

and his feet were swift to shed blood—blood the most pure and precious that ever warmed a human heart or coursed through human veins—O! never had such a depth in the horrible pit been reached before, or that terrible truth started out into such startling prominence: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?”

Does he not pause ere lifting the knocker of that door? As he looks up at those lighted windows within which sat the counsel of the ungodly anxiously awaiting him, does he not mutter, turning on his heel, “My soul, come not thou into their secret, into their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.” The silent stars witness no such soul-struggle—the night winds catch up no such penitent words. If he has hesitated before, all compunctions are now at an end. He is utterly “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” He is bent only on not missing the chance, and on seizing his victim. “See him yonder—that is he; hold him fast” What though it be the hour for his Master’s rest or devotion? What though the holiest memories gather round the spot? What though the gentle Jesus, meek and mild, be handcuffed and buffeted as a worthless malefactor, and his favourite love-token be converted into a badge of treason? No matter to Judas. He has sold himself to commit iniquity. He “draws sin as with a cart-ropes,” and is dragged by it in turn with resistless rapidity towards the awful abyss, down into whose fathomless depths the fatal plunge must soon be taken. Judas became not thus hardened all at once. There was a period in his history when his heart was as impressive as that of any child amongst us. A blooming boy, perhaps an associate of Him whom he now betrays with a kiss, little thought he when he made his start in life, that he was destined to reach such a miserable end. And what was the master sin of Judas? one thought the least of by the

bulk of mankind—by some counted no sin at all. He was a covetous man, like Achan, and Balaam, and Gehazi. The demon of covetousness possessed him, and drowned him in perdition.

It matters not what be the form of sin you indulge, let it be persisted in, and although you may think you can control it as you like—that you may commit it or avoid it as you please—you will by and by find you are in a tyrant’s iron grip—who is hurrying you, insensibly, on your path down the slippery slope to a pit that is bottomless. Listen to the syren strains, lay your head on the lap of the enchantress, and sooner than you are aware will Delilah prove your destruction. You may think yourself a Samson—strong in principle, resolute in purpose—but soon you will be shorn of your strength, the eyes of reason and conscience will be put out, and bound hand and foot by the cords of sin, you will be cast into prison.

If a single sin possess such power, what must sin itself be in the myriad forms it assumes? Surely this is no thing to trifle with, to tamper with, any more than you would cast a burning brand into a magazine of gunpowder, and cry, “Am not I in sport,” or merrily dance on the edge of the crater of Vesuvius or of the cataract of Niagara. “Fools make a mock of sin.” The current may be smooth and the sky bright, the banks may be fringed with flowers, and the motion be easy and delightful, nevertheless that river will lead you to the rapids, where it will be impossible for you to stop, any more than could Judas at the garden gate. Act the deaf adder to the notes of warning now, like the Indian who sat down coolly in his bark canoe, till it shot over the beetling crag into the boiling caldron, and you will start up from your fatal stupor, to find yourself “mid ‘perils of waters.” O! then every member, every nerve and sinew, will be strained as if they would burst; but it will be too late.