

SORROWFUL SAM;

OR, THE

TWO BLACKSMITHS.



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(Printers to the Cheap Repository for Moral and Religious Tracts,  
No. 41, and 42, LONG-LANE, WEST-SMITHFIELD, and J. HAT-  
CHARD, No. 190, PICCADILLY, London. By S. HAZARD, Bath,  
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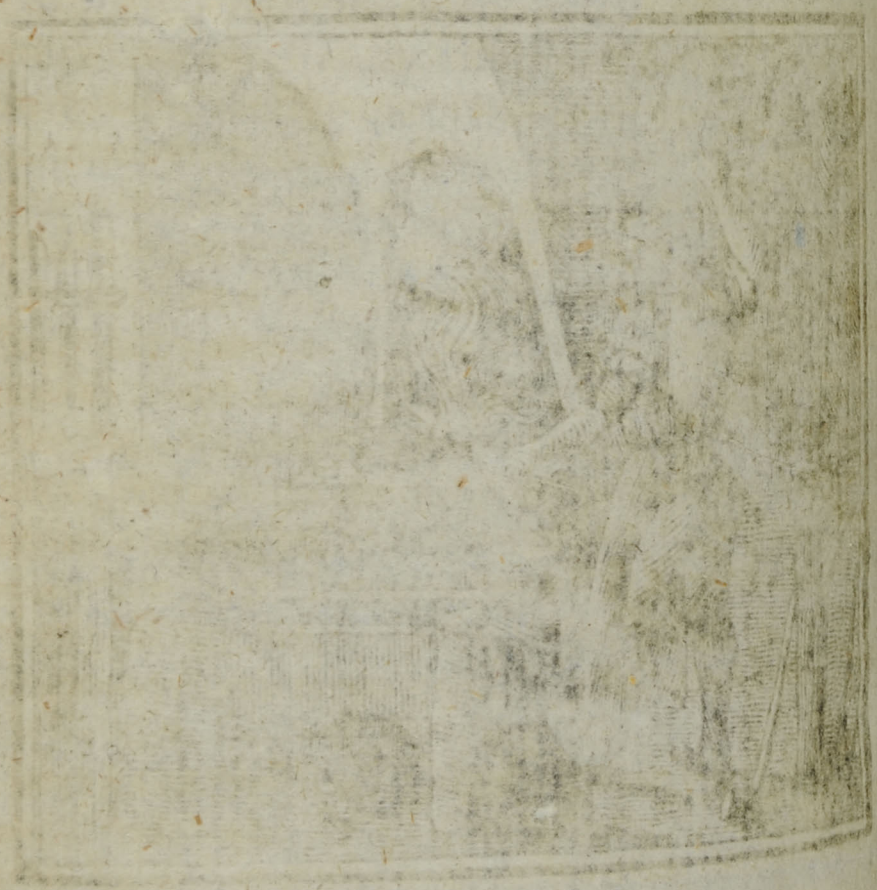
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## SORROWFUL SAM, &c.

MR. STEPHENS, a very worthy gentleman, having bought a considerable estate in Devonshire, had no sooner taken possession of the manor-house, than he began to turn in his mind, how he might prove useful to his industrious neighbors. He thought the surest means to find out the most deserving, was to observe what families were most regular at church on Sundays. The wife and children of one John Parker, a Blacksmith, drew his notice above all the rest, he resolved to go and see them, which he did the first opportunity; he found Mary Parker in the best situation in which a good mother can be found, that is to say, taking care of her family; an infant lay asleep across her lap at the same time she was putting a patch on her husband's waistcoat, her eldest girl was spinning, the second was learning to knit, a third was getting by heart her catechism, whilst a fine boy was unbinding a faggot to heat the oven; a Lord's house could not be neater, the tables were rubbed as bright as a looking-glass and the pewter dishes on the shelf, shone like silver.

Mr. Stephens sat down and kindly taking the children by the hand, gave each of them a shilling, telling them it was a little reward for their good behaviour at church, and he was so obliging as to add, he never heard little folks say their catechism better.

