

like me. He wanted a hearty lad to bring up to his own trade; and I deserved the drubbin's sometimes, too, for I was a young limb in those days.

"I was talking about fightin' just now—if you'll believe me, sir, cripple as I was, I'd fight any boy that 'ud go down on his knees to me to bring our heads level and give me a chance. The Almighty knew my spirit, and so, I believe, He was pleased to make me as I am, to keep me out of temptation. It was the drubbin's father gave mother hurt me far worse than my own. Though I often grieved her with my ways, dear soul, I always loved her, for she was always good to me. She taught me to read my Bible and to say a prayer, and tried to get father to ask for me to be put in the Bluecoat School in Maidenburgh Street. He could easily have got me in, but he couldn't read or write himself, and so he swore at mother for teachin' me. She went to the Round meeting, too, and though he never went to church himself, he couldn't abide her being a Pogram—that's what some of the silly folks used to call a meetin'er in those parts. And then, when he was very drunk, he'd abuse poor dear mother just as if it was her fault I was born so.

"I remember one Saturday evening, when I had just turned eight, mother had coaxed me not to go hippety-hopping down to the quay to lark about the coal-sheds with the young rascals that used to get down there at night, but to stay at home with her. Father was at the Whitby Packet, or the Seven Bells, or some such place, and mother had swep' up the hearth, and sanded the kitchen, and brushed my hair, and there we sat readin' and talkin' together for ever so long, as comfortable as could be. I can remember one of the chapters we read that night—though, deary me! what a time ago it seems—for there was 'If, therefore, ye being evil,' in it. I used to pride myself on being sharp in those days, and says I to mother, 'What a precious evil father I've got then, for he never gives me nothing but whacks.' I wish I'd never said sharp things about father to poor mother, for they always made her cry. She was crying and sayin', 'It isn't for you to speak against him, Bob. Honour thy father—' when in he came. Mother had kep' me up longer than she meant, and he'd come home earlier than usual, in a fury of a temper about something. As soon as he saw us, he began to storm at mother for wasting his fire and candle—though, how we should have lived without mother's washing, I don't know—poor old father used to drink away almost the whole of his wages. 'And blubberin' over your Methodist rubbish,' he went on with a swear. And then he bundled us both out of doors, and chased us up the hill. We turned into the churchyard to get out of his way, and there we waited for him to quiet down. It was a sharp frosty night. After a nit we went back, and heard father a-snoring; so we crept in. But mother had got her death in the churchyard. She took a cold which settled on her lungs, and she went back in the churchyard afore Christmas. 'God bless you, my dear Bob!' she said