

The bottle. In eight plates ... Price one shilling / [George Cruikshank].

Contributors

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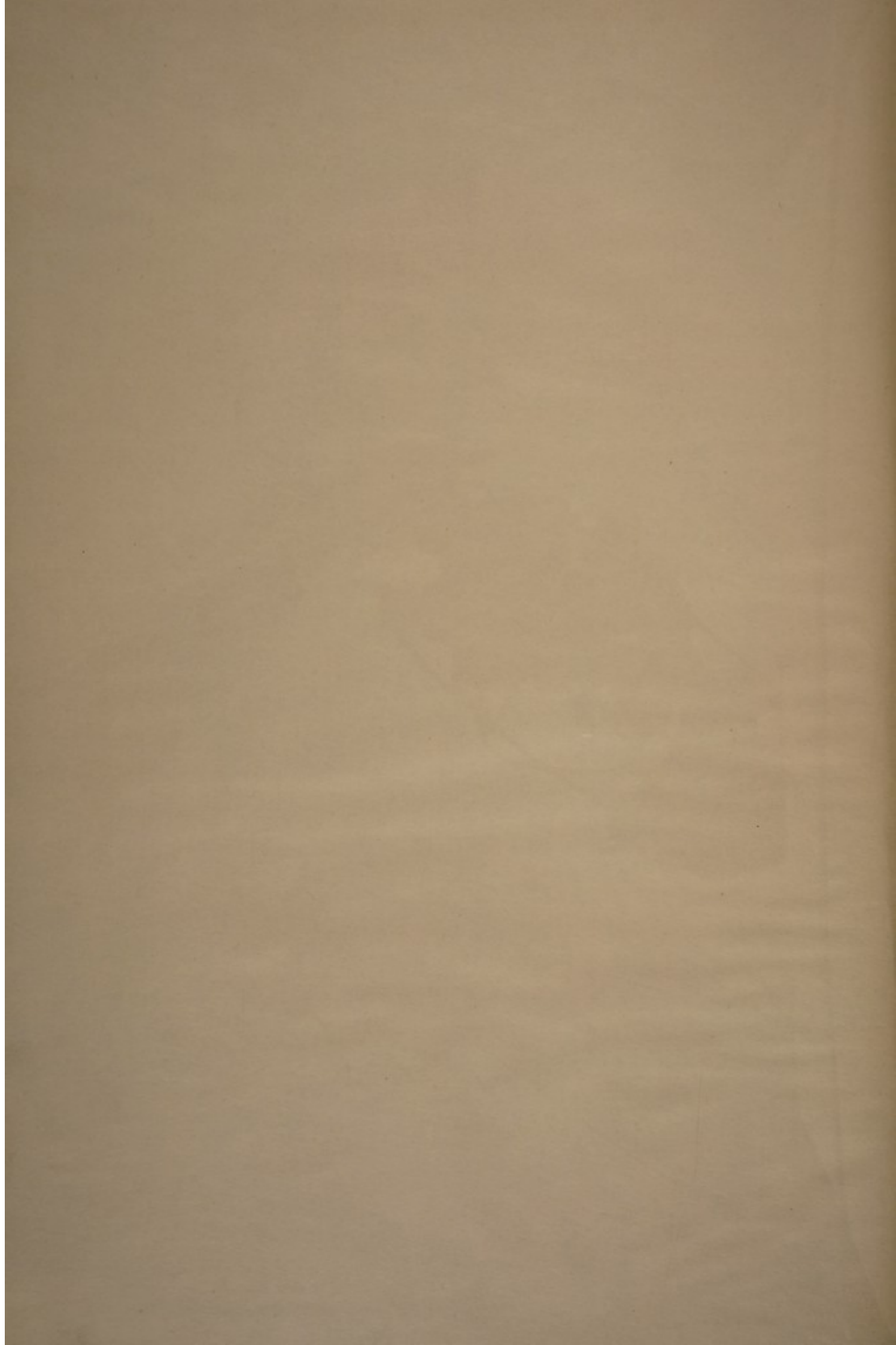
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THE
B O T T L E.

