

LET EVERY MAN MIND HIS OWN BUSINESS.

"And so you will not sign this paper?" said Alfred Melton to his cousin, a fine-looking young man, who was lounging by the centre table.

"Not I, indeed. What in life have I to do with these decidedly vulgar temperance pledges? Pshaw! they have a relish of whiskey in their very essence!"

"Come, come, Cousin Melton," said a brilliant, dark-eyed girl, who had been lolling on the sofa during the conference, "I beg of you to give over attempting to evangelize Edward. You see, as Falstaff has it, 'he is little better than one of the wicked.' You must not waste such valuable temperance documents on him."

"But, seriously, Melton, my good fellow," resumed Edward, "this signing, and sealing, and pledging is altogether an unnecessary affair for me. My past and present habits, my situation in life,--in short, every thing that can be mentioned with regard to me,--goes against the supposition of my ever becoming the slave of a vice so debasing; and this pledging myself to avoid it is something altogether needless--nay, by implication, it is degrading. As to what you say of my influence, I am inclined to the opinion, that if every man will look to himself, every man will be looked to. This modern notion of tacking the whole responsibility of society on to every individual is one I am not at all

inclined to adopt; for, first, I know it is a troublesome doctrine; and, secondly, I doubt if it be a true one. For both which reasons, I shall decline extending to it my patronage."

"Well, positively," exclaimed the lady, "you gentlemen have the gift of continuance in an uncommon degree. You have discussed this matter backward and forward till I am ready to perish. I will take the matter in hand myself, and sign a temperance pledge for Edward, and see that he gets into none of those naughty courses upon which you have been so pathetic."

"I dare say," said Melton, glancing on her brilliant face with evident admiration, "that you will be the best temperance pledge he could have. But every man, cousin, may not be so fortunate."

"But, Melton," said Edward, "seeing my steady habits are so well provided for, you must carry your logic and eloquence to some poor fellow less favored." And thus the conference ended.

"What a good disinterested fellow Melton is!" said Edward, after he had left.

"Yes, good, as the day is long," said Augusta, "but rather prosy, after all. This tiresome temperance business! One never hears the end of it nowadays. Temperance papers--temperance tracts--temperance hotels--temperance this, that, and the other thing, even down to

temperance pocket handkerchiefs for little boys! Really, the world is getting intemperately temperate."

"Ah, well! with the security you have offered, Augusta, I shall dread no temptation."

Though there was nothing peculiar in these words, yet there was a certain earnestness of tone that called the color into the face of Augusta, and set her to sewing with uncommon assiduity. And thereupon Edward proceeded with some remark about "guardian angels," together with many other things of the kind, which, though they contain no more that is new than a temperance lecture, always seem to have a peculiar freshness to people in certain circumstances. In fact, before the hour was at an end, Edward and Augusta had forgotten where they began, and had wandered far into that land of anticipations and bright dreams which surrounds the young and loving before they eat of the tree of experience, and gain the fatal knowledge of good and evil.

But here, stopping our sketching pencil, let us throw in a little background and perspective that will enable our readers to perceive more readily the entire picture.

Edward Howard was a young man whose brilliant talents and captivating manners had placed him first in the society in which he moved. Though without property or weight of family connections, he had become a leader in the circles where these appendages are most considered, and there

were none of their immunities and privileges that were not freely at his disposal.

Augusta Elmore was conspicuous in all that lies within the sphere of feminine attainment. She was an orphan, and accustomed from a very early age to the free enjoyment and control of an independent property. This circumstance, doubtless, added to the magic of her personal graces in procuring for her that flattering deference which beauty and wealth secure.

Her mental powers were naturally superior, although, from want of motive, they had received no development, except such as would secure success in society. Native good sense, with great strength of feeling and independence of mind, had saved her from becoming heartless and frivolous. She was better fitted to lead and to influence than to be influenced or led. And hence, though not swayed by any habitual sense of moral responsibility, the tone of her character seemed altogether more elevated than the average of fashionable society.

General expectation had united the destiny of two persons who seemed every way fitted for each other, and for once general expectation did not err. A few months after the interview mentioned were witnessed the festivities and congratulations of their brilliant and happy marriage.

