

"Why, I think it has ministered to our comfort, Cora."

"How?"

"Oh, in many ways."

"Name one of them."

"Why, in the enjoyment of our guests."

"Ah, but I am speaking of ourselves, Henry—of you, and me, and our own little family. Has it ever ministered to our comfort?"

"No, I can't say that it has."

"And if it was banished from our house to-day and forever, as a beverage, should we suffer in consequence?"

"Certainly, what would our friends—"

"Ah, but stop. I am only speaking of our own affairs, as shut out from the world, by our own fireside. I want all extraneous considerations left out of the question. Should we, as a family, suffer in our moral, physical, social, or domestic affairs, in the total abstinence from this beverage?"

"No, I don't know that we should."

"Then, to you, as a husband, and a father, and as a man, it is of no earthly use?"

"No."

"And it would cost you no effort, as far as you alone are concerned, to break clear from it?"

"Not a particle."

"And now, Henry," pursued the wife, with increased earnestness, "I have a few more questions to ask:—Do you believe that the drinking of intoxicating beverages is an evil in this country?"

"Why, as it is now going on, I certainly do."

"And isn't it an evil in society?"

"Yes."

"Look over this city, and tell me if it is not a terrible evil!"

"A terrible evil grows out of the abuse of it, Cora."

"And will you tell me what good grows out of the use of it?"

"Really, love, when you come down to this abstract point, you have the field. But people should govern their appetites. All things may be abused."

"Yes. But will you tell me the use—the real good—to be derived from drinking wine and brandy?"

"As I said before, it is a social custom, and has its charms."

"Ah, there you have it, Henry. It does have its charms, as the deadly snake is said to have, and as other vices have. But I see you are in a hurry."

"It is time I was at the store."

"I will detain you but a moment longer, Henry. Just answer me a few more questions. Now call to mind all the families of your acquaintance; think of all the domestic circles you have known since your school-boy days to the present; run your thoughts through the various homes where you have been intimate—do this, and tell me, if in any one instance you ever knew a single joy to be planted by the hearth-stone from the wine-cup? Did you ever know one item of good to flow to a family from its use?"

"No; I cannot say that I ever did—not as you mean."

"And now answer me again. Think of those homes once more—call to memory the playmates of your childhood—think of the homes they have made—think of other homes—think of the firesides where all you have known dwell, and tell me if you have seen any sorrows flow from the wine-cup? Have you seen any great griefs planted by the intoxicating bowl upon the hearth-stone?"

Henry Seaburn did not answer, for there passed before him such grim spectres of *Sorrow* and *Grief*, that he shuddered at the mental vision. He saw the youth cut down in the hour of promise; he saw the grey head fall in dishonor; he saw hearts broken; he saw homes made desolate; he saw affection wither up and die; and saw noble intellect stricken down! Good Heaven! what sights he saw as he unrolled the canvass of his memory.

"Henry," whispered the wife, moving to his side, and winding one arm gently about his neck, "we have two boys. They are growing to be men. They are noble, generous, and tender-hearted. They love their home and honor their parents. They are here to form those characters—to receive those impressions which shall be the basis upon which their future weal or woe must rest. Look at them—O, think of them!—Think of them doing battle in the great struggle of the life before them. Shall they carry out from their home one evil influence? Shall they, in the time to come, fall by the wayside, cut down by the Demon of the Cup, and in their dying hour, curse the example whence they derived the appetite? O, for our children—for those two boys—for the men we hope to see them—for the sweet memories we would have them cherish of their home—for the good old age they may reap—let us cast this thing out now, and for ever!"

Cora kissed her husband as she ceased speaking; and then he arose to his feet; but he made her no reply.

"Henry, you are not offended?"

"No," he said. He returned her kiss, and without another word, left the house and went to his store.

How strangely did circumstances work to keep the idea his wife had given him alive in his mind. That very morning, he met a youth, the son of one of his wealthy friends, in a state of wild intoxication; and during the forenoon he heard that young Aaron G— had died at sea. He knew that Aaron

had been sent away from home that he might be reclaimed.

