley wants to get back to Ilkley by the 7.45, and perhaps now would be the best time. Shall we go in here?"

The room they entered was a small library, well stocked with pleasant literature, and where most of the papers and periodicals of the day lay upon inviting stands, as though they would say, "Come read me" to the passers by. The apartment was approached by a tiny conservatory, where a mimic fountain and cascade played upon lovely ferns and other plants arranged among a picturesque rockery, and the fragrance of many flowers climbing to the very roof filled the air. After a few moments' conversation about their surroundings, Mr. Dexter exclaimed—

"Now then Bardsley, you'd better plunge into the subject. This is an important day, and there is a great deal to be done in it."

"'Tis a subject I hardly like to '*plunge into*,'" answered his friend, "and yet it must be done, for I have taken this journey for the very purpose. When Dexter met me at the station yesterday he chanced to say that he was staying with friends named Lester, and I immediately made up my mind to see you and to find out if possible whether you were in any way related to an old school-fellow of mine in Manchester some thirty years ago."

"We *had* a son at school in Manchester," said Mr. Lester, after a little hesitation. His name was James Austin Lester."

"That was the name of the lad I knew. James is common enough. 'Tis the Austin confirms it. I feel sure 'tis he. You have not heard of your son lately, I believe?"

"Oh, not for years," cried Mrs. Lester, who had turned very pale on hearing her son's name so unexpectedly. "Can you tell us anything about him?"

"I was not sure that the—the gentleman of whom I have known something during the last few months *was* your son."

"It is a most painful subject to us," said Mr. Lester, who was nearly as agitated as his wife. "I would have preferred to postpone it until another time. We have suffered immensely for many years concerning him."

"Pray, do not refer to it now," said Mrs. Lester. "It has, indeed, been the one great trial of our life."

"I don't think you need fear the subject," continued Mr. Bardsley. "I have only good news to give you, that your son is alive and well."

"That is, indeed, good news," said Mr. Lester, adding sadly: "but probably you do not know his history,—you have never heard of his unhappy downfall,—not, alas, through himself, and that is what makes the subject such a painful one to us."

"I am entirely unacquainted with his history for many years after we were school-fellows," replied Mr. Bardsley. "I should fear, however, that it has been a painful one."

"And it must ever be so to us. We little thought ten years ago, that one so good and so sincerely loved and respected by everybody who knew him would ever drop down to such a degradation. First, we saw him taking the drink to soothe his grief, and then it laid such a hold upon him that he was quite unable to resist its influence, and at last he went away from Cherryfield with not a friend to say good-bye to him, or to wish him well. We have never heard of him since. But *our* part in the production of all this evil and unhappiness never appeared to us till about two years back—a little more, perhaps, when we saw it right to become abstainers for the sake of our dependents and others around us, and we have been naturally filled with the bitterest sorrow and remorse, that we should not have set such an example to our own son."

"Yes, indeed," sighed Mrs. Lester; "and however ready we may now be to stretch out a helping hand to the falling and the fallen, that can never obliterate the deep scar upon

our conscience left by the neglect of our own boy,—our only child."

"There is One above who orders all things," replied Mr. Bardsley. "He leadeth the blind by a way which they know not."

"May I ask how long it is since you first met with our son?" asked the father with a tremulous voice.

"I met with him first about two months ago, at a time when he was in great trouble. His little girl was dangerously ill."

"What! Is that poor baby living?" exclaimed Mrs. Lester. "The last time I saw it I thought it would go into a decline, and when he went away with it nobody thought it could live a month."

"The little baby May, would be nearly eleven years old," said Mr. Lester.

"Oh dear yes, so she would; and perhaps now quite a big girl."

"She is not *that*," said Mr. Bardsley; "she is a small child for her age; but 'tis she who has been the means of leading her father into the same path that you have been treading for several years,—I mean the path of total abstinence."

"Is it possible!" fell from the lips of the father and mother simultaneously.

"And more than that," continued Mr. Bardsley; "he is now not only a sober man, but a Christian, which is of course the only foundation of a really sober life."

"Pray tell us something of his present position," said Mr. Lester. "How is he living, and where?"

"He is now," replied Mr. Bardsley, "in some position of trust in the firm of a gentleman of whom I know something. You, too, may have heard the name of Tyrrell. Your son saved a daughter of his from drowning; and as he would take no compensation, they never rested until they persuaded him to accept this situation, which was vacant at the time."

"Dear, dear!" cried Mrs. Lester. To think of Austin being in a *situation*, while there is such abundance here belonging to him!"

"I think he has the impression that he is not in possession of any property whatever. I urged him to write to you some weeks ago upon the subject, and he then assured me that he had gone through everything, and that his intention was to retrace his steps for a time before revisiting you, in order that his return might not further disgrace you. I did not learn from him anything about you; only that his parents were still living *somewhere*. And as my acquaintance with him was extremely slight and casual, I did not deem it my business to inquire into a subject which he so evidently shunned."

"For the last two years we have been occasionally advertising for him," said Mr. Lester, "but there was no response, and we decided that he must have died. He certainly did run through everything of his own; but in the course of years several things have happened to throw property to his share. The principal of these, perhaps, is the death of an aunt of mine, who was very fond of Austin as a child and youth. Of late years, poor thing, she had not been well

mentally. The last will she made was when he was twenty-one, in which she left all her property to him. She was spared the pain of realising his downfall."

"And then there's May," said Mrs. Lester. "Under her grandfather's will she will have a nice income—quite enough to keep them comfortably even if Austin had nothing."

"Truly, truly," continued her husband with a sigh. "But this, after all, would not be a matter of importance. *We* have plenty for ourselves, and for them too *if* they will only come back to us. And, see," he went on, pointing across the path to where a neat spire, surrounded by scaffolding, was in course of erection, and just visible above the trees. "There is a church we are building close by the house *he* used to occupy. No one has lived in it since he left. It was falling into decay; and it occurred—to my wife first of all, and I only too gladly carried out her suggestion—that we should erect a new church there, and turn the house into a rectory. The old church is far away from us, and the old Vicar is, I fear, far away from the path of temperance. We want to get a man who will help us on, and not put every obstacle he can think of in the way of the people's advancement—a man who will preach temperance in the pulpit and his life."

"I fear you will find 'tis no easy task," said Mr. Bardsley.

"I little thought what a romantic errand you were on, Bardsley," said Mr. Dexter, "when you offered to come here with me to-day."

"I little thought it myself," replied his friend. "When

you said you were the guest of a Mr. Lester, I did not like to lose the opportunity of finding out whether he was any relation of one in whom I have felt greatly interested. From the very first I was convinced that he was not what he appeared to be."

"May I inquire how you became acquainted with our son?" asked Mr. Lester.

"I think 'tis best you should hear it from himself. No doubt you will be seeing him soon."

"Oh, we must, we must indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Lester. "But how, when could he come to us?"

