

tive unjustly attributed to her conduct. Under these circumstances, she did what has often been done before, to relieve the mind from similar uneasiness—she suddenly conceived the idea of doing good, and she imagined to herself the pleasure of doing it to this family on a more extensive scale than mere charity could effect. It is true, she had scarcely ever attempted to do good in her whole life before, because of the trouble required to keep it up; but the recollection of the very little she had done, was connected with a sense of pleasure; and now that pleasure was to her of such rare occurrence, now that so few people loved her—now that life was becoming altogether so dark and desolate—perhaps, if she was to begin to do good, she might feel more comfortable. Besides all this, something whispered in the secret of her heart, that perhaps it might cover a multitude of sins; for, in addition to those of which she knew herself to be guilty at that time she was seriously contemplating the committal of more. Not that she considered herself much in fault; she rather thought as many others have done, that her inclinations were on the side of virtue, but that the luckless circumstances in which she was placed, and the influence of those around her, were actually forcing her into a course of conduct which it was impossible to avoid; nor had she yet begun to think so deeply as to understand, that by allowing this to be the habitual and prevailing feeling of her mind, she was in reality accusing God of injustice, and living in a state of constant blasphemy against the purity and the benevolence of his designs.

A sudden impulse to do good has, however, always something pleasant and cheering in it, and Isabel became more than usually animated as she applied herself to the task of talking with the mother of Maria on the subject of her besetting sin—a task which she undertook with the hope that she might be the means of restoring this lost creature to respectability and comfort.

The poor woman was on this occasion in that low stage of her disease when tears flow abundantly, and often without any definite cause; and Isabel, in her new character of admittance, was encouraged by these tears to proceed at greater length than she had previously intended. The daughter listened attentively—for the poor and the solitary like to have their sorrows entered into with feeling, and altogether the hour which had passed appeared to have been a very profitable one, when, on Isabel's rising to depart, the poor woman raised her head and began, in her turn to speak.

"All that you have said," she observed, "is very well. It is all very true and good, and I could have said as much myself, only in different words; but it is all worth nothing—I tell you it has no more to do with my case, than tolling the church-bell has to do with the soul that has just gone to judgment. Look here," she continued, beckoning to Isabel to be seated, "you have had your say—it is fit I should have mine now. The case is just this: you talk to me as if I could help it—as if I could stop, and be as I once was again. You can help it, I dare say, and I could help it once; but the time is past, and it would be of no more use for me to make the attempt now, than it would be to try to lift the burdens I carried in my youth. I tell you this plainly, because it is a waste of your fine words, to come here and talk to me. You know nothing about my situation, or what I know, and what I suffer. You have been but a short time married. I was happy for six months; your days of trouble may come, as mine did; and then let us see whether you will deny yourself the wine that warms your heart, and makes you care for nobody. No, no; even now, I dare say, you drink your glass every day—perhaps two—and makes yourself comfortable, though I have a kind husband, and health, and wealth, and I have nothing."

Poor Maria listened to this outbreak of her mother's feeling with a degree of alarm and chagrin, scarcely surpassed by that of the individual to whom this unexpected address had been directed; and following her guest, who prepared to make a speedy exit, to the door, she made the best apology for her mother which the exigency of the moment allowed by saying that her troubles, and the habits she had given way to, had turned her head.

"Don't mind her, poor thing," she added; when she talks in this way, she does not mean to be impertinent; and oh! ma'am, if you could do her any good, what a blessing it would be!"

It was some little consolation to Isabel to find that her endeavours to do good had at least been appreciated in one quarter, but still her disappointment was proportioned to the extraordinary degree of effort she had that morning made, to do evil, as well as good to serve herself as well as to serve another. Both these objects had been defeated, and she could only wait for the con-

pletion of her own purpose until an opportunity should occur of conversing with the young dressmaker alone.

This opportunity occurred again and again, and still the resolution of Isabel failed her; for there was something in Maria's honest care-worn countenance that seemed to repel every idea of bringing her over to a bad cause. At last, however, she gained courage to make the proposal, that this poor girl should be her secret agent in bringing to the house what she could not openly obtain.

Maria received the proposal in silence; she seemed unable to answer; a deep blush spread all over her face, and then faded away to ashy paleness. She was poor, and Isabel had ministered to her necessities; she was unhappy, and her benefactress had shown her more kindness than any other human being since the days of her childhood; how could she refuse her so small a service in return? Upon what plea could she refuse it, except such as would convey a direct insult?

All these thoughts and feelings rushed simultaneously through the mind of the poor girl as she stood speechless and trembling, with her eyes fixed on the ground. At last she spoke the simple truth, and her courage seemed to rise with the effort it cost her: "I dare not, ma'am," she said; "indeed, I dare not; it was the way we began with my poor mother. Many's the time I have gone out for her, early and late, into places where it was a shame for a girl like me to be seen; but I was young then, and little knew the danger of what I did; I know it now, however—nobody knows it better—and the sin would lie at my door, if evil should ever come of it."

"Then you compare me to your mother, I suppose," said Isabel, in no very conciliating tone.

"Oh! no, ma'am," said Maria, "no indeed; far be it from me to compare a lady like you, to my poor mother; but many great sins come from small beginnings, and, as I said before, it is for those who know what such beginnings are, to keep their hands clean from meddling in them."

"Then you may go away," said Isabel; "I have no more occasion for you to-day: this is the only thing I ever asked of you, and I have no one else to ask now."

Maria turned away. Tears were streaming from her eyes, but no relenting voice recalled her; and, with downcast look and heavy heart, she passed along unheeded through the busy streets which led to her own miserable dwelling.

Galled and wounded by this refusal, and the reproach it naturally implied, Isabel was now thrown entirely upon her own resources for the means of obtaining what she had been accustomed to consider as the necessaries of life. Like all women whose habits of indulgence resemble hers, she was subject to a variety of nervous affections, as well as to some serious ailments—to hysterical fits, to indigestion, and to occasional faintness; for the prevention or the cure of all which she was accustomed to make use of strong stimulants, frequently applied.

Symptoms of these disorders had been exhibited soon after her entrance into Mr. Ainsworth's family; but having met with little encouragement, they had been subsequently almost entirely confined, to the knowledge of Betsy alone. Now, however, when the circumstances of her case had become more serious, Isabel either was, or believed herself to be, more severely indisposed. Amongst other distressing symptoms, she was seized with violent spasms, and Miss Ainsworth was applied to for brandy, or, indeed, for any kind of spirit; and this prudent person, after expressing her surprise that Mrs. Ainsworth should have recourse to any thing so potent and inflammatory, went so far in compliance with the demand, the third time it was made, as actually to take up stairs with her own hand, a wine-glass full of warm water, slightly discoloured by a few drops of brandy—"It was enough," Betsy said, "to make one ill to look at it."

(To be Continued.)

Intemperance the Idolatry of Britain.

BY W. R. BAKER ESQ.

(Continued from page 323.)

IV.—OUR IDOLATRY IS DISTINGUISHED BY ITS COSTLY SACRIFICES.

It was the remark of Solomon, that "The way of transgressors is hard;" and if we may judge from the sacrifices which intemperance demands, the history of this sin is a striking illustration of the truth of the assertion.