IN EIGHT PLATES,

BY

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

PUBLISHED FOR THE ARTIST,

BY

D. BOGUE, LONDON; WILEY AND PUTNAM, NEW YORK; AND J. SANDS, SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

N.B. — An Edition on Fine Paper, Imperial Folio, with a Tit. Price Six Shillings.

J. H. BOLLING

THE BOTTLE.



91275 ①

PLATE I. — THE BOTTLE IS BROUGHT OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME: THE HUSBAND INDUCES HIS WIFE "JUST TO TAKE A DROP."



THE BOTTLE:

A Poem,

TO ILLUSTRATE THE ETCHINGS OF GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

BY

CHARLES MACKAY, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "TOWN LYRICS," "VOICES FROM THE CROWD," ETC.

Part the First.

I.

How fair were earth, would men not mar its beauty—
What stores of joy are spread beneath the skies—
What bliss of love—what recompence of duty,
Daily and nightly woo us to be wise!
At poor men's homes what wealth of loving eyes
May make amends for riches unattained;
What sunless pleasures are the hourly prize
Of him, whose wishes, temperate and restrained,
Are simple as the laws that happiness ordained.

II.

Forth to his labour at the dawn he goes,
In the strong armour of his self respect:
He makes no moan for visionary woes,
Or thinks his toil an evil to neglect,
Or heavy burden borne by men abject.
He knows how noble and how good is he,
Whate'er his task, who, steadfast and erect,
Claims for his fair day's work, his fair day's fee;
And never sells his truth, or manly dignity.

III.

When happy love has sanctified his life,
How sweet to him, at noon, or set of sun,
To meet the answering kindness of his wife,
And taste the calm repose by labour won.
Lo! round his hearth the little children run;
His human flowerets blossom at his feet;
Their lisping words, their frolic never done,
Make pleasant music; and two hearts repeat
Throbs of responsive joy in sympathetic beat.

IV.

For him no tavern opes its vulgar door;
To him no charms its coarse allurements yield;
Dearer to him when all his toil is o'er,
And happy sleep the children's eyes has seal'd,

To read the wisdom or the wit reveal'd
In books immortal, made by bard, or sage,
Or great romancer; or traverse the field
Of daily history in the ample page,
That tells the grief or crime, and triumphs of the age.

V.

Happy the land where men like this abound—
And happy he, however lowly placed,
Who knows that happiness is never found
Where self no law of wise control has traced:
Who knows that hearts whence virtue is effaced
Are dead to simple joys and pure delight;
Who feels the bliss which every man may taste
That loves the open truth, the obvious right,
And lives his life unstained in Poverty's despite.

VI.

How few they are—how many they might be,
Lords of the earth, if masters of their will;
Who, 'mid the humblest toils of industry,
In field or forge, in workshop or in mill,
Might rise superior to perennial ill;
Might brave all peril, every hardship dare
Through good or evil, calm and happy still;
And find the genial earth a garden fair,
For wisdom to enjoy and temperance to share!

VII.

Behold the story of one man that fell
From this estate—and how the tempter came;
And learn, ye weak of soul, and ponder well
The mournful lesson; how a deed of shame
May follow faults scarce worthy of the name,
If self-control and self-respect expire,
And leave existence without hope or aim;
How little sparks may nourish mighty fire,
And crime succeed to vice in quick succession dire.

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Second.

I.

How pleasant were the hours of Lucy Roy,
With Adam, chosen of her heart and mind;
Humble their home—but it was full of joy,
When he was in it, and was good and kind;
And that was ever; till one passion blind
Made havoc in his brain, and from his breast
Rooted the love, the sympathy refined—
Chief boons of life, whatever be the rest;
In high or lowly sphere, the purest and the best.

II.

Not all at once the deadly habit grew
To deadlier passion: not without remorse
Th' industrious worker to the tavern flew,
And sought in fiery drink the constant source
Of fierce excitement and enjoyment coarse;
Sure, though unnoticed, and by slow degrees,
Custom and habit lent their daily force,
To make the liking, love—the love, disease;
And fill his home with griefs, despairs, insanities.

III.

It seemed so pleasant, when a friend dropped in,
To sit together by the fireside bright,
And bring the BOTTLE, filled with creaming gin,
To show good-fellowship. 'Twas surely right,
To spend a portion of the wintry night
At home with Lucy, and his friend and glass?
Such was his thought: and ever in his sight
'Twas social joy—it made his evenings pass;
The charm of wiser men—the custom of his class.