Never did two young persons commence life under happier auspices. "What an exact match!" "What a beautiful couple!" said all the gossips. "They

seem made for each other," said every one; and so thought the happy lovers themselves.

Love, which with persons of strong character is always an earnest and sobering principle, had made them thoughtful and considerate; and as they looked forward to future life, and talked of the days before them, their plans and ideas were as rational as any plans can be, when formed entirely with reference to this life, without any regard to another.

For a while their absorbing attachment to each other tended to withdraw them from the temptations and allurements of company; and many a long winter evening passed delightfully in the elegant quietude of home, as they read, and sang, and talked of the past, and dreamed of the future in each other's society. But, contradictory as it may appear to the theory of the sentimentalist, it is nevertheless a fact, that two persons cannot always find sufficient excitement in talking to each other merely; and this is especially true of those to whom high excitement has been a necessary of life. After a while, the young couple, though loving each other none the less, began to respond to the many calls which invited them again into society, and the pride they felt in each other added zest to the pleasures of their return.

As the gaze of admiration followed the graceful motions of the beautiful wife, and the whispered tribute went round the circle whenever she entered, Edward felt a pride beyond all that flattery, addressed to himself, had ever excited; and Augusta, when told of the convivial

talents and powers of entertainment which distinguished her husband, could not resist the temptation of urging him into society even oftener than his own wishes would have led him.

Alas! neither of them knew the perils of constant excitement, nor supposed that, in thus alienating themselves from the pure and simple pleasures of home, they were risking their whole capital of happiness. It is in indulging the first desire for extra stimulus that the first and deepest danger to domestic peace lies. Let that stimulus be either bodily or mental, its effects are alike to be dreaded.

The man or the woman to whom habitual excitement of any kind has become essential has taken the first step towards ruin. In the case of a woman,

it leads to discontent, fretfulness, and dissatisfaction with the quiet duties of domestic life; in the case of a man, it leads almost invariably to animal stimulus, ruinous alike to the powers of body and mind.

Augusta, fondly trusting to the virtue of her husband, saw no danger in the constant round of engagements which were gradually drawing his attention from the graver cares of business, from the pursuit of self-improvement, and from the love of herself. Already there was in her horizon the cloud "as big as a man's hand"--the precursor of future darkness and tempest; but, too confident and buoyant, she saw it not.

It was not until the cares and duties of a mother began to confine her at home, that she first felt, with a startling sensation of fear, that there was an alteration in her husband, though even then the change was so shadowy and indefinite that it could not be defined by words.

It was known by that quick, prophetic sense which reveals to the heart of woman the first variation in the pulse of affection, though it be so slight that no other touch can detect it.

Edward was still fond, affectionate, admiring; and when he tendered her all the little attentions demanded by her situation, or caressed and praised his beautiful son, she felt satisfied and happy. But when she saw that, even without her, the convivial circle had its attractions, and that he could leave her to join it, she sighed, she scarce knew why. "Surely," she said, "I am not so selfish as to wish to rob him of pleasure because I cannot enjoy it with him. But yet, once he told me there was no pleasure where I was not. Alas! is it true, what I have so often heard, that such feelings cannot always last?"

Poor Augusta! she knew not how deep reason she had to fear. She saw not the temptations that surrounded her husband in the circles where to all the stimulus of wit and intellect was often added the zest of wine, used far too freely for safety.

Already had Edward become familiar with a degree of physical excitement which touches the very verge of intoxication; yet, strong in

self-confidence, and deluded by the customs of society, he dreamed not of danger. The traveller who has passed above the rapids of Niagara may have noticed the spot where the first white sparkling ripple announces the downward tendency of the waters. All here is brilliancy and beauty; and as the waters ripple and dance in the sunbeam, they seem only as if inspired by a spirit of new life, and not as hastening to a dreadful fall. So the first approach to intemperance, that ruins both body and soul, seems only like the buoyancy and exulting freshness of a new life, and the unconscious voyager feels his bark undulating with a thrill of delight, ignorant of the inexorable hurry, the tremendous sweep, with which the laughing waters urge him on beyond the reach of hope or recovery.

