

of penury, yet moved with such grace, that I felt sure she could not have held so low a position long. Attracted by some undefinable sympathy, I threw open the sash, and looked after her fast receding form. I saw her hold out a fair thin hand, and heard an earnest voice say to a passer by, "Charity, for God's sake. Charity." The tone, and the attitude, appealed so strongly to my heart, that I could not, as did the person addressed, thrust her aside, and, quickly enveloping myself, I rushed from the house just in time to see her vanishing round the corner. I hastened after her as she threaded her way along the bustling street. Once I came near enough to see a pale earnest face, but not near enough to speak to her.

At length she turned into one of the dark narrow streets, so common in the poorer sections of large cities, and I followed her until I saw her enter the door of a wretched looking tenement. I had hurried on after her, led by an irresistible impulse, and had not asked myself why I did so, until the door shut between us. For a moment I stood irresolute; but the thrilling tones, in which she had asked aid of a stranger, still echoed in my ears, and, knowing that there must be want within, I knocked at the door.

In a moment it was opened by the same person, whom I had been following. She seemed surprised at my appearance, but I soon made her understand that I had overheard her appeal for charity, and her look of surprise changed to one of heart-felt gratitude, as she led me to the farther end of the room, and, pointing to a scantily furnished bed in the corner, said, "See for yourself, is not there an object of charity?"

On that bed lay the wreck of what might have been a noble looking man. A mass of dark wavy hair was thrown back from a high, broad brow—his eyes were sunken and bloodshot, and rolled about restlessly—his form was emaciated, and every now and then, he uttered a groan of such unspeakable anguish, that it required no stretch of the imagination to believe that the horrors of the pit had indeed taken hold on him.

I turned to the wife for an explanation.

"Ah!" said she, "No wonder that you ask the meaning of all this. *Once I would have asked it, but now, alas! I know only too well. Once, I would have scorned the thought that I should ever be a drunkard's wife; now it is too late, too late. Oh! to think that one so noble and true, as my own H——, should have fallen so low!*"

"But it was not his *crime*," she exclaimed, her voice rising, as she mentally ran over the gloomy part, "it was not his *crime*, but his *misfortune*. It was *wine* did it, yes *curved wine, just such wine as his father taught him to love.*"

"But stay," she said, "you have not seen *all*," and grasping my arm, she almost dragged me to an obscure

corner of the apartment, and turning down a tattered spread, showed me, lying on a pallet of straw, the form of a little child.

I bent down and stroked back the soft brown curls which played over the temples; but, as my hand came in contact with the fair, pale forehead, I started back, horror-struck, the child was *dead*.

"Yes *dead*," she exclaimed with bitter emphasis, "*dead, starved to death, and all for wine. That which has debased the father has murdered the child.*"

Just then a groan from the living, but far more wretched occupant of the bed, recalled us to his side. He gazed at us a moment, and then, as if awaking from some horrid dream, "Where am I?" he asked, "and who is this?—It cannot be that one who knew me in better days, has found me out in my degradation." Then turning to me, "Ah!" said he, "you do not remember H——, who ten years ago, stood at the altar in the old church at D——, and vowed to cherish and protect as gentle a being as ever smiled on man. How he has fulfilled the trust, let that broken-hearted woman answer."

In a moment all was explained. This, then, was my friend. This was the gifted youth, whom I had watched with so much interest.—The noble man whose upward paths had been for a time so brilliant. The gold alas, how dim now! He lay in the last stages of that fearful disease, the inebriate's inheritance, the Delirium Tremens—in which the powers of darkness seem to encompass the soul, and the torments of the second death are so fearfully typified. Reason had for a moment gleamed up, preparatory to being quenched in the darkness of death.

All that I have spoken of, had transpired in a shorter space of time than I have consumed in relating it, but already the sombre shades of night were gathering over the city. I asked myself what I could do to alleviate all this suffering:—Alas! it was too late to offer more than sympathy, and, dispatching some one from a neighboring tenement to my Hotel to tell of my whereabouts, I prepared to spend the night with poor Mrs. H——. As darkness settled down over us, the wind rose to a gale, and black, ominous clouds went drifting through the sky.

Scarcely a word was spoken, as we took our places at the bedside of the dying man. Never shall I forget that night of untold horror. The wife seemed to have drunk the cup of sorrow to its deepest dregs, and there was little more for her to suffer—her time was divided between the dead child, and the dying father.

The features of the sufferer would at one moment assume an expression of demoniac rage, and at another sink into the calm of despair. At times his wild cries, and groans echoed above the din of the warring elements without, and again all was silent as the grave.