

assurance that "it was all right" could comfort her. But her complaints fell on deaf ears. He drank the pot of tea she made for him, and then, shutting himself in the second room, tried to think over things. This event had, as it were, broken his life in two. The things that had been his glory never could be again. John Burslam's scorn had robbed them of all favour in his eyes. And yet they had been a power that it grieved him to relinquish. Who would take his place? That was a bitter thought. His obligation to the preacher galled him. "Wha axed him to tak' a hand i' my fight?" he demanded, angrily; and then the next moment he thought of Jimmy Hirst drowned, and of Sam Naylor in prison, with the gallows before him. He followed out these thoughts till he was in a tempest, and wanted beer more imperatively than ever. Then swift as an arrow, and keener than keenest steel, his promise to Mary Burslam arrested him.

He might have reasoned that it was the ale-house he promised not to enter, and so have Martha fetch his beer home; but Sam was a straightforward sinner; he had not learned to play tricks with his conscience. He might have reasoned that it was not really Mary, and that a promise made to a fancy was not binding. But in all rude natures there is a strong sentiment of that spiritual something we call superstition, and though Sam could not define his ideas about Mary's appearance, he believed that in some mysterious way she had been permitted to warn him. His promise to her he regarded as irrevocable, unless he was prepared to face consequences he dared not take into consideration.

But the feelings I have endeavoured to analyze attacked Sam in furious confusion. Remorse, anger, shame, pride, superstitious fear, reverent admiration, tortured and divided him. If it had been a physical pain, he could have understood it; but this inarticulate agony of the soul in all its senses conquered him. As night came on he put on his cap and went out to the gate, looking this way and that, like a man in extremity.

After hours of anguish, he suddenly remembered John Burslam. "I'll goa tu t' preacher; I'm fair dazed—that I am;" and he went straight to John's house, called him up, and poured out his whole heart to him. It was a queer confession, and many might have doubted Sam's sincerity, for wounded pride, sensual regrets, matters of drink and dog-fighting, were queerly mixed with sorrow for his neglect of "a' that could mak' a man o' him," and his total forgetfulness of God.

But John had stood where Sam was standing, and he quite understood him. He was holding Sam's hand and crying over it before he had finished. Through the still, solemn hours of mid-