"Suppose we go to him, my dear?" said her husband. "That is, if you think you can bear the journey."

"Oh, yes. I can bear more than *that*. I was much fatigued last time I went up, but that was on a far different errand. I have felt twenty years younger the last half-hour."

"Well done!" cried Dexter. "I must say I haven't seen you look so blooming since I came. But now, settle at once when you will go."

"'Tis Friday to-day," said Mr. Bardsley. "I must go to town on Monday. Could you go up with me then?"

"Oh, yes! we could go," said Mr. Lester, "but how should we meet with you?"

"I'll tell you," exclaimed Mr. Dexter; "we'll all go to Ilkley to-morrow. "If they can't take us in at Ben Rhydding, we can try that other place—I forget the name of it. And if we can't get in there—why, we must take apartments."

"Then will you go on with us to London?" said his hostess. "It would be delightful if you would."

"I should enjoy it immensely," replied Dexter; "but as I am due at Leeds on Tuesday, I think I must leave you in Bardsley's hands."

"I cannot offer you a home like this," said Mr. Bardsley; "but if you can make yourselves comfortable in my cottage, you will have a thousand welcomes."

Here, then, on the following Monday evening, the happy party sat down to dinner. Mrs. Bardsley and the younger children were in Yorkshire; but the Lesters, having made their acquaintance during their two days' stay at Ilkley, felt quite at home with the whole family, including Mrs. Bardsley's sister, who always took charge of the household in her absence.

CHAPTER X.

HAPPY MEETINGS.

"Stand up ! stand up for Jesus !
Stand in His strength alone ;
The arm of flesh will fail you—
Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armour,
And, watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there."

"IF special arrangements had been made in honour of your visit, things couldn't have fallen out more opportunely," said Mr. Bardsley on his return from a visit to the London house of Mr. Tyrrell, the next morning. "I went early, making sure of finding your son. But he is out for the day with his little girl. To-morrow evening, however, there is to be a special meeting at the hall, in the neighbourhood where they used to lodge. There is to be a tea first to the children, and after that the parents and others who like will assemble, and there will be speeches and music. Mr. Tyrrell, who is not quite a teetotaller himself, supplies the funds to a great

extent. 'Tis a pity he doesn't come out, but perhaps he will, some day."

"Does he know of our being here?" inquired Mrs. Lester.

"Not a word of it. That would spoil it all. When I heard of the meeting, I thought the best plan would be for us to drive there at the time—I mean the time for the evening meeting. No one would know you. I have been there before, so there would be nothing to create a sensation in that. It will not be a late meeting, on account of the children, so I have accepted an invitation to supper at our Vicar's, to whom I have entrusted our secret. He will be at the hall, and will, I think, take the chair."

Mr. Bardsley had a special design in wishing the senior Lesters to attend this meeting. He had with pain observed that they invariably spoke of total abstinence as the one requisite for the raising of their people. This was to be the antidote for their every trouble, the cure of their poverty, the lamp to guide them into the path of respectability, the only necessary teacher of morality and virtue. He had noticed that when he mentioned the fact that their son was a Christian as well as a total abstainer, the remark had met with no response, and he was anxious that they should hear his voice first in the Gospel address, which he felt sure would fall from his lips that evening. He knew also the power of love there was in Mr. Alleyne's heart for the dear friend whom he had been the means of leading to trust the Saviour, and he hoped that these combined influences might be used of the

Lord to teach the Lesters, whose experiences in the far North had been very limited.

Tuesday afternoon saw a goodly gathering of children waiting for their tea in the hall. Texts of Scripture for the occasion, in large white characters upon bright-coloured calico strips, adorned the walls, and a variety of late autumn flowers made the tables attractive to the eyes, in addition to the plentiful supply of good things placed there to satisfy the hunger of the poor children who, by five o'clock, were all in their places and ready to commence a vigorous attack. One table was devoted to the boys, who were under the charge of Mr. Stanley and Percy Tyrrell, while the girls were sufficient in number to surround three tables, and were in the care of the Vicar's wife, assisted by Sylvia and Isabel. By Sylvia's side sat a neat little creature, plainly but well dressed; very pale, but with such a happy face. Next to her was an older girl.

"Take some more cake, May," said the latter.

"No thank you, Tilly; I'm not hungry."

"Well, I don't know as *I* am now, but this 'ere cake's just jolly and no mistake. Shan't get nothink like it to-morrow. There's Nell Brown a stuffin' of it in like fun—she only took a card last week cos o' this tea meetin'. She ain't a-goin' to keep it."

"What a shame!" replied May. "Why, that is telling a lie in actions."

"Tellin' *wot*, May?"

"It is just as bad as saying words that are not true, to

pretend to be good and do a right thing for the sake of what we can get by it."

"I suppose it is," replied Tilly, after a pause. "I say, May, mother's a-comin' to-night. She say if dad 'll be teetotal, p'raps he'll git up in the world like yourn; an' *I* means to keep to it. I don't so much care about it sin' I've giv' it up. Well, I *do* look more genteeler, don't I?"

May laughed. "I'm so glad, Tilly dear; I do hope your father and mother will both join."

Poor child, she hardly knew what to say, for it was as easy to see that Mr. Smykes—Marty Smykes, his friends called him—belonged to a different circle—in fact, that he was naturally one of the hard-handed sons of toil—as it was to the most cursory observer to detect that *her* father was a gentleman, even when lost to all sense of his position.

Tea being over, there was a general scatter. Many of the children had younger brothers and sisters whom they had to take home, as they were too young to stay to the meeting, and others went for a run while the tables were cleared and stowed away and the forms arranged; but by seven o'clock there was a large gathering, bidding fair to crowd out late-comers.

There was a good harmonium on the platform, and as the children had been learning several special hymns for the occasion, the singing made a good impression upon the audience, many of whom had never been into the hall before, and were much gratified by what they saw and heard

The Vicar, who occupied the chair, read a few verses from

the Bible, and Mr. Stanley offered a short but simple and earnest prayer; after which there was more singing, and then followed a short speech by Mr. Alleyne, in which he explained the object of the meeting, and urged it upon those present who were parents to abstain from all evil — especially from taking intoxicating drinks—for the sake of their children. Only one or two present knew what gave such power to his utterances. Then another hymn was sung, during which there was a slight bustle near the door. The audience were all standing, so that the late-comers slipped in at the back of the room unnoticed by the majority. Mr. Bardsley was surprised, on taking his seat, to find himself next to Mrs. Alleyne and May.

"We came here for a little air," she whispered. "May is not very strong yet, and I feared she would faint. It is rather exciting for her. I would take her home, but she is so anxious to hear her father speak."

