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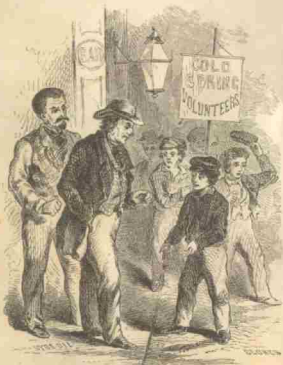
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THE COLD SPRING VOLUNTEERS.

THE
LITTLE CAPTAIN.

A Temperance Tale.

BY
LYNDE PALMER.

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THE LITTLE CAPTAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHISPER IN THE GARDEN.

NIGHT was closing early upon the comfortless autumn day, and heavy drops were beginning to fall from the clouds which had long been mustering under command of the chill East Wind.

It was a dreary trio, — the night, and the wind, and the rain, — and they made determined onslaught upon a little cottage humbly courtesying back from the road. But it stood out bravely. Its mossy roof bowed low to its pattering visitant, and its stanch timbers groaned, but clasped each other more firmly in the rough salute of the North-easter; and as for the *night* — the cottage windows showed a bright fire and candle-light

smile that dimpled out into the darkness with a cheery defiance, and hinted of the comfort lying behind the snowy curtains.

For within, the kitchen fire blazed and crackled so merrily, and the tea-kettle so puffed, and strained, and sputtered in its cheerful song, that one would think they were on a wager as to which could make the most noise. The little supper table was spread before the fire, and there was a pleasant odor in the air of "something nice for tea."

Harry and Kitty, and "Queen Vic,"—in other words a sleek gray puss, with a star coronet upon her forehead,—sat on one side, eagerly superintending the baking of a short-cake before the glowing coals, while Jamie was engaged in the double occupation of holding the little baby brother, and completing the education of "General Washington," a rather small representative of the canine species, but, as Jamie would have told you, with a *mind* very disproportioned to his size. Mother bustled around, putting every thing

in order, and making the small kitchen as pleasant as a palace. At last every thing was ready, and Kitty exclaimed again and again, —

“I wonder what *can* keep father! He is hardly ever so late.”

Then Harry, Jamie, and the “General” made frequent excursions to the outer door, but only reported, with lengthening faces, that “nothing was coming except the wind and the rain.”

“Poor James,” sighed Mrs. Grey, “he will have a dreary walk after his hard day’s work;” and she lighted a candle to set in the window that looked down the darkening road.

The old Dutch clock in the corner ticked away faster and faster, and the quarter and half hours passed without bringing the sound of familiar footsteps.

Little Paul, the baby brother, fretted and complained; was fed, and laid away contentedly in the little wooden cradle with his pink thumb in his mouth. The “Queen”

slept royally in the chimney corner, and Kitty followed her example; while the General's eyes winked and closed in sympathy with his master's. Still "father" did not come.

"Well, children," said Mrs. Grey, sadly, "you need not wait any longer; you must have your supper, and go to bed."

The children rose with disappointed faces, for they were very fond of their father, and they always looked forward with great eagerness to Saturday night, when, the week's work being ended, he regaled their young imaginations with famous stories. They had nearly finished their supper, and Harry was just dolefully exclaiming, "No story to-night!" when they caught the sound of steps.

"There's father!" cried Kitty, joyfully.

"No such thing," said Jamie. "Father never stepped like that — that's some old man."

"Well, the gate is opening," persisted Kitty.

Just then a voice without broke forth into the chorus of a roistering convivial song.

"Hi miral, miral miraldi!"

"Why, it's a drunken man," cried Kitty; and Harry flew to bolt the outer door.

"I was just in time," cried he, returning with a red face. "Just hear him pounding on the door."

"I wish father was home," said Kitty, beginning to cry.

But now came a perfect storm of blows and violent language, and a strangely familiar voice cried, "What do you mean, Maggie? Are you going to keep me out all night?"

Mrs. Grey turned deathly pale. "Go up stairs to bed, children," said she, eagerly. "It is your father, but I think he is very sick. Go to bed; he will not want to see you to-night."

Harry and Kitty turned, but Jamie lingered anxiously while his mother nervously slid the bolt.

"What do you mean, woman?" cried

James Grey, staggering in, and catching his wife roughly by the shoulder.

"Remember your little son, James," whispered Mrs. Grey, while Jamie cried, "Oh, father! father!" with such agony in his voice, that James Grey partly came to his senses, and said, almost tenderly, —

"What is the matter, now, Jamie? You didn't think I'd hurt your mother — did you? That was all in fun."

Jamie sobbed convulsively, and threw himself into his father's arms, while James Grey soothed and caressed the delicate, sensitive child, for whom he had always felt a peculiar tenderness.

"And now, Maggie," said he, looking at his wife, who sat with tearful eyes, and her hands fallen hopelessly across her lap, "are you going to be so sullen, because I just made a little mistake? You see you kept me out in that drenching rain till I was in a perfect chill. I felt so strangely, I think I must have had a rush of blood to the head, and didn't quite know what I was about."

"Oh, was that what made you act so queer, father?" said Jamie, anxiously. "Your face *does* look very red indeed!"

Mrs. Grey sighed, and, rising to get him some dry clothes, led little Jamie to bed.

"You may clear off the table, Maggie," said James Grey. "I've just come from the best dinner I ever had in my life. Mr. Mabbit has had a great streak of luck this week, and has given all his men a dinner on the strength of it. He's a generous soul, and never does things by halves. We had every thing nice to eat, and what is better, oceans to drink. Oh, we had a high time, and I didn't forget you, either, Maggie. I brought home a bottle to give you a taste. Is that tea-kettle boiling? Now, if you'll just hand me a little sugar."

"James," said Mrs. Grey, laying her hand sadly on his shoulder, "I couldn't drink a drop; and oh, my dearest husband," she continued, with starting tears, "if I could only make you see it as I do. Give me that miserable bottle, and let me throw

the poison all away. Oh, think what the end may be! Shall we let this fiend destroy the happiness of our pleasant fire-side, and shall our little innocent children be brought to misery, and blush to own ——”

“There, there, Maggie, that’s enough,” interrupted James, a little angrily. “There’s no need of going into such hysterics, and *tragedy* isn’t in your line. If a man chooses to take a little something after a hard week’s work, just to keep up his spirits, and as a sort of medicine which he really needs, I think it is pretty hard that his wife should fall into the sulks the minute he comes home, and talk to him as if he had just been picked out of the gutter. You know I only take it once in a great while, on some such wretched night as this.”

“Oh, James,” said Mrs. Grey, “you take it oftener than you did a year ago; and, don’t be angry, but I’m so afraid the habit is growing upon you. You can not see the evil of it *now*, but by and by this friend, this good medicine, as you call it,

will 'bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.'

"I believe I can quote Scripture as well as you, Maggie. Didn't Christ turn water into wine, and probably drink it too? What do you say to that?"

"I am not learned," said Mrs. Grey, sadly, "but I know the wine our blessed Saviour made must have been very different from the poison men sell now — poison that ruins their fellow-creatures' bodies and souls. Let me tell you, James, how I have heard some of these famous wines and best kinds of brandies are made."

"Stuff, Maggie," said James, good-naturedly. "Suppose we drop the subject. It's rather a fault of yours to make mountains out of molehills. Women are easily frightened. They haven't our strength of character. Why, Maggie, you ought to have more confidence in me; and now, to show you how much I can take, and not feel it in the least, I'll just finish this bottle."

Mrs. Grey looked up imploringly, but all in vain; and sitting down by the fire she dropped her head low in her hands.

"What are you thinking of, Maggie?" he said, after a long pause, during which he sipped his glass in silence, and the fire burned low on the hearth.

"I'm thinking of my brother John," she replied, without raising her head.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed he, shifting his feet uneasily. "Why *will* you be so provoking to-night! I hope you don't think of comparing me with that weak-headed brother of yours. He couldn't stand any temptation. He died as much of idiocy as drunkenness."

"James," cried Mrs. Grey, quickly, "you must not speak so of my only brother. Besides, you have no right to pass such judgment. You did not know him at first, when he was the pride of the family, and when, with his uncommon talents, we thought he might rise to any position. But cruel friends flattered and tempted him; and when you

knew him he had fallen, — *fallen*, — his bright intellect was clouded, *fire* ran in his veins, and when he died — Oh, James !”

“ Well, Maggie,” said he, setting down his glass, “ you’ve just spoiled the evening for me. I haven’t had any peace of my life. I meant to have told you how politely Mr. Mabbit spoke to me to-night. He showed me how I could make an excellent investment of my little savings, and even hinted that he could give me some good post in his employ, if I ever got tired of slaving for that ‘slow coach,’ old Fundy. And the fact of it is, Maggie, I think I ought to be earning more. These distilleries are doing a great business, and growing more and more profitable every year. I believe if Mabbit makes me a good offer, I’ll close in. Just think, Maggie,” continued he, strutting across the room, as he began to feel the exhilaration of his late draught; “ we shall yet ride in our own carriage; we will move out of these suburbs down into the city; you shall have servants, fine dress, every thing you want. What do you say to that ?”

Mrs. Grey clasped her hands fervently. "I say, God grant that you may have nothing to do with that distillery!"

"There it is again," said he, fretfully. "Where one expects sympathy, there is nothing but opposition and fault-finding. I never knew you so unreasonable;" and he retired sullenly to his room.

His wife remained weeping and praying by the fire, thinking of her *old* home, and the dearly-loved but misguided brother who wrecked its peace and happiness, and brought her father's gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. Surely James must remember that father's dying words; how solemnly he warned him of the horrible snares laid for so many unsuspecting feet. Yes, and did not James make him many promises, and tell him there should be no more broken hearts in his family for *that* cause? But now she felt the old shadow creeping over her hearth. Alas! what could she do to avert the threatened danger?

James Grey was thinking, too, in the

silence of his room ; but they were angry, self-confident thoughts.

“ I can't always give up to all Maggie's whims and notions. Women are so easily frightened and upset. I'm a man, strong, and able to control myself. A little now and then can surely do me no harm. I really think I feel better for it.”

Alas, alas ! It was the old voice, the subtle, tempting voice, that made all Paradise to shudder, and they were the old words, the same old words, powerful as in the first temptation — “ Ye shall not *surely die.*”

CHAPTER II.

SLIPPERY PLACES.

THE storm and the night passed away together, and the sun, struggling with the fog wreaths, threw paths of faint glory across the fields.

James Grey had risen with bloodshot

eyes and a throbbing head. His simple breakfast had passed untasted. Little Paul's crow of welcome, and fair, outstretched arms, had not been noticed, nor Jamie's anxious hovering about his chair.

"James," said Mrs. Grey, breaking a long silence, "will you go to church to-day?"

"No," was the short, decided answer.

"Why, father?" asked Kitty, timidly.

"Don't bother me, child," returned he, sharply. "My head aches horribly."

Kitty looked grieved; but Jamie, taking her aside, whispered confidentially, "Don't mind it, Kitty. I'll tell you what's the matter. Father had a rush of blood to the head last night, and was dreadfully sick; and I don't think he has quite got over it yet. Poor father! he works so hard for us all!"

"He *does* look sick," said Kitty, in a sympathizing whisper; and the children went softly on tiptoe, adjusting caps and tippets, and stole like mice from the outer door, to take their way to church.

When they returned, father was lying

upon the lounge in a heavy sleep, and mother was crying, with her head bent low over little sleeping Paul.

"Is father so *very* sick?" asked Harry, apprehensively.

Mrs. Grey shook her head; but before she had time to speak, her husband roused from his lethargy, and looked around with his old, pleasant smile.

"There's father again," cried Jamie, exultingly, running to throw himself into his arms, while the others followed, with shouts of delight.

Yes, there was again James Grey. He had slept off the effects of the previous night's dissipation, and was once more the clear-headed, kind father and husband. The afternoon passed so happily, in the old way, with pleasant reading and the telling of Bible stories, — for although James Grey was not a member of any church, he still respected religion, and had great admiration of his wife's gentle and unobtrusive piety, — that even Mrs. Grey was reassured, and

thought she had too easily given way to despondency. She was proud of her fine-looking, energetic husband, and comforted herself with the thought that all would yet be right. It was not possible that *he* could ever become a common drunkard. John had been excitable, and easily led away; but James had stronger common sense, and too much *pride* ever to fall so low.

Ah, what a happy family they were that night, sitting around the cozy fire, in the cheerful half sitting-room, half kitchen, which they all liked so much better than the more pretentious parlor!