It was at this period in the life of Edward that one judicious and manly friend, who would have had the courage to point out to him the danger that every one else perceived, might have saved him. But among the circle of his acquaintances there was none such. "Let every man mind his own business" was their universal maxim. True, heads were gravely shaken, and Mr. A. regretted to Mr. B. that so promising a young man seemed about to ruin himself. But one was "no relation," of Edward's, and the other "felt a delicacy in speaking on such a subject," and therefore, according to a very ancient precedent, they "passed by on the other side." Yet it was at Mr. A.'s sideboard, always sparkling with the choicest wine, that he had felt the first excitement of extra stimulus; it was at Mr. B.'s house that the convivial club began to hold their meetings, which, after a time, found a more appropriate place in a

public hotel. It is thus that the sober, the regular, and the discreet, whose constitution saves them from liabilities to excess, will accompany the ardent and excitable to the very verge of danger, and then wonder at their want of self-control.

It was a cold winter evening, and the wind whistled drearily around the closed shutters of the parlor in which Augusta was sitting. Every thing around her bore the marks of elegance and comfort.

Splendid books and engravings lay about in every direction. Vases of rare and costly flowers exhaled perfume, and magnificent mirrors multiplied every object. All spoke of luxury and repose, save the anxious and sad countenance of its mistress.

It was late, and she had watched anxiously for her husband for many long hours. She drew out her gold and diamond repeater, and looked at it. It was long past midnight. She sighed as she remembered the pleasant evenings they had passed together, as her eye fell on the books they had read together, and on her piano and harp, now silent, and thought of all he had said and looked in those days when each was all to the other.

She was aroused from this melancholy revery by a loud knocking at the street door. She hastened to open it, but started back at the sight it disclosed--her husband borne by four men.

"Dead! is he dead?" she screamed, in agony.

"No, ma'am," said one of the men, "but he might as well be dead as in such a fix as this."

The whole truth, in all its degradation, flashed on the mind of Augusta. Without a question or comment, she motioned to the sofa in the parlor, and her husband was laid there. She locked the street door, and when the last retreating footstep had died away, she turned to the sofa, and stood gazing in fixed and almost stupefied silence on the face of her senseless husband.

At once she realized the whole of her fearful lot. She saw before her the blight of her own affections, the ruin of her helpless children, the disgrace and misery of her husband. She looked around her in helpless despair, for she well knew the power of the vice whose deadly seal was set upon her husband. As one who is struggling and sinking in the waters casts a last dizzy glance at the green sunny banks and distant trees which seem sliding from his view, so did all the scenes of her happy days pass in a moment before her, and she groaned aloud in bitterness of spirit. "Great God! help me, help me," she prayed. "Save him--O, save my husband."

Augusta was a woman of no common energy of spirit, and when the first wild burst of anguish was over, she resolved not to be wanting to her husband and children in a crisis so dreadful.

"When he awakes," she mentally exclaimed, "I will warn and implore; I will pour out my whole soul to save him. My poor husband, you have been misled--betrayed. But you are too good, too generous, too noble to be sacrificed without a struggle."

It was late the next morning before the stupor in which Edward was plunged began to pass off. He slowly opened his eyes, started up wildly, gazed hurriedly around the room, till his eye met the fixed and sorrowful gaze of his wife. The past instantly flashed upon him, and a deep flush passed over his countenance. There was a dead, a solemn silence, until Augusta, yielding to her agony, threw herself into his arms, and wept.

"Then you do not hate me, Augusta?" said he, sorrowfully.

"Hate you--never! But, O Edward, Edward, what has beguiled you?"

"My wife--you once promised to be my guardian in virtue--such you are, and will be. O Augusta! you have looked on what you shall never see again--never--never--so help me God!" said he, looking up with solemn earnestness.