IV.

'Twas growing habit. If no friend should come
The well-meant hospitality to share,
Where was the wrong to fetch a little rum,
For Lucy's hands to brew a mixture fair,

Steaming and fragrant on the evening air?
And then, since converse and a pipe were good,
'Twere hard indeed, if, with an hour to spare,
He could not seek some friend of genial mood,
In tavern close at hand:—'twas harmless, and he would.

V.

And so it grew: and Lucy, like himself,
Found joy where he did. As he taught, she learned;
Time passed; and bread grew scanty on her shelf:
And dim the light of household duty burned,—
Though now and then her struggling soul discern'd
The frightful pit on brink of which they lay;
She shut her eyes: she drank, and ever yearned
For the strong cordial which should cheer the day,
And make her soul forget the grief she could not stay.

VI.

Farewell their tranquil walks at eventide—
Farewell the words of love so sweet to hear—
Farewell the father's and the mother's pride
In happy children, innocent and dear.
Farewell the easy mind, the conscience clear;
The hopes which time seemed powerless to destroy,
That sweetened toil, or dull'd its edge severe;
Farewell to manly truth, connubial joy—
They fly thy heart and home, unhappy Adam Roy.

VII.

"Who will employ a drunkard? surely none.
Who can confide in promises you make?
Who can entrust you with a task? Begone!
And learn amendment for your children's sake.
Learn it in poverty, and counsel take
Of your own conscience, though your heart should bleed."
Thus, as he paid his gage, the master spake.
And Adam scowled and cursed him for the deed,
But drain'd deep draughts that day, for comfort in his need.

THE BOTTLE.



PLATE II. — HE IS DISCHARGED FROM HIS EMPLOYMENT FOR DRUNKENNESS: THEY PAWN THEIR CLOTHES TO SUPPLY THE BOTTLE.

THE BOTTLE.



PLATE III. — AN EXECUTION SWEEPS OFF THE GREATER PART OF THEIR FURNITURE: THEY COMFORT THEMSELVES WITH THE BOTTLE.

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Third.

I.

WEARY was day, unhappy was the night,
Morn brought no hope, and evening no repose.
Scorn'd of his fellows in his piteous plight,
The BOTTLE cheer'd him when compunction rose—
The fearful Bottle, source of all his woes.
Abroad he drank : at home, sad Lucy's care
Required a solace. Guilty misery knows
No balm like liquor—ever bright and fair
Bubbles the burning cup that panders to despair.

II.

The bread might fail them at their humble board,
The fire burn scanty for the want of coal;
Their babes might pine; but while they could afford
The usual Bottle, they could still control
Unhappy thoughts, and stupify the soul.
Alas, poor children of a home like this!
Orphans already! vainly ye condole,
Each with the other, o'er departed bliss,
And mourn your father's smile, your much-loved mother's kiss.

III.

Never, oh never more shall time renew
The innocent feelings of your earlier days;
Never, oh never more shall peace, like dew,
Fall on your spirits, in the evil ways
Where those are walking who should guide and raise
Your minds, unspotted by contagious sin;
The guide forsakes you—the best friend betrays.
They blight your hearts, nor know when they begin,
The sacrifice they make, the lives they sell, for gin.

IV.

And thou, poor Emma, to thy mother's faults
Indulgent ever, mournful task is thine;
They give no credit at the neighbouring "Vaults,"
"No cash—no drink"—'Tis useless to repine;

And thou must seek the pawnshop, and consign,
For scanty shillings, to the "broker's" chest,
Thy mother's shawl, thy father's linen fine,
The ring, the trinkets, e'en thy brother's vest,
And thine own satin frock, sole wealth by thee possessed.

V.

And worse than this. The clamorous landlord sues
For long arrears. No sympathy has he,
Nor ought to have, for drunkards, that refuse
To pay their debts, but spend complacently,
In gin-shops and in skittle-grounds, the fee
Of honest men, defrauded by their waste;
He sends th' appraiser, and the laws' decree
Sweeps off the drunkard's goods with cruel haste,
And leaves him to the streets, lost, ruined, and disgraced.

