

rounding cottages were decked in the beauty of winter's silver-like spangled flowers. The village gardens showed little signs of vegetation. Here and there, it is true, might be seen the green top of some favorite pot-herb, looking peeringly forth from its cold snow-bed, around which a few small footmarks pointed out where the timid hare had made a scanty meal, and then scampered off again to the more open fields. The male portion of the villagers were busy making preparations for a forth-coming *bonspiel*. My father, in company with one or two other neighbours, had gone off in the forenoon of a Monday, to inspect the state of a sheet of ice some two miles distant, and all around was happiness and glee.

How soon is joy often turned into mourning. The smile which played on the features of each member of our family in the morning, was, ere night, effaced, and supplanted by the deepest anguish and wailings of despair. The head and support of his family, the example of his neighbours, as well as the hope of his little ones, was suddenly called before the judgment-seat of God, to render an account of his stewardship. Reader! has it been your misfortune to lose a loved parent in the days of your childhood? If so, you can feel for those who mourn over such a calamity. He was taken from us, and that too without being permitted to bestow upon us his last blessing. Had we but seen him die, it would have moderated our grief; but no, it was otherwise ordered. God's ways are often mysterious, yet his will be done! My father had gone forth from his home and his family in perfect health; there was no warning, for true it is, "in the midst of life we are in death." He and his companions had enjoyed their walk to the appointed place, and were in the act of leaving the ice, when it gave way, and my father was engulfed. When he was rescued, his spirit had fled to God who gave it. He was carried back to our now mourning home, dead—*dead*. I must pass over the rest of this sad scene.

Another six months passed, and my removal to Glasgow became a desired event, although my now widowed mother had many misgivings as to my future conduct. He who would have advised and consoled her was gone, and the whole burden and responsibility of rearing a young family, rested upon her undivided efforts. Her duty, relying upon the blessing of God, she was determined to do; and no one ever had occasion to point the finger of reproach at her, whatever might be the fate of any of her children.

Installed at last in the office of Mr. S——, I spent the first three years much to my own and employer's satisfaction. The influence of youths of my own age, was, however, beginning to make encroachments on my yet somewhat rusticated nature. In the son of Mr. S—— I found one who was already pretty well initiated into all the vices, vastly too common in large cities. From my first appearance in his father's office, he had, by various acts of kindness, endeavoured to show his gratitude for the service he considered I had rendered him. These acts were extremely flattering to me, but

they were carried at last much farther than his father, or any one interested in my welfare, could wish; but they were done in such a way, as rendered me incapable of refusing them, from the fear of displeasing one for whom I entertained a great respect.

He often made the theatre a resort; the ball-room occasionally; and a sporting house almost nightly. At first, and to the first-mentioned place, I was induced to accompany him, by his presenting me with a ticket of admission; to the second-mentioned place I was introduced in the same manner; but as to the third, wine and curiosity, from what he had told me concerning it, was the cause of my visit there. *Curiosity*, a curse on it! *curiosity*, if I may so speak, caused the fall of our first parents; it has caused the fall of many since, and will cause the fall, if not guarded against, of many yet unborn. I had no natural desire to become a gambler, for I possessed a strong abhorrence to card-playing; but once admitted, I was led imperceptibly on, till I became altogether engulfed in that devil's cauldron—a gambling house.

Would that at this juncture some kind friend had stepped in, to advise me how to escape from my dreadful dilemma. I had various conversations with my devoted companion on the subject—for we were both adrift on the same doomed vessel—but he seemed alike heedless and careless as to consequences, and all the consolation I received from him was—"Try again—fortune may smile on your next attempt."

One dark night in the month of January, 1830, I left that gathering of human depravity—the gambler's den. John was by my side, but I was scarcely conscious who he was. I had drank deep, and all I possessed had passed into the hands of other parties. Had the money been my own, the consequences would have been less fearful; but it belonged to him who had striven to raise me in the scale of society, and give me a standing in the world. Alas! this was not the first sum I had so squandered; and that, too, by the advice and sanction of his own son. Reflection at that moment was impossible, as the powers of my mind were too deeply steeped in wine, for healthy exercise. Various fancies, however, spread across my mind. I had a feeble conception of the danger of my position, and as we strolled on in an opposite direction from home, visions of the gloomiest character kept floating directly in my path. In this state of mind we reached part of the public green termed "The Fleisher's Haugh." By this time the cold evening breeze, and the distance we had walked, wrought a beneficial effect upon me; but as consciousness returned, neither I nor my equally unfortunate companion, could explain why we were there, or how we had gained such an unlikely spot, on such an evening. The Clyde, close by, rolled rapidly and moaningly downward to the sea. The wind rushed drearily past. The face of the sky was completely covered with thick heavy clouds; not a single star was visible to guide our wandering and depraved hearts from earth to heaven: all above and around looked desolate and lonely, as if everything below and above