"I'll tell you what," said Jamie, as the children clambered up stairs to bed, "I think we have the nicest father in all the world."

"So do I," said Kitty, "except when he has *rushes*."

Harry and Jamie laughed merrily, while, as the clear, happy sounds floated back into the little kitchen, James Grey said, "I am proud of those little children, Maggie."

"You may well say that," responded Mrs.

Grey, with a pleased smile. "Mr. Brown tells me Harry is a fine scholar already, and Jamie is further advanced than any boy of his age in the school."

"I intend they shall have every advantage," said James, rising and walking the floor with a quick step. "If I prosper, as I hope, there is no reason why they should not go to college some day. Who knows but I may suddenly turn out a rich man? With such a thrifty wife as Maggie, and such good prospects as ——"

"O James," exclaimed Mrs. Grey, a slight cloud passing over her face, "promise me you will not enter that distillery. No matter how bright the prospect seems *now*, I have a terrible presentiment that the *end* will be ruin."

"Pshaw, Maggie, you always see so many lions in the way! Besides, if you haven't any confidence in your husband, and think he's such a man of straw, blown about by every wind, you can at least *pray* for me," he said, half laughing, "and ask your God to keep me all straight."

"I do that always, James," said Mrs. Grey, sighing; "but I do not think we have a right to expect much help when we pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' and then walk right in ourselves, with our eyes wide open."

"Margaret, you take too serious a view of these things. One would think I was going to join a gang of thieves, or take to counterfeiting money. Don't you know that some of our best men are engaged in this business? Mr. Rabbit himself is a most respectable member of Dr. ——'s congregation."

"I don't care if he is," said Mrs. Grey, warmly, "or even if he belonged to his church. Among the twelve disciples of our Saviour, one betrayed him; and perhaps there is the same proportion of traitors among those now professing to be his followers. I am sure, James, he will have sorrow in this world or the next. 'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink.'"

"Come, come, Maggie, you are getting excited. I don't think that was a very charitable speech for a Christian."

"Perhaps it wasn't," she returned, humbly; "but, O James, if you go into this business, I shall feel all the time as if you were walking, in the night, upon the slippery edge of a precipice, and perhaps the next step would plunge you into death and destruction."

"Well, Maggie, there's one thing certain," said James, kissing her affectionately; "you're in earnest about the matter, and I'll promise you not to make any hasty decision. Perhaps I shall find some better investment for my money."

Mrs. Grey looked up with a smile of glad surprise, and for a time the heavy burden was lifted from her heart.

The whirling leaves and leaden rains of autumn gave place to snowdrifts and icicles, and James Grey still walked proudly in his self-confident strength. To be sure, he stopped once in a while at the new club room, where every thing was so bright and pleasant, where they sang such merry songs and told such good stories. But as his wife

had warned him that this was another "slippery place," he concealed the fact from her, although he shrewdly suspected that she had many uneasy doubts about the "business" which detained him so late at night.

But it was now Christmas Eve. There had been great hilarity in the kitchen. Little warm woolen stockings had been disposed in the most advantageous places, and even General Washington had been induced to superintend the hanging of one of baby's socks, with the promise that it should be filled with sugar plums, of which the canine general had grown very fond.

But now the little voices had gradually died away, and in the silent room Mrs. Grey awaited her husband, who had promised to return early, with his pockets full of presents from the city. But the hours passed on, and a strange presentiment of evil began to oppress her. Ten — eleven — twelve. What could have happened? And with a beating heart she unbolted the outer door and peered out into the darkness.

Nothing was in sight, but she heard through the clear air a distant sound of revelry and drunken frolic, that made her heart faint. The sounds came nearer and nearer, and the General's low growls broke into quick, angry barking. They reached the gate. Yes, it was James's voice, and he was being led home by two companions, not much better off than himself.

"How do, old girl?" he stammered, as he stumbled into the house. "Give 's y'r hand. Wish 'e merry Christmas. Hi tooral ooral ooral lu; 'Landord, fill your flowing bowl;'" and, bursting into an idiotic laugh, he fell into a chair.

Presently he looked up again, and addressing the old Dutch clock, called out, "Colonel, old boy, what'll you take to drink? Give 's y'r hand. Hi tooral ooral." Poor Maggie laid her head upon the table, and burst into bitter weeping. He looked at her with a sort of stupid wonder, and winking solemnly to the old clock, said, confidentially, "Seems to feel bad about suthin'. Curous,

ain't it? Well, it's sworld of trouble;" and stumbling into the little back room, he fell heavily upon the bed.

Poor Mrs. Grey followed him, and threw her arms frantically around his neck. "O James, speak to me, speak to me; I can not bear it!"

But he had already dropped off into heavy, lethargic sleep, and was deaf to all the agony and tears of the wife he had promised to love and protect. All night long she watched beside him, with eyes of patient misery, as with flushed face and heavy, labored breathing, he lay in brutish stupidity through all the solemn hours. But with the first streak of daylight, the faint sound of happy voices — like the low twittering of young birds just awaking in their nest — aroused her from her apathy. She started, and remembered that it was Christmas morning, and the little stockings had been all forgotten. She arose and eagerly examined her husband's pockets. Not a toy nor paper of confectionery was to be found.

He had forgotten his children, and their busy whisperings and wonderings about the mysterious treasures which would feast their eyes upon this day of delights. What was to be done? She would go to their room, and prepare them for their bitter disappointment. But ah! she was too late! As she opened the kitchen door, a cry of dismay broke upon her ears; and there, in the gray morning light, stood the barefooted trio, gazing with various expressions of wonder, incredulity, and bitter disappointment upon the little limp stockings.

"That's a poor joke," said Jamie, biting his lips, and trying to look very careless, while Harry attempted to whistle "Yankee Doodle," and made a dead failure, and Kitty broke forth into genuine sobs.

"Why, there's mother," cried Jamie, suddenly, "and crying, too. Has any thing happened to father?"

Then Mrs. Grey told the saddened little group that father had again come home very sick, and had not been able to buy them

presents, but if they would be patient and cheerful, it should certainly come all right on New Year's.

They tried to be satisfied with the assurance, but very sober young faces gathered around the breakfast table that morning, and Jamie, peeping in the bedroom door, reported in great dismay, that father had "another rush of blood to the head."

CHAPTER III.

SLIPPERY PLACES, CONTINUED.

A VERY unhappy man was James Grey, when, oppressed with a blinding headache, he once more came to the consciousness of how terribly his feet had slipped. He remembered it was Christmas—a day of rejoicing and innocent mirth in thousands of happy families; but *his* wife sat with eyes heavy with unshed tears, and the patient, wistful expression of his little chil-

dren went to his heart. Yes, for all those dear ones he had embittered the day which should have been one of unmixed happiness. His cheeks burned with shame as he vaguely remembered in what condition he came home the night before. What must his wife think of him? Could she ever respect him again? And his innocent children — did they suspect? Were they not watching him *now* with furtive, timid glances?

James Grey buried his face in his hands, and in his shame and humility groaned aloud. Mrs. Grey was at his side in a moment, gently bathing his fevered forehead, without a word of reproach. A look of gratitude, almost painful, dawned in his haggard eyes. "You do not despise me, then, Maggie?" he asked, eagerly.

She could not trust herself to speak, but her face was eloquent of love and forgiveness; and again into his wife's hopeful ears did James Grey pour his story of repentance and sorrow, and promises of an amended life.

He also made a great effort, toward night, to walk to the city, and buy the lacking presents; and as at twilight the family again sat by the fire, the room all alive with the merry shouts of the children, whose short-lived grief was past, James Grey thought with a shudder of the pit yawning before his feet, and of the terrible temptation which needed all his manhood to resist.

He looked around the room. What a pleasant scene it was! Harry was eagerly reading his new book of travels. Jamie, with a bright, illustrated alphabet, was gravely instructing a spelling class, consisting of Kitty, Queen Vic, and the General, who had just been promoted to the head, on account of having put his paw on the right letter, while poor Kitty could only tell "crooked S" from "round O," and the Queen was a perfect dunce, always sitting comfortably at the foot.

"Maggie," said James, looking up from little Paul, who was twining his fair arms around his father's neck, "I have made up

my mind; I shall bring no more misery into this pleasant home. I have made a firm resolve. I shall never drink again."

"Will you sign the pledge, James?" said his wife, eagerly.

"Pshaw, Maggie!" he exclaimed with great displeasure. "How can you ask such a question? I should feel it a positive disgrace to sign the pledge. *That* was got up only for those terribly hard cases who have lost all self-control, and need some kind of a strait jacket. I'm not exactly ready to acknowledge myself a member of that crew. How would you like now to hear some of your gossiping neighbors, making big eyes over their tea, and saying, 'Oh, have you heard about poor James Grey? Why, he's so far gone, he's actually had to sign the pledge;' and then another old snuff-box will whine, 'Poor Mrs. Grey! she has seen a great deal of trouble, and I guess the end hasn't come yet. It's my opinion he'll end in the gutter.' No, no, good people, not just yet. I believe I am able to balance

myself a little longer. Maggie, I give you my word, the strong, determined word of a *man*. I may take a social glass now and then with a friend, but"—he lowered his voice—"you shall never see me the worse for liquor again."

"God grant it!" said Mrs. Grey fervently.

The holiday week passed brightly and hopefully, but again upon the evening of the New Year, Mrs. Grey was awaiting her husband. Alas! could she have looked within the bright, tempting club room, down in the city, she would have known, with aching heart, that the proud spirit which had disdained all help from a higher power, had again fallen, more disgracefully than ever.

That pleasant New Year's day James had been in eager conversation with Mr. Mabbit. Every thing about the business had been made so enticing, and so brilliant were the prospects opened before him, that his resolutions and promises were all forgotten.

Before night every thing was settled. The hard-earned savings of a dozen years were transferred to Mr. Mabbit's hands, to be employed in the business, and James himself had accepted a situation in the old distillery.

He reasoned very much to his own satisfaction while the bargain was being made. He was sure of his principles, and here was such an easy way to make his fortune, and place Maggie and the children in such comfortable circumstances. Surely she would give up her foolish prejudices when she saw him on the highway to success. But as he came out of Mr. Mabbit's office, and walked along in the cool night air, gradually his fevered brain became more rational, his golden dreams faded, and he thought with growing discomfort of the sorrow in Maggie's sad eyes when he should tell her of the evening's deeds. More and more uneasy did he feel at the thought of the meeting and explanation. His step grew more lingering and hesitating, and when one of Mr.

Mabbit's men clapped him on the back with a hearty —

“How are you, Grey? Let's go in, and drink to your good fortune,” — James made but faint resistance.

He felt low-spirited. He didn't think he was well. One glass would certainly do him good, and Maggie need never know it. Then, as honest old Fundy had just paid him his last quarter's salary, he would buy Maggie a new dress; he would get a barrel of flour, for they were just out; and perhaps a few oysters, to roast in the coals before they went to bed. With these peace-offerings he thought he could safely get through with the disagreeable news he was bringing home with him.

James Grey had had a good education, could tell a capital story, and more than all, had a fine sonorous voice, that came in with great effect in the choruses of the midnight revelers. It is no wonder, then, that he received a warm greeting as he entered the brilliantly-lighted rooms. He was excited,

and drank freely; and the vociferous applause which greeted each well-told story, and the low murmurs on every side, "That's a good hit," "Grey tells a capital story," "And beats the whole of us on songs," began to operate upon his mind.

He couldn't refuse to take a glass with those generous, open-hearted friends. They thought so much of him, and were such good fellows, in spite of their little weaknesses, he could not bear to hurt their feelings. Once a thought of his waiting wife smote upon his heart, and he rose hastily to depart, but a dozen hands and voices detained him.

"Don't go yet, Grey. You're the life of the party. Give us another song, and we'll all join in the chorus."

James hesitated. "He's afraid of Mrs. Caudle," sneered a voice.

"Well, I'm thankful I'm not tied to any woman's apron strings," cried a bloated, red-faced creature, from the other end of the table. "I believe I can stay as late as I please."

"So can I," said James Grey, quickly, coloring with false shame. "I'm as much my own master as any man here;" and again sitting down, he soon became the most uproarious of the party.

Now and then, amid the wild orgies, came a vision of sad, patient eyes, and the sweet, wistful faces of his innocent children. But he was reckless now, and glass after glass of the liquid fire was tossed down his burning throat. His jokes and "capital stories" soon degenerated into weak and senseless maunderings, and before long, under the table lay a heavy, inanimate mass, — was it man or beast? — a theme for scornful gibes and sneers.