"Let her come this side," continued Mr. Bardsley. "There is more air here—This is *May*," he said, turning to Mrs. Lester, as he passed her along towards the door. Quite thrown off her guard for the moment, the delighted grandmother caught the astonished child to her bosom and gave her some hearty kisses. May was so startled that she turned paler than ever, but stepped back to her former position and laid her hand in Mrs. Alleyne's lap.

The hymn was done now and the audience reseated. There was breathless attention when James Lester rose to speak.

Some present had known him as "Coaly Jim." Others

had heard of him. Nearly all knew that he had been rescued from the very lowest pit of degradation by some wondrous power, and they had been drawn together out of curiosity to see and hear the man who was once so poverty-stricken, now so superior, so evidently a gentleman. The speaker gave them a brief account of his life, suppressing only the neglect of his parents. Had he known upon whose ears his every word fell like a living coal, he could not have more carefully avoided reference to them. Of the wonderful transition from darkness to light he spoke at greater length, describing in eloquent language the wonderful way by which he had been led to see the evil and sin of his life—the blind selfishness and spiritual ignorance that had overwhelmed him as the waves of the sea. Having arrived at this point, he launched forth into an earnest appeal to those among whom he had found a residence for some months, to make the attempt to break their chains and walk the earth as he did—a free man.

"To this end," he said in conclusion, "you must do the same thing which I and all saved sinners have done. Come to the One who is Mighty to save, and who has given not only His promise to receive and keep all who do come, but also gave His own precious life as a ransom for them. Cease to put trust in yourselves, and put all your trust in the Saviour. No promise you may make to yourself will save you. No pledge you may give to others will keep you. Only the Saviour can save you. Only the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls can keep you. *His* almighty power and grace is not shared with any of His poor sinful

THE TEMPERANCE MEETING.

creatures. Neither will He give His glory to another. But He has permitted us to use many different kinds of helps to the one great end. And one of these many helps —which I have tested and can recommend to you from my own personal experience—is the writing your name to a promise that you will not *taste* the liquor which causes so much sin, crime, and wretched poverty. There is no bad thing which the taking of the drink may not lead to—*has* not lead to. I ask you all to give it up, and never taste a *single drop.*

"Many of you, I sincerely believe, are as tired of your sin and of yourselves as I was. Some of you have perhaps even gone as far as I did—to the very verge of committing suicide, to the very shadow of flinging away a useless and sinful life. And I trust that at least some may to-night be led to do as I have done in a far different way."

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.'
I came to Jesus *as I was,*
Weary and worn and sad,
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live.'
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream,
My thirst was quench'd, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's light,
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise
And all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done."

As soon as Lester had ceased speaking, Mrs. Alleyne and May slipped out and were driven home, where the excited and weary child was only too glad to go to bed at once. She had, with her father, been a welcome visitor at the Vicarage for more than a month. How greatly both father and child appreciated the loving generosity which had prompted the Alleynes to make this arrangement for them, until they could get a suitable home and attendants within easy reach of Mr. Tyrrell's business premises, can hardly be told. It was more than the act of a good Samaritan,—it was the outflow of Christian brotherly love, which found a deep response in Lester's heart, and which bound him to his spiritual father in those bonds which not even death can sever.

As soon as the cab could return again from the hall, it brought the senior Lesters and Mr. Bardsley, who were hardly deposited in the drawing-room, before the arrival of the rest of the little supper party.

Mrs. Lester was in a flutter of expectation. The Vicar's wife found it quite a difficult task to divert her mind in any way; her eyes were continually wandering to the door, and her ears evidently listening only for the remotest sound

that should convey to her the fact of her long-lost son's approach.

At length the door opened, and the Vicar and Lester entered the room. It was no uncommon thing for the latter to see visitors at any time, or to any meal, in the Vicarage, and there were plenty of grey-haired people in the parish. But this elderly couple seated side by side upon the couch—surely, *surely*, their faces had never been seen by him here, and yet how familiar to him !

"These are very old friends of *yours*," said Mr. Bardsley, advancing to meet him.

"Rather say very old enemies," exclaimed Lester senior, as he rose and came hastily towards his son, followed by his wife, who, throwing aside all formalities, seized his hands, and, as she passionately kissed them, said, in trembling accents—

"Oh, Austin ! my boy, my boy, can you ever forgive me ?"

Looking from one to another of the group surrounding him, Lester seemed for a moment utterly bewildered, but the necessary explanations were not long in forthcoming, and what a joyful party surrounded the supper-table that night ! As may be supposed, they lingered together until a late hour of the night ; nor did they separate without offering up their most hearty praise to the Giver of all good gifts for the happy reunion which had been so unexpectedly brought about.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEMON EXPELLED.

"If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."—1 Cor. viii. 13.

"Know your own mind."
"Have the courage of your convictions."

"HAVE you heard any special news to-day?" asked Mr. Tyrrell, the next evening, as the family were, with the exception of Sylvia, assembled around the dinner table.

"Nothing particular," answered his wife. "Only that Croft's brother, a widower with seven children, has come home from America, and wants her to go and keep house for them."

"Oh, mamma! Do you think Croft will go?" exclaimed Dora.

"I can't say yet, dear. She is divided between inclination and duty, like many other people in this world."

"I shouldn't have thought she need have a thought of duty in the matter," observed Mr. Tyrrell. "Croft's brother may get married again, and then what would she do? *I*

should advise her to stay in a comfortable home as long as she can."

"Here comes Sylvia," exclaimed Percy. "How late you are! Have you been to Oliver's about going to the Crystal Palace?"

"No, indeed," answered his sister. "I had no time. I must go to-morrow. Papa, what *do* you think I have heard?"

"That I am going to lose my new manager!"

Isabel looked up with a startled face, saying: "I hope he hasn't——"

"No, of course not," said Sylvia, catching her sister's fear in the unspoken words. "Did you see any strangers in the hall last night?"

"I did," said Percy. "I was near the door and saw Mr. Bardsley bring in a strange lady and gentleman; they disappeared directly the meeting was over."

"Who do you think they were?" asked Sylvia.

"Haven't the remotest idea; friends of the Bardsley's, I suppose."

"They were Mr. Lester's *father* and *mother*," she answered, with emphasis on the last two words.

"And I have invited them to dine here to-morrow," added Mr. Tyrrell. "That is with mamma's permission."

"My dear John!" exclaimed his wife. "Do you know anything of them? What sort of people are they?"

"People that we may be proud to entertain, my love. I have had the honour of an introduction to them to-day. And it *is* an honour—for a city merchant, if he be ever so rich, is nowhere beside a real old county gentleman. They

are a splendid old couple, and you will be charmed with their society."

"How is it they are here? Did he write to them?"

