

woman had kindled a fire very quickly, and some wa. a breakfast was now ready for the children, which she distributed with the greatest tenderness, at the same time pressing the poor mother to sit down by the now glowing fire, and warm herself. Helen Burton obeyed; and as she looked wistfully in the face of her besotted husband, she burst into a flood of tears.

"It is a mighty power that can change the current of woman's love," said the old woman. "Years of neglect, and sorrow, and want, crowned with sinful and debasing conduct on the part of a husband, cannot always do it, or the love of Helen Burton would have been changed to hatred cruel as the grave." I addressed myself to the poor afflicted Helen in the mildest terms I could use, spoke to her of the loving-kindness of him whose tender compassions fail not, and who maketh the light to shine out of darkness when it pleaseth him. She heard me in silence, her eye wandering alternately from her husband; but I saw clearly that nature was struggling vehemently, and I could not help reflecting with pain on that wretched condition to which man reduces himself and others by the commission of iniquity. Here was before me the feeble and broken hearted mother of five children, destitute of every earthly comfort, and brought to ruin and want, apparently by the bad conduct of the only individual on earth to whom she had a right to look for comfort and protection. There he sat, unconscious of that ruin to which he had reduced his family, but of which he could not have been unconscious as he was pursuing his career of wickedness.

My reflections were broken by the voice of Maria Moreland, who again commenced her address to the drunkard. "Mark Burton, wilt thou not rouse thee? Thy wife, thy dearly beloved Helen, seeks a word from thee, ere the fift of death has overcast thy eyelids? Where are now thy plighted vows? where that kindly heart and manly form which stole the affections of Helen, pure as the dew upon the mountain top? Mark Burton, thy children are no common beggars, but thy madness has reduced them to receive an alms from the stranger. *Thy children, Mark Burton, are beggars, and they have been made so by you!*" This last sentence was expressed with great power and emphasis. Whether it was the clear shrill intonation which struck home upon the ear of the drunkard, or whether the sentiment expressed had touched some latent feeling not yet entirely destroyed by a long course of wickedness, I cannot tell; but Mark Burton started upon his legs, and in a tremulous, but angry voice he said, "Who dares to say that my children are beggars?" Maria Moreland replied, "I dare tell you, Mark Burton, that the wife and children of the heir of Lindsburn are beggars, and in greater distress than the mendicant who wanders from door to door. Look around you, look at Helen your wife, hungry and half naked! Look at your children in that miserable corner—they cannot rise for want of clothing! The fire before you, and the morsel of which they have just partaken, and the gifts of this messenger of mercy—and will you deny that your family are beggars?" "Maria Moreland," answered Burton, "you have crossed my path for years, and I hate you. Your voice to me is as the voice of a fiend, and your dwarfish, shrunken form is as the form of an unearthly visitant. Who told you that I was the heir of Lindsburn? and who taught you to track my footsteps as the blood-hound tracks the footsteps of his prey?"

Maria replied, "I have crossed your path for years, have I? Ay, and I will continue to cross it, till you turn from your wicked courses. But your course is nearly run: riot and drunkenness have done their business with your once noble form: even now you trample—your eye has lost brilliancy, and there are but a few steps between you and the grave. I have crossed your path for years, have I? Maria Moreland has watched you with the eye of the eagle from your infancy, and she knew that you were the heir of Lindsburn before you knew it yourself."

"In the name of God, who and what are you?" said Burton: "I thought I had escaped the eye of all who know me. Did you know my mother? Were you a witness of her care over me?—and do you now also mark my degradation? It is torture to my mind to think so."

"Did I know your mother, do you say?" said Maria: "I shall meet her in heaven; she crossed my path until I turned into the blessed path that leads to eternal life; she taught me the way to happiness and heaven; and, Mark Burton, she taught you also, and she taught your Helen who now sits before you, oppressed with misery; but a patient expectant of everlasting glory. O that you had been buried in the same grave with your mother!—then you would have escaped the drunkard's doom, and Helen and her first-born would have sorrowed for you on the sunny mountains of Lindsburn, but not as those who sorrow without hope. I shall not tell you who I am; but I have watched you in your mad career. I saw you when drunken tavern

assemblies began to steal from you the thousands of poor Helen and the acres of Lindsburn. I saw you when drink, debauchery, and unhallowed amusements began to lead you from your once happy home, and when your lovely Helen was left by you to pine in solitary sadness. I have crossed your path even then, but not in the decrepit form of Maria Moreland. And," she added, in a low whisper, "I saw you when you became a forger, and but for me you would have suffered a forger's doom."