In an agony of suspense Mrs. Grey watched through the almost endless night; but not till the dawn did James Grey, a pitiable object, with clothes tattered, bruised face, and empty pockets, make his weary way home. As his wife met him at the door, he only burst into feeble weeping, and suffered her to lead him unresistingly to the bed.

He told a pitiable, broken story of having been attacked by thieves upon the road, and almost left for dead; but the miserable *truth* was all too plain; and Mrs. Grey, as with dreary apathy she bound up his wounds, and bathed his burning face, felt that hope was past, and that the tragedy of her youth was to be enacted again. Her grief was too great for outward demonstration, and though she had wept before, it was now with tearless eyes that she threw herself upon her knees, and besought that this cup might pass from her.

When again James Grey recovered his senses, there was much less show of repentance than ever before. He had fallen so utterly, and his boasted strength and principle had so failed him, that he was filled with angry shame and sullenness.

He had broken his promises, and neither dared nor *wished* to make any more. He felt wretched and unnerved, and a terrible yearning came over him to pour down another fiery draught, strong — *strong* as it

could be made. If he could only escape Maggie's eye, if he could steal quietly away while she was busy, and run, *fly* to the nearest tavern, grasp a glass quickly, and toss the precious elixir down his parched throat! The thought grew upon him, till the desire became almost maddening. He *must* go! He couldn't wait a minute longer; and with wild, eager eyes, he seized his coat, and smoothing, with a feeling of instinctive shame, his battered hat, he — the proud, self-confident James Grey — slunk guiltily to the door. But turning as he reached it, he caught a glimpse of his wife's apprehensive eyes.

"That will do, Margaret!" he cried, angrily. "I'll let you know I'm not to be watched like a convict."

"I didn't know you felt well enough to go out," said Mrs. Grey, apologetically.

"That's the very reason why I'm going. A walk to the city may cure my headache."

Mrs. Grey sighed, and added, timidly,

"Could you let me have a little money before you go? Our flour is all gone, you know."

James felt for the well-filled pocket-book, but it was not in its usual place. With an exclamation of dismay he hastily searched his overcoat, and turned all the pockets wrong side out; but nothing was there. He put his hand to his head, and tried to think. He vaguely remembered, the night before, being asked to play, and to play for money too. He lost once or twice, he knew, but he had not staked *all* his money. Could some rogue have stolen the rest, or had it fallen out of his pocket in some of the many stumbles he remembered on his way home? But all was in hopeless confusion, like a dream. His hand dropped from his pallid face. "It is gone, all gone, Maggie, the whole quarter's salary. It's a heavy loss!" and he leaned despairingly against the door post.

"Perhaps you will find it again," suggested his wife, taking his burning hand. "Do

not be so unhappy. Even if it is lost, we need not give up in despair. We will be very economical. I'll make over the children's clothes, and we can even sell one or two articles we don't really need. I'll promise to fight *this* enemy, James, if you'll only fight *yours* ;" and she burst into tears.

James Grey was troubled. He was almost ready to comfort the dear, patient wife, and make one more desperate resolution to give up strong drink for ever. But oh, reality looked so miserable ! There was Maggie so sad and fearful, — his little children wondering, and half afraid to come climbing into his arms, — his money all gone, which would have made them so comfortable ; and no one to blame but himself. Then came a vision of the bright, warm club room, full of merry revelers. There was no trouble there, and what a shout of welcome there would be, if he made his appearance at the door !

James Grey was a coward, and he thought to himself, "I will forget my troubles this

one night more. To-morrow I will look them in the face like a man."

He looked up at his wife with a forced smile, and, muttering something about going to look for his money, he hurried out of the gate, and with eager step sought the scene of his previous night's revels.

Mrs. Grey entered the house, dreary with the early twilight, and with a foreboding heart, gathering her little children around her, she bade them each pray for their father.

"Is he worse, mother?" asked Jamie, the tears springing into his clear eyes.

"I am afraid he is."

"And will he die?" gasped Kitty, clasping her hands tightly over her little beating heart.

"Unless God helps him," said Mrs. Grey, solemnly.

Jamie burst into tears, and Harry cried, —

"O mother, *do* send for old Dr. Grant."

"No one but God can do him any good." said Mrs. Grey, tearfully.

"Then we will ask him right away," cried Jamie, and Mrs. Grey was comforted as she saw the small clasped hands, and sweet, reverent eyes, and heard the simple petitions rising from the fullness of their innocent hearts. "Surely," thought she, "God will hear these prayers." And God did hear them, and answer them in his own good time, although, with a wisdom we may not question nor understand, he permitted still heavier shadows to gather around that pleasant home.

Well was it for Mrs. Grey that, standing upon the threshold of the new year, the future was mercifully veiled from her eyes. Before her, and those little, untried soldiers, in the stern battle of life, there lay a "great fight of afflictions."

CHAPTER IV.

GROWING DARK.

THE May blooms had unfurled their pink banners from the apple trees, and the song of the robin was heard in the land. In the long spring twilight, Harry, Jamie, and Kitty were playing with their little neighbors around the garden gate.

"What's that coming?" suddenly cried little La Carroll, peering down the dusky road. "I'm afraid it's a drunken man."

Harry, with a quick sensitiveness, looked in the direction indicated by her rosy finger.

"Why, that isn't a drunken man," cried he, the blood rushing to his hair; "that's father."

"Well, what if it is?" cried Dick Staples. "It may be a drunken man, for all that."

"What do you mean?" cried Harry, fiercely.

"I mean your father drinks, and that's what makes his face look so red and shiny."

"No such thing," cried Jamie, his blue eyes leaping into sudden fire. "Father has rushes of blood to the head. He told us so himself; and mother says it's very dangerous." And Jamie choked down a sob.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dick, tauntingly. "That's a good joke. Why, there isn't a boy in the neighborhood that doesn't know he drinks like a fish. I declare he's staggering about now as bad as old drunken Peter."

Harry sprang like a young lion upon his tormentor, so wild with shame and bitter pain that he hardly knew what he did. Dick's brother flew to his assistance; and little Jamie, with flashing eyes, enlisted on the side of Harry, while the General vigorously attacked his master's enemy in the rear.

"Take it back," screamed Harry, while Jamie, with bleeding face, had no breath for words.

"I won't," retorted Dick; "he's so drunk now he can't tell the door from the window."

"Boys! boys!" exclaimed a voice full of reproachful surprise; and, turning quickly, the young combatants beheld their white-haired pastor, his kind face full of grief and pity.

The boys stood with downcast eyes and paralyzed tongues; while the General, feeling himself involved in the common disgrace, retreated behind Jamie, with drooping ears.

"How did this happen?" asked Mr. Mason, kindly taking the hot hand of little panting Jamie.

"He called our father a drunkard," gasped Jamie, a large tear rolling down either cheek.

"As bad as old Pete Brown," added Harry, with flashing eyes.

Dick gradually edged away from the reproof of good Mr. Mason's eyes, and the two children were left alone with their old friend.

"O Mr. Mason," cried Jamie, "don't look so sad. We know it was very wrong to fight; but we could not help it when he

called father such names. You don't know how a fellow feels when—" But Jamie broke down, while Harry stood firm and defiant, muttering,—

"Served him right. I'd do it again. No one shall call *my* father a drunkard."

"My dear children," said the kind pastor, "let us talk over the matter. My little flock has gone all astray. Did you forget the lesson to 'do good to those who ——'?"

"Oh, I remember," cried Harry, excitedly; "but I could not do it that time. O Mr. Mason, wasn't it a lie?" he asked appealingly; and Jamie looked up with eager hope.

The good old man's voice was tremulous with pity as he answered tenderly, "I'm afraid it was not all a lie, my poor children. Your father has changed very much within the last few months; but I hope we shall yet be able to save him. We will all try together—shall we?" he added, more cheerfully.

Harry's brown eyes were distended, and his proud young mouth quivered painfully,

as he said in a hoarse whisper, "It's true, then, Jamie. Our father is a drunkard."

"Oh, what shall we do?" sobbed Jamie, throwing himself passionately upon the ground.

"My dear children," began Mr. Mason, wiping away a tear; but Jamie continued, in a low, wailing voice, —

"Oh, will the boys chase him, and knock in his hat, and throw mud and stones at him, as they do at old Pete Brown? Oh, I shall die — I shall die."

"Hear me," said the old pastor, with kind authority. "You must not give up in this way. There is a great work for you and Harry to do."

"Oh, we shall be a drunkard's children," said Harry, bitterly; "and all the boys will laugh at us, and call us 'Punch' and 'Whisky Skin' as they do old Pete's boys. I won't go to school any more; and there's no use trying to do any thing."

"Stop, stop, my child," cried Mr. Mason. "You are going too fast. There are a great

many good people left in the world—men and boys—who will never think of laughing at you. And, besides, I want you to be very brave and courageous, and never mind a little ridicule now and then, and perhaps you won't have to bear it very long, for I think you can do a great deal to help your father."

"What?" asked Jamie, eagerly springing to his feet.

"In the first place, you can ask God to cure him."

"O Mr. Mason," sighed Jamie, in a disappointed tone, "we've done that ever since New Year's, and it don't seem to do any good."

"You don't know that," said Mr. Mason, cheerfully. "Perhaps God has a plan *now* to make him your own kind father again. But I think he would like to have these two boys help him."

"What, help *God!*" asked Jamie, with an incredulous smile.

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Mason. "Of

course God could do every thing alone, but he likes to have some of his work done by his little children. He wants to see how willing and ready they are to do any thing to please him."

"Well, Mr. Mason," cried Jamie, joyfully, "I'm ready. What shall I do?" And, with eager eyes and parted mouth, he seemed ready to spring into immediate action.

Then followed a long, earnest talk, which resulted in the conclusion that Harry and Jamie were to be home missionaries. They were to be very attentive and affectionate to their poor father. They were to try all sorts of innocent expedients to keep him in nights. They should tell him funny stories about their school and the boys. Harry should want help in his sums; and Jamie should have some curious puzzle to be solved; and they should both watch if he seemed uneasy, or his throat became parched, and be ready to give him a draught of pure, cool water. Then, while father was gone to his business, they should still keep on trying to

do good. They should call a meeting of all the little boys and girls in the neighborhood, and ask them if they didn't want to join a cold-water army; and they should all sign a pledge never to drink any thing but pure, cold water.

"I'm sure *I* never shall!" interrupted Harry, with clinched hands and burning tears.

"But, Mr. Mason," said Jamie, anxiously, "won't all the boys say it's a pretty joke for drunkards' boys to get up a cold-water army? I'm sure Dick Staples will."

"Perhaps some of them will laugh at first, but it won't last long. I believe every boy has a good spot in his heart somewhere; and I shouldn't wonder if even little Dick Staples came to ask your pardon before night. But be careful, my dear little soldiers. Remember that 'he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.' And never forget to ask God's blessing for *Christ's* sake."

Mr. Mason went on his way; and Harry

and Jamie entered the house, saddened, but hopeful, and anxious to begin their good work.

But as they entered the gloomy, unlighted room, their young hearts were chilled with a presentiment of some impending evil.

"Is any thing the matter, mother?" asked Jamie, stumbling up to where she sat, her face buried in her hands, and her long, black hair unbound, and falling unheeded over her shoulders.

Harry instinctively lighted their last little piece of candle, and revealed his father leaning against the mantel, with a ghastly, despairing face.

The poor children gazed from one to the other in pitiful distress, as no sound broke the stillness but the solemn ticking of the old clock.

At last Jamie made one more effort, and, timidly approaching his father, he asked imploringly, —

"What is the matter, father? Can't you tell us?"

"Matter?" groaned James Grey. "Oh, nothing is the matter, only I've ruined my family, and we're miserable beggars!" And he laughed a loud, startling laugh.

Mrs. Grey looked up, and caught the frightened gaze of the two bewildered children. "My poor little sons," she cried, forgetting her own misery in pity for them, "come, I will tell you all. Mr. Mabbit has failed, and your father has lost every thing."

"Well, now, mother," said Jamie, brightening, "that isn't so bad. I always hated that old distillery, and the ugly, red-faced men that used to be around it. Now, can't father go back to Mr. Fundy's, and we all be just as happy as——"

"Hold your tongue, boy!" thundered James.

The child grew deathly pale, and looked at his father with a pitiful expression of broken-hearted surprise.

"Jamie is not used to such words from his father," said Mrs. Grey in a low tone.

