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THE DRUNKARD'S VISION.

A man stood in the street one New Year's morning. The cold was intense, the river was frozen, and large icicles depended from the eaves of the houses. The man was wretchedly clad. His rags fluttered in the wind that blew keenly from the north. The blood languidly circulated through the veins of his pinched limbs. He was a picture of misery and want.

As the throng of beings passed him, in the pursuit of business (for no one went abroad on pleasure on that winter day) he scanned their faces with eager glances. But no one seemed to know or care for him. He wrung his hands in the intensity of his anguish. No one pitied him. He wept scalding tears of remorse. He raised his hands in entreaty towards heaven, and prayed for death to end his sufferings.

An old man, too, for the lines engraven in his battered and sallow countenance, tell his age as legibly as any formal register of birth.

Guess his age. Three score and ten.

You are wrong; that man, so haggard and decrepid at his body bends with the apparent infirmities of age, is seen but forty three years of natural life. In vice, dissipation, debauchery, crime,—in care, disappointment, and shame, self-reproach, in all the ruin of a seared and wasted life, he is as old as you please, a very patriarch.

A vision of his youth passes before him. He is once more a boy. Yes, that is the old home,—the old garden—the seat in the orchard—there are his sisters at play. The old home! His parents are beneath that roof. He is happy, very happy. He has just won a splendid prize at school—a pair of twelve inch globes. His father strokes his head, and says with pride that he will pursue a bright and honourable career through life. The old home!—the old home! He raises his withered hands to hide the tears that stream from his eyes, but

(they burst through his fingers and freeze as they fall upon the pavement.

No one heeds him, no one pities him.

He sees in vision still, or rather in mental retrospect—the mercantile house, in which he began the career, which his father told him, would lead to fame and fortune. He sees his desk at which he sat, he looks in the faces of his fellow clerks. He remembers the old hopes, the bright prospects—all the old thoughts and affections come crowding back,—his legs sink under him—But for the grasp of that passenger he would have fallen to the earth.

Yet again. He is a man now, and those are his wife and children. (His friends and former school-fellows are married, and so is he) He will romp with his youngest child, and when the hour has arrived for them to be sent to bed, he will read to his wife the latest new book he has obtained from the library. He is prosperous in worldly affairs, happy in domestic circumstances beloved by his relations, respected by his friends.

Ragged, disgraced, forsaken, hungry, cold—a vagabond, and an outcast.

He raises his hand to his head, his brain reels, he fears that he will go mad.

What has wrought the change? How did he fall from a position so honourable, so useful, so prosperous?

The old tale—the old vice, drunkenness. "One glass," a friend told him, "can do no harm," can do no harm, but the first glass led to the second, the second to the third—and in the course of time, he became a confirmed and hardened drunkard. That was not all. A man is never a drunkard, without being also demoralized in other respects. He forfeited the confidence of his friends—he was no longer prosperous, ruin seized him like an armed man.

Ragged, disgraced, forsaken, hungry, cold, a vagabond and an outcast. No one heeds him, no one pities him.

"O days of my youth, return again, days of my innocence return." So in frenzied tones, he entreats the past to restore him the opportunity of redeeming the dreadful errors of his manhood.

But the past is irretrievable—the years that are spent are beyond recall.

"O days of my youth, return again."

So, he continued to exclaim, invoking heaven with earnest, supplicating gesture: "Days of my youth, return—days of my youth, return, that I may act otherwise than I have acted."

And his youth returned, for he had only dreamed upon this New Year's day. He was still a youth. He awoke, and with a shudder, fell upon his knees in "gra-