VI.

Oh, who shall tell how sad it is to part
With trivial things which Time has sanctified,
With small mementoes, offerings of the heart
When life was fair? In vain would Lucy hide
The grief she feels. In vain would Adam chide
Sorrow so like his own. That Bible, bound
In red morocco, was their house's pride—
The children's names and birth-days might be found
Inscribed upon its page, with wreaths of flowerets round.

VII.

That clock had been a purchase of their youth;
That chest of drawers an old familiar friend;
That picture was a pledge of love and truth,—
And all were going. Joy was at an end.
But should they weep? Not they—the times might mend;
If not, 'twere foolish to lament and moan,
For ills that Fate had thought it right to send.
They would not weep; they would not lie and groan;
They had one solace yet—the BOTTLE was their own.

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Fourth.

I.

HOUSELESS and homeless, whither shall they go?
The wintry gusts upon the pavements beat,
All night and morning fell the silent snow,
Warmed by the noontide into drearier sleet.
Plashy and raw and cheerless is the street;
Where shall they turn to shield them from the cold?
They know not well; they search some mean retreat
Where Want may harbour, sad, but uncontrol'd,
In pestilential lane, or crumbling alley old.

II.

And all day long they wander through the town,
Imploring pity. Underneath her shawl,
Tattered and thin, in scanty cotton gown,
The pale-faced mother bears her infant small,
The little darling, dearest of them all,
Whose prattle charmed when nought beside had power,
Whose smile shed radiance even on their fall;
Poor blighted blossom! ne'er to be a flower;
Misfortune is its nurse, Destruction is its dower.

III.

Shame was extinct. The strong man did not blush
To beg with piteous look and whining tone.
The comely matron felt no guilty flush
Upon her cheek, as, with deceptive moan,
She told false stories of the griefs they'd known,
To draw the offering from a stranger's hand:
" 'Twas sad," she cried, " in poverty to groan;
" 'Twas sad to famish in a Christian land;
" 'Twas bitter to endure, 'twas hard to understand."

IV.

Goaded by hunger, Emma told her tale—
The little Emma, once so sweetly shy;
Touched by her trembling voice, her face so pale,
Her modest action and her downcast eye,

Many a mother stopped, when passing by,
Though poor herself, to aid that child of woe,
Thinking, perchance, unconscious of the sigh
Which tracked her thought, that ev'n *her* babe might know
Sorrow as great as this: might Heaven avert the blow!

V.

Hope of his father, ere his griefs began,
How fared young Edward, once so good and mild?
Suffering had made him a precocious man;
Brushed from his heart its freshness undefiled,
The hopes, the fears, the pleasures of a child,
And made that Cunning which was Wit before;
Herding with misery, ragged and reviled,
The crops of knowledge which the pavement bore,
He gathered as he ran, and prized the unhappy lore.

VI.

Fierce envy rankled in his youthful breast,
When joyous wealth passed heedless on his way;
What had those rampant boys, so finely dress'd,
Done for their living? Was their pamper'd clay
Better than his, or he as good as they?
Thus did he argue with himself forlorn,
When tired with begging through the cheerless day,
Thus in his spirit nourish hate and scorn,
And wonder to what end such boys as he were born.

VII.

Dark, utter dark, and hopeless was their life,
But still the BOTTLE lent its aid to cheer;
The husband said it, and so thought the wife,
" *Give stayed the appetite when Bread was dear.*"
And so the children, 'mid the cold severe,
Received as they did, the reviving drop,
And learned to love it, strong and sparkling clear.
And still they haunted that enticing shop,
Where Frenzy sought to dull the pangs it could not stop.

THE BOTTLE.