"I didn't mean to frighten him," said

James, half apologetically; "but the child must learn not to be impudent. And, Maggie," he continued, with a wild look from his bloodshot eyes, "don't reproach me. You must be careful how you goad one standing on the brink of ruin. I'm going fast enough. I'll soon topple over. Hurrah!" And, with an insane laugh, he hurried to the door.

"James," implored Mrs. Grey, springing to her feet, and catching his arm, "I don't reproach you. Hear me—" But he flung her roughly aside, and hurriedly rushed from the house.

"Where is he going, mother?" asked Harry in a fearful whisper.

Mrs. Grey shook her head.

"O mother, you needn't try to keep it from us any longer. We found out all about it. We know our father is"—his voice sunk to a sobbing whisper—"a drunkard."

"Yes," said Mrs. Grey, in tearless apathy, "it is true; and now he has gone for more of the horrible poison."

"Why, mother," cried Jamie, "will any

one be so wicked as to give it to him when he sees how wretched it has made him already?"

Mrs. Grey smiled a strange, wan smile. "Oh, yes, my little Jamie."

"And can't any thing be done with them?"

"They ought to be hung," said Harry, vehemently, drawing up his small figure. "What's the difference between killing a man in a minute and killing him *slow*? O mother, if I'm ever a man, I'll try to be president; and I'll make it a law that whoever sells rum shall be hung till they're dead, dead, *dead*!" And the excited child laid his head upon his mother's knee, and wept bitterly.

After a while, when they all became more composed, Mrs. Grey told them they must leave their pleasant home in one short week, and go to live in the city.

"Why, that isn't so bad, mother," cried Harry, with returning animation; "I like the city."

"O my poor child," returned his mother,

"we are not going to live in any of the fine houses on the pleasant streets, but in some narrow lane, in a rickety house, where there are already two or three other families. It is all your father can afford at present."

"I'll never go," said impulsive Harry again, while Jamie looked wistfully around the room where he had passed so many happy hours.

"Ah, but you must," said Mrs. Grey, with difficulty commanding her voice. "The cottage is already sold, and the new people are coming to take immediate possession."

"I don't think I can bear it, mother," said Jamie, in a choking voice.

"Well," said Mrs. Grey, making a great effort to be cheerful for the sake of her children, "perhaps it will not be so very hard, after all. We will all work together, and make our new home as pleasant and bright as we can; and perhaps father will be more willing to stay with us, now that he is done with that dreadful distillery."

"Mother," said Jamie, eagerly recurring

to his old question, "why can't father go back to Mr. Fundy's?"

Mrs. Grey hesitated, but Jamie persisted.

"Well, my child," said she, with great effort, "Mr. Fundy has refused to take him back because——"

"You needn't tell the reason, mother," cried Harry, fiercely. "I don't want to know. Oh," cried the child, jumping up, and pressing both hands to his aching head, "I don't think father has any right to make us so unhappy. I won't have him for my father. I can't love him any more."

"Harry!" cried Mrs. Grey, reprovingly; and Jamie hastened to say,—

"Why, I love him; I shall *always* love poor father; and you know, Harry, what we were going to do for him. Mr. Mason thought God would help him, if we only did what we could."

"Well, we can try," said poor Harry; "but I can't exactly see my way clear. I feel as if every thing was growing dark."

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW HOME.

It was at the close of a sultry day in June that Mrs. Grey stood, with her little corps of workmen, contemplating the completion of their labors. They were in the new home. A few days of hard work had cleansed the two rooms from the accumulated filth of a score of years, and enough had been saved from the auction sale to furnish them very comfortably. There were snowy-white curtains at the front windows, a bright strip of carpet across the floor, the stand with the great family Bible which had come down through two or three generations, and, cheerful and companionable, the old Dutch clock ticked away in the corner. Kitty had taken good care that her pet should not be left behind, and accordingly Queen Vicreposed upon the window seat, the very picture of comfort. The General, too, had not been forgotten,

but had been formally introduced to the new home by Jamie that very afternoon. He did not seem quite satisfied with the new quarters; but, after a suspicious snuffing around the whole premises, he sat gravely down by the old clock, as if satisfied that one friend remained unchanged.

"Perhaps we shall be very happy here," said Jamie.

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Grey, cheerfully; but the smile died on her lips as, in the street below, she heard the sound of a drunken brawl, and language she did not wish to reach the ears of her innocent children. As she turned instinctively to close the windows, the sultry, unwholesome air rose from the steaming streets, and she sighed heavily, remembering that around their old cottage home swept the pure breezes, sweet with the breath of June roses. Alas! how would her delicate little human flowers thrive in this foul air? Or, even if they escaped sickness and physical waste, how could they remain pure and innocent, exposed to the contamination

of intercourse with the almost heathenish children in the row.

The happy voices of her children aroused her. Sorrow never weighs long upon young hearts; and Jamie and Kitty were already having a romp with the General, and Harry was eagerly telling her that it was only a step out of that dirty street into the handsome squares of houses and stores, where there was so much to see and admire. Besides, they were very near the church of which good Mr. Mason had told them, where there was a splendid organ half as big as their old home.

The children slept but poorly the first night in their new quarters. At all hours, there were loud, angry words, and slamming of doors, and sometimes such frightful screams that they sat up in bed with wild, staring eyes, and baby Paul refused to be comforted. But, as the days passed on, they became more accustomed to the constant noise and tumult, and only kept more closely within the limits of their own peaceful rooms.

Whenever they were caught timidly passing through the great halls, they met with a thousand annoyances. Their neat, though well-mended garments excited the constant ridicule of the ragged regiment infesting the halls and rickety stairs.

"My! what a swell! There's style!" cried an impish-looking boy, with a head like a mop, as Harry and Jamie, with little Kitty between them, were stealing quietly down the stairs on their way to the new Sabbath school. Harry hurried on, hoping to escape without further molestation; but a shrill whistle from the before-mentioned boy brought the whole battalion of ragged infantry screaming in shrill voices, —

"What's up, Weasel? What's the fun?"

"Weasel," as he was familiarly known, winked his bright eyes, and pointed derisively to the neatly-clad trio just vanishing through the hall door. Sunday was generally a dull day for these young vagabonds; and, screaming out, "Weasel's got an eye for game — catch Weasel asleep!" they leaped,

tumbled, and scrambled after the hapless children. Soon volleys of mud, stones, old rubbish of every kind, were showered upon them; and one sharp stone cutting Jamie on the head, he grew faint, and could go no further. Kitty began to cry; and Harry turned, his whole frame shaking with indignation and anger, —

“What do you mean to do?” he cried, as his young tormentors closed around him, dancing with as wild antics as a tribe of savages around their victim.

“Surrender first; you’re our prisoners,” cried Weasel, who seemed to be in command, “and then we’ll try your case, and see what’s best to be done.”

So back they went to “Rat Hall,” which Weasel politely informed them was the name of the *palace* where they all lived. Arrived in the dingy porch, they had a mock trial, wherein it was urged that the Greys tried to “set themselves up, and be better than other folks, when every body knew that their father was nobody but old ‘drunken

Jim,' who was the greatest soaker in the row."

Harry clinched his fists, and the blood rushed impetuously up Jamie's pale cheeks; but their ragged guard took a firmer hold, and advised them to "be easy."

Then sentence was passed upon them, and Weasel decreed that, in order to "take down their wicked pride, their coats should be torn, the patches ripped off their elbows and knees, and their hats jammed in." This sentence was carried into immediate execution, notwithstanding Harry's frantic efforts at self-defense. Kitty was spared by common consent, as she was so very little and helpless, and seemed almost in convulsions of fright. Jamie did not make the least resistance; but, as Weasel undertook his case, he stopped short in the work of destruction, and asked, uneasily, —

"What makes you look so at a fellow?"

"I'm very sorry for you, Weasel," said Jamie, still looking at him with an expression which he could not understand.

"And why, pray?" asked Weasel, sharply.

"I can't tell," said Jamie slowly, "but I am. Weasel, have you got a mother?"

The boy gave a cry of sudden pain.

"There, what did you do that for—eh? You knew that would cut me, you did. She's dead!" said he, with a wild sob; "and now, if you ever ask me again, I'll kill you."

The deep, sweet pity of Jamie's face touched him. "There, now," said he, "go home. I'm sorry I bothered you. Who'd think I'd be such a squash?" And Weasel gave the word of command for cessation of hostilities, which was reluctantly obeyed.

"Only," added Weasel, as the children went slowly up the stairs, fluttering as many rags as the worst-dressed little immortal in the crowd, "don't let me see you trying to go to church again. That's against our principles. We'll show you better game than that."

Harry and Jamie, closely followed by the outraged General, whose tail was ornamented with two or three old tin pans, hurried

up stairs, but not quickly enough to avoid hearing loud murmurings from the young rabble that they were not allowed to have more fun out of the "prigs."

"Oh, mother!" cried Harry, bursting in, and throwing himself on the floor in a perfect abandonment of rage and shame. "I can not, *can not*, live here. Do take me away."

Mrs. Grey was as much distressed as the little ones, and for a while they all wept together. Then hopeful, patient Jamie exclaimed, with a brightening face, —

"Well, I'll tell you one thing, mother: we shall have a great chance to do good, as Mr. Mason told us. He said every boy had a good spot in his heart somewhere, and I know that Weasel has. After we get to be better friends, I mean to get up a cold-water army among the boys."

"You'll never do it," cried Harry, in great disgust; "and *I* wouldn't speak to the dirty little scamps."

"We shall see," said Jamie, with a quiet smile: for he thought to himself, "God will

help me. Mr. Mason says he always hears us when we say, 'for *Christ's* sake.'

The summer rolled on; and, in spite of the patient, untiring love and efforts of his wife and children, James Grey was steadily sinking lower and lower. In the intervals of his drunken frolics, he sometimes found employment with a pitying old friend, and now and then he brought home food to his family. But they were mostly dependent upon the exertions of Harry and Jamie, who were gone all day, trying to run of errands, or do any little work which would bring them enough to buy bread for the dear ones at home. And sometimes, though not often, Mrs. Grey would be able to procure some sewing to do; for people were unwilling to trust any one living down that suspicious old lane.

So they already began to know bitter privations, and many a time the poor children had gone famished to bed. The bare rooms already told an eloquent story of pressing necessity, and it was difficult to say what old

friendly table or chair could be best spared next.

Jamie came wearily home, at the close of an unsuccessful day, only to hear Kitty crying for bread, and to see little Paul stretching his almost transparent fingers with a feeble baby wail.

Suddenly a bright thought seemed to strike him; and, taking Kitty by the hand, he stole out of the room unnoticed by his mother, who was wearily pacing the floor with the little wasted form pressed to her bosom.

"Jamie," cried Kitty, as they hurried down the street, "where are you going to take me?"

Jamie only pressed the little hand tighter, while they picked their way along the dirty lane, looking more full of discomfort than ever, as the twinkling lights from many a reeking cellar and rum-hole streamed luridly out into the faint twilight.

"Don't go in here," pleaded Kitty, as they paused before one of the low haunts from which proceeded shouts and drunken

merriment. But Jamie, strong in his new purpose, guided carefully in the little, unwilling feet.

The close room, full of odors of tobacco and rum, was almost stifling, and there was a perfect Babel of tongues. Evidently some very exciting discussion was going on, and Jamie drew Kitty behind a large hogshhead till it should be over.

"I say," said a large man with a good-natured face, but so bloated that the skin seemed ready to burst, "I say this is a free country, and no one has a right to say to me, You shall, or you shall not drink. A man has a perfect right to go to the devil, if he wants to, and it's no other man's business. As for all this nonsense about a prohibitory law, it was just got up by a set of meddlers and fools. No one has a right to tie up a man's liberties in that way. We're a free people."

"Hurrah for Old Tiger!" screamed a dozen discordant voices.

"Give us another swig, Pete," said a shak

ing little man to the bar-keeper; "strong—*strong*. I'm not going to be put down by any pale-faced, canting teetotalers."

"My friends," said a patient voice, "beat me once more. If a powder house were to be erected in this street, in the midst of your houses, and if at any time of day or night there might be a horrible explosion, sending hundreds of poor creatures into the other world, would you have any thing to say?"

"Why, I've got to say," cried a swaggering fellow, "that it isn't a supposable case. We've a law against that, I believe."

"And you think it is right?" said the gentleman.

"Why, to be sure I do. It's a nuisance, and there ought to be a law against nuisances."

"Then out of your own mouth I condemn you," said the gentleman, pleasantly. "I can show you conclusively—I have the statistics—that one such hole as *this*, in a few years, is full as destructive as a powder

house. You are dying, more slowly, to be sure; but it is just as certain —”

“Put him down!” screamed the enraged voice of the bar-keeper; and loud murmurings arose from the crowd.