"But for you I should have suffered a forger's doom!" said Burton, as he again sunk upon his seat, evidently suffering the severest mental torture. "A forger's doom!" he repeated, and fell senseless on the floor. Helen Burton screamed aloud and fainted; the poor naked children started from their bed, and running to their mother, cried in piteous accents. "Mother—dear, dear mother—O do not leave us."

I tried to calm them; and while Maria directed her attention to the poor mother, I said to her, "This is a sad and awful scene—a melancholy picture of the effects of sin." She replied, "Yes; we are entering upon the last scene of a painful drama. I have seen it from the beginning, and must abide the close; but at present there is no immediate danger. Helen will come round immediately, and so will her husband. I have touched him in a tender part; I am glad he feels it, for he may now listen to the word of wisdom and the voice of mercy, which he has long despised."

I said, "He is very ill, and something must be done for him immediately; a bed must be procured, and clothing for those poor children." Helen Burton opened her eyes, and staring wildly round her, exclaimed, "Is he gone—gone for ever? O my poor husband—my poor children—my heart is broken."

"Helen," said Maria, "there is still hope; your husband begins to feel. The lamp of life, it is true, glimmers in the socket, and it must soon go out: but while life exists it is our duty to direct him to the fountain of mercy—that fountain long neglected and despised, but still open to wash away the sins of the vilest of the vile."

Addressing myself to Maria, I said, "I shall go and provide some necessary articles for this poor family. I shall send medical aid immediately, and will again look in upon you in the course of the day."

In the afternoon of the same day on which the foregoing events took place, I again directed my steps to the miserable apartment of Burton; having previously sent a bed, some clothing, and other necessaries for himself and family. I slipped quietly into the passage, on one side of which was the door of Maria's room, and on the other the door of the room occupied by the drunkard and his family. The clear, shrill, animated voice of Maria burst upon my ear, and by her language, I soon discovered that Mark Burton had recovered his senses. The door of the room being ajar, and not wishing, at the instant, to disturb her conversation, I slipped into it, and sat down. "Mark Burton," said Maria, "it is long since I ceased to flatter, and it is no mark of friendship to withhold the truth from a dying man. You have sinned—sinned grievously—and with a high hand. You have sinned against God, against that dear woman, and her helpless children, and against your own soul."

A deep and hollow groan was the only reply.

"If that groan were the groan of a heart broken and contrite under a deep sense of sin, and under a conviction of the long-suffering and tender mercy of God, Maria Moreland would rejoice with a joy exceeding the delight of a mother over her first-born child. Is it so, Mark Burton, or is your soul still cold and callous as the nether millstone? Look at Helen and your children—look at your devoted wife, whose heart, still unchanged, burns with an affection for you which all your neglect and wicked conduct have not quenched."

The poor drunkard was touched. "Helen," he said, "my poor Helen, forgive me. I am suffering under the horrors of a dark despair, and, when too late, I see the dreadful condition to which I have reduced myself and family. I—I deserve it all; but you—you and my innocent children—the thought is madness! O that I had never tasted the poisoned cup!"

Poor Helen wopt for joy; for to the voice of kindness from her once fond and affectionate husband she had long been a stranger. Truly the cup of strong drink is a poisoned cup; it destroys the affections, and almost, if not altogether, obliterates the common feelings of humanity. In accents the most gentle and affectionate, she said, "O Mark! O my dear husband! I forgive you all; and may you receive forgiveness from God. May he yet spare you to be a comfort and help to your poor family."—"I feel that my worthless life is near to a close," said Mark Burton: "there is a sad sinking within me; it is like the breaking up of the framework of nature. Helen, I cannot leave you to a world that will use you worse than you have been used by your wicked husband. What an awful reflection is this for a dying man! I

dare not, I cannot hope for mercy from Him against whom I have so deeply offended. Oh, the misery of a life of dissipation, and the tenfold misery of a dying hour! Would to God I had remained satisfied with the pure and simple pleasure of domestic life at Lindsburn! O tell my children to avoid the beginnings of evil."

