

said, as I had been in prison two nights and a day they would only fine me five shillings."

"Five shillings! was that all?"

"No, there were the costs."

"The costs! and how much were they?"

"Why, sir, they were more than the fine,—seven and sixpence. I don't know how they made it out to be so much as that. It's rather hard to tax a poor working man in that fashion."

"Five shillings and seven and sixpence, that makes twelve and sixpence. Was that all?"

"No, sir, not exactly; in the midst of the row, either I or somebody else smashed two of the large panes in the draper's window. They said I did it, though I have no remembrance whatever of having done anything of the kind; however, they made me pay ten shillings for that."

"Ten shillings and twelve and sixpence,—that's twenty-two and sixpence. Rather a costly affair, Wilson."

"It's very true, sir; but there's plenty of work, and I get good wages. I'll soon make it up."

"But we have not got all the costs reckoned yet. How much do you lose to-day from not being at your work till between two and three in the afternoon, instead of six o'clock in the morning? Three and sixpence would be a low figure, wouldn't it?"

"I dare say it would, sir."

"Then how much did you spend on the drink that made you so disorderly?"

Wilson was silent. To say the truth, he had not a very definite idea. He did remember, however, that he had received for wages on Saturday night two pounds five shillings; and that when the fine and the costs were deducted on Monday morning, he had not more than a few shillings left. He had, it is true, discharged a score which he had run up during the week; but then that was for drink, and so it did not greatly matter whether it was actually spent on Saturday night or before.

"Well, well," said Mr. Gregson, "I have no doubt it took a good part of your wages. Now then, do you think we have got the whole of it reckoned?"

"Pretty nearly, I think, sir."

"I don't think we have, Wilson," said his master; "let us look a little further. That sad affair on Saturday night was only one of a good many things of the sort, none of them so bad as this, but all tending in the same direction, and all costing money. I've more than once remonstrated with you, for being absent from your work, either actually drinking, or paying the penalty of it, in a state of health which unfitted you for work. Now tell me honestly, has there been a night during the last year or two, in which you did not go and spend more or less money in the public-house?"

"Well, you see, sir, sometimes I'm obliged to go on account of my club."

"It's a great pity your club is held at the public-house. However, that need not take you there more than once a week, or a fortnight, perhaps seldom. That leaves

the other nights of the week, or fortnight, as the case may be, altogether unaccounted for. Now, you can't have spent, in one way or other, much less than half your wages, and that would amount in the year to somewhere about fifty pounds. You talked a little while ago, of the heavy tax the magistrates imposed on you in making you pay that seven and sixpence for costs. I wonder who has taxed you most heavily, yourself or they. Depend upon it, the working-man's self-imposed taxes are commonly the heaviest."

Wilson was astounded to think that he had spent anything like such a sum, and yet he could not deny that the calculation was substantially correct.

"Suppose you had put half that sum into the Savings' Bank, for the last two years," continued his master, "what a nice little fortune you would have had now! And then, if you had spent the other half in feeding, and clothing, and educating your children, as you should have done, in how much better plight they would have been than they are now! The fact is, Wilson, only a part of the 'costs' have fallen on yourself. Your poor wife and children have had to pay no small share of them, in the lack, not only of the comforts, but of the very necessities of life."

"I'm sure, sir," said Wilson, a little roused by the last remarks, "there's nobody loves his wife and children better than I do."

"I dare say you have some sort of love for them; but you must excuse my telling you, that I've no great idea of any man's love for his wife and children, when I know that for the sake of drink and his drunken companions, he'll suffer them to go in want and rags."

This was a very sore point with Wilson, and the more so because he felt there was only too much truth in what his master said. When he married his wife, there was not a handomer, tidier girl in the town. She had done her best, poor creature, to keep her home comfortable, and to provide her children with what her thoughtless husband allowed her of his wages; but of late her health had sadly failed—the bloom had gone from her cheek, and altogether she had evidently lost heart. The poor children had many a time been only half fed, and their clothing was meagre and ragged. Sorely against her will, she had been compelled to allow the two elder ones, though only ten and eleven years of age, to go to work in a factory. All this Mr. Gregson knew very well. Wilson was silenced.

"Now there are some other things," continued Mr. G—, "which we must look at in reckoning up the costs. Your health is giving way. You know very well you're not the man you were. Worse than that, you're losing your character, and with that your self-respect. Then, to return to the costs you are making other people pay: you are depriving your children of the benefit of a good example, which you ought to set them, and setting them one which, if they follow it, will be a curse to them for ever."

Here was another point, on which Wilson's conscience had, now and then at least, rebuked him severely. His wife had tried as well as she could to keep his drunkenness from his children, by getting them off to bed before he came home at night, but she could not do that always; and it had now become a recognised fact that "father got drunk."

It was late on the Saturday evening to which our narrative refers, when a friend called to tell Mrs. Wilson what had become of her husband. Poor creature! she passed a sleepless night, and in the morning the children saw that something more than usual was the matter. They asked where their father was. At first the question was evaded, but by-and-by the whole truth came out, much to their distress. But everybody knows that even children become in process of time habituated to that which at first distresses them, and that it is one of the commonest things in the world, for the children of the drunkard first to grieve over his conduct, and then to follow his example.

"There's another thing still, Wilson," said Mr. Gregson; "that Bible which you and I read together so many years ago in the same class at the Sunday-school, warns us against the consequences of all sin, and especially tells us that the drunkard can have no part in the kingdom of God and Christ. My dear fellow, you are ruining yourself for ever. The cost of this sinful indulgence of yours will certainly be, unless you repent and forsake it, the loss of your immortal soul."

"You're very kind, sir. It's all true; but what shall I do? To tell you the truth, I have many a time resolved to give it up; but when I've done my work it seems quite natural for me, a sort of habit at least, to go to the public-house. And then my companions would jeer me so if I were to leave them and go home."

"Never mind that. They'll not jeer you long; and if they do what matter? My advice to you is to abstain from intoxicating drink altogether: you may do very well without it. You know I have done so for years, and I never was in better health than I am just now. Resolve that you will never enter a public-house again. But more than that, in what you have done, you have sinned against God. Ask his forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and as you do so, implore his grace that you may rise superior to your besetting sin. I tell you candidly, I shall have no real hope for you, till I see you with your heart changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. God is ready both to pardon you and to give you all needful strength. Let it be your earnest prayer that he would give you both."

"I'll think about all you have said, sir, and try to do it."

"Do, Wilson; you'll never regret it."

Both Wilson and his family had abundant reason to be deeply thankful for the kindly expostulations of his master. From that time he became a sober man. It cost him many a hard struggle, but he stood fast against all temptation to recur to his old habits. He and his family were thence-