

said to himself, it was only just that he should be left without hope, and without God, in a world where he had brought all his misery upon himself. At this time little Nelly was always in his thoughts—the puny, pale little child; puny and pale through his vice, hungry often, crying often, seldom merry and light-hearted as other children are, yet always patient and fond of him—always ready to be glad if he only smiled upon her. Oh! what a wretch he had been! How often, too—his memory was vivid in recalling it—how often, when he had received any money, had he resolved to hasten home with it, that Nelly's wants might be supplied, and those accursed gin-palaces had been strewn so thickly in his path, that, when he had reached home he had been penniless, but raging mad with drink—striking the quiet, patient little creature if she only came in his way!

But one morning—so early that it was still an hour or two before the paupers left their pauper beds—a whisper seemed to come to his troubled conscience, partly, as it were, in a dream, which said to his awakening ears: "I will arise, and go to my Father." He repeated the words over and over and over again.

Had that poor, prodigal son, living among swine, and eating of their husks, still a right to call any good and great being his Father? Still, it was he who had said it, without hesitation, as it seemed, the word Father. Christ, the Son of God, who knew all things, and could make no mistake, was he who in saying had told the story. The miserable prodigal, who had spent every penny in riotous living, just as he had done, when he came to himself, had said: "I will arise, and go to my Father." Was it possible he could do the same?

Day after day Rodney pondered this question over in his heart. Long ago he had known that Jesus Christ had come to seek and to save those who were lost; and now, if he would only suffer himself to be found by him—if he would only receive Christ and his love, he would give—even to him—the power to become one of the sons of God! Oh! if Christ would but find him! Down there, in his deep degradation and despair! Had he never known a drunkard like him? If he had not when he was a man on earth, he knew them now by hundreds and thousands in the streets of Christian cities. His pure eyes beheld them in all their vileness, in their desecrated homes, and in the gin-palaces thickly studding the streets.

The day dawn that was breaking upon his soul grew stronger and stronger, until the shadows fled away. There was neither drink nor the temptation to drink to make it dim, or to quench it. He could think now. He could repent, pray, and believe. Reason and faith could work within him; and there was no subtle foe to steal away his senses. The hour came at last, when from his inmost soul—drunkard though he had been—though his wife and little Nelly had perished through his sin—he could look up to God, and cry: "Father!"

TRUE TO A PROMISE.

It was not many days after this that Rodney came to the conclusion that he ought not to stay any longer within the sheltering walls of the workhouse, to be a burden upon the poor rates. He was strong enough now to earn his own living, though he could never regain the vigour he had thrown away. Weakness of body and a sorrowful spirit within him, must be his portion in this life, though his sin was forgiven, and his heart could call God his Father. He knew also that outside the gates—within sight of them—a vehement temptation would assail him. Even there, within the refuge, if the thought of drink came across him, he could only find help against it in earnest prayer. Would the demon take him captive again if he ventured out to confront the peril?

With a trembling heart, and in an agony of prayer, Rodney left his shelter, and found himself once more free and unrestrained in the streets. He was compelled to pass the places of his temptation not once or twice only, but scores of times, with the fumes of the liquors poisoning the atmosphere about them. He could not help but

breath it—could not choose but see the gaudy and bright interiors—as his feet carried him from one fierce assault to another. Sometimes he felt as if he should be lost if he did not flee back to the shelter he had left, and end his days there shamefully. But he continued his course down to the docks, where he hoped he might happen on work to supply his wants for that day and night, for if he failed he must return to the casual ward for a lodging.

He had earned a few pence, and was about to seek lodgings for the night, when he saw a number of decent working-men crowding into a school-room, which was well lit up. He stopped one of them to ask what was going on inside.

"It's a lecture," he answered, "on Temperance, by Mr. Radford. He's always plenty to say—and says it out like a man. Come in, and hear him!"

"Aye, I'll come in," said Rodney eagerly, forgetting both his hunger and his fatigue. The lecturer had just begun, and the speaker—whose face was earnest and hearty, and who had a pleasant voice—had gained the fixed attention of his hearers.

"I'll tell you what a promise once did," he said, towards the close of his lecture: "We had a meeting of our Band of Hope, some years ago, and I saw amongst the children a rough, barefooted little girl, staring about her with large, eager eyes, as if she could not make out what we were about. I asked her what her name was, and told her to come to my house—and I wrote down my address for her. But I said to her: 'Will you promise me not to taste anything that will make you drunk till you see me again?' And she promised me."

"That's Bessie Dingle!" cried Rodney, half aloud; and the lecturer paused for an instant, looking down kindly, but gravely, upon his listeners.