"Blessed be God, sir," said Mary, "we have both an excellent Sunday and weekly School in the parish, where every poor family may have their children instructed for nothing, would they but be at the trouble to send them in a clean decent manner; yet there is many a mother, I am sorry to say, so little thankful for it they won't even be at the pains to do that. A small matter of education, sir, as I take it, quite a little portion to a poor child if their parents knew how to value it. My Betty there can make a shirt as well as her mistress, and Sally, who is but seven years old, has saved,

enough by spinning at odd hours after school to buy her frock: bringing up children in laziness is the root of all evil besides, Sir," continued she, "every year there are great rewards given at the school to all children who are regular in their hours and behave well; my girls have an handkerchief or white apron given them, and my boy gets a hat or a pair of shoes, besides Bibles and many other good books proper to be had in all Christian families, which they read to me every night, and which are a great comfort to my poor heart, under very trying afflictions"—Mr. Stephens said he was sorry to find she was not happy, and asked her what was the matter.

"My lot, Sir," replied Mary, "is not harder than that of many others, there is an alehouse on the Common called the Tennis-Court, which causes more poverty in the parish, than either dearthness of provisions or want of labor. But children, you may go to play on the green;" they were no sooner gone than she went on. "I don't like, Sir," said she, "that my innocent babes should ever hear me talk of the vices of their father, as it may harden their little hearts and make them undutiful to him: but, as I said before, my lot, after all, is not harder than that of many of my neighbors. There is Susan Waters, the other blacksmith's wife, whose husband is more drunken than mine, if possible. Sam could earn his two guineas a week as well as my husband if he would but work, but no sooner does either of them earn a few shillings, than off they are gone tippling, nor do they think of returning to their families till ever farthing is spent. As to that, Susan Waters loves work as little as Sam, she is a lazy, dirty, gossiping body, and won't even take the trouble to clean and send her children to school, only because they were properly corrected for cursing and swearing, and for seldom getting to school of a morning till other children were going home to dinner, so she lets them go strolling like vagabonds all about the parish, stealing apples, breaking edges, and committing a multitude of other little trespasses on the neighbors."

"I humbly thank God, Sir, no one can say my scolding temper drives my husband to the ale-house, because he can have no peace at home, which I am sorry to say is too often the case; a man that works hard all day, Sir, ought to be kindly received by his wife when his labor is done; my John is a very good-natured fellow in the main, and he might have

who is but seven years old, has saved

been much worse than he is, if I had provoked his temper instead of trying to mend it by gentle means. I am not without hope he will live to see the error of his ways; but all will be right in God's good time, who knows what is best for us: a life of patient suffering, I think, sir, is a daily preparation for death to poor people." — "Aye, and for rich people also, my good woman," said Mr. Stephens, "or else the Almighty sends his warnings to us in vain; believe me there is no rank of people in life free from calamity — man is born to suffer." "O dear, Sir," said Mary, wiping her eyes, "why we poor folks never think rich folks can be unhappy." — "I can prove to you the contrary," said Mr. Stephens, "and I can prove also, that he is the happiest man, who has the strongest faith in God, and the fewest sins to repent of, let his condition in life be what it will; yet the best people we often see are most grievously afflicted; the Almighty only knows what is best for us; besides, Mary, you may be sure great riches were never intended by Providence to make men wise, good, or happy: that man is always poor, who is always coveting; the only rich man is he who is content with what he hath, for 'riches,' says the wise Solomon, 'make to themselves wings and fly away:' that is to say, when they are not applied to christian purposes for which they were given. — Riches indeed may supply a man with food, but they cannot give him an appetite to eat it: riches can't heal a broken constitution, or quiet the inward gnawings of a guilty conscience. An abundance of wealth oftener proves a snare to a man's soul than the means of making him happy; believe me, my good woman, it is not either in the nature of wealth, titles, or power to prevent a man from partaking of all the evils of life, which the sins of his nature have brought upon him. I have a very handsome fortune, Mary, but I much question if any laboring man in the parish would accept it, if he must take all my afflictions into the bargain." — "Why, Sir," said Mary, "there is not a family in this place that does not envy your good fortune."

"I will now shew you, Mary, whether it has made me a happy man. I will give you a short history of myself, and then leave you to judge what share of happiness is fallen to my lot. As I have said before, I have a very handsome fortune, I have a fine house in London, from which my bad

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spirits oblige me to fly, as my dear wife died suddenly in my eldest son is turned out in spite of all my care and pain one of the most profligate young men of his time. I had three fine daughters, who all died in the space of three years; I should have sunk under this severe stroke, had not God's goodness supported me, the shock of it destroyed my health, though it did not shake my belief, that this great affliction was meant in mercy to my soul.