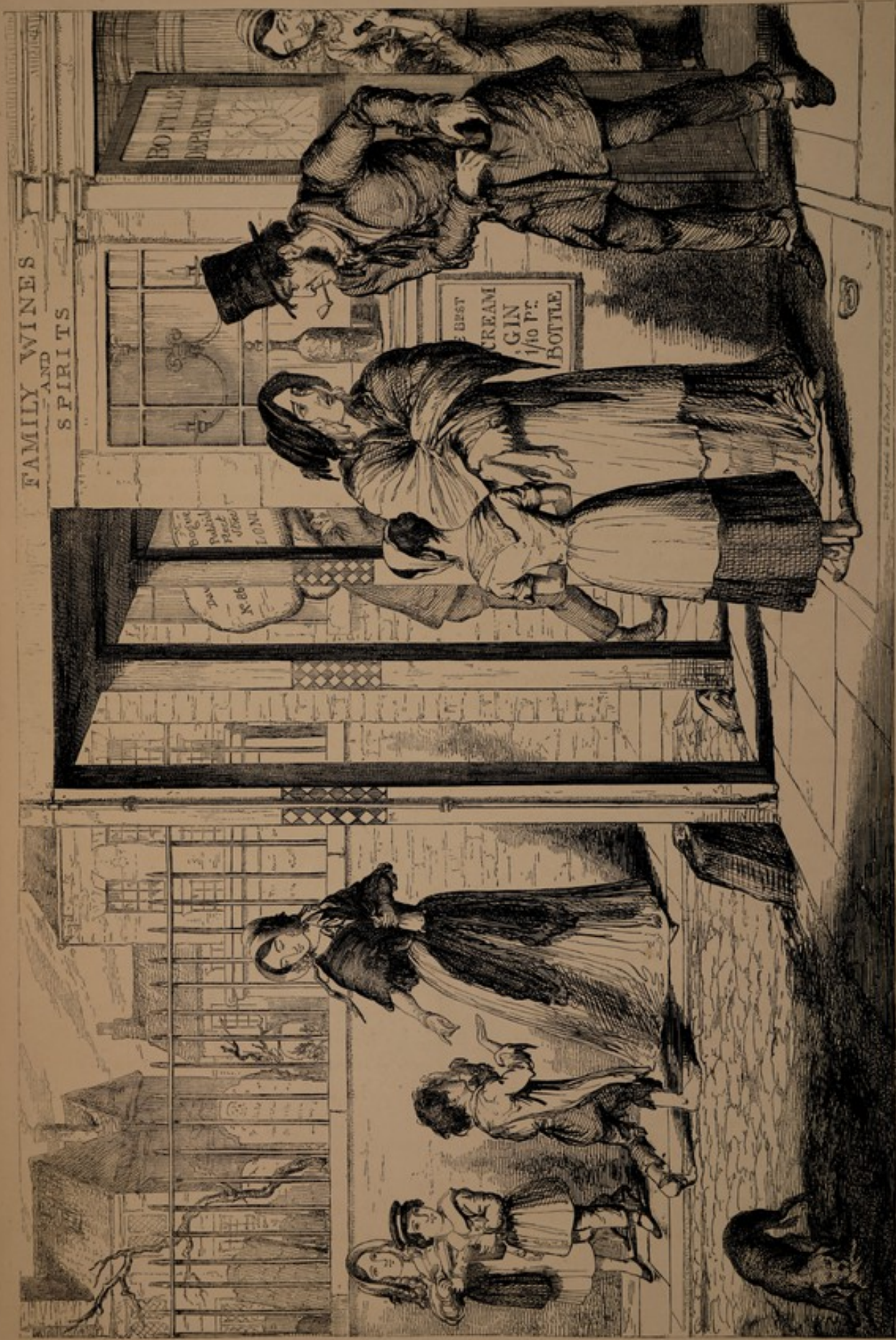
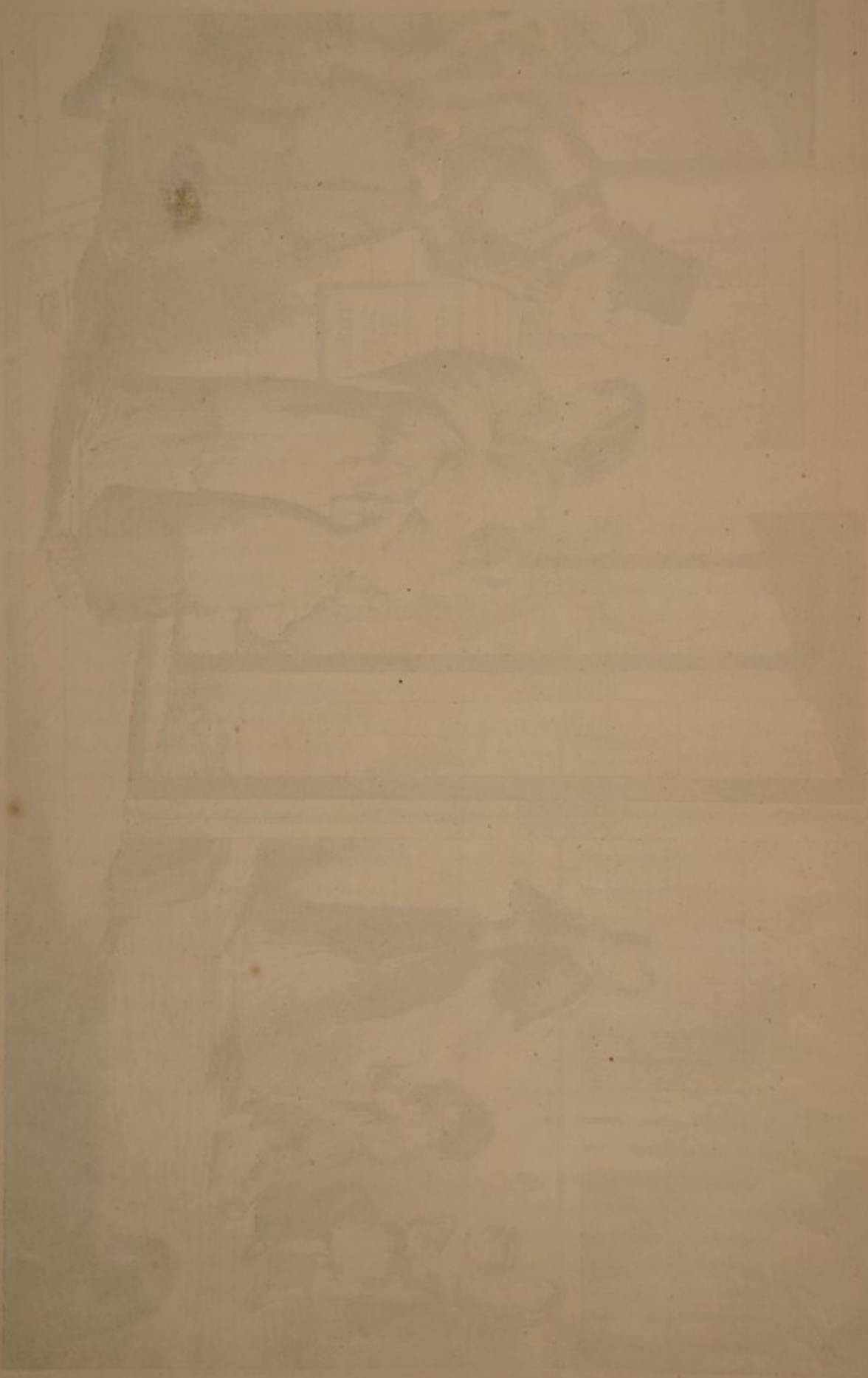
