

south side of the Thames, to look at the king's dockyards at Deptford. As I was rambling among the docks, I received a smart slap on the shoulder, and, turning suddenly round, whom should I see but old Tom Johnson, an honest fellow as ever broke bread or wore a tarpaulin! He was born in our village; had followed the sea for nearly forty years; and, once in the course of three or four, he contrived to find his way to the old spot, and spend a few days in the valley where he was born.—“Why, Bob,” said he, “I'm heartily glad to see you, my lad; so you've taken leg bail of the old folks, and turned rover, in good earnest, oh?”—I told him, I hoped he didn't think I'd left my old mother to shirk for herself, in her old age.—“Not a jot,” replied the old sailor: “Squire Seely has told me the whole story, and says he has put the sweat of your brow more than once, or twice either, into the old lady's hand and made her old weather-beaten heart leap for joy, to hear you was so thoughtful a lad. I saw your mother about a year ago, and your sister Rachael.”—I shook old Tom Johnson by the hand, I could not restrain my feelings, for this was the first news I had received from home for more than five years.—“Come, Bob,” said the old fellow, “don't be for opening your scuppers and making crooked faces; though it blows hard enough now, it may get to be calm weather after all.”—“How is my father doing now?” I inquired.—“Why, as to that,” answered Tom Johnson, “it's about a twelvemonth since I was there. I told the old lady, I might cross your hawse in some part of the world. She has a rough time of it, my boy. The old man holds on to mischief, like a heavy kedge in a clay bottom. The cold-water folks began, about a year ago, to scatter their seed in the village, in the shape of tracts, and tales, and newspapers. Some of them were thrown at your father's door, and at the door of old Deacon Flint, the distiller. There, as you may suppose, the seed fell in stony places. Your father was in a great rage, and swore he'd shoot the first person, that left another of their rascally publications before his door. I'm afraid it will be a long while, my lad, before the temperance folks get the weather gage of the rum-sellers and rum-drinkers in our village. They have had a miserable seed time, and the Devil and Deacon Flint, I am afraid, will have the best of the harvest.”

As Tom Johnson was to sail, in about a week, for the United States, I sent by him a few lines of comfort and a small remittance for my mother. As I have already stated, they never reached the place of their destination. The Oranoke, of which this poor fellow was first mate, foundered at sea, and the whole crew perished.

After our arrival at Oporto, the crew of the Swiftsure were discharged: and finding a favorable chance, I shipped for Philadelphia, where we arrived, after an extremely short and prosperous passage.—I directed my course, once more, towards my native hamlet. My feelings were of the most painful and perplexing character. In accumulated years, and even in the little property which I had gathered, I felt conscious of something like a power and influence, which, by God's grace, I hoped to exert for the protection of my mother. Yet, when I recollected the ungovernable violence of my father's temper, under the stimulus of liquor, I almost despaired of success. At any rate, I could behold the face of her who bore me, and receive her blessing once more before she died.

Having sent my luggage forward, I performed a considerable part of my journey on foot. I had arrived in the village adjoining our own. I paused, for an instant, to look at the barn, in which, five years before, I had passed a most miserable night. It brought before me, with a painful precision, the melancholy record of the past. Every mile of my lessening way abated something of that confidence, which I had occasionally cherished, of being the instrument, under God, of bringing happiness again into the dwelling of my wretched parents.

I had arrived within two miles of the little river, which forms one of the boundary lines of our village. I was passing a little grocery, or tipplery, and standing at the door I recognized the very individual, who formerly kept the grog-shop in our town, and from whom my father had purchased his rum for many years. Although it was already gray twilight, I knew him immediately; and, however painful to approach a person in whom I could not fail to behold the destroyer of my father, I could not repress my earnest desire to learn something of my family. I accosted him, and he remembered me at once. His manners were those of a surly and dissatisfied man. In reply to my inquiries, he informed me, that my parents and my sister were alive, and added, with a sneer, that my father had set up for a cold-water man; “but,” continued he, with a forced and spiteful laugh, “it will take him all his days, I guess, to put off the old man: they that have gotten the relish of my rum, are not so very apt to change: 't' for cold water.”—Upon further inquiry, I ascertained, that there had been a temperance movement in our village; and that the seed, as poor Tom Johnson said, had been scattered there, with an unsparing hand. I also gathered the information from this rum-seller, that the select-men had refused to approbate any applicant for a license to sell ardent spirit in our village; and that he, himself, had therefore been obliged to quit his old stand, and take the new one, which he now occupied.

I turned from the dram-seller's door, and proceeded on my way. It was quite dark; but the road was familiar to my feet. It afforded me unspeakable pleasure to learn, that my mother and sister were alive and well. But I was exceedingly perplexed, by the rum-seller's statement in relation to my father. Can it be possible, thought I, that he has become a cold-water man? How true is the rum-seller's remark, that few, who have gotten a taste of his rum, are apt to change it for cold water! For more than twelve years, my father had been an intemperate man; and, even if he had abandoned ardent spirit, for a time, how little reliance could be placed upon a drunkard's reformation! Besides, Tom Johnson had expressly stated, that my father had been exceedingly hostile to the temperance movement from the beginning.

With these and similar reflections, my mind continued to be occupied, until I entered our village. It was about half-past nine, when I came within a few rods of the old cottage. A light was still gleaming forth from the window. I drew slowly and silently near to the door. I thought I heard a voice. I listened attentively. It was my father's. My mother appeared not to reply: such was her constant habit, whenever, under the influence of liquor, he gave a loose rein to his tongue, and indulged in unkind and abusive language. I drew still nearer—and, passing softly into the entry, I listened more attentively, at the inner door. Can it be possible! thought I. He was engaged in prayer! in fervent and pious prayer! He prayed, with a trembling voice, for the restoration of an absent son! There was a pause. From the movement within, it was evident they had risen from their knees. I gently raised the latch, and opened the door. The father, the mother, the brother, the sister, were locked in the arms of one another!—My regenerated old father fell once more upon his knees; we all followed his example; and before a word of congratulation had passed from one to the other, he poured forth such a touching strain of thanksgiving and praise to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, for my safe return, as would have melted the heart of the most obdurate offender. It came directly from the heart of a truly penitent sinner, and it went straightway to the God of mercy. I gazed upon my poor old father. It seemed like the moral resurrection of one, already dead and buried, in his trespasses and sins. I glanced rapidly about me: all was peace, all was order;