"I have beds of down, Mary, but my physicians order me to lie on a straw mattress, and though my bed-chamber is crowded with the most costly furniture, I seldom get two hours sleep in a night. My table every day is covered with the most dainty dishes, yet I can only eat a turnip or a potatoe; my cellars are filled with the best wines, yet I can drink only water. I have a coach, a post chaise, and a variety of saddle-horses, yet I have an inward complaint, which prevents my making use of either without suffering great pain; thus you see, Mary, how wrong it is to envy people for their great wealth; do you shew me a miserable poor man, and I'll shew you ten miserable rich ones."

"What you have been saying to me, will do me more good than a sermon, and I hope it will teach me for the time to come, to be quite satisfied with any station."

At this moment John Parker came in; "you have some of the loveliest children, John, I ever saw in my life," said Mr. Stephens. "What a pleasure it must be to you of an evening, when your work is done, to sit here in your great chair, with your little prattlers on your knees, to hear them read their pretty books, and say their prayers before they go to bed." Here John's conscience flashed in his face, which became as red as fire, so sorely did it smite him.

"True enough, sir," however stammered he, "but I suppose your worship must have heard, I am not quite so kind a husband and father as I ought to be, though I have the best wife and children in the world; I know my fault, sir, and hope in time I shall mend it."

"I hope you will, John," said Mr. Stephens, "as your own eyes must convince you what poverty and distress a drunken tradesman brings on his family; that man has a hard heart, John, who lives upon ale, whilst his poor wife who suckles his children, drinks nothing but water; a pint

of good beer, John, makes an Englishman strong and hearty, but drunkenness makes him both a beggar and a beast." —  
 "May God's blessing for ever attend you, sir" cried Mary, "for giving my dear husband such good advice; I should be the happiest woman in the world, were he to turn from his present evil courses."

Soon after this Mr. Stephens went away, and on his road home, called on Sam Waters, and though it was the middle of the day, he found him stretched at his length and fast asleep in his shop, though his yard was full of waggons, ploughs, &c. waiting to be repaired; but not a spark of fire was there in the forge, nor a bit of iron to work upon if there had. Several of his children all rags and tatters, lay basking in the sun, and kicking up their heels on a bank of cinders. When Mr. Stephens peeped into the house, it stunk with filth, it shocked him to think how people could consent to live like pigs, rather than to take the smallest pains to keep themselves fresh and clean, for though folks may be ever so poor, 'tis nothing but their own laziness need keep them dirty. The furniture of the kitchen he observed, had all been very good, but for want of the smith's driving an occasional nail, every thing was gone to rack and ruin; a large oak table was without a flap; the clock had no pendulum; the bellows was without a nose; the skimmer without a handle; the brass pot without a hanger; the gridiron had hardly any ribs; the frying-pan was burnt through; the stairs' door hung without an hinge; the window-bench was full of the parings of potatoes, and on a round table in the middle of the house, stood a parcel of broken tea dishes and saucers, some bits of cake lying in the slop of a pewter dish, with the brim melted off. Mr. Stephens here seeing Susan Waters, who was sitting over the fire, with her hands idling before her, told her he wished her husband would call, and look at one of his coach-horses that was sick. — "Ah, sir," said she, "you may as well preach to a man without ears, as to talk to our Sam about work, a lazy drunken dog." " 'Tis a sad thing, to be sure," said Mr. Stephens, "for a poor woman to have a drunken husband, but that need not hinder you from discharging your duties as a wife: what a pity it is you keep your house so filthy, and your children so ragged; clean water costs nothing, and needles and thread are very cheap; don't you think your

