

you oblige your father by signing the pledge of total abstinence before you leave us?"

The father having made this request, stopped, and all eyes were turned on Haldane. The young man was evidently affected, for the tears were coming down his cheeks; and there was an inward heaving that prevented utterance. Indeed, there were none present whose eyes were dry, and as each head dropped to hide their tears, all expected that a ready response in the affirmative would have been given by Haldane to his father's wish. Some minutes elapsed amid this suspense, when Haldane at length broke silence. He merely requested, that, as he did not start till next day, he might be allowed to think over the proposition for the night. This answer did not give the father satisfaction; yet, leaving the issue with God, he agreed that he would urge nothing farther that night.

The conversation then became general, and when the hour for family devotion arrived, each one felt that they had really passed a happy evening. The father's prayer contained much food for reflection, and some points of it touched the heart of at least one of the party, who, through the mist of years gone by, often reverts to that evening as the one on which the first stone of his temperance temple was permanently laid.

At an early hour the following morning, the whole family were astir, the females engaged, some in packing Haldane's trunk, others preparing breakfast. The father, to inhale the morning air, and commune with nature's God, had gone forth to enjoy a short walk, ere he resumed the toils of the day. A short hour passed, and all were seated at the morning meal. Little was said, but much was thought.

Breakfast over, before rising from the table the father resumed the subject of the previous night, but from the uneasy expression resting on the countenance of Haldane, it was evident the father's request contained within it, wise and reasonable though it was, sufficient to suggest to his proud heart, that, by following the required course, he would be cheating himself of what he thought was a liberty, to act as his own mind might dictate, according to the circumstances he might be placed in. Haldane's reply to his father was, therefore, couched in a respectful denial of the request. He, however, boldly affirmed, that he had power within himself to temperate his desires; and as to becoming a drunkard, he trusted his father did not think him insane: go where he would, he had strength of mind sufficient to guard him from such a result. On hearing the determination of his son, the father, while tears stood in his eyes, sadly replied, "God grant that it may be so."

On the wings of brightest anticipation, away went Haldane, to mix among a population as varied as is to be found in any city in the world. Rich and poor, good and bad, seem to be so amalgamated, that, with no trust in God, and no reliance but on self, it is no matter of wonder that thousands of well-meaning young men have entered the whirlpools of vice and crime, and have been forced down their dark, polluted waters, to a drunkard's grave.

For the first few months after Haldane's arrival in the great metropolis, everything went well; but those who are conversant with the customs of men employed in any particular calling, who carry on their work in apartments where numbers of them are congregated together, must know how easy a transition is made from the strict propriety evinced in the conduct of young men on their first arrival from the country, to a state of easy carelessness, after a short sojourn amongst the living mass of that wonderful city. Every thing is new to them, and, being strangers to the place, they are eager to make acquaintance with some one or other, whose experience and knowledge of the place they wish to take advantage of. Places of public resort are visited, one after another, as opportunity occurs, and by the time this is accomplished, the bashful, inexperienced youth is pretty

well initiated into the mysteries of many of the evils which afflict all large communities, namely, public houses, concert rooms, theatres, and the like. If at first he was afraid to taste liquor, after this routine of introduction is over, he can toss off his glass of gin with all the *non-chalance* of a man who has spent a life-time subject to the vice.

Such is the history of thousands, and such was the history of Haldane's career. He still flattered himself, however, that what he took did him no harm, and it was so dull to go home of an evening and spend his hours in a lodging house, that visiting such places as is mentioned above, became a favourite scheme; but this was only to make him, in common phrase, "a judge of the world,"—no harm being intended.

At first, his letters to his parents were regular and interesting, but as his attention became absorbed with the scenes of London, his epistles became less frequent, and at last were suspended altogether. Home and its associations became engulphed in the bitter waters of intemperance and its concomitant evils; and six years passed in which he was lost to himself, to his friends, and to the world; for despite the many inquiries which his fond but sorrowing parents caused to be made after him, no tidings could be learned of Haldane; and whether dead or alive, in prison or at liberty, was unknown to every one interested in him. During that long period, he had been but once seen by one who knew him in his youth, but in such a plight that he was ashamed to speak with him; and all that person's answers to Haldane's parents were so evasive, that the worst fears were entertained of his condition, although nothing certain was known to them.

On a chilly evening in the December of 1844, a coatless, halless, shivering, bloated wretch, applied to the captain of a vessel, about to start from one of the docks in London, for a passage to Scotland, whither the vessel was bound. The captain was a humane man, else his application might have been refused. The wretched applicant expressed a willingness to assist, as far as his strength would admit, at any work the captain might set him to during the voyage. The captain pitied him, and gave him a passage, and he arrived in Scotland in safety. Haldane, for it was him, had far to travel ere he reached his early home; but as he travelled the distance, his mind was occupied with far other feelings than those which glow in the breast of a man conscious that his return, after a long absence, will be hailed with feelings of unmingled delight. He felt that he was degraded, and his whole bearing gave evidence that he wished to remain so.

As he approached the house where all that ought to have been dear to him lived, memory, with the quickness of light, shadowed forth to his senses the days of his boyhood and his pride. He remembered his father's last request, and how it was so haughtily spurned. The wonder that his father should ever entertain fears of him becoming a drunkard, was now lost in the reality that these fears were but too well founded; and exhibited the insatiation and foolishness of self-reliance. He dared not dwell on these points, and the better feelings which were creeping upon him were driven from his heart with a blasphemous oath; and, with the words of hell upon his tongue, the thoughts of devils on his heart, and the drunkard's covering for his body, he at length stood before the windows of his father's house, in all the hideousness of a ragged, degraded, and incorrigible drunkard.

Such was the return of the once proud youth, after an absence of between six and seven years. The consequences of that return we will record in our next, as by it we intend to show the fallacy of a commonly expressed opinion respecting the drunkard, "Poor fellow, he only harms himself."