

neither dropped from the skies, nor did they spring from the earth; the heavens bent over them as benignly as ever; the sun poured his light and warmth, the rains descended, the dew fell, and fertilized all their ground; the crops sprung up and ripened in rich abundance; health bloomed in the family, and yet there was something within that was continually thwarting all these blessed influences. "It is that spirit shop that does it all," thought Mary Duffil, as she looked upon her altered husband, whose temper was once as sweet as summer, ever so prompt to act that he made the rough places all smooth, but now so slack in all his business, that molehills grew into mountains; his footstep which was like the bounding deer, now was like one ploughing through a bog; life had become full of little vexations; the fence was broken down; the sheep strayed away, and one after another was found dead; the cows were lost through the same broken fence, and days were lost in looking for them; the swine broke from the pens and rooted up the corn; he was churlish to the children, and they were glad when he was gone away.

With rolling tears, did she entreat her husband to abandon that shop, never never to go there again, it would ruin him, and bring disgrace and misery upon his family. James bent like a culprit before the sorrows of his wife; he acknowledged that it was all true, and he feared the shop had ruined him; he had often, he said, tried to break away, but never could get resolution; his tears fell fast to see her so grieved, for he still loved her better than all in the world besides, and, amidst all his failings to others, it was ever a pleasure to do any thing for her; he made many promises, but they were like the burnt flax. Too plainly to doubt it revealed to her agonized heart, that her husband's locks had been shorn, and that a band of iron had been fastened around him, which she could never break; she had lost her opportunity; once, had she persevered, she might have saved him. All their affairs now grew worse and worse; the property wasted away like the snow before the blazing sun; the crops were seized for debt on the ground; the stock was all taken; this poor woman could scarcely get the necessaries for her little dependant family; the farming utensils went one after another, the plough, and then the harrow, the spade, and then the hoe. The besom of destruction had swept over all the premises, the fences were fallen down, the neighbouring cattle strayed in and destroyed what had been left, the barn was falling to pieces, the house leaked in every part of it, the windows were broken, that it afforded not a shelter from the winds. James Duffil now became a terror to his family; he seemed as regardless of their lives as of any of the household furniture, which he had nearly all destroyed by his violence, and their only security at night was for the children to climb into the loft, where his unsteady step could not go, and his wife, with the youngest child, to flee to the barn.

Mary Duffil now felt herself a poor, lone woman in the world. "Few," she said to herself, "will even pity me; every one will say we brought all our sufferings upon ourselves; yet they would pity me if they knew all, for what sorrows are like my sorrows; to live in constant fear of my life, to see my poor children so treated that they quake with fear when they even think their father is coming to see them; so blighted in their youth; they would be happy even if they had not any thing, if they were only kindly spoken to; and worst of all, to see my poor husband, when I remember what he once was, every eye that saw him loved him, now a poor degraded outcast; even the children scorn him. It seems as if my heart would break."

The winter was now approaching; a dreary season to those who have no household comforts, and it seemed to this poor woman that her family must perish; but suddenly she formed the resolution to make one more effort to save them, to go to the shopkeeper and engage him not to let her husband have any more spirit. It was strange work for such a woman, to complain of her husband, she had long tried to hide him from every eye, and that shop was a sad place for her to go to. There stood those huge hogsheads, filled with their maddening draughts; there, standing under them the measures of every kind, glasses in array all around; the gibbet, the block, and the axe could not pierce a heart with more agony, than did the sight of these executioners of her poor, suffering, bleeding family; but the shopkeeper was a human being; "he must have some compassion, and he will befriend me," said Mary, "when he knows what we suffer." She told him that

she had come to beg him not to let her husband have any more spirit, that she was sometimes afraid her poor children would be killed, that every night, when he came from the shop, he seemed to have lost his reason; that she and her children were obliged to get out of his way; that it was so cold, now, she did not know how to sleep in the barn with her little girl, that she was a feeble child, and she could not keep her warm; that if her husband could not get any spirit, he would be kind and help them. The tears fell on her apron, as she stood, her head cast down, pleading to the only person who she believed could help her.

The shopkeeper told her he was sorry her husband had taken such a course; that when he first came into the shop he thought he was as likely a man as ever he knew, and every one said there was not so promising a young man in town, one so likely to get up in the world, and he stood out a great while; but it was strange how the habit of drinking gained upon him lately; he is now the most trouble-ome man that comes into the shop. "And why do you let him have it," asked Mary Duffil, "you see that it has ruined him and all the rest of us?" "Why, my family must live," replied the shopkeeper, "those that pay for my goods I must let have what they want." "Must my family be destroyed, that your family may live?" said Mary Duffil, in a tone of bitter suffering, "will that excuse stand at the great day of reckoning?" "I shan't sell him much more," said the shopkeeper hastily, "the mortgage will be out to-morrow, and if he don't pay he must quit." "Mortgage," said Mary, thunderstruck at the sound. "Yes," said the shopkeeper, "it has been mortgaged these two years, and I can't wait." As if the current of life had been frozen, she turned and swiftly went to her home. "Any other woman in town," said the shopkeeper, "would have known it long ago; but nobody could ever speak to that woman about her husband; I always feel bad, when I see her, that it was done at my shop; but folks must live," he said, as he shut the door. It was a hard snow storm, but this broken hearted woman heeded it not; "to-morrow," thought she, "we must all be cast out into the open world. O, that the grave would hide me; and my poor children, what will become of them, will they follow their wretched father's steps, better never to have seen the blessed light of this world, than to quench its beams with our own hands." As she entered her house, her four children were cowering over a few dying embers; the eldest, James, a boy about ten years old was holding his little sister, a child of a year; she shed not a tear, but they saw something was the matter, and each one pressed closely to her. "We must all go away to-morrow; you will never sleep here again," said she to her children: "the shopkeeper says our father owes it to him." They all cried and sobbed till the two youngest boys fell asleep; their mother laid them in their bed; she did not attempt to hide them. "I cannot save them any longer," thought she, now grown desperate in her grief; she sat down with her little girl in her arms, and James sat close by her. "Where are we going, mother," said he, "when we go away from here?" "To the poorhouse, my child," answered his mother. "Where that fool is?" said James. "Yes," answered his mother. "And where that crazy man is that screams all night?" "Yes, my child." "And shall we have to live with them?" "Yes," answered his mother, "we must all live together; there is but one room." "And won't the boys despise me?" asked James. "Yes, I'm afraid they will; they will tell you that your father is a drunkard, and you are a town poor-boy." Can't we go live somewhere else?" "No, my child." "Mother, would not father have been a good man if it had not been for that shop?" said James. "Yes, my child, he was always good before he went there; he would have done every thing for us: it is that cruel shop that has done it all." "And if father had never gone there, we should not have had to go away from our house, should we? and they couldn't have had our mowing and our corn-field, and that pretty wood-lot, too? Our horse and wagon, that the shop folks used every day; I should think would have been enough. And there's our two cows that stand in their yard; it makes me cry when I see Brindle there; all the whiskey in the world ain't so good as she is," and, seeing his mother's eyes filled with tears, "Mother," said he, "I shall be a man pretty soon, and then I will take care of you, and we will go away and live a hundred miles from a rum-shop, and father will come, and he will be just what he used to be, won't we."

Just then he heard the muttering voice of his father upon the