“No, let him speak, if he wants to,” said Old Tiger, bringing down his heavy hand with an emphasis which made the glasses ring. “Let’s hear what he has to say.” And, under his powerful protection, the speaker continued:—

“My friends, you get this poison in your heads, and you become wild. You go forth to steal, to ill treat your wives and children, and sometimes — *sometimes* — to *murder*. My friends, has not society a right to protect itself against such enormities? Has it not a right to aim at the root, the cause, of all this evil? And where shall we find it? Is it not where I stand to-night? Would it not be a merciful thing if this, and the score of other poison holes in this one little miserable street, were closed by law this very night? Then, perhaps, you could come back

to health and respectability. You could again take your places as equals among your fellow-men, and do your duty bravely and well. Come, my brethren, we are ready to stretch a helping hand. Will you make the effort? You can yet have happy firesides here, and hope in the life to come; but"—he lowered his voice—"no drunkard can inherit the kingdom of God."

One or two wretched creatures broke into maudlin sobs; but the majority swayed angrily to and fro.

"Come, now," said Old Tiger, "we've heard you all through, and now it's in your place to go; and, if you don't go pretty quick, we won't stand long on politeness."

"And won't any of you strive for a happier life?"

"We don't want to," shrieked a voice through which trembled a thrill of despair. "There's no use in your talking. We *can't* live without rum. We can't stop *now*, even if we have to live in hell-fire for it through all eternity."

"Sir," began the stranger again, his fine face full of pity; but hoarse voices rose threatening around him, and Old Tiger, taking him by the shoulder, almost lifted him into the street, saying, "There, you may thank *me* that you got no worse treatment."

This was not very encouraging to Jamie; but, gathering all his bravery, he came out from behind the barrel, leading little sobbing Kitty. The red-faced crew looked in astonishment at such an unusual apparition. The two little children, with their fair hair, and sweet, pale faces, looked almost as much out of place as angels in the abode of the lost.

"What do you want here?" asked the bar-keeper, with an unconscious softening of tone.

"Sir," said Jamie, "is it here that my father gets drink?"

"Who is your father?" said the man, more roughly.

"Mr. James Grey."

"Drunken Jim," explained one of the men.

"Well, I suppose it is, then," said the man. "I believe there won't any body else trust him,"—and he laughed coarsely,— "but I manage to get a job out of him now and then."

"Please, sir," said Jamie, gathering all his courage, "don't sell him any more."

The bar-keeper frowned; and Old Tiger, laying his heavy hand almost tenderly upon Jamie's slight shoulder, said, "Come, little one, this is no place for you. You ought to be home, and in bed."

"Let me say something first," pleaded Jamie. "O Mr. —, we used to be so very happy once, and had such a kind father. But he began to drink, and then we grew so very poor; and now we don't, half the time, have any thing to eat. Kitty hasn't had any dinner nor supper,"—and he put his arm around the sobbing child,— "and, worse than all, little Paul, — that's the baby," he explained to Old Tiger,— "little Paul is dying, sir. His hands look like little chickens' claws;" and Jamie burst into vehement grief.

Old Tiger was strangely moved, and one or two hard cases stole out of the door with tears in their eyes. "What the devil has got into every body to-night?" said the bar-keeper, angrily. "Here, children, are some cakes; now run home."

Kitty seized them eagerly, but Jamie swept them away with a proud wave. "Promise me first that you won't give father any more drink."

"You impudent dog," cried the bar-keeper, stamping his foot, "go home before I flog you. I've lost a good many customers to-night by *your* whining."

Old Tiger took Kitty in his arms, and led Jamie from the store.

"Then it has done no good!" sobbed the child. "He will sell it to father all the same."

"Well, child, if he didn't, he'd get it somewhere else," said Old Tiger, in a consoling tone.

"No; he said no one else would trust him."

"Oh, he'd find it somewhere, you may be sure ; but," muttered Old Tiger to himself, "if I had two such children as these, seems to me I'd struggle pretty hard against the old enemy."

They reached the dreary entrance of Rat Hall, and Old Tiger, pressing a half dollar in Jamie's unwilling hand, walked rapidly away.

Poor Jamie ! his plan had utterly failed !

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE COLD-WATER ARMY.

It did not seem possible that things could grow much worse in the little family of the Greys, but darker hours were yet to come. The languid heats of summer, the close, confined air, and the insufficient food, were making sad havoc in the fair, round faces. Little Paul drooped slowly, but surely, despite the most tender care ; and the desolate

rooms were stripped of almost every article which reminded them of the comforts of the old home, with the exception of the clock, to which they all clung as to a friend. Harry and Jamie worked unflinchingly, but met with slight returns, and the squalor and wretchedness of the neighborhood grew more and more repulsive every day. In one respect, however, the new home had become a little more endurable. Jamie's quiet ways and unobtrusive deeds of kindness had won over almost the entire ragged regiment of Rat Hall.

After a long series of persecutions, culminating in the hanging of poor Queen Vie, who was caught out upon a quiet ramble, there was a gradual cessation of hostilities, and they began to pay Jamie involuntary respect, although he was the youngest and feeblest of them all. There was a charm in the expression of his pale face, which they felt rather than understood, and instinctively all swearing and evil language were hushed at the words, "Here comes

little Grey!" Also for his sake they agreed to tolerate the airs of the "Count," as poor, proud Harry was always called, and he passed to and fro without the least molestation beyond a derisive word or smile.

A week or two after the occurrences of the last chapter, as Jamie was hastening home one day, in the glare of noon, he heard the loud voices of the little heathenish children of the neighborhood, and knew that something unusual had occurred to raise them to such extravagant mirth. Forcing his way through the crowd, Jamie grew faint to see the figure of a woman stretched upon the ground, with leaden eyes and fiery face,—her tattered garments covered with mud and filth, and a bottle clutched tightly in one hand. Jamie had never before seen a *woman* so degraded; and looking around on the young rioters full of wicked mischief, he essayed to speak, and burst into sobs which shook his whole frame.

"What's up, little Grey?" cried one, touched by his evident emotion.

"I guess he ain't used to it," cried another. "He thought all women were like his mother."

"Come, little Grey, let's be jolly," said the first boy. "Now see, when I poke her in the ribs, she'll grunt like any old pig."

"Let's tickle her feet," said a little rascal, applying a feather to her blistered soles.

"Boys!" cried Jamie, with such an indignant thrill in his voice that they all stopped to listen, "you must not, *shall* not be so cruel! Do you know God sees you?"

Two or three looked around apprehensively, and *one* cried, "Pshaw! there isn't any God."

"I'll tell you what to do," said Jamie, not heeding the interruption. "Let's all take hold, and draw her up by the wall, out of this broiling sun."

There were some dissatisfied murmurs, but one voice spoke out: "Well, we've had enough fun for to-day; let's do the handsome thing by little Grey;" and the Liliputian army seized hold upon the heavy mass,

at every available point, and had nearly drawn her into the shade, when an alarm was given — “Here comes Weasel!” and with a busy shuffling of feet the place was cleared as if by magic, and Jamie, to his great surprise, was left alone with the wretched woman. He then tried vainly to draw even her head out of the blinding sun, but his strength was insufficient; and taking his little worn handkerchief from his pocket, he spread it carefully over the swollen features.

“What’s the row?” cried Weasel, coming up breathlessly; “and what made ’em all scatter?” But before Jamie could answer, he had quickly lifted the handkerchief, and glanced at the face beneath. He dropped it as if his fingers had been burned; put on a hard expression, tried to whistle, and finally looking at Jamie’s puzzled face, burst into such a strange laugh, with so little merriment in it, that Jamie asked quickly, —

“What is it, Weasel? Do you know her?”

Weasel nodded in a manner intended to be

very careless, and said, as if he were trying to swallow something, "It's the old woman."

"Who?" asked Junnie.

"Why, my old mammy, if you *must* know," replied Weasel, assuming great indifference.

"Not your *mother*?"

Weasel nodded.

"You said she was dead!"

"Well, isn't she, or worse?" said Weasel bitterly. "I wish she *was* dead. There now! little Grey, don't look at me so with your great eyes. *You* can't say or do any thing wrong. I never believed all that stuff about angels till I saw you, but I believe they're getting you ready for one now! They won't leave you *here* long, little Grey; I know it, I know it:" and snatching up the astonished Jamie, he gave him a hug that almost suffocated him, and saying, "I'll always remember the handkerchief," he vanished in one of the tumble-down doorways, and Jamie went wearily home.

The next day was Sunday, and Mrs. Grey sat vainly trying to soothe little Paul, who moaned and started painfully, as the shouts and screams of the children rose more noisily than ever.

Harry, gazing pitifully upon his little suffering brother, exclaimed, vehemently, "Oh! I should like to choke every one of those rascals;" and Jamie rose and went softly out of the room.

"Here comes little Grey and the General," cried one of the young "Rats," assembled in the great hall. "Here, make a place for them both," continued he, shaking hands with the General, who gravely held out his paw.

Jamie raised his thin hand. "Please don't make a noise, my little brother is so very sick."

"Little Grey's baby is sick," whispered one to another; and the little revelers, each with a good spot in his young heart, became suddenly quiet.

"Here, little 'un," said Weasel, "take a

swig;" and he proceeded to pour something out of a black bottle into a broken tea cup.

"What is it?" said Jamie, starting back.

"Oh, don't be afraid; it's real good," cried a dozen voices. "Ben found it in his father's closet this morning, and I got the sugar out of old Simms' store. Come, taste," cried a young tippler; "it's just exactly what the men drink."

"There!" cried another boy, watching Jamie's dismayed face, "I knew little Grey would be as cranky as a minister."

"Boys," began Jamie, —

"Oh, don't let's have any cant! If you don't want to drink, go back to your mother, and don't spoil all *our* fun."

"Can't I say something?" urged Jamie.

"Yes," cried Weasel, bringing his fist down, "little Grey shall speak if he wants to, and I'll knock down the first boy that stops him."

There was a dead hush, for all the boys stood in awe of Weasel's fist, and Jamie began his speech. He told the old story in

his own touching way, of how his father first began to drink, and how he had drunk up the pleasant home, and almost all the furniture; and now poor Harry was so proud and miserable, mother never smiled, and little Paul was dying. "Oh, boys," said Jamie, with a quick, gasping breath, "you all know what it is to have some friend a drunkard. *You* have two brothers, Ben. Your father and mine, Jack, are off on srees together; and Weasel—has a mother. Oh!" sobbed Jamie, "almost every grown-up person in the lane is drunk half the time! Now shall we, too, begin to drink, and lie around in gutters with the pigs? Shall we stumble over cellar doors and break our legs, as Ben's brother did? Shall we steal, like old Jack, and be shut up in a gloomy prison for years? Shall we be too crazy to find our way home cold winter nights, and freeze to death, like——?"

"Oh, no, no!" cried two or three voices.

"I'll tell you what, boys," continued Jamie; "very near my dear old home there

is a little wood, and right in the midst of the thick trees there is a little stream as cool as ice, and it dances and sparkles in the sun like so many diamonds. Oh, that's the kind of drink God meant us to have. The birds drink there, and the happy little squirrels, and every thing else that lives in the wood; and you couldn't get one of them to touch any thing that came out of that horrid black bottle. And, boys, I believe, if we follow their example, we can be just as happy as *they* are. We can be wise, and good, and respected. We can come out of this dirty little street, and live in clean, healthy houses. We can earn money, and take care of our little brothers and sisters; and there is no reason why we shouldn't, some day, get to be judges or governors, or even (who knows?) *presidents* of the *United States*. Come, boys," said Jamie, seeing his young audience were with him, "I've been thinking of getting up a cold-water army. You see we'll all sign a little paper—a sort of pledge, you know—not to drink a

single drop of any thing but cold water; and then we'll all watch over each other, and see if we can't keep the promise. Come, boys!" cried Jamie, excitedly, "who'll choose between being a pig or a president?"

"I, for one," said Weasel, going to the window and throwing out the black bottle, which fell on the stones below with a great crash.

"There's the first gun against King Alcohol!" cried Jamie, enthusiastically; and at Weasel's earnest request that the thing might be done "right up to the handle," Jamie took out a pencil, and upon a dirty scrap of paper, handed up from the crowd, drew up a simple pledge, and signed his name. Weasel followed next, in a large print, and amidst some murmurs of dissatisfaction more than half the rest followed after, in styles suited to their various degrees of scholarship. Most of them could only make a simple mark; but they evidently felt all the importance of the step they were taking, and promised to keep their pledge

most faithfully. There was much merriment raised, as the General, standing by Jamie's side, being suddenly seized with a spirit of investigation, lifted his paw, and left its muddy impress upon the well-filled little sheet. "The General wishes to sign," cried Weasel; and the little dog was enthusiastically voted a member.

