

good accomplished by the temperance movement. Emancipated from the worst bondage, he set himself vigorously to work for the emancipation of others. Temperance struck out an entirely new course for him, as it has done for thousands; and in every possible way, as far as his humble position and circumstances would admit, did he lay himself out for doing good.

James Stirling, the distinguished temperance reformer, the subject of this memoir, was born in the parish of Strathblane, 6th March, 1774. His general history we shall not now notice. Suffice it to say he early acquired drinking habits, they grew with his growth, one dark page follows another in the history of his intemperance, and he became at last a confirmed drunkard. The means of the great change wrought in him deserves attention, and afford encouragement.

One day he was sent for to a public house in the morning, and remained drinking there till the evening. He had been oscillating between this house and his work for several days before, as was his usual practice when the drinking fit was on him—unshaved, poorly clad, and without a penny. His will seemed entirely in the grasp of a master vice that had all but made complete wreck of conscience, honour, and affection, and to all appearance he was drifting hopelessly onward to ruin that now “had him in the wind.” But help, remonstrance, resistless appeal, conviction were now at hand, and God *employed the simple but startling question of a little child* to arrest the drunken father in his downward career.

His faithful wife had always been in the habit of observing family worship with the children when he was absent. She sat down with a heavy heart and with tears in her eyes that night to this exercise which had so often been her solace. Looking to the younger children she said: “Poor things, my heart is sore for you and your father.” What follows is so affecting that our old friend, (Mr. S.) must tell it himself:—

“I had been all day in the public-house, and at night, when I came home, my wife as usual, was reading a chapter to the children. When she was so engaged, I went in slipping like a condemned criminal. The portion of Scripture read was the twenty-fifth chapter of Mathew’s Gospel, in which these words occur:—‘When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.’ Our youngest boy, then almost four years old, was lying with his head on his mother’s lap, and just when she had read those awful words, he looked up earnestly in her face, and asked: ‘Will father be a goat then, mother?’ This was too strong to be resisted. The earnest innocent look of the child, the bewilderment of the mother, and above all, the question itself, smote me to the heart’s core. I spent a sleepless, awfully miserable night, wishing rather to die than to live such a life. I was ashamed to go to church on the following Sabbath. I stopped at home and read the ‘six sermons on temperance’ by Beecher, which had found their way into the house, but how I never knew. But so it was, that when looking about the house for some suitable book to read on Sabbath, I laid my hands on them and they seemed as if written and printed and sent there for me alone. I was now decided. My resolution was taken, as