

than shoremen are, and perhaps it is this which makes us so reckless. Anyhow, many of us are over fond of the drink, wife. I've often seen you look reproach, Mary, although you've said but little. And I'm not wishing to excuse myself for liking it too. Well, I'd just come in after a hard day's work, and a social glass at the Three Mariners tempted me. But I didn't stop there, Mary, for it was a merry party, and the song and the joke went briskly round, and the liquor too.

"I was just getting far enough gone to lose all command over myself; another five minutes and another glass, Mary, and I should have been drunk, ay, drunk. My hand was upon it, lass, when there was a noise outside of voices, and the sound of feet. I knew what it meant before Harry Norris run in and said, 'You must turn out, Laing, there's a schooner aground on the Scroby.' I got on to my feet, lass, with an unsteady reel at first, but the fresh night air, and the spray, and the danger set me right. Well, we saved the crew and the cargo—(that's my share of the salvage on the table)—but you see, lass, if I'd drunk that other glass, the life-boat would have lost its coxswain that night, and the bones of the schooner's crew might be whitening on the Scroby Sands, and John Laing a dishonoured man."

"A fearful warning, John."

"Yes, and I will profit by it, lass. John Laing's no drunkard, and I'll take good care to keep to windward of danger in future."

"I know you will; I believe I can trust you, John. But are you sure you can trust yourself, John?"

He looked at her, and then at his own strong hands, and laughed. "Trust myself! I've had to do so many a time, in many a peril, lass. John Laing trust himself! What do you mean, Mary?"

"Only—only that it might be safer to keep from the temptation altogether; to do what Morris and Davis and many others have been glad to do."

"To take the pledge, lass! Is that what you mean, Mary? Nay, no need for that. Come, don't look disappointed, Mary. You don't really want me to be an abstainer?"

"Only for your own safety, dear John."

"Tush! I can see to that. Come, I must have no tears on our wedding-day. Where's the boy?"