"No. He knew nothing of it—had no idea who formed part of his audience last night; it was all a plot of Bardsley's, who, from the first, had an idea that Lester might be an old school-fellow of his when he was in Manchester, more than thirty years ago. I will tell you how it was brought about. Some years ago Mr. Bardsley formed an acquaintance with a gentleman called Dexter, who resides somewhere in the North. Last week Mrs. Bardsley decided to take the children to Ilkley, and they wrote to Dexter to ask his advice on the subject. Dexter not only gave them the necessary advice, but met them at Ilkley and took them to nice lodgings. Then he persuaded Bardsley to accompany him next day to a place called Cherryfield, where there was to be a grand demonstration in honour of opening a new Temperance Hall. Bardsley was attracted by the name of Lester, with whom Dexter had said he was staying, and went with him; and, truth being always stranger than fiction, when he saw them he asked several questions, which soon brought out the fact that the man who had been working for him was actually his old schoolfellow."

"Why, it's as good as a book," said Gerald.

"It's far better than a book," continued his father. "I have heard to-day such a revelation of the misery and unhappiness and poverty brought about wholly and solely by the use of these—I can only say—*deadly* drinks,—such a history of the

heart-breaking sorrow of parents whose son learned to take these so-called 'beverages' at their own table in moderation, but who afterwards indulged in them to such an extent that they felt it a disgrace to own him as their son,—I have listened to such a painful recital of the anguish and remorse of these parents since they, by the persuasion of this very friend Dexter, abandoned altogether what had wrought such mischief in their family,—that I have resolved from this hour to banish from my table anything that in after years might bring upon us similar disasters. I know that you, my dear wife, will not object, for you seldom indulge in anything stronger than your famous slice of lemon in water."

Mrs. Tyrrell had laid down her knife and fork, and looked up amazed at her husband.

"It makes not the slightest difference to me, John," she said; "but what shall we do when we have visitors? To-morrow, for instance, how strange the table will look without any wine."

"To-morrow, my love, if wine were placed on the table, provided that you did not take it, there would be only *one* to do so," replied Mr. Tyrrell, looking across at Gerald, who was quietly but quickly disposing of his glass of wine lest it should follow the rest into banishment. "Our guests to-morrow, including the Vicar and his wife, are all pledged abstainers, and very likely Mr. Alleyne will have his pledge-book in his pocket, and then perhaps he will get an addition to his list of signatures."

"Sylvia's and Isabel's and mine are there already," said Percy.

"Oh, may I sign to-morrow?" asked Dora.

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed Gerald with mock solemnity, "when even one's little sister leaves a fellow out in the cold."

"Well, don't be left out in the cold," she answered laughing. "You sign, too, and then we'll all keep you warm."

"What are you going to do with all the wine in the cellar?" said Gerald, as the little laugh at his expense died away. "You will sell it, I presume; but I hope you will dedicate a few bottles for the special use of your sons during the ensuing term."

"Speak for yourself, Gerald," exclaimed Percy.

"Ah, yes; I forgot that you had left the ranks of the free."

"Just joined them, you mean."

"Do you consider it freedom to be chained to the pump for the rest of your days?" asked Gerald with a little sneer.

"Rather that than to a beer-barrel," retorted Percy.

"My dear boy," said Mr. Tyrrell gravely to Gerald, "I am really sorry to deny you anything that would give you pleasure; and if this would be a real pleasure unmixed with evil, and one which would bring you unmixed happiness in the future, rest assured I would not deny it to you; but I dare not. I confess I knew something of Mr. Alleyne's trouble before, and I have heard to-day of the wretchedness and ruin brought upon a man through having been educated by his parents to drink, in moderation, of course; as soon as he overstepped that boundary he was looked upon and

treated as an outcast by those who had placed the temptation in his way, and who would have laughed to scorn any resolve of his not to touch a drop of the stuff which has proved to be to him a very demon of destruction."

"His little child was the one who showed to him the only path of safety. I rejoice that some of my children have gone before me in that path; I trust that none may linger behind. As to the wine and other dangerous drinks in the cellar, I do not intend to sell or give to others what I banish from my own table as poison, unfit for use. I think I know of a fitting receptacle for it. There is a sink in the cellar, is there not, Tomkins?"

"Yes sir; there is so," answered the man, who had refrained from refilling his young master's glass, and only too glad to hear that for the future there would be no temptation placed in his way at home, whatever there might be elsewhere.

So, as soon as the dinner was over, the whole family—with the exception of Gerald, who had an impromptu appointment—adjourned to the cellar, where they witnessed the death of the demon. From every dwelling, whether of glass, wood, or stone, he was mercilessly ejected. Ferreted out from dark corners where he had lain ensconced for years—gathering strength for more successful attacks upon his victims whenever he should be liberated—he was sent forth ignominiously racing into the sewer to keep company with rats and other vermin,—better they than human beings.

It now transpired that Tomkins had not touched any strong drink for years; he could not sign the pledge, however,

because of having to give it at the table of his master. This obstacle was now removed, much to his satisfaction, and he, with Croft and the housemaid, were all agreed that the demon should also be turned out of the kitchen. Here cook stood upon her necessities. She could *not* cook a decent dinner without a little something to keep her up. The kitchenmaid, being her niece, was bound to second her aunt in this.

"Has for Mr. Tomkins," Cook said, "he was used to drinking water, and, with his light sort o' work, didn't need anythink stronger, and the housemaid likewise; and as for Mrs. Croft, well, it was no mistake to say that her duties was so light that a cup of tea was the very strongest thing *she* could need to carry *her* through. But everybody knew that it was quite a different matter to have a dinner every day for a dozen, to say nothink of hextras and dinner parties, hodds and hends for luncheons and such like. It was most harduous and hanxious work, and couldn't be done without a glass of something reg'lar."

How often the "glass of something reg'lar" had produced something very irregular in cook's conduct, the kitchen and housemaids could have testified. How frequently she had been found dozing over the pastry,—on the verge of introducing curry powder into a jelly, or using vinegar instead of milk for the custards,—was a secret known too well. Many a time the dinner would have been a complete failure but for the intervention of the niece, who was nearly as expert as her aunt, and the help of the housemaid, who was very good-natured, and who would do anything rather than

let her mistress be annoyed if possible. A deeper secret still was thought to be in the possession of cook's fellow-servants, which was that she had even been carried to bed on more than one occasion in a helpless condition. But, cleverly as they had concealed the real state of the case, they had not entirely deceived their mistress on the subject. She had often expressed to her husband the fear that cook was not always so sober as she ought to be, and they now thought it would be best to place the matter in her own hands. So her master gave her a month to decide whether she would abstain entirely, or seek another situation. During the month there would be no provision made for her; if she wanted any stimulant, she would have to provide it at her own expense, and it was not to be placed upon the kitchen table at meal times.

It may as well be stated here that cook found in the course of the month that, having to pay for her own stimulants, she did not find them so necessary as formerly, when she was allowed to keep the key of the kitchen beer and fortify herself *ad libitum*.

