

The Reformed.

A Sketch from Real Life.

BY GEORGE NOARE.

—“ Every day some sailor's wife,
The masters of some merchant, and the merchant,
Have just our theme of woe.”—*Tempest*.

“ So foul and fair a day, I have not seen.”—*Macbeth*.

It was a tempestuous night. The wind whistled fearfully, and hailstones, whose size threatened to demolish the windows, rattled against them with a pertinacity, as if to test their strength. In the parlour of a fine old fashioned house, beside a rather meagre fire, were the family of Mr. Brunskill, consisting of himself, wife, daughter, and faithful maid servant. A heavy gloom, more of sorrow than anger, rested on each brow, not even excepting the maid servant alluded to, from whose eager glances, over and anon cast towards the family group, the close observer would have noticed the deep interest she took in the course of their grief.

The picture was a melancholy one, for virtue in distress has no light shade to relieve;—all around and about it is dark and sombre,—virtue! did we say;—yea—the reformed and penitent are well worthy the title. The sensitive artist would have thrown aside his pencil, if the subject had been presented to his view as we have described it, and his heart have received an impression which he could not have transferred to canvass.

“ To-morrow,” observed Mr. Brunskill, “ is the anniversary of the death of our dear Henry,—to-morrow will be ten years since the vessel in which he sailed was lost and all on board perished—all, all.”

“ Alas!” exclaimed the wife, as the tears coursed their way down her cheeks, “ to-morrow will be a melancholy day.”

“ Indeed, it will; for to-morrow this house, which belonged to my father—the furniture, which time has made, as it were, a part of ourselves, and associated with many a pleasing event in our lives, is to be sold—torn from us by the unrelenting hands of creditors. O, heavens! I am severely punished for my sins. If every man would take warning from my chequered life, he would fly from spirituous liquors as from a serpent! whose sting brings misery and sure death on aught it touches. It is through that alone that I am reduced to this stage of poverty.”

He had been wealthy, but, alas! was reduced to the most abject state of poverty, like thousands before him, and all through intemperance!—that monster of iniquity which annually carries hundreds and hundreds to an untimely grave. O! that I had a voice like thunder, that I might proclaim to all the world its evils! What is the consequence of intemperance? Intemperance expels reason, drowns the memory, defaces beauty, diminishes strength, inflames the blood, causes wounds incurable, both internal and external, is a witch to the senses, a devil to the soul, a thief to the purse, the beggar's companion, a wife's woe and the children's sorrow, the picture of a beast and self murderer, who drinks to others' good health, and robs himself of his own. These are but a few of the natural consequences of intemperance; we could enumerate many more, but space will not permit. Thomas Brunskill had been an habitual drunkard, but through the exertions of the members of a *Temperance Society* near this city, he reformed and became one of the staunchest supporters of Temperance, but not before his affairs became considerably embarrassed. Heaven sent the reward!

“ Will they sell everything, pa? Can we secure nothing?” asked the daughter.

“ No, my child, unless with what little money a friend has lent me, I can secure a few articles. Alice, my dear, take your pen-

cil and put them down: first, the side-board, it is true, will be to us now a superfluous piece of furniture; but it belonged to my mother, and I cannot, will not part with it.”

“ But my piano, pa! must it go?”

The wife sighed, the father cast his eyes towards the flickering fire, and the daughter was silent. The fate of the piano was decided upon. A melancholy pause in conversation plainly told how severe was the alternative; for the law never studies the feelings of its victims, when exacting the penalty of a bond.

“ Go, Mary,” said Mr. Brunskill, addressing the servant, “ go and request the sheriff's officer, who is watching the property, to walk into the parlour; he is only doing his duty; no doubt it is painful to him, as it is distressing to us. Give him a seat at our fire: for it is a severe night.”

“ It is, indeed, a fearful night,” observed Mrs. Brunskill, “ and we have behaved rude to this man.”

“ Mother, I made a fire in the room where he is, but—”

“ Speak out, child—'twas the last stick.”

“ Father, it was.”

Mary returned with the officer, a polite, gentlemanly man, for such should be the character of men who have to perform a part in the drama of life, not unlike that of the inquisitors of old, whose province it was to torture by the rack; with this difference, however, there was a physical torture, administered with all the nicety and precision of legal justice! The officer politely accepted the invitation, and endeavored to cheer his victims by enumerating many cases of similar kind, equally poignant and distressing. Thus the evening passed heavily and cheerlessly away.

On the morning of the contemplated sale, was to be seen a crowd of people flocking to the house of Mr. Brunskill; some out of sheer heartless curiosity—friends of the family, who came with mockery on their lips, and empty purses, others with an intent to purchase; but not one among the crowd showed the least desire to aid, assist, or sympathise with the distress of the family. Thus is the world; we laugh at the misfortunes of our fellow creatures, and ever block their distresses by witnessing in silence their sufferings.

The auctioneer now commenced arrangements by flourishing his hammer. The crowd gathered around him. The house was put up first, and actually described—free from all encumbrances, and subject to but very little ground rent. There were several bidders, all of whom seemed anxious to purchase it. At length it was knocked down at £1,800. “ What name?” “ Machin,” was the response, and all eyes rested on a tall, noble looking man, who had remained silent during the rapid bidding of the speculators, and who, as the whisper went round, was pronounced a total stranger.

“ It is gone,” whispered Mr. Brunskill to his wife, as he pressed her hand in silent grief. “ We have no home now.”

“ Now, gentlemen,” cried the auctioneer, “ we will sell this sideboard; in regard to which, I am requested by the creditors to say that it is an old family piece, and it is the wish of the owners to retain it if possible. I merely mention this, as it is known to you under what peculiar circumstances the things are sold.”

This had its desired effect; no one seemed willing to bid against the unfortunate man, except Mr. Machin, to whom the family piece of furniture was knocked down. A gentleman who stood by, remarked that the act was a cold hearted one. “ Was it?” sarcastically asked Mr. Machin. “ Then, sir, why did you not buy it for him?”

Mr. Brunskill was very much affected by this little incident: