

"Can't we get something a little better for Lizzy?" said he, as he pushed his plate aside, his appetite for once gone before his meal was half eaten.

"Not unless you can earn more," replied the wife. "Cut and carve, and manage as I will, it's as much as I can do to get common food."

Claire pushed himself back from the table, and without saying a word more, went up to his shop in the garret, and sat down to work. There was a troubled and despondent feeling about his heart. He did not light his pipe as usual, for he had smoked up the last of his tobacco on the evening before. But he had a penny left, and with that, as soon as he had finished mending a pair of boots and taken them home, he meant to get a new supply of the fragrant weed. The boots had only half an hour's work on them. But a few stitches had been taken by the cobbler, when he heard the feeble voice of Lizzy calling to him from the bottom of the stairs. That voice never came unregarded to his ears. He laid aside his work, and went down for his patient child, and as he took her light form in his arms, and bore her up into his little work-shop, he felt that he pressed against his heart the dearest thing to him in life. And with this feeling, came the bitter certainty that soon she would pass away and be no more seen. Thomas Claire did not often indulge in external manifestations of feeling; but now, as he held Lizzy in his arms, he bent down his face and kissed her cheek tenderly. A light, like a gleam of sunshine, fell suddenly upon the pale countenance of the child, while a faint, but loving smile played upon her lips. Her father kissed her again, and then laid her upon the little bed that was always ready for her, and once more resumed his work.

Claire's mind had been awakened from its usual leaden quiet. The wants of his failing child aroused it into disturbed activity. Thought beat, for a while, like a caged bird against the bars of necessity, and then fluttered back into panting imbecility.

At last the boots were done, and with his thoughts now more occupied with the supply of tobacco he was to obtain than with any thing else, Claire started to take them home. As he walked along he passed a fruit-shop, and the thought of Lizzy came into his mind.

"If we could afford her some of these nice things!" he said to himself. "They would be food and medicine both to the dear child. But," he added, with a sigh, "we are poor!—we are poor! Such dainties are not for the children of poverty!"

He passed along, until he came to the ale-house where he intended to get his pennyworth of tobacco. For the first time a thought of self-denial entered his mind, as he stood by the door, with his hand in his pocket, feeling for his solitary copper.

"This would buy Lizzy an orange," he said to himself. "But then," was quickly added, "I would have no tobacco to-day nor to-morrow, for I won't be paid for these boots before Saturday, when Barton gets his wages."

Then came a long, hesitating pause. There was before the mind of Claire the image of the faint and feeble child with the refreshing orange to her lips; and there was also the image of himself uncheered for two long days by his pipe. But could he for a moment hesitate, if he really loved that sick child? is asked. Yes, he could hesitate, and yet love the little sufferer; for to one of his order of mind and habits of acting and feeling, a self-indulgence like that of his pipe, or a regular draught of beer, becomes so much like second nature, that it is as if it were a part of the very life; and to give it up costs more than a light effort.

The penny was between his fingers, and he took a single step towards the alehouse door; but so vividly came back the image of little Lizzy, that he stopped suddenly. The conflict, even though the spending of a single penny was concerned, now became severe; love for the child plead earnestly, and as earnestly plead the old habit that seemed as if it would take no denial.

It was his last penny that was between the cobbler's fingers. Had there been two pennies in his pocket, all difficulty would immediately have vanished. Having thought of the orange, he would have bought it with one of them, and supplied his pipe with the other. But, as affairs now stood, he must utterly deny himself, or else deny his child.

For minutes the question was debated.

"I will see as I come back," said Claire, at last starting on his errand, and thus, for the time, making a sort of a compromise. As he walked along, the argument still went on in his mind. The more his thoughts acted in this new channel, the more light came into the cobbler's mind, at all times rather dark and dull. Certain discriminations, never before thought of, were made; and certain convictions forced themselves upon him.

"What is a pipe of tobacco to a healthy man, compared with an orange to a sick child?" uttered half-aloud, marked at last the

final conclusion of his mind; and as this was said, the penny which was still in his fingers, was thrust determinedly into his pocket.