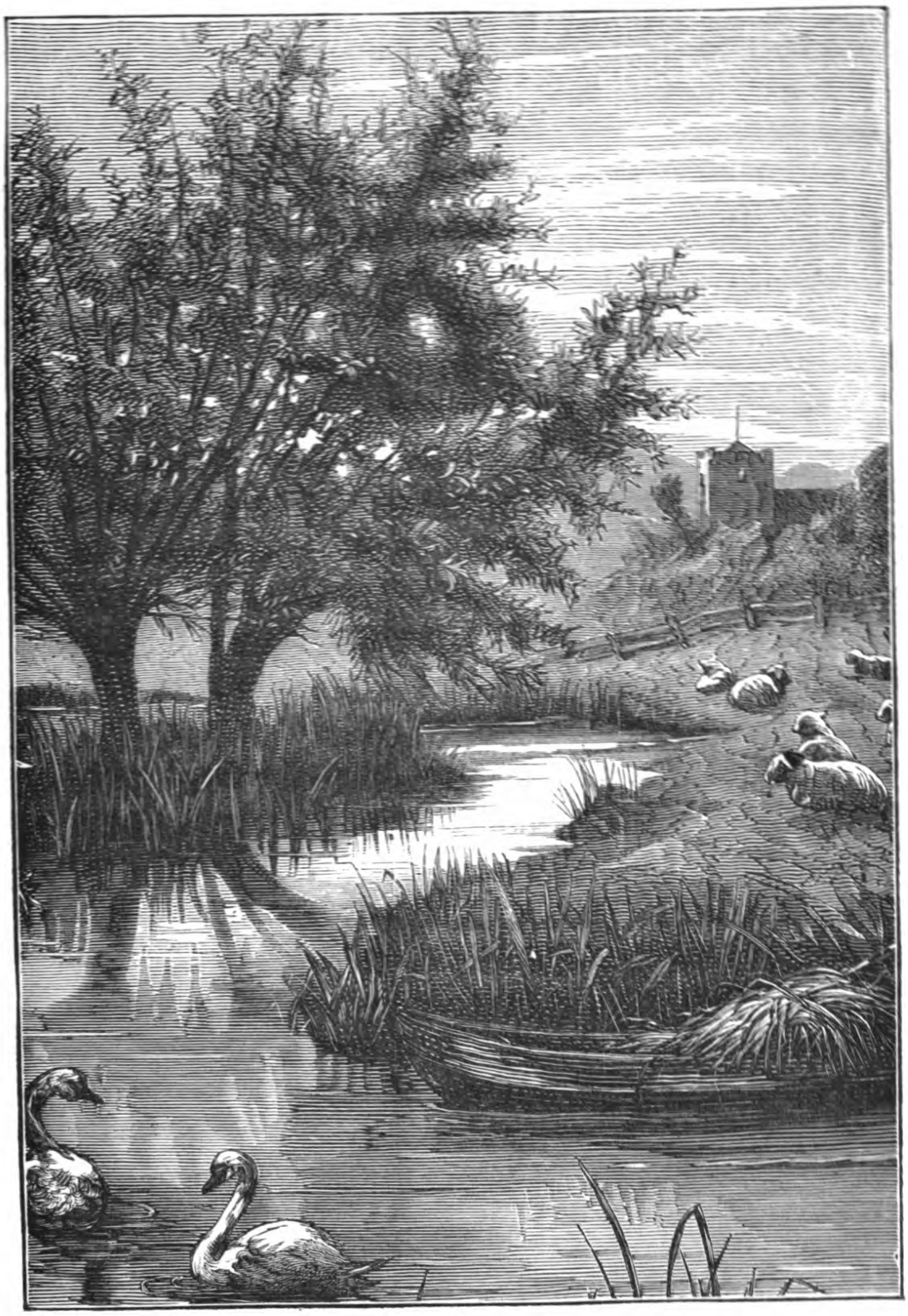
CHAPTER XII.

CHERRYFIELD.

"Conquer we shall, but we must first contend;
'Tis not the fight that crowns us, but the end."

TEN years have passed away since the events recorded in our last chapter. The master and mistress of Cherryfield Hall are wearing their seventy-five years with thankfulness to the Giver of life and the Preserver thereof, dispensing to those by whom they are surrounded much blessing and happiness.

Above the trees across the park they can see the spire of the church they reared to the cause of Temperance; and whenever their eyes rest upon it, how thankful they are that the Lord of all power and might led them out of the delusion that this was the highest good their people could attain to; and how supremely happy are they in their old age to know that every Sunday, and oftentimes in the week as well, the voice of one whom they love better than all their earthly possessions is lifted up to teach men of the Saviour, and to inspire them by his own example to tread the narrow way of a holy life.



CHERRYFIELD.

The Rectory stands close by the church. To this lovely bower, more than twenty years ago, Austin Lester had brought his bride. Under this roof he had first fallen a victim to the Demon Drink. How many battles he had fought with him, not even *he* could tell. Nearly every room in the house could witness of temptation, of struggles for freedom, of warfare, of downfall, until at last he went forth a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Here now he lives once more with May. Five years ago he had been ordained and presented by his father to the rectorship of the new church of the Good Shepherd. In the parish churchyard, a mile away from the Park, stands the monument to his wife. How thankful he is when he looks upon it that he never caused that sweet and gentle creature, whose remains rest beneath the marble cross, a moment's pain through his overstepping the bounds of moderation. But he has enough to reproach himself with when he remembers May's childhood. When he looks upon her now and sees the delicate features and thin white hands that betoken her permanent want of strength, he many a time hates himself for having been the cause of so much woe even to one human being. Sometimes May catches that particular shade upon his face that tells her what is passing in his mind. At such times she will muster all her cheerfulness and her modicum of strength to rally him.

"Don't look so sad, dear," she said one day, patting his face fondly as she gave him a paragraph in the newspaper to read. "Look at this and be thankful."

Mr. Lester glanced over the florid description of a grand

wedding that had recently taken place in their own neighbourhood.

"Why need I be thankful that Eva Thornton has thrown herself away to such a racing, gambling scapegrace as Lord Tenterbrooke?" he asked, looking back at her with unmoved gravity.

"Who knows but *I* might have been Lady Tenterbrooke?"

"You, May? Impossible! It could never have been."

"I have heaps more money than Eva; and had I been as strong and well as she, I might have gone flying about on horseback as she has done, forming all kinds of doubtful friendships, and tumbling over head and ears in love with the very first votary who should bend his knee at my golden shrine; but as things are, I am only my own daddy's little May, and I shall be nothing else as long as I live."

"Poor little May," said her father, looking tenderly at her; "I would rather lay you to rest beneath yonder cross, than such a fate as Eva's should ever be yours."

"There's no fear of the latter," she answered, merrily laughing; "and I don't want you to do the former just yet. It isn't wrong to wish to live to be old, is it? I don't mean *very* aged, because one would only be a bother in the world, but to live as long as one can do any good for others—not that I can do so *very* much."

