

was by nature a man of full body but temperate habit. His wife was a pattern of virtue and good-sense, and he loved her well. He was one of those men who seem to take to religion, in a way, as ducks take to water. Being a natural element for a frank, good-hearted, quiet, yet active fellow, it was therefore no wonder that he became a shining light in the Methodist Zion of Cherry-Luton. No leader prayed with greater unction, or gave the minister nicer suppers, or better beer, or more acceptable toddy after the fatigues of three sermons and of meeting many classes. His wife thought that he went too far in this line, and indeed sometimes the ministers too; though she was an unsuspicious woman, and never loved even to think evil of dignitaries, still less to speak it.

Nevertheless, as the years went on, and Mr. Merton's struggles increased, and he plied his task more earnestly on Wednesdays and Saturdays, his wife became conscious of a change in him, which began by startling her, and then settled down like a heavy cloud over her heart. Now and then it appeared to her he was a little over-excited on a market-day. The indication was slight though, and affection soon invented excuses to repress anxiety. By-and-by, however, sharpened eyes noticed that far more was taken at home than formerly. Her gentle hint was met with a good-natured laugh at her suspicion that there was "any danger of *his* taking too much," and a demonstration that he required more stimulant in order to meet the increasing strain upon him. Meantime he was sincerely "laboring in the vineyard," according to the Reverend Gideon Ouseley Pratt, who, though himself the teetotaler of the circuit, for a long time never suspected anything wrong about his friend Mr. Merton.

It was a fearful hour in Mrs. Merton's experience, home and religious, when one day the Reverend Gideon sought a confidential interview with her, and broke it to her that he was sorely exercised about his dear brother Mr. Merton. His conduct latterly at one or two prayer-meetings had not savored of godliness. In truth Mr. Merton had, "on two occasions," when called upon to lead the worship in prayer, been fast asleep beyond any ordinary awakening processes adopted by neighboring brethren to stir him up; and when finally aroused at the close of the meeting he had shown a vacancy of mind and superabundance of spirits, which gravely troubled the good minister. On being challenged, Mr. Merton, for the first time probably in his manhood, prevaricated. I know not how truly; but it is certainly affirmed by eminent medical authorities, and with reasonable proof, that a constant habit of heavy drinking will not only deteriorate the mind, but in doing that, hopelessly degrade the moral principle. So Mrs. Merton watched her husband. The "means of grace" he once seemed to cherish, not alone with reverence but enjoyment, were gradually deserted. First on the week nights, then on the Sunday. At times it was perfectly clear that he had begun to pass the limits of sobriety. Still affection pleaded, and hoped,

and worked, with blood distilling the while in great drops from the loving heart, in the agony of anticipated sorrow.

SAILORS' ADVANCE NOTES.

A ship, the "Four Bells," 950 tons, out of Plymouth Sound, bound for New Zealand, was running down the Channel before a south-east breeze, freshening to a gale. A noble clipper, she had left Plymouth before daylight, on a murky November morning, with a full cargo and 480 emigrants for Christchurch. The grey afternoon had ended in a dark and dirty evening. The sea increased; the wind, which now and then swept up in angry gusts, brought with it a cold and drizzly rain. The gallant ship, under reefed mainsail, foresail, and topsails, danced before the wind in the joy of strength and beauty—her taper mast and white sails bending gently to the breeze, and her graceful hull skipping over the white-topped waves like some living leviathan sporting in the water. The emigrants had gone below, most of them overcome by the weather, and only two or three in shining waterproofs remained on deck, clinging to the bulwarks on the lee side. Two of these were talking to the look-out on the fore-deck, who, clad in oilskin from head to foot, stood peering through the darkening scurry of the elements, as the bow of the noble vessel went up and down, to the roll and hollowing of the waves, which ever and anon flung their crests over the bulwarks with a mighty splash, followed by the hissing swirl of water to and fro as it rolled into the waterways and out at the scuppers.

"I am the second mate," he had said, in answer to one of the emigrants.

"Are you the only look-out?"

"Yes."

"Is it not a very bad night?"

"Dirty enough, sir."

"Why, there's no one on deck but you and the man at the wheel."

"Oh yes," replied the mate. "There's the first-mate in his cabin; and the captain too, for that matter."

"Are you short-handed?"

"Well, we are and we aren't," said the officer laughing. "We have a full crew aboard, but they're not in working trim yet. They don't muster well the first day, anyhow; but I never sailed with such a lot of drunken dogs as these."

"Do you mean to say they are all drunk?"

"Drunk as fiddlers."

I am unable to state what degree of intoxication is implied by this standard of measurement, though I presume it means that they had waxed very drunk,—but it certainly was a long way beyond capacity to stand and act.

"And do you mean to say," said the elder of the emigrants, who spoke in a cultivated, authoritative tone, which the mate noticed particularly, "that the captain has gone to sea with only four able seamen on board, and that you four are all there are to handle the ship through such a night as this?"

"There aren't *four*!" replied the other,