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THE VILLAGE SHOEMAKER.

By G. W. BUNGAY.

The village shoemaker, in compliance with my solicitations, furnished me with the following sketch of his life. I am sure it will not be unacceptable to the readers of your useful paper, which is the reason why I have prepared it for publication. Twenty one years ago he left his native country, for this colony, with promising prospects and glowing hopes; believing that the "road to wealth is as plain as the road to market." Having served a regular apprenticeship to his business, and being counted a good mechanic, and possessing, withal, an unblemished reputation, he readily obtained flattering testimonials and other credentials, from ministers, magistrates, and other distinguished persons, which documents are still in his possession. He realised his anticipations respecting business; found no difficulty in procuring plenty of employment, and having a faculty of managing his concerns to good advantage, he soon became proprietor of sufficient capital to drive an extensive and thriving business. He had a crowd of customers, who were satisfied and pleased with his work, and it was a subject of public remark, that if he continued ten years in such a course, his industry and enterprise would be rewarded by the accumulation of an independent fortune. Thus matters and things passed on for the two first years; but, unfortunately for him and many others, there was a distillery in the neighbourhood, which sent forth ominous clouds of smoke, and streams of liquid fire, brutalizing the bodies, and demonizing the minds of men. Whiskey became almost as common as water in the village, and he soon discovered that he was acquiring a taste for it, although at first the very smell was offensive to him. He could only take a small quantity once or twice a day for a time; afterwards a little more and a little oftener; but no one called him a drunkard. During this time he courted and married an amiable and modest young woman, who did not dream that she had united with a man who was serving an apprenticeship to intemperance. After the wedding he indulged more and more, and continued to drink deeper and deeper, until it became the common talk that he was too fond of liquor; though his house was well provided with the comforts of life, and it was often said that he was one of the best providers in the village. In this way he continued to wax worse and worse, would frequently stay out late at night, and when questioned by his

wife why he absented himself so much from home, he pretended that special business detained him from the pleasure of the fireside. He neglected his business, and his customers began to complain of their treatment, and many of them sought a more punctual man to deal with. Some of his best friends advised, admonished, and begged him to turn over a new leaf, telling him plainly that they would withdraw their custom if he did not alter his method of doing business. In this way he went on from bad to worse, until he became a confirmed drunkard. About this time his wife gave birth to a son, and to show how completely he was the slave of appetite, I will mention a circumstance that occurred at that time. After providing the necessary assistance he became so intoxicated as to be insensible to what was going on, although his wife was twelve hours in labour, and it was supposed that death would soon terminate her sufferings. When his companion recovered she often pleaded with him to reform, he as often promised amendment, and as frequently apostatized. His family continued to increase, and his business to decrease, and he continued to sink lower and lower in the mire of intemperance. His home was the abode of poverty and wretchedness. His enterprising and economical wife endeavoured to supply his house with something to make it a little comfortable, until her slender resources were entirely exhausted. By this time his customers had forsaken him, and no person reposed confidence in his promises; his unnatural appetite for liquor was so strong, that when his family had no wood to burn—no bread to eat—no decent clothes to wear, he would contrive some plan to obtain, by "hook or by crook," his favorite drink. Sometimes, his affectionate but heart-broken wife, after pleading with him to desist from drinking, would go to the vendors of liquor in the place and implore them to sell no more liquor to her poor husband, and some of them would promise her they would not let him have any more on their premises, for they made great professions of friendship for her, and some of them did refuse to gratify his passion for liquor, but this was always when he was moneyless; he has no recollection of ever being denied when he had the change. Although his appetite was so ungovernable, he was occasionally visited with seasons of serious reflection, and would have given much had it been in his possession to be released from the fetters of drunkenness. In order to get away from temptation, he once determined to move off to some remote township where there were no facilities for drinking alcohol. Oh, how glad he would have been if some kind temperance man had taken him by the hand and told him that he could yet be a man amongst men; but the reverse was the case, for one of his esteemed friends at the present time, who was then engaged in selling the liquid poison, proposed to assist him if he would purchase a barrel of whiskey and drink himself dead, for he was a pest and a nuisance in society, and yet that same man would sell the exhilarating beverage when he had money, although he knew it was killing him. He would submit to the lowest drudgery to get grog. At one time an individual promised him a "horn" if he would wade through the creek; although he was no friend to cold water, he cheerfully plunged into the cold stream in order to procure his dram.