

Curtis; tampering with temptation for only a just once, has ruined many a good boy,—remember you have no father to watch over you; you must possess the firm, manly, self-denying spirit; and her lips quivered.

“My heart was steeled; I arose hastily up, and went out. Tied to wrong-strings, I think, as Tom Jones said, I muttered to myself, walking angrily down the street.

“The bad influence of bad companions was already at work in my heart. At recess, being still undecided, I believe they suspected the cause.

“I should take the liberty of judging for myself, once in awhile, and sometimes acting for myself,” cried one, with a sneering emphasis.

“Yes, that I should,” added another, drawing himself independently up.

“Shant we have a first rate skate?” exclaimed a third. “What a pity that you can’t decide to go, Curtis, you are such a capital skater.”

“Altogether it seemed as if I must

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 “Evening came,—my mother was well in her chamber. ‘I am for bed,’ I said to Sarah, soon after supper, taking up a lamp and going to my little bed-room. The door I carefully locked after me. ‘Yes, I shall go,’ muttered my headstrong will, and immediately drew on my great coat, tying on a sippet and fastening down my cap. Carefully did I open the window. It was a glorious night. The moon and stars glittered above, and the snow and ice gleamed below. Then came misgivings. What was I about to do? What bold step was I taking? But I dashed away every whispering of a better spirit, and put my foot upon the window sill. In an instant was I creeping over the roof of a shed beneath the window, from the shed I jumped into a snow-bank, and then, skates in hand, fled towards the place of meeting. The boys greeted me with loud huzzas. ‘Ready, all ready,’ was the cry. We started in the race. The ice was smooth, the air still, and we flew up the river. Soon

I got the better of my companions, and soon was far ahead,—on,—on,—on, their voices echoed in the distance, and I was alone in a narrow bend of the river, amid the bare branches of high, leafless trees. I stopped to tighten on one of my skate straps; the stillness and solemnity of the place awed me some. My mother’s quivering voice appeared to float on the air a stern reproach. I seemed to be a wanderer from the dear fireside of brothers and sisters. Just then a broad and dreadful oath from Tom Jones broke upon my ear.

“‘Oh, for the whiskey punch,’ cried Kent.

“‘I’m for a good cigar, and a glass of wine,’ shouted another, ‘aye, and I’ve not forgot the cards.’

“‘Profanity, drunkenness, and smoking! Have I abused my mother’s confidence; outraged her wishes; left my studies and home for companions like these? What sneaking, pitiful conduct is this! I am losing my own self-respect, and shall feel nothing but guilt and shame when I go back; besides, how can I tell my little brothers what is right, if I do so wrong myself? How can I dare open the Bible and read at family prayers? Why, every verse would condemn me! And what am I gaining? Nothing. I cannot really enjoy what I am ashamed of; and I am ashamed of such associates.’ All this passed through my mind with the rapidity of thought, and I instantly decided, ‘I will turn about, I will! It is not too late. I will turn about now, quick, before it is too late;’ and I made a great returning sweep on my skates.

“‘There’s Curtis! What! Why, you are going the wrong way, my boy, cried several voices.

“‘Right way! I am for home,’ I shouted manfully.

“‘Home,—what do you mean?’ they exclaimed at once.

“‘Home, ho! home, ho! ho!’ I shouted, and skated away.

“They thought—but it was no matter what they thought; I had broken away from their influences.