"Can you not, darling? What have you done for me! It is not for *us* to measure how much good we can do. Every word and every little action is like a pebble cast into water. The effect of its touch ceases not until the

ripple reaches the extremest banks. But alas! it is so with our influence for evil also. When I look back through the vista of sinful years, stretching far into the past, and think, if only of the servants who have learned to take strong drink under our roof——"

"*His* mercy is over all our sins," said May softly, "and *He* can bring light out of darkness. Leave the past in His hand, dear father, even as you do the future."

"Oh! I do, I do," replied the Rector, brightening as he spoke. "I know that He has blotted out all the past. He has cast all my sins behind His back. But although the wounds are healed by the grace and love of Christ, the scars remain, and I shall take them home with me."

After a moment's pause he resumed—

"Will you not go for a drive this morning? I really think you should; or you will look so extra delicate when your friend comes back, that she will think we have been working you too hard in her absence."

"I have tried not to exert myself too much with the school-work, but I *have* been working rather hard—for *me*, you know—to finish this necktie for Tom. To-morrow is his birthday."

"It's rather a smart one, isn't it?" said her father as he examined the red and black satin scarf May placed in his hand.

"Well, yes; but you know he likes colour. His flower-beds in the churchyard show that. They will be a regular blaze of scarlet and yellow, this summer."

It may as be well explained here that "Tom" was the Rector's old friend, the barman of "The Crown."

When Mr. Lester had asked a visit from him some weeks after May's recovery, that he might repay the shilling and add a little to it, Tom had revealed to him how distasteful his occupation was to him, and how he hoped some day to get back to the gardening work to which he had been trained as a boy. And it was not long after the Lesters returned to Cherryfield that a lodge on the old estate became vacant; and Tom and his mother were only too glad to accept the offer of lodge-keeper and gardener, and here they have been comfortably located for some years. Mrs. Larkin also did the laundry work of the rectory; and the lodge being near the church, Tom was able to take the entire charge of the picturesque churchyard, and laid it out year after year according to his own fancy. He was the Rector's most faithful servant; and as for May, Tom was always ready to gallop off to the village or the nearest town to procure wools, or silk, or books, or anything else she required. He was also a steadfast teetotaller and bade fair to become an honoured and useful member of the community.

One of the first things that May had wished for upon her restoration to her native place, was that Tilly, who had taught her to mend holes, and who had waited upon her with such assiduity when her life was almost despaired of, should be educated and fitted for something better than the life she was leading at home. So it was proposed through Mr. Alleyne that she should go away to school in some distant town for a term of years and be fitted if possible to earn her own living as a governess, or perhaps by opening a school. But when the plan was laid before

the young lady herself, she utterly repudiated it. The fact is, she had taken up the cudgels in the Temperance cause with such wholeheartedness, and had seen such fruit of her example and advice in the abolishing of all sorts of intoxicants on the part of her mother, and the consequent increased intelligence and respectability of that lady, that she was encouraged to bring her forces to bear upon the head of the family.

Primed and loaded every Wednesday with fresh arguments and anecdotes, which she imbibed with avidity and treasured up with a firm grip of her memory, she lost no opportunity whenever her "dad" could present his ears, partially opened by the touch of the angel sobriety, to pour into those receptacles an abundant supply from her treasury. So it came about in course of time that reason and intelligence were reinstated, and Tilly had the satisfaction of seeing her father's name also enrolled on the list of abstainers.

With these wholesome changes at home, which she could look upon as mainly the result of her own exertions, she wisely decided that to forsake her parents might not be good for them and certainly would not be dutiful of her. She had no objection that her schooling should be paid for by the friends whom she loved so well, and was naturally so proud of.

So for a year she had attended an unpretending establishment near her home. Before this, however, Tilly's mother awoke to the fact that they "wosn't Smykeses" at all, but that her husband's family name was *Smythe*. The

elegant change having been manufactured in the course of time by their neighbours, they became so accustomed to hear it that their own rightful cognomen seemed to have faded from their recollection. So Tilly went to school as Matilda Smythe at first. But the family removing to a superior neighbourhood at a distance, she was entered at the next "Establishment for Young Ladies," as *Miss* Smythe. Her mother, who was the daughter of a respectable Kentish farmer, but who had married very early, and dropped alike her maiden name and her very limited knowledge of grammar, with her returning respectability desired to return to the paths of education and refinement, so necessary in their improved position, and to this end she gladly took lessons of Tilly—second hand—and soon made appreciable progress. The other children all went to school, for Martin Smythe, having escaped from the fangs of the demon, had plenty of money to spare to clothe and fairly educate his boys and girls.

Tilly's next move was to College, where she was bereft of name entirely, and known only as No. 136. Here she made rapid strides in learning, carrying off important prizes, and attaining to such pre-eminent position in almost every department, that she was looked up to as no mean authority upon any and every subject by her associates. She spent most of her holidays with May in her Yorkshire home, which she learnt to love so well that it was always a hard task to tear herself away when the vacation was over. Mrs. Smythe had also paid the Lesters a visit. The Rector never forgot that "drop o' winegar" so freely given, when

it was the only thing in the world he craved to soothe his child's fevered brow.

When at length Tilly's years of education were run out, and May also was freed from the hands of her governess, it so happened that there was a snug little farm for sale not far from Leeds. Mr. Lester bought it, and it did not take much to persuade Mr. and Mrs. Smythe to settle down upon it. The latter had not forgotten her home-life occupation, and her husband being one of those clever men who are at home in any trade, the affair turned out a prosperous and happy arrangement for all parties.

The Pinewood Farm was only a few miles distant from Cherryfield Rectory, and it was natural that the visits of Tilly to her friend should be more frequent and of longer duration, until at last May found her presence such a necessity to her, that the proposal was made to her that she should consider Cherryfield Rectory her constant, and Pinewood Farm her occasional home. Tilly's next sister, Rosie, was now eighteen, and quite competent to take her place; so, with the good wishes of all parties the arrangements were made, and at this time had been working satisfactorily for two years, and bade fair still to do so.

"I was so sorry I could not stay up to see you yesterday evening dear, but the day had been extra hot, and you know the heat always prostrates me."

May was resting upon an "Ilkley" under the shadow of a spreading chesnut tree,—a Spanish chesnut by the way, whose sweeping branches, laden with tender burrs, made a natural arbour. Tilly sat on a low wicker chair by her side.

"I like to go home very much sometimes," she replied, "and they are always glad to have me, but I cannot bear to stay away from you so long. I should have returned earlier, but those boys were not to be persuaded to part with me before they went back to school. Archie is sixteen now; he is to leave altogether next term. Martin is twelve, he is nearly as tall as Archie though, and they are both getting on splendidly."

"It was quite right of you to stay with them dear, I am sure they must all miss you when you come away."

