

ferred my hand, I could detect, by the light of the moon, an expression of such profound dejection on the altered face of Wargrave—so deadly a paleness—a *haggardness*—that involuntarily I re-seated myself on the wall beside him, as if to mark the resumption of a friendly feeling. He did not speak when he took his place; but, after a few minutes' silence, I had the mortification to hear him sobbing like a child.

"My dear fellow, you attach too much importance to an unguarded word," said I, trying to reconcile him to himself. "Dismiss it from your thoughts."

"Do not fancy," replied Wargrave, in a broken voice, "that these humiliating tears originate in anything that has passed between us this night. No! The associations recalled to my mind by the rash humour you are generous enough to see in its true light, are of far more ancient date, and far more ineffaceable in their nature. I owe you something in return for your forbearance. You have still an hour to be on shore," he continued, looking at his watch. "Devote those minutes to me, and I will impart a lesson worth ten years' experience; a lesson of which my own life must be the text—myself the hero."

There was no disputing with him,—no begging him to be calm. I had only to listen, and impart, in the patience of my attention, such solace as the truly miserable can best appreciate.

"You were right," said Wargrave, with a bitter smile, "in saying that we do not allow ourselves to assign to wine the full measure of authority it holds among the motives of our conduct. But you were wrong in limiting that authority to the instigation of great and heroic actions. Wine is said in Scripture to 'make glad the heart of man.' Wine is said by the poets to be the balm of grief, the dew of beauty, the philtre of love. What that is gracious and graceful is it not said to be? Clustering grapes entwine the brow of its divinity, and wine is said to be a libation worthy of the gods. Fools! fools! fools!—they need to have poured forth their tears and blood like me, to know that it is a fountain of eternal damnation! Do not fancy that I allude to *Drunkenness*; do not class me, in your imagination, with the sensual brute who degrades himself to the filthiness of intoxication. Against a vice so flagrant, how easy to arm one's virtue! No! the true danger lies many degrees within that fearful limit; and the Spartans, who warned their sons against wine by the exhibition of their drunken Helots, fulfilled their duty blindly. Drunkenness implies, in fact, an extinction of the very faculties of evil. The enfeebled arm can deal no mortal blow! the staggering step retards the perpetration of sin! The voice can neither modulate its tone to seduction, nor hurl the defiance of deadly hatred. The drunkard is an idiot; a thing which children mock at, and women chastise. It is the man whose temperament is excited, not overpowered, by wine, to whom the snare is fatal. Do not suppose me the apostle of a temperance society, when I assert, on my honor, that after three glasses, I am no longer master of my actions; without being at the moment conscious of the change, I begin to see, and feel, and hear, and reason differently. The minor transitions between good and evil are

forgotten; the lava boils in my bosom. Three more, and I become a madman."

"But this constitutes a positive physical infirmity," said I. "You must of course regard yourself an exception."

"No! I am convinced the case is common. Among my own acquaintance, I know fifty men who are pleasant companions in the morning, but intolerable after dinner; men who neither like wine nor indulge in it; but who, while simply fulfilling the forms and ceremonies of society, frequently become odious to others, and a burden to themselves."

"I really believe you are right."

"I know that I am right; listen. When I became your brother's friend, at Westminster, I was on the foundation,—an only son; intended for the church; and the importance which my father and mother attached to my election for college, added such a stimulus to my exertions, that, at the early age of fourteen, their wish was accomplished. I was the first boy of my years. A studentship at Christ Church crowned my highest ambition; and all that remained for me at Westminster was to preside over the farewell supper, indispensable on occasions of these triumphs. I was unaccustomed to wine, for my parents had probably taken silent note of the infirmity of my nature; and a very small proportion of the fiery tavern port, which forms the nectar of similar festivities, sufficed to elevate my spirits to madness. Heated by noise and intemperance, we all sallied forth together, prepared to riot, bully, insult. A fight ensued; a life was lost. Expulsion suspended my election. I never reached Oxford; my professional prospects were blighted; and, within a few months, my father died of the disappointment! And now, what was to be done with me? My guardians decided that in the army the influence of my past faults would prove least injurious; and, eager to escape the tacit reproach of my poor mother's pale face and gloomy weeds, I gladly acceded to their advice. At fifteen, I was gazetted in the —th regiment of Light Dragoons. At Westminster they used to call me 'Wargrave the peacemaker.' I never had a quarrel; I never had an enemy. Yet, twelve months after joining the —th, I had the reputation of being a quarrelsome fellow; I had fought one of my brother officers, and was on the most uncomfortable terms with four others."

"And this sudden change —"

"Was then attributed to the sourness arising from my disappointments in life. I have since ascribed it to a truer origin—the irritation of the doses of brandy, tinged with sloe juice, which formed the luxury of a mess cellar. Smarting under the consciousness of unpopularity, I fancied I hated my profession, when in fact I only hated myself. I managed to get on half-pay, and returned to my mother's tranquil roof; where, instead of regretting the brilliant life I had forsaken, my peace of mind and early contentment came back to me at once. There was no one to bear me company over the bottle; I was my mother's constant companion; I seldom tasted wine; I became healthy, happy, beloved as a neighbor and fellow-citizen. But higher distinctions of affection followed. A young and very beautiful girl, of rank and fortune superior to my own, deigned