children would be much better at school than beating about the parish all day?" "My children, Sir," said Susan, "don't love confinement at school, and they shan't go any where to be put upon, nobody shall hector over them but myself."—"Then take my word for it," said Mr. Stephens, "you will live to see yourself the cause of their ruin: mark a poor fellow, Susan, has been brought to the gallows by his mother's folly, we are all corrupt by nature, and therefore if our faults are not corrected in our infancy, how can we expect to obtain favour of the Almighty, when we come to ripen years."—"O sir," replied Susan, with a toss of the head, "it is mighty fine talking, you don't know how hard the times are."—"Yes," says Sam Waters, who at that moment came forward staggering and stretching himself, "times, and please your worship, are hard, taxes are high, and work is scarce."—"From what I have heard, and from what I see, Sam," said Mr. Stephens, "your idleness and your drink are the heaviest taxes that are laid on your family—you have a deal of work about you, and here I find you fast asleep in the middle of the day. Lazy folks, Sam, are always complaining of the hardness of the times, while industrious ones are striving to amend them. As I now shall reside great part of the year at the manor-house, I intend to keep a good look out among my tenants and the poor, that I may have an opportunity to assist the most deserving, but remember, Sam, there is no helping those who won't help themselves: however, as I find you are neither a dishonest nor an ill-natured fellow, I flatter myself you will not be deaf to good advice, and as soon as I see you prefer your workshop to the ale-house, I will advance a sum of money, that you may lay in a stock of goods, and I will cloath your children if you will insist on your wife's sending them to school." Here Sam humbly thanked Mr. Stephens for his promised favors, saying he hoped he should live to deserve them.—"I have told his worship already," said Susan, "our children don't love school and they shan't go to be put upon, poor things! so they shan't, they shall have their own way, for they are likely to have nothing else."—"Unhappy mistaken woman," replied Mr. Stephens, "I now see nothing but God's grace can turn the crooked heart to ways of righteousness; don't be surprised, Susan, if your own wilful obstinacy should bring your children to ruin, and you should die of a broken heart in consequence of your folly."



One summer's evening, as Mr. Stephens happened to pass by the Tennis-Court, he saw a number of jolly fellows sitting under a large tree, before the door, singing and roaring as if there was neither poverty or sorrow in the world; among this merry crew he perceived Parker and Waters, the former blushed up to the ears on seeing Mr. Stephens, for Parker was not at all disguised in liquor, but Waters was too drunk to see any thing beyond the quart pot which he held to his lips. The moment he had drank it off, he began to roar aloud the old song of 'Let us drink and drive care away,'—at that instant his wife appeared with her rags flying behind her, and her face as black as a chimney-sweeper, her eyes staring with rage, and her lips white with passion, carrying one child under her arm and leading another by the hand; after having set them both on the ground, she flew like a tyger on her husband, and so belabored him with her clenched fist, that the blood began at length to stream forth from his mouth and nose, for he was so top-heavy, he had not power to defend himself; she called him at the same time by names too shocking to repeat, so true it is bad words always follow bad actions; at length she twisted one hand in the hair of his head, snatched up her infant in the other, and in this manner she dragged him off in triumph. The violence of her behaviour struck every one present with dismay, Parker turned as white as a sheet.—“I hope you will not take unkindly the advice of a friend, who has both the power and will to serve you.” The men all bowed very civilly, saying, they were much obliged to him, for as he was to get nothing by it, they were sure he would say nothing but what was for their good. Mr. Stephens then went on. “It is a strange thing, my friends,” said he, “that christian men, who have souls to be saved, should call any thing a pleasure which must certainly bring on their ruin. How frequently has it happened that men have died drunk, consider, I beseech you what an awful thing it is, for a being to be launched into eternity in a fit of intoxication, in which the soul cannot offer up one prayer for mercy to that great God before whom it is about to appear. Let me kindly advise you then to think seriously of what I have been saying, live soberly if you would live happily, drink less abroad at the ale-house, that you may eat more with your families at home.”—“O sir, cried Parker, looking ghastly pale

with shame, "may the blessing of heaven forsake me, if ever I am seen drunk in this house again; my poor dear wife and children, how often have I starved your bodies to pamper my own; merciful Father, forgive the hardness of my heart! I have not the excuse some men will make for running to ale-houses, who have scolding ill-tempered wives at home; my Mary is the best tempered meek creature in the world, and tho' I have drank gallons of liquor in a week, whilst she has been lying-in and suckling my children upon a drop of cold water, she never once said, John Parker, why do'st do so? Nothing but her trust in God, I am certain, could make her bear unkindness with so much patience. O sir, sir, I am afraid I am too wicked for heaven's pardon to reach me."—"Never despair, John," said Mr. Stephens, "the only thing we are sure of, is pardon for sin, upon our sincere repentance; practice must keep pace with prayer; yet it is only daily prayer that can keep us from the commission of bad actions."

