

With one voice they spoke against "as cold, careless, unfriendly, nay, actually unkind. They declared Herman wished to break with him—that was evident; he had not even expressed sorrow for being so detained. Then shifting their ground, they applauded Clifton's adherence to the pledge. That chain had been wound around him doubtless by his friend, but he ought to be above being influenced now; he should choose for himself, and enjoy "the pleasures of life," as every other young man did. The shafts of ridicule were ready had this failed; but alas! they were not needed, the ~~words~~ of Clifton was yielding fast, and a few more "affectionate expostulations," as they called them, finished the work; that night the pledge was—Broken

Nine months have passed away. It is a fine, clear, moonlight night. From a small, dark lodging, in a narrow obscure street, the form of a young man is issuing; and can that be Clifton, with altered dress, crouching figure, emaciated face, skulking along like a coward who fears being seen? Can this be Clifton? It is even so! The night of the broken pledge paved the way for final ruin. During the following week he was never sufficiently himself to attend to business; and ever after that, his benevolent nights rendered him totally unfit for steady application in the morning. This change was soon marked; his most steady clients forsook him by degrees, and those whose favor he hoped to gain by the change in his principles, were overheard saying, "Since he had taken the pledge, he should have kept it; breaking a solemn promise did not look well." His answer to Herman's note, written when his brain was excited by liquor, was so incoherent, that his friend, alarmed, wrote back in haste to ask the one question was the pledge unbroken still. The answer, dictated less by Clifton than his comrades, avowed the truth, and hinted that Clifton was accountable to none for his conduct—not even Charles Herman. When the first shock of this change had passed, Herman wrote in terms of affectionate expostulation. His letter was returned with a few lines importing that his advice was not wanted. The erring youth now passed rapidly from bad to worse; and his "affectionate comrades," finding that he was now no credit to them, one by one shook him off. He was forced to go a grade lower for company then; and this suited his taste, too, which was waning fast. It is needless to trace further his downward path. He was going now to meet some worthless companions and spend a few of the last shillings he possessed—compounds now he had none. Yet was he not entirely hardened; the sound of distant bells fell on his ear, and thrilled through his heart, carrying him back to youth again. There is a flash in the pale cheek, and the clouded brow grows sadder still—he can feel. Oh for a guiding voice, a helping hand. Now he halt-halts, two strangers are before him, and he dare not pass. Look! what say they? "So old Mr. Herman is dead, after a painful illness, and his nephew is master of all his wealth, but not likely long to enjoy it." "Why, he is better now, but he has been very bad; attention to his uncle was the chief cause, but the bad conduct of a friend of his made him very unhappy, and while the one cause injured his frame, the other bowed his spirits." "Ay, Clifton was it not? he has turned out bad. They quarrelled I think, what was the cause, and how did Herman hear of the misconduct of his friend?" "Through an acquaintance to whom he wrote purposely to know. I did not hear the cause of the quarrel; faults on both sides, I suppose." "There was not, there was not," cried Clifton impetuously, "the fault was Clifton's, not Herman's." The young man passed as he spoke, and turning a corner, strode down the street like one under strong excitement.

"Who was it? Could that be Clifton?" exclaimed both in a breath, "It certainly was his voice, but how changed," added one, "and, strange coincidence, here comes Herman himself; who thought to see him in town!" The pair went to the young man at once; and communicated what they had heard. Herman gave scarcely time to understand them, before he cried, "Where is he?—which way?" and turning down the street they indicated, with a brief farewell, he followed the steps of Clifton; with a swiftness that belied his pale cheek and slender form. The youth he sought was not far off; and Herman was on the point of speaking, when suddenly five or six young men joined him, and with laughter and jokes at the cloud of gloom that he had not yet shaken off, carried him away with them, their loud voices and coarse language reached even the ears of Herman, and told him too plainly how degraded he had become. At last they all stopped, and Herman, unwilling to seem a spy on their movements, entered a public garden he was just passing, and tired by exertion and excitement, sat down on a seat placed rather in the shade. Almost immediately after, Clifton's party also entered the gate, and remarking that the rooms would not be full enough yet, strolled slowly past the place where Herman was sitting. None glanced at the youth but Clifton, and he stood as though spell-bound, gazing on the muffled form in mingled hope and fear. Herman felt that he was known, and unable to show a coldness he did not feel, advanced a step from the shade. The moon-beams fell full on his face. The eye of Clifton rested a moment on those pale features, now paler still with strong emotion, and then rushing forward with a wild cry of delight, he flung himself into the arms of his friend. Surprise and joy had overcome him, or he had never, never dared to meet Herman thus. In a moment the recollection of all returned, and he raised his eye timidly and fearfully to the countenance of his friend; but there was no coldness, no harshness there. The agitated features and starting tear spoke unchanged affection; and yielding to the influence of better and sweeter feelings than he had known for long, Clifton bowed his head on his friend's shoulder and wept. And the noisy party—their mirth suddenly hushed—silently turned from a scene which touched their hearts despite themselves, and left the garden. It was some time before the young men could speak calmly to each other, and then the first word that trembled on Clifton's lips was "forgiveness," and once assured of this, and encouraged to hope for the future, he submitted to the every wish of Herman. The young men walked a little while together, and then Clifton accompanied his friend to the lodgings of the latter. But a fever that had been long in his veins now broke out, and for many days he lay on a bed of sickness, but Herman's affection and care soothed his troubled spirit, and the affliction was not loet; he looked on his past career with horror. He had tasted the cup of the world's pleasure, and shrunk from it now with dread. The words of Herman fell on a willing ear; his instructions were eagerly sought. When able to travel, Clifton was taken by his friend to his own home in their native town, where, on his return to health, the youth finally settled. Once more he took the pledge, and this time on bended knee he asked strength from his God to observe it. The after life of Clifton was peaceful and honorable. He was an ornament to his profession. His friend's unwearied love was returned with true, warm affection. He had temptations to meet, difficulties to encounter, yet was he made more than conqueror over all his enemies. Thus time,—*the pledge was kept.*