"A good miss too, mother would say. She is always anxious about you if I am at home an hour or two, let alone a whole week. She would have packed me off the very next day if she could."

"She *is* kind," answered May; "but she knows how useful you are here, and how I cannot get along without you."

"Ah! of course she does," replied Tilly, taking May's hand, which lay near her, and kissing it. "And she knows too that *we* should not have got along at all but for you."

"Hush!" said May, smiling. "To change this painful topic, let me show you a letter I had from Melbourne yesterday."

"From Miss Tyrrell?"

"No, from Dora—and there is a fresh Miss Tyrrell now, for Sylvia is married and likely to leave Melbourne, for her husband—who was a widower with several children, but a good, kind man, Dora says—owns a lot of land in New Zealand, so that he thinks of settling there."

"Poor Miss Tyrrell," said Tilly. "What changes she has seen since you and I were in her class at school."

"Yes, indeed, and all through that terrible drink."

"I suppose it was," answered Tilly; "but when we left the neighbourhood we lost sight of them. I did hear of Gerald's affair though; there was something about it in the paper."

"You see they could never prevail on him to abstain from the drink," said May, "and the worst part of it was that he invariably reminded his father that he had taught him to take wine; all Mr. Tyrrell could say to him made not the slightest impression for good. Then he was so wild at College that he was always in debt. After that he was at home a great deal, and used to be at the firm often, although his father could never get him to settle down to the business. Then came the forgery, and he was sentenced to seven years. What could they do but leave the country after such a disgrace? Dora tells me that they have placed enough money in the hands of some friend to send Gerald over to them. He may be reformed enough not to disgrace them in a foreign country. I should hope Mr. Tyrrell will live to see that his good example was set not altogether too late, and that Gerald may yet follow it and become a respectable man. It should be enough that his mother died of a broken heart, and that all their prospects were blighted through him."

"*How* can anyone take the deadly stuff!" exclaimed Tilly, "when they know how many fall by it."

"Ah, that is indeed a mystery," sighed May, "which

I fear will not be solved in our time. I thought I heard a horse—yes—and that is the click of the gate. What early visitor have we, I wonder?"

"It is a clergyman," said Tilly, as she peeped through the foliage. "He is going up to the house, and has tied his horse to the churchyard gate. Tom is not there, and the lodge door is shut; a very unusual occurrence."

"Very," replied May, laughing. "It is Tom's birthday, you know, and he has taken his mother to see some old relative of their's who keeps a little farm on the moor above Shipley Glen. What a treat it will be to Mrs. Larkin, and won't the old Glen look lovely to-day. But who is the visitor, I wonder? I don't think father expected anybody."

"Now I know who he is," said Tilly, still peering through from her protected position. "His name is the Rev. Silas Sheepshanks. He is first cousin to Lord Tenterbrooke. I saw him at Eva Thornton's wedding; he took part in the ceremony."

"I remember seeing his name in the paper, in the account of the affair," said May, "and I thought I shouldn't much care to be named Sheepshanks."

"Perhaps I shouldn't either," replied Tilly, dropping back quietly into her chair, as the Reverend Silas went stepping by, unconscious of the pair of dark eyes that had been taking his measure. "But," she continued, "I have very pleasant associations connected with that name, for when I was studying at Kensington I copied a painting from one in the Sheepshanks collection. I wonder if this hungry-looking young man is a descendant of the benevolent-

looking old gentleman whose bust and portrait adorn those particular rooms at the Museum."

"Tilly! Is he really hungry-looking? I hope I am not inhospitable in wishing we may be spared his society at luncheon, but I don't feel equal to seeing a stranger to-day —especially one with such fine names. I wonder what he has come for?"

As this question is not likely to meet with a satisfactory answer under the chesnut tree, we will follow the Rev. Silas to the Rector's study, where, after introducing himself, he partially explained the object of his visit. He had been taking part at Lord Tenterbrooke's wedding, and hearing of this lovely part of the country, had come over to have a look at it, although he had not seen much of it, being on horseback. He was charmed with the estate of Cherryfield —what he had seen of it—and last, but not least, the church, although he had only viewed it from the outside. There seemed nobody about to show one the interior.

Mr. Lester replied that he would show Mr. Sheepshanks the church himself, as their lodge-keeper was away for the day, and they had so few visitors by that entrance that they thought it unnecessary to appoint one for so short a time.

The preliminaries being exhausted, the Rev. Silas became more awkward. The Rector had noticed all along that his visitor was not at ease, and it was quite evident there was still some subject yet untouched, upon which he wished to speak. After another pause he said—

"I have heard, but of course I could scarcely credit it, although I had it on the very best authority, that you do

not use wine at the sacrament; but not being in possession of the facts of the case, I could not contradict the statement."

"This then," thought the Rector, "is the secret for which I have to thank this distinguished visitor for his presence here. We do not use wine so-called," he answered aloud, and stopped, looking his clerical brother in the face.

"It *is* a fact then," answered the other; I couldn't believe it, indeed I couldn't. Such a *very* peculiar arrangement. Surely there is nothing to be gained by it."

"If there is nothing gained by it, there is most assuredly nothing lost," answered Mr. Lester gravely.

"Well, no, perhaps not. But you must have some *very* special reason for not doing as everybody else does."

"I have indeed a *very* special reason; but I am happy to say that I do not act in this matter entirely upon my own responsibility—although I should be free to do so—I am supported by both my church-wardens and by the majority of my communicants."

"They are all teetotallers, I presume," said the Reverend Silas, as he twirled his hat upon the knob of his riding-whip.

"Ours is a small congregation, the church being at present in rather an isolated position; but many of the communicants come from a long distance, even coming into the village and staying from Saturday to Monday so as to be present at our monthly communion. Many of them *are* total abstainers, and I trust all may be some day."

"May I ask what you give your people instead of wine?"

"I give them the best and purest of all wines, the pure juice of the grape."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Sheepshanks. "Why, how on earth do you manage it? It appears to me a most outlandish plan."

"There is nothing easier," said Mr. Lester, "I can show you the arrangement presently when I take you over the church. The juice of the grapes is merely pressed out into a bason, and then strained direct into the chalice. We have proper grape squeezers, and it is no trouble."

"I can't see the use of it, I must confess."

"Perhaps you have not thought or read much about the subject; and if you have, perhaps your research has not been corroborated by personal experience, as mine has. There are some men who have been in the habit of taking too much strong drink, and the very *smell* of it is fatal to their good resolution of abstaining. They dare not trust themselves to go even to the Lord's table, lest the smell and taste of the liquor which has proved such a snare to them should regain its power and lead them back to destruction. I myself knew such a case not very long ago. A man who had been a drunkard was reformed, and, I sincerely hoped, converted. He became a communicant at the parish church, and almost immediately afterwards fell back into as bad or worse a condition than formerly. He caused the death of his own wife and was tried for manslaughter."

