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THE TEMPERANCE PLEDGE,

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Mrs. Jarvis did not raise her eyes to the face of her husband, as he entered. The sight of that once loved countenance, distorted and disfigured, even made her heart sick when she looked upon it. Jarvis seated himself quietly in a chair, and held out his hands for his youngest child, not over two years old, who had no consciousness of his father's degradation. In a moment the happy little creature was on his knee; but the other children showed no inclination to approach; his conduct had estranged their young hearts' purest and most innocent affections. This was perceived and felt keenly; but he had hope of reclaiming all that he had lost, and this compensated, in some degree, for the present distance and estrangement.

The frugal meal passed in silence and restraint. Mrs. Jarvis felt troubled and oppressed, for the prospect before her seemed to grow more and more gloomy. All the morning she had suffered from a steady pain in her breast, and from a lassitude that she could not overcome. Her pale, thin, care-worn face told a sad tale of suffering, privation, confinement and want of exercise. What was to become of her children she knew not. Under such feelings of hopelessness, to have one sitting by her side who could take much of her burdens from her, were he to will it—who could call back the light to her heart if only true to his promise, made in earlier and happier years—soured in some degree her feelings, and obscured her perceptions. She did not note that some change had passed upon him—a change that if marked, would have caused her heart to leap in her bosom.

As soon as Jarvis had risen from the table, he took his hat, and kissing his youngest child, the only one there who seemed to regard him, passed quickly from the house. As the door closed after him, his wife heaved a long sigh, and then rising, mechanically, proceeded to clear up the table. Of how many crushed affections and disappointed hopes, did that one deep, tremulous sigh speak.

Jarvis returned to his work, and applied himself steadily during the whole afternoon. Whenever a desire for liquor returned upon him, he quenched it in a copious draught of water, and thus kept himself as free from temptation as possible. At night he returned, when the same troubled and uneasy silence pervaded the little family at the supper table. The meal was scanty, for Mrs. Jarvis' incessant labor could procure but a poor supply of food. After the children had been put to bed, Mrs. Jarvis sat down, as usual, to spend the evening, tired as she was, and much as her breast pained her, in sewing. A deep sigh heaved involuntarily her bosom as she did so. It caught the ear of her husband, and smote upon his heart. He knew that her health was feeble, and that constant labor fatigued her excessively.

"I would'nt sew to-night, Jane," he said, "you look tired; rest for one evening."

Mrs. Jarvis neither looked up nor replied. There was something in the tone of her husband's voice that stirred her feelings; something that softened her heart towards him. But she dared not trust herself to speak, nor to let her eye meet his; she did not wish to utter a harsh or repulsive word, nor was she willing to speak kindly to him, for she did not feel kindly—and kind words and affected cheerfulness, she had already found, but encouraged him in his evil ways; and so she continued to ply her needle, without appearing to regard his presence. Her husband did not make another effort to induce her to suspend her labors; for under existing cir-

cumstances, he was particularly desirous of not provoking her to use towards him the language of rebuke and censure. After sitting silent for about half an hour, he rose from his chair and walked three or four times backwards and forwards across the room, preparatory to going out to seek a coffee-house, and there spend the evening—as his wife supposed. But much to her surpris, he retired to their chamber, in the adjoining room. While still under the expectation of seeing him return, his loud breathing caught her quick ear; he was asleep!

Catching up the light, as she arose suddenly to her feet, she passed, with a hasty step, into the chamber. He had undressed himself, was in bed, and sound asleep. She held the candle close to his face; it was calmer than usual, and somewhat paler. As she bent over him, his breath came full in her face; it was not loaded with the disgusting fumes that had so often sickened her. Her heart beat quicker—the moisture dimmed her eye—her whole frame trembled—then looking upwards, she uttered a single prayer for her husband, and, gliding quietly from the room, sat down by her little table, and again bent over her work. Now she remembered that he had said, with something unusual in his tones—"I would not sew to-night, Jane; you look tired; rest for one evening?"—and her heart was agitated with a new hope; but that hope, like the dove from the ark, found nothing upon which to rest, and trembled back again into a feeling of despondency. What had she to hope for? Surely not that her husband would reform! She had seen too many efforts at reformation, commenced under better auspices than could possibly now surround him, and all had failed. At each successive failure, his state became worse than before. It was past twelve o'clock when she laid by her work, from exhaustion and pain, and sought a few hours of troubled repose.

On the next morning, the trembling hand of Jarvis, as he lifted his saucer to his lips at the breakfast table, made his wife's heart sink again in her bosom. She had felt a hope, almost unconsciously. She remembered that at supper time his hand was steady—now it was unsteady. This was conclusive to her mind, that notwithstanding his appearance he had been drinking. But few words passed during the meal, for neither felt much inclined to converse.

After breakfast, Jarvis returned to the shop, and worked steadily until dinner time, and then again until evening. As on the night before, he did not go out, but retired early to bed. And this was continued all the week. But the whole was a mystery to his poor wife, who dared not even to hope for any real change for the better. On Saturday, towards night, he laid by his work, put on his coat and hat, and went into the front shop.

"So you have really worked a week, a sober man, John!" Mr. Lanford said.

"Indeed I have. Since last Sunday morning, no kind of intoxicating liquor has passed my lips."

"And I hope never will again, John."

"It never shall! If I die, I will not depart from this resolution."

"May you have strength to keep it," the old man said, earnestly. Then, after a pause—

"How much have you earned this week, John?"

"Here is the foreman's account of my work, sir. It comes to twelve dollars."

"Still a fast workman. You will yet recover yourself, and your family will again be happy, if you persevere."

"O, sir, they shall be happy! I will persevere!"