"What shall we have for a name?" cried a voice.

"Well," said Jamie, "I should like to have you called after my little spring in the woods — the 'Cold Spring Volunteers.' What do you say?"

"All right," said Weasel, promptly.

"Who shall be captain?"

"I vote for Weasel," said Jamie; but Weasel, jumping on an old box, most decidedly refused, saying, —

"I go for little Grey. He'll make the best captain of any of us."

So, in spite of Jamie's remonstrances, there were three subdued cheers for "Captain Grey;" and after passing a resolution

that the next pleasant day they should all march out to Cold Spring, and pledge each other in the pure draught, Jamie sprang up stairs with a light heart.

But a sense of unusual stillness oppressed him as he entered the room. There was a thick paper pinned over each window to exclude the light; and after stumbling over Kitty, who lay curled on the floor in restless sleep, he found Harry kneeling before his mother in an agony of silent grief. But his mother looked strangely happy, and it was with a sweet smile that she said, gently, "I thank you, dear little son. You have kept it very quiet." Jamie bent tenderly over little Paul, and rejoiced to find him in such a sweet sleep. His little restless hands were lying so quietly across his breast, and he had not seen such a smile upon his pale lips in weeks.

"He is better, mother?" he asked.

"Yes, my little Jamie, a great deal better."

"But," continued Jamie, uneasily, "what is the matter with Harry?"

"Oh, Jamie," cried Harry, with a bursting sob, "can't you see our little baby brother is *dead*?"

Jamie grew deathly pale, but his mother took his cold, trembling hand. "Do not cry, Jamie. Dear little Paul can never suffer any more. He is happier than any of us now."

The heavy, shuffling tread they had learned to dread broke upon the stillness—the door swung rudely back, and James Grey staggered in.

"Come, come, Maggie," he cried, with an oath, "must you be for ever whining over that baby? You don't seem to care any thing for *my* comfort. Can't you get me something to eat? I'm horribly hungry."

"James," said Mrs. Grey, rising, and standing before him, holding the little waxen figure, "see, it is Paul — our baby — our little baby — he's dead! Oh, James!"

The miserable man looked at it with a vacant stare; he laid his burning fingers on the icy cheeks and brow, then gazing

around at his weeping children, he burst into feeble tears.

Jamie was quickly at his side, and with the affection, which had never wholly died out of his forgiving heart, he essayed to comfort him. The wretched man wound his arms around him with something of the old tenderness; a milder look dawned in his haggard eyes; and he became so deeply moved with the child's simple, pleading eloquence, that Mrs. Grey felt a slight glimmer of hope that this sorrow might not be in vain. But alas! the demon of drink had too closely enslaved him. Even this solemn visitor could not loose the chain; and in less than an hour James Grey, muttering some paltry excuse, stole out to drown his sorrow and remorse in deeper potations than ever.

The day came when little Paul's body should be committed to the dust; but his father was not to be found. A few kind neighbors were there, and poor Weasel, coming in late, with flushed face, as if he

had been on a long, weary tramp, offered Jamie a perfect little white rose bud, which he thought "little Grey's brother might like to have in his hands, when he was put down in the dark ground."

And the flower was laid in little Paul's waxen fingers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTAIN'S PROMOTION.

MORE earnest than ever were now Jamie's desires to benefit his young companions, and more constant his humble efforts to walk in the footsteps of Christ. At his urgent request Harry was admitted into the army; and so greatly had that young warrior been subdued by sorrow, and Jamie's gentle example, that there began to be some difference of opinion as to whether the "Count" was not a *trump* after all. The Cold Spring Volunteers had a great many enthusiastic meetings, and Weasel was Jamie's most able

supporter. Very comical temperance speeches were made by some of the most gifted young "Rats," and Jamie's mother made them each a little red, white and blue badge.

"What are the young rascals up to now?" cried Old Tiger, as the Volunteers moved down the lane, one warm September evening, in orderly array.

"Oh," grumbled the bar-keeper, Mr. Simms; "it's some confounded nonsense of that troublesome little Grey. He's getting to be a perfect pest in the neighborhood."

"How now?" cried Old Tiger, as the procession came up, and the slender little captain politely removed his worn cap. "What's on the banner?"

"'Cold Spring Volunteers,' cried Jamie; 'Death to King Alcohol!'"

"*Ain't* I glad I'm in this army?" screamed Weasel, in a shrill voice, cutting a most exasperating flourish before Mr. Simms' very door.

"Do you think King Alcohol will be afraid of *you*?" asked Old Tiger, glancing contemptuously over the ragged battalion.

"Yes, indeed," said Jamie, with a hopeful smile. "He *will* be in a few years, if he isn't now. We mean to make him tremble. He's a wicked old king, and has done us a great deal of harm."

"Why, what has he done to you?" asked Old Tiger, carrying on the conversation in spite of himself.

"He has killed my father," cried a scrubby little "Rat," bursting into tears.

"He broke my brother's leg," said another.

"He put my father in State's Prison," said a third. And added a frightened little voice, "He makes *my* father see spiders and snakes, and every thing awful, so he screams all night."

"Bad enough," said Old Tiger, gravely.

"Come, start, you young rascals," cried the bar-keeper, "or I'll pour a kettle of hot water over you."

"Three groans for King Alcohol and all his slaves!" cried the undaunted Weasel; and they were given with great effect—the General contributing a long, dismal howl.

"Three cheers for cold water!" shouted Jamie; but in the midst of the enthusiastic shout which followed, Mr. Simms was seen advancing with a steaming fluid; and the "army" retreated with more haste than dignity.

"Well, the Lord bless 'em," muttered Old Tiger, as he watched them re-forming on a distant corner. "If I were only young once more — No, thankee, Mr. Simms; no more to-night;" and Old Tiger walked away with his great head sunk upon his breast, deep in painful thought.

The fall was now rapidly advancing, with heavy skies, and wailing, mournful winds. Harry and Jamie still went bravely on their tour of errands around the city, although the chill air pierced through their scant garments, and Jamie's step daily became feebler. This did not escape Weasel's observation; and with great delicacy he hinted at a temperance meeting, that they ought no longer to allow their captain to go on foot.

but that he should always be borne at the head of their processions on the crossed hands of two of the ablest Volunteers, who should be considered *horses, pro tem*. This met with a hearty response, and Jamie was seldom allowed to walk upon "training days."

Still Jamie grew weaker; and he confided to Weasel that "he was growing to be like a little helpless baby again. He didn't mean to be lazy, but he didn't begin to earn as much as poor Harry, who was working himself to death just to get enough for them to eat; and they didn't pretend to keep warm any more, although they now had only one room. What they were going to do in the winter he couldn't see. Mother had the rheumatism now, so that she could hardly move; Kitty cried all the time, and *he* felt so queerly! Sometimes, when he was almost burning up, his teeth would clatter as fast as the bones old Sambo used to play in his fingers."

Weasel looked profoundly sympathetic;

but, from the depths of his own poverty, he could not offer any more substantial consolation. Neither, from his long experience of the little captain's character, did he dare to suggest a certain mode of relief to which he himself resorted in moments of dire necessity. No; the captain would come right out bluntly, and call it *stealing*. A *thief* was an ugly name, and Weasel wisely kept his own counsel.

So Jamie went struggling on, but with very little hope, till one day, as he rose after a night of restlessness and actual suffering from the cold, it suddenly occurred to him that he could yet make one sacrifice for the common good; and calling his faithful old General, he stole out of the house in the gray dawn of morning.

The General had thriven very well amidst all the discomfort, for he had been a great favorite in the neighborhood, and had many a bone kindly presented for his consideration. Besides, notwithstanding Jamie's care, he did not disdain, now and then, to steal his

daily bread when nature prompted and opportunity offered. So, very sleek, and intelligent as ever, he trotted along, making a thousand little excursions, and yet keeping up with the feeble pace of his master.

They went a long way down into the pleasant streets of the great city, and there Jamie — after resting to regain his breath, and to have one long, affectionate talk with the General — addressed himself to business.

“Please, sir,” said he to a tall, portly gentleman who was passing, “do you want to buy a dog?”

The gentleman looked at him abstractedly, and passed on without a word. Again and again did Jamie appeal to the busy throng, but with no better success. Some took no notice of him; others spoke roughly, and kicked the poor General into the bargain.

A heavy rain and sleet were beginning to fall, and Jamie timidly entered some of the handsome stores, but was ordered out so rudely that he could not bear to make any further attempts.

"I declare, old fellow," said he, in a tone of mingled weariness and relief, "I believe it isn't right for me to try to sell you, after all. Come, we'll go home."

The General wagged his tail joyfully, and they were just turning, when a voice cried, "Hallo, little un! do you want to sell that dog?"

Jamie turned in dismay, and uttered a faint "Yes."

The questioner was a boy not much bigger than Weasel, but with a great amount of flashy jewelry paraded over his vest.

"He don't seem to be much of a dog," drawled the boy. "What's he good for?"

Jamie indignantly proceeded to show off his good points. The poor, unsuspecting General, though tired and wet, patiently obeyed all his little master's commands. He danced, and begged, and stood on his head, and finally picked out letters from some little blocks Jamie brought in his pocket.

"Well, he *is* some," said the boy, admiringly. "I'll take him."



SELLING THE GENERAL.

Jamie nervously caught the General in his arms.

"I believe I *can't* sell him, after all."

"Come, don't be a baby! I'll give you five dollars."

"Five dollars!" Jamie's eyes opened, as the boy took out a tempting new bill. "What wouldn't that buy for mother, and Kitty, and poor, tired Harry? They should have a nice, warm supper, and *such* a fire!"

"Here, take him," cried he, hastily, fearing his resolution would falter; and, after one long embrace, with the General's dirty paws twined around his neck, he relinquished him, seized the bill, and turned desperately away. A long, piteous whine reached him, although his fingers were in his ears; and, turning once more, he caught a wild glimpse of the poor General's reproachful eyes, as he vanished round the corner over the shoulder of his new master.

"Oh, it is too much!" sobbed Jamie, sitting down tremblingly upon the curbstone. "If I could only *explain* it to him, poor,

dear old fellow! I wouldn't mind it half so much."

After a long time he rose, and, with shivering limbs, crept slowly homeward. At the corner of the lane, he stopped at the little eating house opposite Mr. Simms', and ordered some bread and meat. The man looked at him suspiciously as he brought the articles, and, as Jamie handed him the bill, exclaimed, angrily, —

"There! I thought so. You young vagabond, do you mean to pass counterfeit money on me!"

"Is it a bad bill, sir?" faltered Jamie, perfectly aghast.

"Bad! I should think it was," said the man, contemptuously tearing it in two; "and you know it, too. If you weren't such a little fellow, I'd have you taken up this minute; but I suppose some old rogue has set you on. Now, clear out, or I'll set Wolf on you."

Jamie slowly passed into the street. It was now almost night; the heavy, drizzling rain had increased, and Jamie, looking down

the foggy road, knew it was useless to try to find the boy who had cheated him. No, he should never see the General again — poor, faithful old fellow! How patiently he played all his little tricks, and never suspected his master was going to treat him so cruelly! Jamie felt a tightening over his heart, so that he could hardly breathe, and was forced to sit down again upon the dripping curbstone. Then every thing became confused; he tried to think what should be done about the General, but could not fix his thoughts. "I don't feel very badly about it, after all," he thought vaguely to himself. "I don't believe I *can* feel any more. Dear me! I believe I'm going to sleep, and haven't said my prayers. For *Christ's* sake," murmured poor Jamie, dreamily; and his head sunk upon his breast.

Suddenly a cheery voice raised him from his trance.

"I declare, if here isn't little Grey! Seems to me this is a little too much cold water even for the captain of the Volunteers. What on earth are you doing here?"

"I don't know," said Jamie, dreamily.

"Don't know!" and Weasel bent lower, to scrutinize the little colorless face. "I'll tell you, you wicked little captain. You're trying to soak all your body away, so your soul can get out; but that isn't to *my* taste." And Weasel, lifting him tenderly as a woman, carried him rapidly home.

"Where's the General, captain?" he asked, in the transit.

A shiver ran through Jamie's frame.

"I sold him."

