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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
SELECTIONS.— <i>Right, Opposite; or, The Three Visits</i>	129
<i>Teetotalism and English History</i>	131
<i>Physical Effects of Dram Drinking</i>	132
<i>Stop the Distilleries</i>	133
<i>A Soldier's Testimony</i>	"
PROGRESS.— <i>Canada</i>	134
<i>New Brunswick</i>	135
<i>England—Ireland—United States</i>	136
<i>West Indies</i>	137
MISCELLANEOUS.....	"
POETRY.— <i>The Wine Cup—Intemperance</i>	138
EDITORIAL.— <i>Drunlennes and Demoniual Possession</i>	139
<i>Subscriptions for the Advocate, &c</i>	140
EDUCATION.— <i>Women, as they should be</i>	141
AGRICULTURE.— <i>The Dairy</i>	142
NEWS.....	143
<i>Prices Current, &c</i>	144

RIGHT OPPOSITE; OR, THE THREE VISITS.

(Concluded.)

During a period of five years, Mr. Atherton had received no information of Burley's fate, nor a line from Mr. Soder, notwithstanding his promise to communicate any information which might be of importance, in relation to this unhappy man. Mr. Atherton's health had become so much improved that it no longer furnished any inducement for a journey into New England. When, therefore, at the expiration of this time, he again found himself approaching its shores, his motives were those exclusively of business. No considerations but those of pity could move him to make farther inquiries respecting Burley. Mr. Atherton concluded, on the whole, that he must have fallen a victim to his incorrigible habits. He had endeavoured, unsuccessfully however, to adopt, in relation to this old friend, the fashion of the Hebrews, who figuratively bury their apostates alive, and speak of them for ever after as numbered with the dead. His recollections of early days were like resfluent billows, and his efforts to forget were as transient as frail marks upon the sand.

He determined once more to visit the spot.—He arrived in the evening, and alighting at the tavern, resolved, without any previous inquiry as soon as he had taken a little refreshment, to repair alone to the dwelling in which he had found him last; to see the wretched man if alive, or to learn the circumstances of his death, if he were no more.

He reached the humble dwelling and tapped at the door; it was opened by a young woman of respectable appearance, to whom Atherton put the question if Mr. Burley lived there.

"No, sir," was the reply, "my husband has lived here three years, or nearly so."

"Pray," said Atherton, "is Mr. Thomas Burley living?"

"Oh yes, sir, he is alive and well: he passed by about two hours ago."

"Will you be kind enough to inform me where he lives?"

"Right opposite," said the young woman.

"Right opposite!" said Mr. Atherton, with evident surprise.

"Yes, sir," replied the young woman, "right opposite." At this moment a door opened at the end of the entry, and a young man came forward from a shoe-maker's shop, apparently attracted by their continued conversation.

"Husband," said the young woman "here is a gentleman who is enquiring after Mr. Burley."

"Eight years ago," said Mr. Atherton, addressing the husband, "I enquired at this very door for the residence of Mr. Burley, and was told by a Mr. Soder that he lived right opposite. Five years ago, I applied over the way, and was informed again that he lived right opposite. And now I receive the same answer from you. Pray, sir, inform me, has Mr. Burley reformed?"

"Oh yes, sir," said the young man, with a smile upon his countenance; "he could not well do otherwise, for he got no spirit. The case is just this; one of his chaps died of a fever, and the other was drowned, and then he lost his annuity, and they put him in the poor house. The old poor house was burnt, and when old Mr. Soder died, about three years ago, the town bought his big house right opposite, to supply its place. Mr. Burley has been in just about that time. He worked on the highways a short spell; but he is a college learnt man, as perhaps you know, and he got to be so regular at last, that a number of the first men here, who wanted to have their children get more learning than common, persuaded the managers to let poor Mr. Burley open a school. He has now tried it about a year, and they think, if he can abstain from strong drink, he will be able to come out and be again respected.

The shoe-maker's wife noticed that Mr. Atherton repeatedly applied his handkerchief to his eyes. "Is Mr. Burley any kin to you, sir?" said she.

"None at all," said Mr. Atherton. "I am as much rejoiced to hear this good news, however, as though he were."

"He thanked the good people for their information, and returned to the inn, resolving to visit Burley on the morrow.

The impression produced upon the mind of Atherton, by this intelligence, can scarcely be described. The warmth of his heart, and the fertility of his imagination, were immediately brought into vigorous action; and before he had reached the tavern, he had already devised a variety of plans for the advantage of his old friend. The benevolence of Mr. Atherton sprang spontaneously from the natural soil of the heart. It was the benevolence of a cold water man, and not likely to evaporate with the fumes of any unnatural stimulus employed for its production.

As soon as he had entered his apartment at the inn, he sent for the host, and expressed a wish to have a little conversation with him respecting a Mr. Burley, who was an inmate of the village poor house. The inn-holder, who was a remarkably civil man, observed that he had not been long a resident in the town, and could not give him much information upon the subject; but that the managers were there, in session, in an adjoining room, and he had no doubt the chairman would be happy to step in, and answer his questions.