And Augusta, as she gazed on the noble face, the ardent expression of sincerity and remorse, could not doubt that her husband was saved. But Edward's plan of reformation had one grand defect. It was merely modification and retrenchment, and not entire abandonment. He could

not feel it necessary to cut himself off entirely from the scenes and associations where temptation had met him. He considered not that, when the temperate flow of the blood and the even balance of the nerves have once been destroyed, there is, ever after, a double and fourfold liability, which often makes a man the sport of the first untoward chance.

He still contrived to stimulate sufficiently to prevent the return of a calm and healthy state of the mind and body, and to make constant self-control and watchfulness necessary.

It is a great mistake to call nothing intemperance but that degree of physical excitement which completely overthrows the mental powers. There is a state of nervous excitability, resulting from what is often called moderate stimulation, which often long precedes this, and is, in regard to it, like the premonitory warnings of the fatal cholera--an unsuspected draught on the vital powers, from which, at any moment, they may sink into irremediable collapse.

It is in this state, often, that the spirit of gambling or of wild speculation is induced by the morbid cravings of an over-stimulated system. Unsatisfied with the healthy and regular routine of business, and the laws of gradual and solid prosperity, the excited and unsteady imagination leads its subjects to daring risks, with the alternative of unbounded gain on the one side, or of utter ruin on the other. And when, as is too often the case, that ruin comes, unrestrained and desperate

intemperance is the wretched resort to allay the ravings of disappointment and despair.

Such was the case with Edward. He had lost his interest in his regular business, and he embarked the bulk of his property in a brilliant scheme then in vogue; and when he found a crisis coming, threatening ruin and beggary, he had recourse to the fatal stimulus, which, alas! he had never wholly abandoned.

At this time he spent some months in a distant city, separated from his wife and family, while the insidious power of temptation daily increased, as he kept up, by artificial stimulus, the flagging vigor of his mind and nervous system.

It came at last--the blow which shattered alike his brilliant dreams and his real prosperity. The large fortune brought by his wife vanished in a moment, so that scarcely a pittance remained in his hands. From the distant city where he had been to superintend his schemes, he thus wrote to his too confiding wife:--

"Augusta, all is over! expect no more from your husband--believe no more of his promises--for he is lost to you and you to him. Augusta, our property is gone; your property, which I have blindly risked, is all swallowed up. But is that the worst? No, no, Augusta; I am lost--lost, body and soul, and as irretrievably as the perishing riches I have squandered. Once I had energy--health--nerve--resolution; but all are

gone: yes, yes, I have yielded--I do yield daily to what is at once my tormentor and my temporary refuge from intolerable misery. You remember the sad hour you first knew your husband was a drunkard. Your look on that morning of misery--shall I ever forget it? Yet, blind and confiding as you were, how soon did your ill-judged confidence in me return! Vain hopes! I was even then past recovery--even then sealed over to blackness of darkness forever.

"Alas! my wife, my peerless wife, why am I your husband? why the father of such children as you have given me? Is there nothing in your unequalled loveliness--nothing in the innocence of our helpless babes, that is powerful enough to recall me? No, there is not.

"Augusta, you know not the dreadful gnawing, the intolerable agony of this master passion. I walk the floor--I think of my own dear home, my high hopes, my proud expectations, my children, my wife, my own immortal soul. I feel that I am sacrificing all--feel it till I am withered with agony; but the hour comes--the burning hour, and all is in vain. I shall return to you no more, Augusta. All the little wreck I have saved I send: you have friends, relatives--above all, you have an energy of mind, a capacity of resolute action, beyond that of ordinary women, and you shall never be bound--the living to the dead. True, you will suffer, thus to burst the bonds that unite us; but be resolute, for you will suffer more to watch from day to day the slow workings of death and ruin in your husband. Would you stay with me, to see every vestige of what you once loved passing away--to endure the caprice, the moroseness, the

delirious anger of one no longer master of himself? Would you make your children victims and fellow-sufferers with you? No! dark and dreadful is my path! I will walk it alone: no one shall go with me.

"In some peaceful retirement you may concentrate your strong feelings upon your children, and bring them up to fill a place in your heart which a worthless husband has abandoned. If I leave you now, you will remember me as I have been--you will love me and weep for me when dead; but if you stay with me, your love will be worn out; I shall become the object of disgust and loathing. Therefore farewell, my wife--my first, best love, farewell! with you I part with hope,--

'And with hope, farewell fear,
Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost:
Evil, be thou my good.'