"Sold him! sold the General! Now, captain, how could you?"

"Don't ask me now," said Jamie, as they reached the stairs. "I'm too tired. I'm going right to sleep now; and—I'll see you in the morning, Weasel."

"All right," said Weasel; and Jamie, tottering into the cold, dark room, sank wearily on the floor.

"Is that you, Jamie?" cried Kitty, joyfully; "I was so afraid father was coming! Do you know Harry has found some one, at

last, to buy the old clock? And mamma has money, and she's gone for bread, and Harry is getting some wood. O Jamie, just think — we're going to have a fire!"

Just then Mrs. Grey came in, speaking almost cheerfully, and, cutting a large piece of bread for each of the children, began making preparations for the fire.

Jamie could not eat a morsel; neither did he hear Kitty's busy prattle of how "the tears came in mamma's eyes when the old clock was taken away, because it used to stand in her *own* dear mother's kitchen, and how every thing nice was now gone;" but he shuddered painfully as up the creaking stairs shambled the heavy step he knew so well.

Kitty, with an expression of dismay, retreated close to her mother's side; and James Grey, partially sober, staggered into the room. The bareness of the place, revealed by the fitful flashes of the fire, seemed to strike him; and, after a few moments of stupid thought, he thundered out, —

"What has become of the clock?"

Mrs. Grey did not reply, and again he shouted,—

"Speak, woman! Have you dared to sell it without telling me?"

"Yes, papa," sobbed poor, innocent Kitty, anxious to allay the storm; "mamma got a heap of money for it."

James Grey sprang at her like a tiger.

"Where is it, Maggie?" he cried, huskily. "Give it to me—*quick!* I must have it."

"You *can not* have it," said she, in a low, determined voice. "It is for the children; they are starving."

He glared at her fiercely.

"Will you tell me where you've put it?"

"No."

The words came through his set teeth,—

"Then I'll kill you."

Mrs. Grey stood fearlessly before him; the brutal arm was raised; but Jamie, with a wild cry, threw himself between, and the ill-directed blow fell heavily upon his up-

turned head. The child dropped as if he had been shot, and there was a moment of death-like silence. Then, with a wail whose horror thrilled every nerve of the wretched father, Mrs. Grey cried, slowly, —

“ You have killed him — your little son ! killed Jamie — our *little* Jamie ! ” she repeated, with a wild tenderness, lifting the helpless child in her arms.

Little Kitty ran with agonized screams into the hall, and a large company of the Volunteers, headed by Harry, came flying up the stairs.

“ What is it ? ” cried they.

“ The captain's father has killed him ! ” cried a horror-stricken voice ; and Weasel dashed frantically past, and out of the house. In an incredibly short time he returned with a physician, who had been forced to come by the strange, wild eloquence of the half-crazed boy.

James Grey stood by in sullen despair while the various remedies were tried ; and when, at last, Jamie's large eyes opened, and

he looked around with a faint smile of recognition, James cried, angrily, —

“There, I thought so, Maggie. You’re always more scared than hurt. You want to make an *old woman* of me;” and, turning away, he threw himself down in a chair, and soon seemed to fall into a heavy sleep. But, alas! when Mrs. Grey, wishing to send for medicine for the suffering Jamie, cautiously approached her hiding place for the necessary money, those cunning ears heard the slight chink, and the cunning eyes opened furtively and closed again before she had turned. Alas, that man can sink so low!

In the dead of night, when Mrs. Grey, worn with grief and watching, had fallen asleep by the little children, who had also forgotten their woes, James Grey arose, and stealthily casting around his guilty eyes, unmindful of his starving family, his almost dying child, approached the secret place. His trembling fingers seized eagerly upon the scanty store; they scraped it all together, — the cruel, greedy fingers! — not one

small coin remained; and, with a low, fierce chuckle, he stole from the room, to rush for one of the wretched haunts which might be found open at all hours of the night within the degraded precincts of the wretched lane.

No words can describe the grief and dismay of Mrs. Grey when she found her little store entirely gone. She looked at Jamie, tossing and delirious with fever. She learned from his ravings all the piteous tale about the poor General, and the cruel trick played upon the innocence and simplicity of the little child. She felt of his little blistered feet, and noted the sunken eyes and hollow cheeks, and, saying with a strange, calm smile, "He will be better off with Paul," she knelt beside the bed, and prayed, without a tear, that "God would take him *soon*; that his delicate frame might not *long* be racked with agony, but that he might soon be safe 'where the wicked cease from troubling,' where those dear, patient, little limbs might be at *rest*."

Was it an unnatural prayer for a mother?

Let no one judge till he also has stood in such a rayless night, lifting imploring hands from such "*dimness of anguish.*"

The little Volunteers were untiring in their good offices, and throughout the dreary day, with tiptoe tread and muffled voices, they clustered in the halls to receive frequent reports of the state of their beloved little captain.

Towards night, Weasel came with an offering of a nice, fat chicken, and two or three Volunteers brought scraps of board and shavings.

"It's to make the captain some broth," Weasel hastily explained, and rushed away, fearing to compromise his manhood by a sudden breaking down at sight of Jamie's flushed face, and vacant, wandering eyes.

"Rats," said Weasel to the full congress awaiting his return in the lower hall, "to tell the truth, I *stole* that chicken; and, if the captain knew it, I suppose it would just break his heart. But you see we can't let him die for want of something to eat; and

yet it seems *mean* to make the captain eat any thing that's stolen, when we know how he feels about it. Now, suppose we all turn in and work till we pay for it."

"All right," was the good-natured response; and even the laziest little "rat" present was anxious to do something to please the captain.

"No, no," murmured Weasel to himself, as he slowly walked away, "I can not let the captain give me the slip; and yet, he's been such a good soldier down here, I'm terribly afraid the great Commander is thinking of promoting him. Well, it's mean for me to want to keep him down," thought Weasel, brushing his hand across his eyes; "but I wish they wouldn't send for him just yet."

James Grey had a famous spree. Conscience and remorse were effectually laid to sleep; and, till his money was all spent, not one pang crossed his heart at remembrance of his wretched family. But on the evening of the third day, as, nervous, unstrung, but

almost sober, he tottered into the cheerless room, he remembered his passion, and the blow that fell on unoffending Jamie, and, with strange uneasiness, whispered huskily, "How *is* the child?"

Mrs. Grey, with her head drooped in her hands, did not answer, nor did little sobbing Kitty, nor Harry; and Weasel, standing at the foot of the bed, with his wiry hair in the wildest disorder, glared defiantly upon the intruder.

A swift pain shot through James Grey's heart, as he drew near the bed, and looked upon the frail, wasted frame; but more and more did he feel the stings of remorse, as he listened to the unconscious ravings of the child. Such revelations of suffering, of hunger, and cold, and miserable weariness; then bursts of strange, childish laughter, and talk about the pleasant old kitchen fire; then, again, ravings of his last dismal tramp in the city — the chilling rain, the parting with the old General, and pitiful apologies to the old dog that he "wouldn't, *couldn't*, have

sold him, if they hadn't all been starving."

"Who'd have thought it!" gasped Weasel, turning to one or two little sobbing "rats;" "the captain never let us know he was *starving*."

James Grey sank down by the bed, and hid his face in his hands. Jamie seemed to sleep at last, and they all watched the fluttering of the small life with eager breathlessness. No one stirred, although the hours passed on, and it was nearing midnight.

Suddenly there was an outcry down below, and a confused shuffling of feet. Weasel scowled angrily. "They're at it again," said he. "It's Ben's brothers back from a bender. Too bad, too bad!" he continued, as Jamie started, moaned, and opened his large, troubled eyes. But the child soon seemed to recognize the familiar sounds, and, with a heavy sigh, sank back again into a half stupor. Presently a pleasant smile broke over his face, and he whispered, —

"Father — *dear* father!"

"What is it, my precious child?" burst from the wretched man, as he bent down to the pale lips. "Here I am, Jamie," he continued; but Jamie did not speak.

"Doesn't he know me?" almost shrieked James Grey.

"Hush!" said his wife; "he is speaking." And, in the solemn silence, clear and distinct rose the touching little prayer which, night and morning, Jamie never forgot to offer for his father.

The tumult increased below; and the child again, in a voice of distress and horror, said, solemnly,—

"No drunkard can inherit the kingdom of God;" and again, with a quick, sobbing breath, followed the earnest little prayer, "For *Jesus'* sake."

Then a sweet calm settled over his face, and he slowly opened his eyes.

"Good night, Weasel," he cried. "I'll see you in the morning."

"Good night, captain," cried Weasel. "Bless your heart, don't mind *me!*"

The noise increased below.

"Well, there is a most uncommon row," cried Weasel; "but the captain don't seem to mind it much."

Suddenly Jamie again raised his beautiful eyes, full of a wonderful light, and stretched eagerly forth his wasted hands.

"Is he dying?" said James Grey, in a fearful whisper.

"Oh, he's going!" cried Weasel, frantically; "they've come for him. O God! O God!"

A troubled look passed over Jamie's face.

"There, now, captain!" cried Weasel, in an agony; "that wasn't *swearing*—'pon honor, little Grey, it wasn't, now! Oh, can't you hear me, little captain?" And Weasel seized wildly the little hands fallen back upon the scant coverlet.

"He is safe with little Paul," said Mrs. Grey; and, with a long sob, she pressed her lips upon the patient mouth.

Ah! why must these unhallowed noises of earth so intrude upon a scene made sacred

by the awful presence of death? The footsteps and eager shouting grew nearer, and presently the room door was hastily burst open.

"Are you crazy?" cried a man, whose loud voice rang strangely through the gloomy room. "The lower part of the house is all on fire — the stairs will be gone in two minutes. Fly for your lives!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADDER'S STING.

"LET me take the captain," said Weasel, eagerly; "I've carried him often before." But James Grey, with a sharp, agonized cry, sprang like a wild animal, and lifted the slight burden in his own arms. Down through the halls and stairs, lurid and fearful in a fiery rain, James Grey bore his little child out into the chill and solemn night. He tottered a few steps, and then,

within sight of his burning home, he sat down with his dead child. His wife stood beside him, holding little frightened Kitty; and poor, proud Harry, with an unnatural, defiant air, was trying to hide the grief which was almost breaking his young heart.

It was a frightful scene. The fire spread rapidly. Forth from the crazy tenements the red demon flaunted mockingly his fearful banners, and lurid flame and smoke filled the midnight sky with an awful grandeur. A stream of half-clad, half-drunken men and women rushed frantically hither and thither, and their oaths and frightful cries blended wildly with the wails of the terrified children.

Weasel, after seeing to the safety of his wretched, stupid mother, and wrapping an old shawl around her trembling shoulders, had stolen back, irresistibly drawn to the side of the little captain. There he still lay in his father's arms, and many a passer by was involuntarily arrested by the strange and touching scene. In the wild, fearful

light sat James Grey, with distorted features, his disordered hair falling about his fiery face, looking, in his despair, like some fallen spirit escaped from his horrible abode; while, in striking contrast, tenderly pillowed upon his arm lay the fair head of little Jamie. His golden hair swept lightly back from his waxen forehead; the long lashes drooping peacefully over the innocent eyes, and the pale lips parted in a smile of infinite content. No wonder that every one paused amidst the wild hurry and excitement, the shouts and screams that filled the doomed street with unearthly clamor, to gaze with a starting tear on the sweet sleep of the little child whose soul was with God.

Among the rest came Old Tiger. "What's this?" he cried, suddenly; "it can't be the little captain!" and he bent over to look at the child.

"Tiger," said James Grey, huskily, "it's Jamie; you know Jamie; every body knows him. He's asleep now. Hush! don't wake

him! But he is *so* cold! Won't any one get something to wrap around him? I'm afraid he'll freeze."

Old Tiger looked at him piteously. "Come," said he, "go to my home, all of you, and stay for to-night;" but James Grey went on with his low mutterings.

"It is Jamie — *my* little Jamie. Who says I killed him? It's a lie! a horrible lie! Jamie will tell you so. He always loved his father. There, now, is he so cold, dear little son?" and James, drawing off his tattered coat, wrapped it tenderly around the icy limbs.

"We must get him in," said Old Tiger, with gruff kindness, to Mrs. Grey. "My house is only a few blocks off, and if you can put up with an old bachelor's ways, you are perfectly welcome to stay as long as you like."

It was almost impossible to rouse James Grey; but at last he mechanically rose, still jealously guarding the little wasted body, and whispering heart-broken words of ten-

derness, which, alas! were all too late for the ears of the little sleeper

As the party paused a moment upon a corner of the burning street, the air became yet more vividly illuminated, and tongues of blue, yellow, and crimson flame shot forth exultingly.