As he returned home, Claire bought the orange, and in the act experienced a new pleasure. By a kind of necessity he had worked on, daily, for his family, upon which was expended nearly all his earnings; and the whole matter came so much as a thing of course, that it was no subject of conscious thought, and produced no emotion of delight or pain. But, the giving up of his tobacco for the sake of his little Lizzy was an act of self-denial entirely out of the ordinary course, and it brought with it its own sweet reward.

When Claire got back to his home, Lizzy was lying at the bottom of the stairs, waiting for his return. He lifted her, as usual, in his arms, and carried her up to his shop. After placing her upon the rude couch he had prepared for her, he sat down upon his bench, and as he looked upon the white, shrunken face of his dear child, and met the fixed, sad gaze of her large, earnest eye, a more than usual tenderness came over his feelings. Then without a word, he took the orange from his pocket, and gave it into her hand.

Instantly there came over Lizzy's face a deep flush of surprise and pleasure. A smile trembled around her wan lips, and an unusual light glittered in her eyes. Eagerly she placed the fruit to her mouth and drank its refreshing juice, while every part of her body seemed quivering with a sense of delight.

"It is good, dear?" at length asked the father, who sat looking on with a new feeling at his heart.

The child did not answer in words; but words could not have expressed her sense of pleasure so eloquently as the smile that lit up and made beautiful every feature of her face.

While the orange was yet at the lips of Lizzy, Mrs. Claire came up into the shop for some purpose.

"An orange!" she exclaimed with surprise. "Where did that come from?"

"Oh, mother, it is so good!" said the child, taking from her lips the portion that yet remained, and looking at it with a happy face.

"Where in the world did that come from, Thomas?" asked the mother.

"I bought it with my last penny," replied Claire. "I thought it would taste good to her."

"But you had no tobacco."

"I'll do without that until to-morrow," replied Claire.

"It was kind in you to deny yourself for Lizzy's sake."

This was said in an approving voice, and added another pleasurable emotion to those he was already feeling. The mother sat down, and for a few moments, enjoyed the sight of her sick child, as with unabated eagerness, she continued to extract the refreshing juice from the fruit. When she went down-stairs, and resumed her household duties, her heart beat more lightly in her bosom than it had beaten for a long time.

Not once through that whole day did Thomas Claire feel the want of his pipe; for the thought of the orange kept his mind in so pleasant a state, that a mere sensual desire like that of a whiff of tobacco had no power over him.

Thinking of the orange, of course, brought other thoughts; and before the day closed, Claire had made a calculation of how much his beer and tobacco money would amount to in a year. The sum astonished him. He paid rent for the little house in which he lived, four pounds sterling a year, which he always thought a large sum. But his beer and tobacco cost nearly seven pounds! He went over and over the calculation a dozen times, in doubt of the first estimate, but it always came out the same. Then he began to go over in his mind the many comforts seven pounds per annum would give to his family; and particularly how many little luxuries might be procured for Lizzy, whose delicate appetite turned from the coarse food that was daily set before her.

But to give up the beer and tobacco in *total* when it was thought of seriously, appeared impossible. How could he live without them.

On that evening, the customer whose boots he had taken home in the morning, called in, unexpectedly, and paid for them. Claire retained a sixpence of the money, and gave the balance to his wife. With this sixpence in his pocket he went out for a mug of beer, and some tobacco to replenish his pipe. He stayed some time—longer than he usually took for such an errand.

When he came back he had three oranges in his pocket; and in his hands were two fresh buns and a cup of sweet new milk. No beer had passed his lips, and his pipe was yet unsupplied. He had passed through another long conflict with his old appetites: but love for his child came off, as before, the conqueror.

Lizzy, who drooped about all day, lying down most of her time, never went to sleep early. She was awake, as usual, when her father returned. With scarcely less eagerness than she had eaten the orange in the morning did she now drink the nourishing milk