"I expected her to come to me within a day or two, and I should have persuaded her to join our Band of Hope—but she never came. Nearly six years were gone; and one day last autumn, when I was on the landing-stage, I heard some one cry out: 'That's him again!' and a girl of seventeen or so, a bright, busy girl, came rushing towards me from an apple-stall. 'I've kept my promise, sir!' she cried; 'I've never took a drop to make me drunk. I said I never would till I see you again.' The girl had been faithful to her promise. Yes, in her place, and according to her strength, she had kept her promise, as God keeps his."

Rodney scarcely heard the end of the lecture, so full was his mind of Bessie, whom he had scarcely thought of, but who was the only friend he had left in Liverpool. He could not go away without making some inquiry after her, and when the audience was dispersing, he made his way up to the lecturer's desk. "Sir," he said, "that girl was Bessie Dingle. Could you tell me where I could find her this very night?"

"She left Liverpool last autumn," he answered. "She has gone to live in the country, with an old woman of the name of Rodney."

"Why, that must be my mother!" exclaimed Rodney, involuntarily.

"Who are you?" inquired Mr. Radford.

"My name is John Rodney," he answered. "Bessie knows all about me. Oh, sir! I was a dreadful drunkard, and one night I saw my little girl—she was the last of them, and my poor wife was dead as well, thank God!—and the child set herself on fire, and me lying by so drunk I could not move—I could not stir a limb no more than if I'd been dead. Oh, God! Oh, God! It was a horrible thing!"

Rodney grasped the desk with both hands to keep himself from falling, and neither he nor the stranger could speak again for some moments.

"I understood you were drowned," said Mr. Radford, at length. "Bessie believes so. She told me all about it."

"No," murmured Rodney. "I went off with the intention of putting an end to myself, but slipped on the pavement, and they carried me to the infirmary. I was there a long time, and then I went home, and other folks had taken to my liquor, and I had no place to sit down in, and the liquor vaults were the only places open to such as me, and I went in and got drunk again."

"Again" repeated Mr. Radford.

"Aye, again," he said, with a deep groan, "but it was the last time. I pray God it may be the last time. Then I knew there was no hope for me as long as I could see or smell drink, and I went into the workhouse to be out of the way partly, and partly because I had no other place to go to. I only came out this morning."

"And where are you going to now?" asked his new friend.

"Anywhere," he answered, "but I'm afraid of going where they'll be drinking. There seems to be drink everywhere. You don't know what it is down in the low parts of the town, sir."

"Yes, I do," said Mr. Radford; "but I'll speak to a friend of mine here, who will take you to his place for to-night. He was one of the first to join us here, and he was as great a slave to drink as you ever were before."

"Sir," said Rodney, earnestly, "I believe God has forgiven me, and I believe he will help me. He has helped me this day, or I should never have been here. If you will let me join myself to you with a promise, I'll try to keep it as Bessie kept hers, God helping me."

"I believe from my heart it would be of great use to you," answered Mr. Radford after a moment's thought. "Mark! I do not say it will save you, but it will help you. You can give it as a reason for not drinking to your old comrades; but the chief thing will be, that it will bring you into acquaintance with new comrades of your own way of thinking, who will not tempt you to drink. Remember, too, if you should break it, that's no reason why you should not promise again. Yes! and again and again, if you fall again and again. Most of us promise God very often to give up our favourite sin; and when we forget our promise he does not forbid us to renew it."

With trembling fingers, and with deep, unspoken prayer in his heart, Rodney signed his name to a form by which he pledged himself to abstain from all intoxicating drinks; and then Mr. Radford committed him to the care of his friend, who was to take him home for the night.

"What are you going to do to-morrow?" asked Mr. Radford.

"I'll make my way down to my mother's," he answered. "I shall be safer out of the town, though I ought to be ashamed to go to her in these rags. But it's no more than I deserve, and she'll be overjoyed to see me."

"Go down by train," said Mr. Radford. "I will lend you the fare, and you can repay me when you are in work again. They all think you are dead down there."

"Yes," he answered, smiling sadly, "my mother will say, 'This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.'"

With these words he went his way; and after a night's rest—more refreshing than any he had had for years, he started by the earliest train down into the country.

(To be continued.)

A BRAVE LITTLE DAUGHTER.

There is a very pretty story told by Miss Strickland, in her "Queens of England," of a little girl who saved her father's life.

It was in the time of Queen Mary, and Lord Preston, the father of the child, was condemned to death for conspiring to bring back the exiled King James to the throne. Her name was Lady Catharine Graham, and she was only nine years old. The poor child was during the trial of her father left in the queen's apartment in Windsor Castle. The day after the condemnation of Lord Preston, the queen found little Lady Catharine in St. George's Gallery, gazing earnestly on the whole-length picture of James II., which still remains there. Struck with the mournful expression on the young girl's face, Mary asked her hastily what she saw in that picture which made her look on it so particularly. "I was thinking," said the innocent child, "how hard it is that my father must die for loving yours." The queen, pricked in conscience by this artless reply, immediately signed the pardon of Lord Preston.