

Mrs. Middleton, anxious and pale,—save that circumscribed flush, which tell of any thing but health and many years,—was lighted up with an unwonted smile, as she listened to these words of truth and soberness, and looked hopefully upon the features of her husband for some testimony of their happy effect.

“I don't pretend to know as many things as you do, brother Arthur,” said John, “but I believe as truly as I believe any thing, that I should never have been a drunkard, if I hadn't begun with beer. Ardent spirit used to be very disagreeable to me, till I was past nineteen. When I lived with Mr. Paradise, the brewer, the boys had plenty of beer; and, when I left him, and went where beer was not set before us, I found my mouth was quite out of taste for water. Any thing tasted better than water;—a little rum, or gin, or brandy, gave it a very agreeable flavor; and so I went on increasing the quantity, till I became what I was.”

“Let me ask one question,” said Arthur Middleton, with the confident air of one, who has not the shadow of a doubt, that the response will be entirely in his favor,—“let me ask, if either of you ever saw me the worse for liquor, or heard of such a thing in your lives?”—Geoffrey and John turned their countenances upon me, and Mrs. Middleton cast her eyes upon the floor. I perceived it was my duty to speak, and to speak frankly. “My young friend,” said I, “when I tell you, that the visit you are now receiving from your brothers was concerted by me, you will believe that I entirely concur with them in their solicitation. We all urge you to resign every species of intoxicating drink; and we certainly think we have good reasons for the course we have adopted. You have put a direct question, which is entitled to an honest reply. Habits are insidious; and they are commonly manifested to those about us, at an earlier period than we imagine. They are frequently apparent to others, before we ourselves are conscious of their existence. It is with the deepest regret, that I assure you of the fact,—you have acquired the reputation of an intemperate man.”—If a skilful physician had affirmed that the plague had fastened upon his body, he could not have been more completely overthrown. He stared upon me with wild amazement; poor Margaret burst into a flood of tears, and buried her face in her hands.—“I am grieved to give pain,” continued I, “but I am bound, by many considerations, as you well know, to

be explicit. You ask if we, or either of us, ever knew you to be the worse for liquor, or heard of such a thing. Men, who love and desire to respect you, men of years and high standing, have told me, that an impression had long since gone abroad, that you were unfitted for professional business in the afternoon. The docket which is before me at every term, has indicated for the last three years, an extraordinary declension of your business. Your furniture was attached this morning by a wine-merchant. Your personal appearance,—the loss, in some considerable degree, of your good looks, has become a subject for remark among your acquaintances. Your case is also frequently cited, as I am informed, by those, who are desirous of proving, by forcible example, the insufficiency of the old-fashioned temperance pledge. Now, it is apparent, that any individual, so circumstanced in every respect, is decidedly the worse for liquor, in *mind, body and estate.*” “Sir,” said he, with something like asperity, “I see how it is;—I have long thought it might be well for me to try my fortune and seek for friends elsewhere.” “You will seek in vain elsewhere,” said I, “for better friends, than are now gathered around you. Your course is a plain one;—sign the pledge of total abstinence at once; resume your position as a distinguished leader among the advocates of this holy cause; and live down this evil reputation, which is gathering about you. Depend upon it, my dear young friend, your clients will return, your days will be brighter, and yours will be again the happy fireside that it was, when Margaret first exchanged a fond father's roof for your own.” “I wish the voice of our father and mother could speak from their graves,” said Geoffrey Middleton. “Do sign the pledge, dear brother,” cried John, as he sprang from his chair, and seized Arthur by the hand.—Margaret had risen from her seat, and was standing by his side, with her hand upon his shoulder.—“My dear husband,” said she,—the tears, that choked her utterance, fell fast upon his bosom. At length he rose, and with vehemence exclaimed, that he was pledged already,—that he had sworn most solemnly, and upon many occasions, that he would never sign the pledge of total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, nor put it in the power of the fanatics to say he had relinquished the use of fermented liquors.

“We urged upon his consideration, the utter emptiness of all such rash and senseless vows, and pressed him, in the most ear-