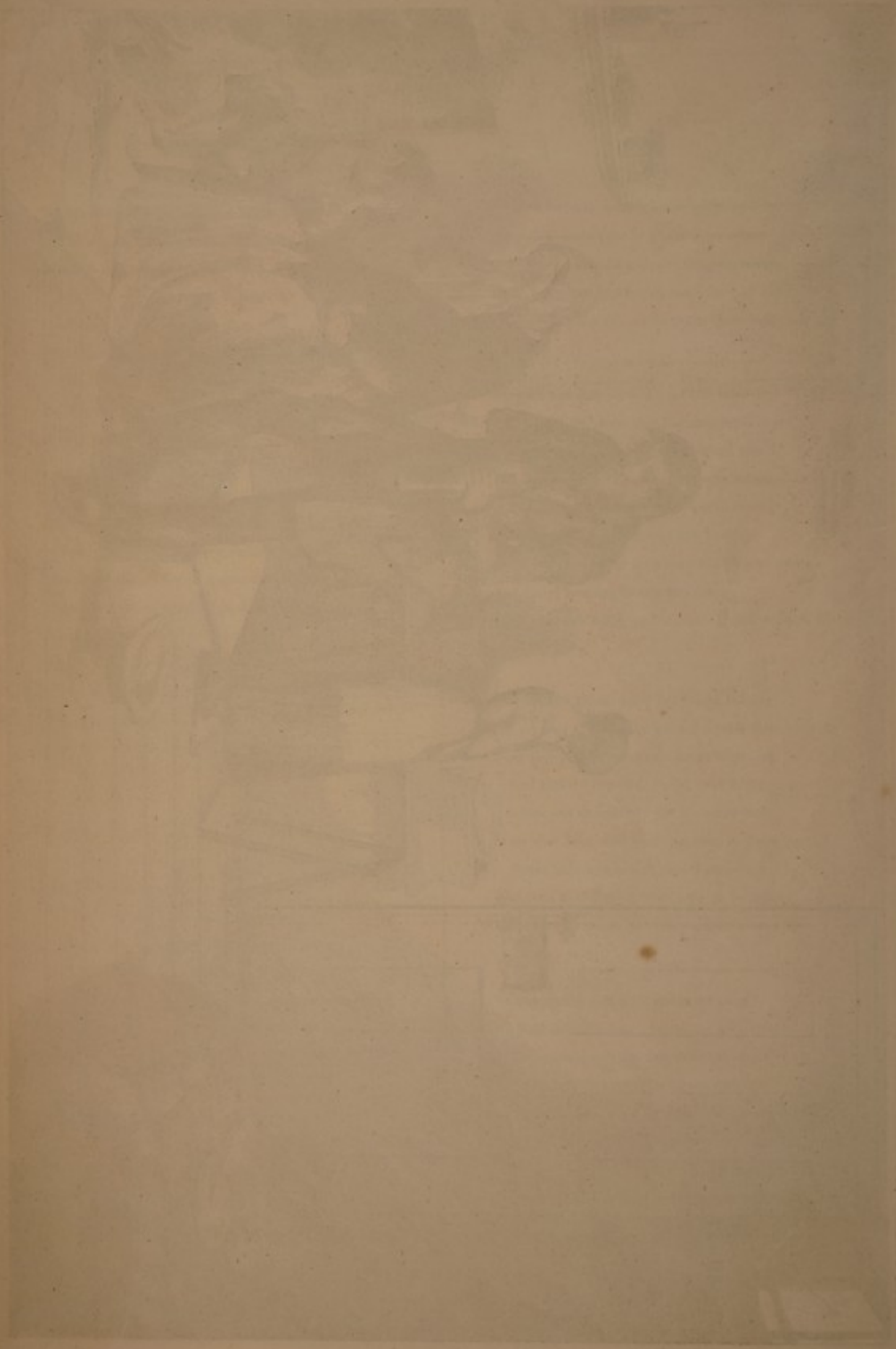


