

THE FATAL GIFT.

SEVERAL years ago, long before I had heard tell of total abstinence, I had occasion to take a voyage in a sailing vessel from an English port to the coast of France. I was accompanied by my two daughters. In the expectation that they would be troubled by sea-sickness, and in conformity with the general opinion, we had provided ourselves with a bottle of brandy, to be used as a *quieting* medicine in the event of illness. Of course, I see now the absurdity of believing that a strong stimulant like ardent spirits is fit to be used when sickness has already over-excited the stomach. Our voyage was prolonged on account of the wind, or other circumstances, so much, that night came on soon after we sailed; and we made preparations for retiring to our berths, with a view of passing, if possible, several hours in the enjoyment of repose. Prior to our retirement for the night, we each took a small glassful of brandy; and as the captain of the vessel—a Frenchman—happened to be below just then, he was asked to have a little of our brandy. He tossed off a draught of the liquor with evident relish, smacked his lips after drinking, and, bidding us ‘*adieu*’ for the night, went on deck.

We had not rested more than a few hours ere we were awakened by the trampling of feet, and a confused noise of voices. I hastened on deck. The night was cloudy; the seamen were shouting to each other, and hurrying to and fro. “What is the matter?” I inquired. “Where is the captain?”

Judge of my horror and regret, when I learned that he had been set on to drink by the brandy which I had given, had got intoxicated, and in that shocking state had fallen overboard! The boat was put out, and the men rowed about in the darkness, for a considerable time; but alas! all was in vain; the poor man was gone to be seen no more until “the sea shall give up its dead.”