

beware, I say, lest those very gifts become the means of luring you from a high path to one of degradation and misery. Beware that ye be not hurled from your station of religion and morality to the detested life of a drunkard. If I have had a feeling of regret for actions committed; if I know what it is to suffer; if I ever had a pang, (and many keen ones I have had,) at being banished my fatherland, and made the companion of the hard-hearted and cruel,—I owe them all to the curse of drunkenness. Do I stand alone on this darkened precipice? Look around you, reader, and the investigation you make, be it ever so slight, will tell you the unfortunate truth, that there are few corners of the rock on which I stand, where the flag of distress is not exhibited in all its dirty and tattered glory.

But I must return to my story. It will be understood from what I have stated above, that my father fell; yes, fell from his high standing: his business was neglected—in short, he became a ———. I dare not name it. The memory of that being is too sacred to me to be associated with such a detested word. But fall he did; not at once, oh no! the enemy was too cowardly to show his real colours at first, nor was he aware of the design of this arch-deceiver, till he became so completely hemmed in, that escape seemed impossible. It was only when all hope had fled that he opened his eyes to his true position. After this unfortunate event, my poor father, unable to bear the thought of seeking employment in the place where he was wont to employ, removed to the spot described at the opening of this chapter.

Time wore on, and with each succeeding year some little was added to my personal bulk. My father's unhappy propensity, however, kept our domestic hearth but barely supplied with worldly comforts, although that hearth was presided over by one of the best of mothers. No flaw was ever found in her character; no spot of her existence, surrounded as it was by afflictions of the severest nature, was ever stained or tarnished. She was one of those beings whose very "fallings leant to virtue's side." When her spirit winged its way upwards, far, far above, I could truly say, with Pope, that the place she left had

"Lent heav'n a mother to the poor and me."

It was necessary at the end of each week for my father to return the work finished to his employers in Glasgow; and on these occasions it but too frequently occurred that the money he received, and which should have gone to the support of his family, was spent in the ale house. Consider what our situation was under such circumstances. But for the character of my mother, starvation might have been the end of our existence. We had kind neighbours, however, who completely understood the position we were placed in, and who lent us both food and money, in the hope that a change might come over the spirit of my father's dreams. At last all hope was abandoned, and our neighbours, kind and good though they were, got tired of assisting us farther. It was at this juncture that my mother, wearied with expostulation, impressed upon my father,

with tears as sincere as ever were shed, the necessity of changing his hitherto infatuated career. Reasons as strong as a naked and starving family, and a heart-broken woman, could urge, were given; and my father, who really loved both his wife and children, with silent grief confessed his error, and proposed that, in future, I should be his companion each Saturday, that he might the more readily excuse himself to the solicitations of his boon companions.

This was a new era in my young life, and how I kept the trust committed to my charge, will be seen. To those who have been brought up in a country village, and remember their first visit to a large city such as Glasgow, I need not describe my feelings on the morning of that day on which I was to make my *debut* on the world's stage; for so the event appeared to me. Shoes in my case were superfluous, and the covering for my head, a Kilmarnock bonnet, had "seen better days," for when placed on my pericranium, a bunch of hair could be seen peering through its upper portion, similar to an overgrown cluster of grass on a pasture field, and what the aborigines of this country, in their hey-day, might have considered an excellent "scalping lock." No matter, off we went—I dreaming of ships, minus "colonies and commerce," my father probably brooding over his own degradation, which made it necessary that I should thus accompany him, or on the cause which give rise to it.

I need not say that "the sun had reached its meridian height" when we reached "the city of the West;" neither do I mean to state how I went gaping about with "eyeballs distended," and a mouth as large as the newspaper receiving-box of a post office; it is sufficient for you to know, that after my father's business had been transacted, and while I was urging our speedy return, an acquaintance made his appearance and accosted my devoted parent. A slight shower of rain beginning to fall, a suggestion was made that, for the purpose of *screening* themselves from a few drops, they should adjourn and "tak' the share o' ae gill." To this proposition my father gave an unwilling consent, but I stoutly protested against the lawfulness of the proceeding; my protest, however, met the fate of many others, although I had the satisfaction of making it again at the table. The *ae gill* was soon discussed, but the appetite was whetted. I did all in my power to remove my father; and hinted plainly enough the state of affairs at home. This had the effect of bringing the crimson to his cheek, but it passed unheeded by the infatuated mortal alongside of him, who, from all I learned, was but too conversant with scenes of family suffering, brought about from the same cause as our own. There is no use in dwelling longer on the day's carousal, for such it turned out. My father knew not where he was till within a short distance from home, although he received two severe falls in his endeavour to catch some tormenting urchins, whom, to use his own expression, he was making "flee like chaff before the wind."

As I have said, my father's consciousness returned only a short distance from our mournful home. A