This is a wild strain, but fit for me: do not seek for me, do not write: nothing can save me."

Thus abruptly began and ended the letter that conveyed to Augusta the death doom of her hopes. There are moments of agony when the most worldly heart is pressed upward to God, even as a weight will force upward the reluctant water. Augusta had been a generous, a high-minded, an affectionate woman, but she had lived entirely for this world. Her chief good had been her husband and her children. These had been her pride, her reliance, her dependence. Strong in her own resources, she

had never felt the need of looking to a higher power for assistance and happiness. But when this letter fell from her trembling hand, her heart died within her at its wild and reckless bitterness.

In her desperation she looked up to God. "What have I to live for now?" was the first feeling of her heart.

But she repressed this inquiry of selfish agony, and besought almighty assistance to nerve her weakness; and here first began that practical acquaintance with the truths and hopes of religion which changed her whole character.

The possibility of blind, confiding idolatry of any earthly object was swept away by the fall of her husband, and with the full energy of a decided and desolate spirit, she threw herself on the protection of an almighty Helper. She followed her husband to the city whither he had gone, found him, and vainly attempted to save.

There were the usual alternations of short-lived reformations, exciting hopes only to be destroyed. There was the gradual sinking of the body, the decay of moral feeling and principle--the slow but sure approach of disgusting animalism, which marks the progress of the drunkard.

It was some years after that a small and partly ruinous tenement in the outskirts of A. received a new family. The group consisted of four children, whose wan and wistful countenances, and still, unchildlike

deportment, testified an early acquaintance with want and sorrow. There was the mother, faded and care-worn, whose dark and melancholy eyes, pale cheeks, and compressed lips told of years of anxiety and endurance. There was the father, with haggard face, unsteady step, and that callous, reckless air, that betrayed long familiarity with degradation and crime. Who, that had seen Edward Howard in the morning and freshness of his days, could have recognized him in this miserable husband and father? or who, in this worn and woe-stricken woman, would have known the beautiful, brilliant, and accomplished Augusta? Yet such changes are not fancy, as many a bitter and broken heart can testify.

Augusta had followed her guilty husband through many a change and many a weary wandering. All hope of reformation had gradually faded away. Her own eyes had seen, her ears had heard, all those disgusting details, too revolting to be portrayed; for in drunkenness there is no royal road--no salvo for greatness of mind, refinement of taste, or tenderness of feeling. All alike are merged in the corruption of a moral death.

The traveller, who met Edward reeling by the roadside, was sometimes startled to hear the fragments of classical lore, or wild bursts of half-remembered poetry, mixing strangely with the imbecile merriment of intoxication. But when he stopped to gaze, there was no further mark on his face or in his eye by which he could be distinguished from the loathsome and lowest drunkard.

Augusta had come with her husband to a city where they were wholly

unknown, that she might at least escape the degradation of their lot in the presence of those who had known them in better days. The long and dreadful struggle that annihilated the hopes of this life had raised her feelings to rest upon the next, and the habit of communion with God, induced by sorrows which nothing else could console, had given a tender dignity to her character such as nothing else could bestow.

It is true, she deeply loved her children; but it was with a holy, chastened love, such as inspired the sentiment once breathed by Him "who was made perfect through sufferings."

"For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified."

Poverty, deep poverty, had followed their steps, but yet she had not fainted. Talents which in her happier days had been nourished merely as luxuries, were now stretched to the utmost to furnish a support; while from the resources of her own reading she drew that which laid the foundation for early mental culture in her children.

Augusta had been here but a few weeks before her footsteps were traced by her only brother, who had lately discovered her situation, and urged her to forsake her unworthy husband and find refuge with him.

"Augusta, my sister, I have found you!" he exclaimed, as he suddenly entered one day, while she was busied with the work of her family.

"Henry, my dear brother!" There was a momentary illumination of countenance accompanying these words, which soon faded into a mournful quietness, as she cast her eyes around on the scanty accommodations and mean apartment.