PLATE IV. — UNABLE TO OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT, THEY ARE DRIVEN BY POVERTY INTO THE STREETS TO BEG, AND BY THIS MEANS THEY STILL SUPPLY THE BOTTLE.

PLATE 10. THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF KARNAK, THEOLOGY OF THE GREAT GODS.





THE VOLLEY

THE BOTTLE.



PLATE V. — COLD, MISERY, AND WANT, DESTROY THEIR YOUNGEST CHILD; THEY CONSOLE THEMSELVES WITH THE BOTTLE.

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Fifth.

I.

WRETCHED and cold was their dismantled room,
The whistling winds blew through the broken pane;
Through the long nights, in solitary gloom
Sat Lucy, listening to the driving rain,
Waiting for Adam—often all in vain.
And when he entered, staggering up the stair,
The fumes of liquor seething in his brain,
He saw no misery in that chamber bare,
But slept the drunkard's sleep—in sensible to care.

II.

Thus passed the slow and melancholy weeks.
Grief!—they had known it under every guise;
Gaunt Famine set her seal upon their cheeks,
And fiery Fever sparkled in their eyes.
Joy!—it was quenched in sunless miseries;
All joy was lost—'twas agony to think.
Not so, alas!—they had one little prize
Still to be robbed of—they had still to drink
Deep of the cup of woe, and drain it from the brink.

III.