Here the whole company humbly thanked Mr. Stephens for having condescended to talk so kindly to them, observing at the same time, what a fine thing it was for so great and wise a gentleman to have so little pride, it was turning his learning to a fine account, and they all knew he said nothing to them which he did not practice himself every day. Mr. Stephens now wished them a good night, hoping they would all return home to their families, and then walked away with Parker to his house. Parker's conscience sorely smote him when he saw his supper neatly covered up before the fire, whilst his children were kneeling round their mother, praying for a blessing before they went to bed.—"We saw no such sight as this at the Tennis-Court, John," said Mr. Stephens.—"No, indeed, sir," sobbed John, "this is a blessed sight which I am not worthy to behold."—"Have you not read in the Sacred Scriptures, John," said Mr. Stephens, "that the unbelieving husband shall be saved by the believing wife?" He then told Mary what had happened, and hoped he had brought her home a penitent husband.—"Merciful God, I thank thee," cried this worthy woman, clasping her hands, "for all thy many favors towards me and mine; may I hope that the father of my precious babes has resolved to leave off his evil courses, and that with God's assistance, he will endeavour to lead a sober religious life, we

shall then not only abound in the good things of this life, but shall have the promise also of enjoying far better things in the life to come."

Sam Waters for some weeks kept clear of temptation, and seemed to be going on tolerably well; he looked very down and sheepish whenever Mr. Stephens called upon him, this gentleman encouraged him, and bid him have a good heart, telling him at the same time, the surest way to avoid shame was to flee from sin.—“All the fault, I assure your worship again, and again,” cried Sam, “is not of my side: my wife is of such a terrible temper that the house is often too hot to hold us both. I can scarcely ever get to church of a Sunday for want of a clean shirt, and my coat and waistcoat are gone all to rags for the want of a stitch in time, whilst Mary Parker, who is a clean, neat, tidy woman, keeps her husband as well dressed as any farmer in the parish: alas! sir, the clothes you were so kind as to give my children, are all gone to tatters already, and they have never appeared at school since the first Sunday they put them on, 'tis enough to weary the great folks to see what a slight many poor folks often put upon their favors; however, sir, I hope my limbs will perish on my body, if ever I am caught drunk at the Tennis-Court again.”—“Take care of what you say, Sam,” said Mr. Stephens, “you have now called on your Maker to witness the oath you have made, and very dreadful to you may be the consequence should you break it. The safest way, Sam, for the rich, as well as poor, is to keep their accounts with heaven short, which should be settled daily, as merchants and tradesmen settle their books, as we may have but a short notice to pay off a long reckoning. We can do nothing of ourselves, Sam, but God's grace accompanying us, we have every thing to hope—it is a tower of strength in the hour of danger.”

How long Waters kept his vow unbroken will shortly be seen: in one of Mr. Stephens's evening rides, just below the Tennis-Court, he spied Sam lying dead drunk across the road, when at the same instant almost, a waggon whose horses had taken fright, ran over him, the waggoner staying behind to drink. By the time Mr. Stephens reached the spot where Sam lay, they found Waters not dead indeed, yet there were little appearance of life in him, the waggon had gone

over his two legs. When the waggoner came to see the woeful misery his neglect had caused, he was ready to tear his hair for vexation, for he knew he had broken the laws of God by getting drunk, and the laws of the land for leaving his plough, and he expected every moment that Mr. Stephens would commit him to jail for his offence. Mr. Stephens kindly gave up his carriage to carry Waters home, ordering his servant at the same time to gallop off for a surgeon, who on his arrival, found it necessary to take off both Waters's legs, one above, the other a little below the knee. During his long illness, Mr. Stephens ordered every thing to be sent him that was necessary for a man of his condition: it was observed by all about him, that the first words Sam uttered on coming to himself, were, "O my good God, my punishment is but my just reward for my sin; did I not call on thy holy name to witness, I would not get drunk and make a beast of myself any more?"—After some time Sam and his whole family were carried to the poor-house; people flocked from all parts to hear him tell how the strength of his own wicked prayers had brought down heaven's vengeance upon him.

Mr. Stephens called in upon him one day just as he had been telling some of his neighbors the history of his misfortunes: "Ah, sir," cried Sam, to Mr. Stephens, "divine vengeance has overtaken me at last, had I taken your kind advice this misfortune would never have befallen me, my own bitter oaths and curses have brought on my own destruction: what a poor miserable wretch they have made me. My dear friends (said he to the by-standers) learn wisdom from the woeful example of Sorrowful Sam, and remember the rod of the Almighty is always hanging over your heads, however his tender mercy may withhold his hand from striking, but justice often provoked, sooner or later will overtake us. O neighbors, neighbors, let me beseech you not to put off the day of your repentance till you are brought to a sick bed:—keep holy the sabbath, and never fail of attending to your church, for if you do not hear God's word, how can you keep his commandments: if you really pity my sufferings, take warning by them, to avoid falling into my crimes, and if you wish to live and prosper in the land, O, my friends, take warning by Sorrowful Sam."