"There goes old Simms' rum-hole," cried Weasel, with a sad triumph. "Oh, if I could only tell the captain!"

Before morning James Grey was in the clutch of that fearful disease — delirium tremens; and Old Tiger was obliged to call for help to hold him in his wild ravings. No words can describe the horrors of his excited fancy. At one time he was tormented in flame; then horrible snakes wound around him, and hideous reptiles covered him; glaring eyes watched him from the corners of the rooms, and fiends strove to tear Jamie from his embrace.

The delirium was at its height on the day of little Jamie's funeral, and the company, assembled below in Old Tiger's little parlor,

started nervously as the despairing shrieks and screams burst upon the solemn stillness. It was a motley group gathered around that small coffin; but never had there been truer mourners. The Cold Spring Volunteers had been prepared under Weasel's anxious superintendence. Not one had been allowed to come without the most careful ablutions, and some attempt at arranging their straggling locks.

"It might please the little captain, if he knew," urged Weasel. "'Twas his taste, you know."

Also from every little ragged arm fluttered a piece of black drapery, as the last mark of respect and affection they could show "little Grey."

They had sent for Mr. Mason, and as the kind-hearted old man rehearsed with tears the simple story of Jamie's life, his earnest desire to follow Christ, his patience and love, the "good fight" he had fought, and the blessed reward to which he had been called, smothered groans arose on every

side, and many a poor publican, catching glimpses of a better life, cried bitterly, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

They carried little Jamie away from the dark city, out to the old country burying ground, where the violets grow, and the robins come in the spring, and as the body was lowered into its last, quiet resting place, the Volunteers, headed by Weasel, one by one dropped over their little hero a sprig of fresh, living evergreen.

For weeks James Gray hovered upon the borders of the grave; and his delirium was so aggravated by the stings of remorse, and the horrible attacks of self-accusing conscience, that sometimes it was feared that his reason was entirely overthrown.

In his more rational moments, his wife tried to comfort him, but he turned wildly away.

"No, Maggie, do not tell me of forgiveness and pardon. There are other things in that Bible. There are curses and the outer

darkness for such as *me*. See!" cried he, pointing wildly with his gaunt finger; "see! God has sent his angels with their vials full of wrath. Oh, not *that* one, Maggie! don't let them pour out that one! Too late!" cried he, sinking back, with an awful thrill in his voice. "It is all *blood*, the seas and the fountains of water, as the blood of a dead man. Ah! it is Jamie's blood. *I* killed him, and I'm branded for ever. Lost, lost, lost!" and he fell back fainting upon the pillow.

James Grey, in former days, had often been fascinated by the poetic grandeur of the closing book of the Bible, and *now* his diseased mind wandered painfully among its most fearful imagery. It was but a moment, and he again started wildly.

"Maggie, do you hear that thunder? Don't tell me it was only a wagon on the road. I know it was thunder, and I know what it said! Maggie," continued he, excitedly, "we read all about the vials, and the seals, and the woes, the horrible woes to

come upon earth ; but, oh ! when the seven *thunders* uttered their voices, do you remember, Maggie ? he couldn't tell *that* — it was too awful ! Well, Maggie," cried he, shrieking with horrible laughter, "I heard them to-day, and *I know what they said* ;" and again he fell back, perspiring at every pore.

"He has a good constitution," said the kind physician, "but unless his mind is relieved, he must soon die."

James overheard it, and calling his wife, said, with forced calmness, —

"You see there is no salvation for me here nor hereafter, and I already suffer the torments of the lost. Now, Maggie, I have one last request, and if you ever loved your wretched husband, do not deny it. I *must* drink once more. Maggie, you wouldn't grudge me a few hours of happiness — the *last* I shall ever know. Oh, let me *forget* once more ; let me drown remorse for only *five minutes*, and then I will promise you not to complain ; I will try to bear it, and die a thousand deaths for ever and ever."

But Maggie and Old Tiger, turning with streaming tears from the yet wilder eloquence of those wretched, imploring eyes, were inexorable.

"I will try to forgive you, Maggie," said James Grey, huskily, reading his answer in her averted face. "But you do not know what you do. You are more cruel than the fiends."

"James," said Old Tiger, "I made a vow at your little Jamie's grave, and I mean to keep it, and by God's help we will save you too;" and Mrs. Grey, bending over her husband, whose once fine features were assuming their wonted form and expression, beneath the refining touch of sickness, felt a trembling hope springing up in her heart.

Good old Mr. Mason came to see him, but was only met with words of despair.

"I have been blind," said James Grey. "I would go recklessly on, and now at last I feel the 'bite of the serpent, the sting of the adder,' and shall feel them for ever. And there is no pardon for me. I am one of those reserved in everlasting chains. Have

you seen my chain, Mr. Mason?" said he, growing wild again; "it is a fearful one! Every day has added a link, and every link was a scarlet sin. Drunkenness, robbery, murder! Oh, it's a heavy chain, and it is dragging me down. Ah, Jamie!" he cried, reproachfully, stretching forth his wasted hands, "can you stand with such sweet, calm eyes, and see your poor father sinking down, *down*, with his heavy chain? No! do not touch it, sweet one; its links are fire and blood. Your little fingers can not break it, Jamie, and you must not touch it: it is all blood — *blood!*"

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin," said Mr. Mason, gently.

"Not *my* sins," shrieked James Grey. "My soul is *red* with the blood of my innocent child!"

"Sir," said Weasel, (who had learned to forgive and pity "little Grey's" father, and had stolen in to inquire after his health,) "if your soul is red, I'll show you a verse the captain wrote with his own hand, and gave me just afore he was called up."

“What, Jamie?” cried James Grey eagerly stretching out his hand for the well-worn paper Weasel took from his bosom.

He opened it, and read,—

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

“He is faithful that promised.”

A burst of tears, the first that had blessed James Grey's dry eyes for weeks, now rained down his sunken cheeks. He had heard the verse often before, but had forgotten it; and now it came to him like a voice from heaven. A gleam of hope shot through his burdened heart, and trembled from his quivering lips in the one word—
“*Pray!*”

And Mr. Mason did pray one of those fervent prayers which ascend like incense before the throne.

“He is saved!” cried the physician, looking in a few hours later, well pleased with the repose of the weary features.

"He is saved!" wept Mr. Mason, as he felt that He who "led captivity captive" had loosed that fearful chain, and was leading the storm-tossed soul beside the still waters.

Oh, thanks be unto God! not to *all* "wandering stars" is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, but some are reclaimed to shine gloriously in the Saviour's crown of rejoicing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHAIN BROKEN.

SLOWLY back from "the hour and power of darkness" — slowly back from the land shadowed with death — came James Grey, with wasted cheeks and hollow eyes, but, thanks to the great Physician, clothed, and in his right mind.

For a while, after the first peace and joy of pardon, he was greatly depressed.

"I shall have to begin the world anew,

Maggie," he said, "and who will trust me now? Who will hold out the hand of friendship to drunken Jim? God may forgive, in his infinite mercy, but I can expect nothing from man."

Yet that very day came good Mr. Fundy, and, looking with tears in his eyes upon the ravages made by agony and disease, said, kindly, —

"Mr. Grey, I have come to offer you your old place in my store."

"What!" cried James, a bright spot springing to either cheek. "Do you dare trust me? Do you know all?"

"*All*," said good Mr. Fundy, with a warm shake of ~~the~~ hand; "and I know that you have signed the pledge, and have found a great Friend to help you keep it. I am more ready to trust you than ever before. Think it over, and let me know your decision to-morrow. God bless you, my brother!" and the kind-hearted man was gone.

More than two years have passed away,

and in the chill spring evening Mrs. Grey is again waiting for her husband. She is standing in the old familiar room, the dear little cottage kitchen, and the fire is blazing cheerily as ever. Her face is not much changed, although there are some deep lines which can never be entirely swept away. But there is no longer that look of dread and apprehension with which she used to await her husband's footsteps. In its place an expression of grateful content and sweet peace overflows her features as she gazes upon the little sleeper clasped close in her arms, whose pink, baby fingers stray over her breast with the dear remembered touch of little Paul, but whose sweet, violet eyes are Jamie's own.

Little Kitty, grown taller, and plump and rounded, is flattening her nose against the window pane, watching for father and Harry.

At last, with a clear, ringing, "Here they come!" she springs to open the door, and James Grey enters with a quick, manly tread.

He looks much older than when we first saw him, but there is a patient strength about his firm mouth, and a better light shines from his saddened eyes.

"Late to-night, Maggie," he says, bending over to kiss her and the fair little sleeper; "but Harry and I stopped into the temperance meeting for an hour or so, and we heard some fine speeches. There's a glorious work going on, Maggie, and ten or a dozen of my old companions signed to-night. Old Tiger made a speech too—" But James Grey's voice faltered, and his eyes filled with tears.

"About Jamie," said Harry, in a low voice; "and every one cried. And then he called on Weasel to tell them more about the 'little captain,' and Weasel tried to say something, and tell them how Jamie covered his mother's face, and how he got up the cold-water army; but it was all mixed up; and when he told them that the little captain said, 'Good-night, Weasel; I'll see you in the morning,' and that he was trying to

live so he *should* see the little captain in the *morning*, and say, 'Captain, here's the whole army, with the right kind of badges on,'—then he broke all down; but the people didn't seem to mind it a bit, but just cried too, and cheered as loud as they could. And, mother, Weasel's mother was there too, in a nice clean bonnet and new shawl; and she looked, oh, *so* proud and happy!"

Mrs. Grey wept silently, but they were happy, grateful tears.

"And then, mother," continued Harry, whose bright, cheerful face contrasted pleasantly with his old air of sullen defiance, "another man got up, and said that, as he saw around him a good many friends whom he used to meet in at old Simms', he wished to say that a new saloon had been built upon that old site, and that any one now in need of refreshment would find every thing they could wish in the way of eating, and the very nicest of tea, coffee, and soda water, served out to them by the popular Mr. Carter, better known, perhaps, as '*Old Tiger*.'

And he heard, too, that he had secured the services of Mr. Tom Buckle, a no less distinguished person than the captain of the Cold Spring Volunteers, and the orator of the evening. Then all of 'em cheered; and, mother, you ought to have seen Weasel! He grew as red as Kitty's dress, and twisted a button off his coat. And, mother," continued Harry, excitedly, "do you know Weasel has found the poor old General, looking so thin and scraggy that he didn't know him at first? He was tied up; but when he caught sight of Weasel, he jumped so he broke his chain, and Weasel got the boy that owned him to sell him. He brought him to father to-night; but he looked so wishful, and the dog was so fond of him, father told him always to keep him. I wish you could have seen how pleased he was; and he said the 'little captain's dog should always live like a prince.'"

"And I have some more news for you, Maggie," said James Grey. "Mr. Fundy has proposed to take me into partnership

Have you any objections?" Mrs. Grey looked up with a quick, bright smile. "Who would have thought we could ever be so happy again!" continued James Grey, looking around the pleasant room, with the identical old Dutch clock ticking away in the corner. "Oh, Maggie, if you could have seen some of the poor wretches to-night — trembling, haggard, with tattered garments and wild eyes! I saw myself so I was two years ago. How my heart ached for them, my *brothers!* and not one of them, perhaps, had yet fallen as low as I." He shuddered, and hid his face in his hands.

"We have left the past with God, James," said Mrs. Grey, gently, divining what was passing in his thoughts.

James looked up with a sad, patient smile. "Well, Maggie, God has brought good out of the evil. Our little Jamie began a great work in that wretched lane, and *now*, many a poor creature, whom the world regarded as utterly lost, is bravely struggling back to life and hope. But it's a great fight, Mag-

gie. You have no idea of the temptations — of the fearful slavery of these fatal habits. Sometimes it seems *impossible* to escape.”

“The sighing of the prisoner comes before *Him*,” said Mrs. Grey, “and he is able to loose all chains. In all these things we may be more than conquerors through him who has loved us.”

A look of perfect peace dawned in James Grey's expressive eyes. “Yes, Maggie, none need despair, and I, even *I* may hope. Oh, precious little Jamie, and my baby Paul, shall I indeed be permitted to meet you again? After the scarlet stains are all washed away, shall I too enter in through the gates into the city, having a *right* to the tree of life?”

“It is not too much to hope,” said Mrs. Grey, looking up through her happy tears. “He that *ove cometh* shall inherit *all things*.”