"Ah, yes! very sad end; but he might have come to that without becoming a communicant at all. Of course it's going against the Bible to use anything but wine. It was

used at the first institution of the sacrament, and we certainly have the example of Christ Himself, at the marriage in Cana, to take wine, even as a beverage, for He made it."

"Has it ever occurred to you," asked the Rector, "that the wine made on that occasion was anything *more* than the pure juice of the grape?"

"Oh, now, you are going too far!" exclaimed his visitor. "You are bringing down the Divine act to your own standard."

"Not so," answered Lester, with solemn earnestness; "I think it is quite the other way. If you argue that the good Lord, who at first made all things by His word and pronounced them to be 'very good,' *could* produce nothing at such a time, or at *any* time, but the fiery poisonous fluid which *men* manufacture and *call* wine, it is *you*, not I, that seek to drag down the power and goodness of the Saviour to suit the vitiated tastes and money-getting schemes of the age."

"But," urged Sheepshanks, after a long pause, during which, with knit brows, he contemplated the carpet, "even the very people for whom the miracle was performed pronounced it the '*best wine.*'"

"Have you ever tasted the juice as newly squeezed into the cup?"

"No; I can't say that I have; but I suppose it's the same as eating grapes."

"Not at all. Allow me to prove it to you." Rising and going to a side-table, upon which stood a bowl of fine black grapes, the Rector took up a pair of silver squeezers,

and, pressing the juice from a large bunch into a small goblet, handed it to the Reverend Silas, who, raising it to his lips, took a small sip to begin with. Knitting his brows, he took another; then, nodding his head, he took a deeper draught, and was about to return it to Mr. Lester, who stood before him intently watching the process. "Drink it all," he said, laughing; "it can't hurt you."

Silas drank it all, set down the goblet, and, with a shadow of shame upon his face, confessed, "It's the best wine I've tasted for many a long day, and no mistake. But those are very special grapes of yours, of course?"

"They are only English grapes from my own vinery," replied the Rector; "not so fine in flavour as those grown in the Holy Land," he added, with playful malice.

"I couldn't have believed it. But now—*how* do you manage when you can't get grapes, eh?"

"There are but few times when I cannot procure them. I make special provision on my own estate for their cultivation, so as to be supplied as far as possible independently of foreign sources. During such rare seasons when they are not to be procured at any price, we omit the service."

"Dear me! But surely you have no warrant for such an omission. It seems a very irregular and unorthodox way of going on."

"It may appear so to you at first sight, but a little reflection will, I think, convince you that it is only in the appearance."

"It wouldn't do at all for us Londoners. Why, we

have a celebration every Sunday, to say nothing of special occasions—holy days, saints' festivals, and so forth."

"Probably so," replied Mr. Lester; "but you will admit that the multiplication of services, or celebrations, or of anything, is no proof that the original intention of their Founder is being carried out?"

"No; I suppose it is not," said Sheepshanks, after a pause.

"You will admit also, I presume," continued the Rector, "that the communion takes the place of the passover feast, which was celebrated once a-year only? And it appears to me that—putting aside the matter of the grapes—the frequent repetitions of this Christian feast in the present day are a decided exaggeration of the original intention, and are likely to lead to that familiarity which, we are told, breeds contempt."

"But the apostles and early Church broke bread even *daily*."

"We know that they continued 'daily with one accord in the temple, and that the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.' But it does not say that they broke bread daily, but 'from house to house,' which simply means that they held the memorial feast at home instead of in the temple."

"Well," exclaimed the Reverend Silas, somewhat taken aback at having misquoted so simple a verse, "you will bear me out that the apostle says, in his directions to the Corinthians, that it was to be held often—'as *oft* as ye do it?'"

"We do not find that expression in either of the Gospels," answered the Rector. "Indeed, there is nothing in either of the accounts given by the evangelists to warrant its perpetuation at all; and I suppose the Quakers take their premise for the non-observance of the Lord's Supper upon that ground. I should be sorry to doubt the Christianity of many of those excellent people because they do not see the necessity of observing ceremonies of any kind. The Book of Common Prayer itself speaks only of three celebrations during the year. The Presbyterians have, I believe, only four; so you see it would not be difficult to provide them with something purer than brandied port on those occasions. I think there is no irregularity in our sometimes omitting the service, especially upon such a foundation. You may perhaps be inclined to condemn me as being wholly unorthodox when I say, and I *do* say it solemnly, that I would rather adopt the method of our Christian brethren the Quakers, and drop the ceremony altogether, than I would hand to a reformed drunkard that which has been his snare and bane and which might have lured him on to irremediable destruction, or administer to a young convert, a member perhaps of the Band of Hope, the first taste of that wine which my Bible tells me is a mocker, and which at the last biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder; but which, alas! is used almost universally as a symbol of that which alone can cleanse us from all sin. Looking back upon my own past life of sin and wretchedness, caused entirely by the use of these deadly drinks, I should feel, if I gave a single drop of intoxicating liquor

to anyone under any pretence whatever, that I was guilty of a great sin. I am aware that I stand nearly alone in this, perhaps entirely so, in adhering so rigidly to the use of the pure juice of the grape alone. But probably I have no clerical brother who has suffered as I have. If they had, I am fain to believe they would act as I do."

The Reverend Silas Sheepshanks remained silent a full half minute with his eyes fixed upon the floor then looking up, he said—

"You have astounded me. I must confess that, hearing from some of my friends at Leeds that you were going on in what they think a very strange way,—that you were a bit of a fanatic, you know,—I thought it would be for the general good if I could convince you of your error and bring you to reason. I little thought that you were going to unsettle *my* mind upon any point, especially the one we have been talking about; but rest assured I shall return to my London parish with a new line of thought in my head. I shall be glad to hear more from you another time; and if you come my way, I hope you'll make my house your home, so that we could improve this short acquaintance. I can't stay longer now, but I am immensely glad I took the trouble to come over and have a chat with you."

"And I am exceedingly thankful if I have been permitted to say anything that will be helpful to you," replied Mr. Lester. "I will walk with you to the church, which you must not return to London without having seen."

And here we must leave them.

A history must be broken off at some point. We cannot follow the Rev. Silas Sheepshanks to his London home now, although we may do so in the future. And the quiet home at Cherryfield is not likely to present any other startling event worth the chronicling just yet. May the inhabitants long live their life of peaceful usefulness!

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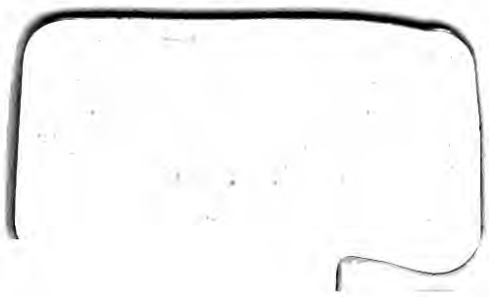
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