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THE PROUD YOUTH.

BY Y-LE.

(Concluded.)

Haldane, while he stood before his father's house, felt bitterly the position he had placed himself in; yet, so seared had every virtuous feeling become, that he was regardless as to the effect his return would have on those who had once doated upon him. Setting, therefore, all delicacy aside, he advanced to the door, for the purpose of entering. The presence of a stranger gazing at the window had been observed by the father; and there was something in the aspect of that stranger which rivetted the old man's attention to him, and made the father gaze with feelings of intense interest. Alas! ragged and dirty as the stranger was, the truth shot across the old man's mind with a shock so sudden as almost to overpower him. The effect was but of momentary duration, for he rushed forward to welcome his lost son, at the same instant that Haldane advanced to the door. It was quickly opened, and the fond father would have thrown his arms around his erring child, and forgiven him; but the brutalised youth rudely forced his father aside, and, with a blasphemous oath, entered the house of his parents.

Oh! the feelings of that father, who can tell? Who can paint the bitter anguish of his soul? To be cursed by his own son, at the time, above all others, when repentance was expected;—to be forced aside with violence, when he was ready to weep out his soul in the embrace of his fallen boy, were incidents of a nature sufficient to break the heart of many a father, endowed with less of the graces which adorn the Christian than was possessed by this sorrowful parent. Haldane's father, however, bowed to the will of God.

Now that Haldane was at home, and the full truth known respecting him, the whole family endeavoured, by every means in their power, to persuade him to reform. The appetite was now formed, however, and it was long ere they succeeded in their humane work. At last a promise

was extracted from Haldane, that he would stop in his sinful career. Although the promise had been reluctantly given; yet, oh, how it gladdened the hearts of his parents that a promise had been made. While he continued to drink, they had no hope of his amendment; but now, there was at least a chance that better days might come, when the happiness of their domestic circle would be again restored. What strengthened this anticipation was, that Haldane's father had procured him a situation, in entering on the duties of which, Haldane expressed a determination that his future course should be such as would give no more pain to his family; and from the sincerity he evinced in giving expression to this resolve, the greatest hopes were entertained that he would yet regain his character and standing as a respectable man.

Months rolled on, and Haldane was rapidly rising in the estimation of friends and acquaintances, and no less so in the esteem of his employer. His conduct had been unexceptionable, and the greatest confidence was being placed in him. At this juncture, Haldane's employer had some business to transact in a town at some distance, but being unable to leave home himself, Haldane was entrusted with the mission, and no one now doubted his capability of transacting the business with despatch and credit. As his employer had some few small accounts to settle in the town to which Haldane was going, arrangements were made that he should pay them while he was there.

Away Haldane went, with the best intentions. The prayers of his father, too, were secretly offered up, that no stumbling block would fall in the path of his son, but that he might return to them again, with his habits of temperance confirmed. But, alas! Haldane's proud heart was not yet humbled, nor was the craving of his corrupt appetite altogether deadened.

It is still customary in some parts of Scotland, that, on the payment of accounts, or at the settlement of any particular business, the whisky bottle is introduced, to treat the party paying the money. Unfortunately for Haldane, such was the custom of some of the parties on whom he called. Haldane at first refused to taste, but on being pressed, he wanted the manliness to proclaim the fact, that he had signed the pledge. The first glass taken, therefore, broke down the barrier which shielded him from destruction, created anew the desire for the accursed thing, and set him again afloat on that sea of peril, whose shores are covered with more wrecks than are to be found from any other single cause besides Haldane took one glass—one led to two, two to three, and so on, till, like the celebrated Gough, for upwards of a week he knew nothing, and cared for nothing, but drink, drink, drink!

Haldane's absence being prolonged beyond the stipulated time, was the first circumstance to cause his friends uneasiness, and as each succeeding day passed on without hearing from him, the worst fears began to be entertained of his temperance stability. Father, mother, sisters, and brothers, felt as if another calamity had overtaken the family; abundance of tears were shed, and fervent prayers poured out from overflowing and sorrowful hearts, that Haldane might