After the bank had closed, and as Henry Seaburn was thinking of going to his dinner, he received a note through the Penny Post. It was from a medical friend, and contained a request that he would call at the hospital on his way home. This hospital was not much out of his way, and he stopped there.

"There is a man in one of the lower wards who wishes to see you," said the doctor.

"Does he know me?" asked Seaburn.

"He says he does."

"What is his name?"

"He won't tell us. He goes by the name of Smith; but I am satisfied that such is not his true name. He is in the last stage of consumption and delirium. He has lucid intervals, but they do not last long. He has been here a week. He was picked up in the street and brought here. He heard your name, and said he knew you once."

Mr. Seaburn went into the room where the patient lay, and looked at him. Surely he never knew that man! "There must be some mistake," he said.

The invalid heard him, and opened his eyes—such bloodshot, unearthly eyes!

"Harry," he whispered, trying to lift himself upon his elbow, "is this Henry Seaburn?"

"That is my name."

"And don't you know me?"

"I am sure I do not." And he would have said that he did not wish to, only the man seemed so utterly miserable, that he would not wound what little feeling he might have left.

"Have you forgotten your old playmate in boyhood, Harry—your friend in other years—your chum in college?"

"What!" gasped Seaburn, starting back aghast, for a glimmer of the truth burst upon him. "This is not Alec Lomborg?"

"All that is left of him, my Hal," returned the poor fellow, putting forth his wasted, skeleton hand, and smiling a faint quivering, dying smile.

"Alexander Lomborg!" said Henry, gazing into the bloated, disfigured face before him.

"You wouldn't have known me, Hal?"

"Indeed—no!"

"I know I am altered."

"But, Alec," cried Seaburn, "how is this? Why are you here?"

"Run, my Hal—Run! I'm about done for. But I wanted to see you. They told me you lived not far away, and I would look upon one friend before I died."

"But I heard that you were practising in your profession, Alec, and doing well."

"So I did do well when I practised, Hal. I have made some pleas, but I have given up all that."

"And your father—where is he?"

"Don't mention him, Hal. We've broken. I don't know him; he taught me to drink! Aye, he taught me! and then turned the cold shoulder upon me when I drank too much! But I'm going, Hal—going, going!"

"Henry Seaburn gazed into that terrible face, and remembered what its owner had been:—the son of wealthy parents; the idol of a fond mother; the favourite at school, at play, and at college; a light of intellect and physical beauty, and a noble, generous friend. And now, alas! "Alec, can I help you?"

"Yes." And the poor fellow started higher up from his pillow, and something of the old light struggled for a moment in his eye. "Pray for me, Hal. Pray for my soul! Pray that I may go where my mother is! She won't disown her boy. She could not have done it had she lived. O! she was a good mother, Hal. Thank God she didn't live to see this! Pray for me—pray—pray! Let me go to HER!"

As the wasted man sunk back, he fell to weeping, and in a moment more, one of his paroxysms came on, and he began to rave. He thought Harry was his father, and he cursed him; and cursed the habit that had fastened upon him under that father's influence. But Henry could not stop to listen. With an aching heart he turned away and left the hospital. He could not go home to dinner then; he went down town, and got dinner there. At night he went to the hospital again. He would inquire after his friend, if he did not see him.

"Poor fellow!" said the physician, "he never came out of that fit; he died in half-an-hour after you went out."

It was dark when Henry Seaburn reached home.

"You didn't tell Bridget where to put those demijohns, Henry," said his wife. She had not noticed his face, for the gas was burning but dimly.

"Ah, I forgot. Come down with me, Cora, and we'll find a place for them."

His wife followed him down into the basement; and one by one he took the demijohns and carried them into the rear yard, and there he emptied their contents into the sewer. Then he broke the vessels in pieces with his foot, and bade Bridget have the dirtman take the fragments away in the morning. Not one word had he spoken to his wife all the while, nor did she speak to him. He returned to the sitting-room, when his boys were at their books, and took a seat on one of the tete-a-tetes. He called his