"I see how it is, Augusta; step by step, you are sinking--dragged down by a vain sense of duty to one no longer worthy. I cannot bear it any longer; I have come to take you away."

Augusta turned from him, and looked abstractedly out of the window. Her features settled in thought. Their expression gradually deepened from their usual tone of mild, resigned sorrow to one of keen anguish.

"Henry," said she, turning towards him, "never was mortal woman so blessed in another as I once was in him. How can I forget it? Who knew him in those days that did not admire and love him? They tempted and insnared him; and even I urged him into the path of danger. He fell, and there was none to help. I urged reformation, and he again and again promised, resolved, and began. But again they tempted him--even his very best friends; yes, and that, too, when they knew his danger. They led him on as far as it was safe for them to go, and when the sweep of his more excitable temperament took him past the point of safety and decency, they stood by, and coolly wondered and lamented. How often was he led on by such heartless friends to humiliating falls, and then driven to desperation by the cold look, averted faces, and cruel sneers of those whose medium temperament and cooler blood saved them from the

snare which they saw were enslaving him. What if I had forsaken him then? What account should I have rendered to God? Every time a friend has been alienated by his comrades, it has seemed to seal him with another seal. I am his wife--and mine will be the last. Henry, when I leave him, I know his eternal ruin is sealed. I cannot do it now; a little longer--a little longer; the hour, I see, must come. I know my duty to my children forbids me to keep them here; take them--they are my last earthly comforts, Henry--but you must take them away. It may be--O God--perhaps it must be, that I shall soon follow; but not till I have tried once more. What is this present life to one who has suffered as I have? Nothing. But eternity! O Henry! eternity--how can I abandon him to everlasting despair! Under the breaking of my heart I have borne up. I have borne up under all that can try a woman; but this thought----" She stopped, and seemed struggling with herself; but at last, borne down by a tide of agony, she leaned her head on her hands; the tears streamed through her fingers, and her whole frame shook with convulsive sobs.

Her brother wept with her; nor dared he again to touch the point so solemnly guarded. The next day Augusta parted from her children, hoping something from feelings that, possibly, might be stirred by their absence in the bosom of their father.

It was about a week after this that Augusta one evening presented herself at the door of a rich Mr. L., whose princely mansion was one of the ornaments of the city of A. It was not till she reached the

sumptuous drawing room that she recognized in Mr. L. one whom she and her husband had frequently met in the gay circles of their early life. Altered as she was, Mr. L. did not recognize her, but compassionately handed her a chair, and requested her to wait the return of his lady, who was out; and then turning, he resumed his conversation with another gentleman.

"Now, Dallas," said he, "you are altogether excessive and intemperate in this matter. Society is not to be reformed by every man directing his efforts towards his neighbor, but by every man taking care of himself. It is you and I, my dear sir, who must begin with ourselves, and every other man must do the same; and then society will be effectually reformed. Now this modern way, by which every man considers it his duty to attend to the spiritual matters of his next-door neighbor, is taking the business at the wrong end altogether. It makes a vast deal of appearance, but it does very little good."

"But suppose your neighbor feels no disposition to attend to his own improvement--what then?"

"Why, then it is his own concern, and not mine. What my Maker requires is, that I do my duty, and not fret about my neighbor's."

"But, my friend, that is the very question. What is the duty your Maker requires? Does it not include some regard to your neighbor, some care and thought for his interest and improvement?"

"Well, well, I do that by setting a good example. I do not mean by example what you do--that is, that I am to stop drinking wine because it may lead him to drink brandy, any more than that I must stop eating because he may eat too much and become a dyspeptic--but that I am to use my wine, and every thing else, temperately and decently, and thus set him a good example."

The conversation was here interrupted by the return of Mrs. L. It recalled, in all its freshness, to the mind of Augusta the days when both she and her husband had thus spoken and thought.

Ah, how did these sentiments appear to her now--lonely, helpless, forlorn--the wife of a ruined husband, the mother of more than orphan children! How different from what they seemed, when, secure in ease, in wealth, in gratified affections, she thoughtlessly echoed the common phraseology, "Why must people concern themselves so much in their neighbors' affairs? Let every man mind his own business."