There was now silence. I rose from my seat and rapped gently at the door. It was opened by Maria, who said to me, "There is a change for the better here, Sir; I wish it were a change for the better in regard to the things of eternity." Maria Moreland left the room, and I sat down by the bedside of the dying drunkard. After a few moments' silence I said to him, "Your situation, and the situation of your poor family, is distressing. What would induce a man, moving in the circle in which you have moved, so far to forget himself, and every honourable and moral feeling, as to sink down into the condition, and take up the character and practices of a low and debased drunkard?" Mark Burton looked at me with a countenance of inexpressible misery, and replied, "Sir, I fall by degrees, and my fall commenced in my own house. Always social and hospitable, I felt great pleasure in the company of my friends. The custom of my country made drinking a necessary adjunct to every evening party, and I was not aware that, thus keeping up the spirit of hospitality, would ruin my family, and eat as doth a canker into my own vitals." I continued: "Your conduct has indeed brought sad and awful ruin upon yourself and family! and yet amidst it all, your poor wife seems an example of patient resignation. Have you wasted all your property? Is there nothing left, either of your own or your wife's for these children?"—"Nothing!" he answered; "nothing!—not even the consolation that her father lived and died an honest, respectable man. Five thousand pounds was the fortune of Helen Blair, my once-beloved Helen. It is gone:—and Lindsburn, the inheritance of my fathers, and what ought to have been the inheritance of these children, is gone also. O the curse which follows in the track of the drunkard! It leaves nothing for those who come after, and it scatters all around it debasement, and misery, want, and death. I am, and have been for years, truly miserable, and yet I have never conquered my degrading passion. Even now, I feel the craving of an opiate cruel and rapacious as the grave."

"Have you any relations, or friends, who can assist your family? To all appearance you must soon quit this world; and, next to your own eternal welfare, it is of some consequence to know what is to become of these children, and your feeble but patient wife." He shrunk back—was silent for a time; and then, in a paroxysm of the most bitter and poignant reflection, exclaimed, "All my relatives have disowned me and mine for ever. Helen Burton has an uncle, an only relative; he is in a distant land. I have attempted to—to ruin—." He could proceed no further; the violence of his feelings overcame him, and he sunk upon his bed in an agony of remorse. His poor wife was at his bed-side in a moment, and in sweet and soothing accents whispered in his ear, "My dearest Mark Burton, my husband, compose yourself. O Mark, may not all yet be well? If Lindsburn is no longer ours, yet a change on you would be better to me than the possession of Lindsburn or any thing the world can give." Mark Burton looked at his weeping wife, and in the language of unutterable despair, cried out, "Helen Blair, I am dying! Drink, in an evil hour, robbed me of every manly and honest feeling. You have sinned, and are now feeling, the consequences of your husband's vile conduct; but you know not half his guilt. O Helen, I am wretched beyond all endurance; and I am—." The miserable man again stopped short. At this moment Maria Moreland entered the room, and looking in his face, she exclaimed, "Mark Burton, thy race is ended—thy course is run: the morrow's sun shall not light upon thy eyelids; and once more I tell you there is balm in Gilead and a physician there." A groan escaped from the lips of the dying drunkard—it came from the heart; and he exclaimed, "I am—." "A forger," said Maria Moreland; "but I crossed your path, and you missed your aim. You became a drunkard—and drunkenness drove you to meanness—to madness—to crime. Bitter is the experience of Maria Moreland of the evils of that awful vice: its name is Legion." At this moment the door of the apartment was opened, and a stranger entered. Maria Moreland uttered a piercing shriek, exclaiming, "It is Colonel Blair, the uncle of Helen Burton." This was too much for the poor drunkard; his whole frame shook and trembled; he heaved one heavy groan—and, in an instant more, his spirit had passed the boundaries which separate time from eternity.

Colonel Blair had just returned from India, and through his agent, had found out the abode of his niece and her wretched circumstances. But very lately before his arrival Maria had discovered a