The most hardened fellow present did not fail to shed tears at such a moving discourse. Mr. Stephens was also much affected, kindly shook him by the hand, and said he was delighted to hear him talk so like a Christian, and hoped if his life were spared, he should see him live like a Christian also, since that alone could prove the sincerity of his repentance. He then spoke to Susan Waters, telling her he believed no misfortunes could touch her heart, or keep her from gossiping and idling about, making her children more wicked by her own example. Now mark the end of this indulgent mother, who lived to experience the misery her own bad conduct had brought upon her children; before her eldest son, who was her favourite, was eighteen years of age, he was transported to Botany Bay and the last words he said to his mother, when loaded with chains and put on board the ship, were, 'Mother, the sight of you is hateful to my eyes, for had you kept me to my school, when I was a child, I should not have spent my days in idleness, learning all manner of wickedness, which has brought me so early in life to this miserable pass'—Though Susan tore her hair and wrung her hands to lose her darling son, yet no one pitied her:—"your trouble is of your own seeking, Susan," the neighbors would say, "for as you brew, so you must bake."—The rest of her children likewise turned out very badly.

Poor Sam Waters languished in pain and misery about two years, but the patience with which he suffered his affliction, proved the best testimony of his repentance, and made every one kind to him, for a hardened sinner under affliction, is a shocking sight indeed. He spent the greater part of the day in reading the Bible and other good books which Mr. Stephens sent him. Some of the old men and women in the poor house, would crowd into Sam's room to hear him read chapters and prayers, for in his youth he had received a pretty education, tho' in his riper years he had not turned it to account. "How thankful I ought to be," Sam would say, "that Heaven, in taking away the use of my limbs, was graciously pleased to open my mind to receive the truths of the gospel, for now truly can I cry out, it is well for me I have been afflicted, and though I cannot run a race, I can sing a psalm; and since I have left off the wicked custom of drinking and swearing, I have taken up a much better one for my

soul's safety, of reading and praying. Thus he went on resigned to his dying hour, and his last words were, "O neighbors, neighbors, remember to avoid the fate of sorrowful Sam."

It is pleasant to observe, that John Parker, after the fray at the Tennis-Court, was never seen disguised in liquor, and what a shining example was his wife to those violent women whose quarrelsome tempers drive their husbands to public houses, whereby their families are often brought to poverty and shame, whereas the mild manners and patient temper of Mary Parker, caused such an entire reformation in her husband, that in a short time they began to thrive prodigiously, business was more brisk than ever, because it was well followed up. His wife did her part to make the most of his earnings, for after all, a man's labors can do but little, if the kind diligent hand of his wife does not help him to bear the heat and burden of the day.—Mr. Stephens no sooner saw how diligently Parker applied himself to his business, than he lent him a sum of money, that he might lay in a stock of goods at the best hand, which would greatly increase the profits of his labor; at length money came in as fast as he could wish, and Mr. Stephens was so much pleased with his eldest boy, who was an honest sensible lad, that at his own expence, he put him two years to a creditable boarding-school that he might be well instructed in writing and arithmetic and afterwards had him bound out apprentice to the first tanner in the country.—It is here proper to notice a little kindness of Parker, as long as Waters lived he sent one of his children with a plate of roast meat and pudding to him every Sunday, for he would say Sam Waters was the best friend he ever had in his life, since in the looking-glass of Sam's vices, he had been able to see the ugliness of his own.

When the fat landlord of the Tennis-Court died of a dropsy, brought on him by hard drinking, the justices would never grant the house another license, as it stood in the village face from the road-side, and could be of no service to travellers. 'Tis surprising to tell, how much in the course of a few years this lessened the poor rates, there being no temptation at hand to draw laboring men from their families, insomuch that by not drinking the earnings of a week in an evening at the public-house, they were soon enabled to brew a cask

of good beer at home.—In the course of a few years, the whole parish had reason to bless God for sending so good a gentleman as Mr. Stephens amongst them, whose hand and heart were ever open to succour the distressed, and to help forward the industrious; but he would never waste his substance to pamper laziness or to succour vice; he looked upon the industrious poor as his children and friends, but from the drunkard, the liar, the swearer, and the thief, his bounty was withheld. And what is very extraordinary, there never was a reprobate in the parish, but all the little children would run after him and tell him to take warning by Sorrowful Sam.

S.



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