Augusta received in silence from Mrs. L. the fine sewing for which she came, and left the room.

"Ellen," said Mr. L. to his wife; "that poor woman must be in trouble of some kind or other. You must go some time, and see if any thing can be done for her."

"How singular!" said Mrs. L.; "she reminds me all the time of Augusta Howard. You remember her, my dear?"

"Yes, poor thing! and her husband too. That was a shocking affair of Edward Howard's. I hear that he became an intemperate, worthless fellow. Who could have thought it!"

"But you recollect, my dear," said Mrs. L., "I predicted it six months before it was talked of. You remember, at the wine party which you gave after Mary's wedding, he was so excited that he was hardly decent. I mentioned then that he was getting into dangerous ways. But he was such an excitable creature, that two or three glasses would put him quite beside himself. And there is George Eldon, who takes off his ten or twelve glasses, and no one suspects it."

"Well, it was a great pity," replied Mr. L.; "Howard was worth a dozen George Eldons."

"Do you suppose," said Dallas, who had listened thus far in silence, "that if he had moved in a circle where it was the universal custom to banish all stimulating drinks, he would thus have fallen?"

"I cannot say," said Mr. L.; "perhaps not."

Mr. Dallas was a gentleman of fortune and leisure, and of an ardent and enthusiastic temperament. Whatever engaged him absorbed his whole soul;

and of late years, his mind had become deeply engaged in schemes of philanthropy for the improvement of his fellow-men. He had, in his benevolent ministrations, often passed the dwelling of Edward, and was deeply interested in the pale and patient wife and mother. He made acquaintance with her through the aid of her children, and, in one way and another, learned particulars of their history that awakened the deepest interest and concern. None but a mind as sanguine as his would have dreamed of attempting to remedy such hopeless misery by the reformation of him who was its cause. But such a plan had actually occurred to him. The remarks of Mr. and Mrs. L. recalled the idea, and he soon found that his intended protégé was the very Edward Howard whose early history was thus disclosed. He learned all the minutiae from these his early associates without disclosing his aim, and left them still more resolved upon his benevolent plan.

He watched his opportunity when Edward was free from the influence of stimulus, and it was just after the loss of his children had called forth some remains of his better nature. Gradually and kindly he tried to touch the springs of his mind, and awaken some of its buried sensibilities.

"It is in vain, Mr. Dallas, to talk thus to me," said Edward, when, one day, with the strong eloquence of excited feeling, he painted the motives for attempting reformation; "you might as well attempt to reclaim the lost in hell. Do you think," he continued, in a wild, determined manner--"do you think I do not know all you can tell me? I

have it all by heart, sir; no one can preach such discourses as I can on this subject: I know all--believe all--as the devils believe and tremble."

"Ay, but," said Dallas, "to you there is hope; you are not to ruin yourself forever."

"And who the devil are you, to speak to me in this way?" said Edward, looking up from his sullen despair with a gleam of curiosity, if not of hope.

"God's messenger to you, Edward Howard," said Dallas, fixing his keen eye upon him solemnly; "to you, Edward Howard, who have thrown away talents, hope, and health--who have blasted the heart of your wife, and beggared your suffering children. To you I am the messenger of your God--by me he offers health, and hope, and self-respect, and the regard of your fellow-men. You may heal the broken heart of your wife, and give back a father to your helpless children. Think of it, Howard: what if it were possible? Only suppose it. What would it be again to feel yourself a man, beloved and respected as you once were, with a happy home, a cheerful wife, and smiling little ones? Think how you could repay your poor wife for all her tears! What hinders you from gaining all this?"

"Just what hindered the rich man in hell--'between us there is a great gulf fixed;' it lies between me and all that is good; my wife, my children, my hope of heaven, are all on the other side."

"Ay, but this gulf can be passed: Howard, what would you give to be a temperate man?"

"What would I give?" said Howard. He thought for a moment, and burst into tears.

"Ah, I see how it is," said Dallas; "you need a friend, and God has sent you one."

"What can you do for me, Mr. Dallas?" said Edward, in a tone of wonder at the confidence of his assurances.

"I will tell you what I can do: I can take you to my house, and give you a room, and watch over you until the strongest temptations are past--I can give you business again. I can do all for you that needs to be done, if you will give yourself to my care."

"O God of mercy!" exclaimed the unhappy man, "is there hope for me? I cannot believe it possible; but take me where you choose--I will follow and obey."

A few hours witnessed the transfer of the lost husband to one of the retired apartments in the elegant mansion of Dallas, where he found his anxious and grateful wife still stationed as his watchful guardian.

Medical treatment, healthful exercise, useful employment, simple food, and pure water were connected with a personal supervision by Dallas, which, while gently and politely sustained, at first amounted to actual imprisonment.

For a time the reaction from the sudden suspension of habitual stimulus was dreadful, and even with tears did the unhappy man entreat to be permitted to abandon the undertaking. But the resolute steadiness of Dallas and the tender entreaties of his wife prevailed. It is true that he might be said to be saved "so as by fire;" for a fever, and a long and fierce delirium, wasted him almost to the borders of the grave.

But, at length, the struggle between life and death was over, and though it left him stretched on the bed of sickness, emaciated and weak, yet he was restored to his right mind, and was conscious of returning health. Let any one who has laid a friend in the grave, and known what it is to have the heart fail with longing for them day by day, imagine the dreamy and unreal joy of Augusta when she began again to see in Edward the husband so long lost to her. It was as if the grave had given back the dead.

"Augusta!" said he, faintly, as, after a long and quiet sleep, he awoke free from delirium. She bent over him. "Augusta, I am redeemed--I am saved--I feel in myself that I am made whole."

The high heart of Augusta melted at these words. She trembled and wept.

Her husband wept also, and after a pause he continued,--

"It is more than being restored to this life--I feel that it is the beginning of eternal life. It is the Savior who sought me out, and I know that he is able to keep me from falling."

But we will draw a veil over a scene which words have little power to paint.

"Pray, Dallas," said Mr. L., one day, "who is that fine-looking young man whom I met in your office this morning? I thought his face seemed familiar."

"It is a Mr. Howard--a young lawyer whom I have lately taken into business with me."

"Strange! Impossible!" said Mr. L. "Surely this cannot be the Howard that I once knew."

"I believe he is," said Mr. Dallas.

"Why, I thought he was gone--dead and done over, long ago, with intemperance."

"He was so; few have ever sunk lower; but he now promises even to outdo all that was hoped of him."

"Strange! Why, Dallas, what did bring about this change?"

"I feel a delicacy in mentioning how it came about to you, Mr. L., as there undoubtedly was a great deal of 'interference with other men's matters' in the business. In short, the young man fell in the way of one of those meddling fellows, who go prowling about, distributing tracts, forming temperance societies, and all that sort of stuff."

"Come, come, Dallas," said Mr. L., smiling, "I must hear the story, for all that."

"First call with me at this house," said Dallas, stopping before the door of a neat little mansion. They were soon in the parlor. The first sight that met their eyes was Edward Howard, who, with a cheek glowing with exercise, was tossing aloft a blooming boy, while Augusta was watching his motions, her face radiant with smiles.

"Mr. and Mrs. Howard, this is Mr. L., an old acquaintance, I believe."

There was a moment of mutual embarrassment and surprise, soon dispelled, however, by the frank cordiality of Edward. Mr. L. sat down, but could scarce withdraw his eyes from the countenance of Augusta, in whose eloquent face he recognized a beauty of a higher cast than even in her earlier days.

He glanced about the apartment. It was simply but tastefully furnished, and wore an air of retired, domestic comfort. There were books, engravings, and musical instruments. Above all, there were four happy, healthy-looking children, pursuing studies or sports at the farther end of the room.

After a short call they regained the street.

"Dallas, you are a happy man," said Mr. L.; "that family will be a mine of jewels to you."

He was right. Every soul saved from pollution and ruin is a jewel to him that reclaims it, whose lustre only eternity can disclose; and therefore it is written, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."