Cold and Neglect—ah! not Neglect—who knows
All that a mother in her heart may feel—
The boundless love, the unutterable woes,
That Vice may chill, and Penury conceal,
But ne'er extinguish—though no sign reveal?
Ah! not Neglect—but Hardship, Want, and Cold—
The feverish damps, the scant unwholesome meal,
Have done their work: have spared the strong and old,
But claimed the tender bud, the youngling of the fold.

IV.

Unhappy parents!—happy! happy child!
Yet happy they, if to their sight were given—
Amid their grief and self-reproaches wild—
To pierce the future, unrevealed by heaven!

Hardened was Adam's heart, but it was riven.
Sleep well, poor babe! Death is no enemy!
Thy sad survivors, tost, and tempest-driven,
Upon a perilous and raging sea,
Shall envy thee thy fate, and long to sleep with thee.

V.

All grief was nothing to a grief like this.
It roused the virtue that had slumbered long.
Upon those innocent lips, one last sad kiss
Adam imprinted: and ev'n *he*—the strong,
The callous man—felt in his soul a throng
Of better feelings, prompting him to weep.
He wept hot tears: he owned his life was wrong.
And Lucy, kneeling in emotion deep,
Sobbed o'er her child, and moaned; and wished, like it,
to sleep.

VI.

Edward and Emma knew not Death before—
They had not seen it; felt not what it meant—
They knew it now—it was a dread no more;
And Edward brooded, on the grief intent,
Silent and thoughtful; but his sister went,
Hour after hour, with yearning eyes, to trace
Those little features, calm and innocent;
And, 'mid her blinding tears, admire the grace
Which peaceful Death had cast on that beloved face.

VII.

"Close up the coffin-lid, and come away,"
Said Adam, kindly; "tears are all in vain—"
"They cannot animate that senseless clay;
"The babe is happy, let us not complain.
"Come, Lucy, weep no more; look up again.
"Heaven has received it—cling to that belief.
"We need support and comfort in our pain.
"Cheer up—this glass will give our hearts relief,
"And give us strength, dear wife, to combat with our grief."

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Sixth.

I.

THE slow, sad progress of their vice and sin
Were hard to trace : the roots were deeply laid.
Reform was hopeless. He could not begin ;
He, scorned, mistrusted, withering in the shade
Of men's contempt, and at himself dismay'd.
He asked for work, but no one would employ ;
He asked for sympathy and kindly aid,
'Twas often given him ; but the present joy
O'erbalanced future good—unhappy Adam Roy.

II.

He could not grapple, like a strong, true man,
With self-indulgence. When the succour came,
The thought of liquor through his senses ran,
And all resistance dwindled to a name ;—
He knew 'twas wrong—he felt a secret shame ;
But still he yielded, saying to his soul—
“ This only once, and all my future aim
Shall be directed to my self-control ;
Once only I will taste, and then—Farewell the bowl.”

III.

And Lucy, maudlin, like her husband, sought
The strong excitement that her griefs beguiled ;
But aye a vision floated o'er her thought
When drink possessed her—on her buried child
Ever she doated—ever pure and mild,
Its long-lost face upon her cheated view
Returned to bless her : evermore it smiled,
But vanished soon ; and in the darkness grew
A hideous face that scowled, and looked her through and
through.

IV.

Her voice was querulous : her temper sour.
She that was once so pleasant and so neat,
And freshly blooming as the morning flower ;—
Of her own garden-plot, the lily sweet—

Was like a lily trodden under feet—
Her odour gone, her whiteness soil'd in mire ;
Ev'n Pity's self, which passed her in the street,
Was shocked to mark Intoxication's fire—
The dignity destroyed, the slatternly attire.

V.

So grew they both—two discords in one chant—
Twin poison apples on a upas tree ;
So lived they both amid excess and want,
And vice increasing with their misery ;
And so the children, on the parents' plea,
Threw off restraint, and magnified the will.
How could they copy what they did not see ?
So in a circle spread the germs of ill ;
So vice produces vice, self multiplying still.

VI.

Sorrow and Love, with Innocence of heart,
May sing together Life's harmonious song ;
But Love and Sorrow learn to live apart,
When Guilt is with them : so *they* found ere long—
Adam was violent, and Lucy wrong.
Hatred and malice in vindictive flow,
Boiled in their blood, and rose to frenzy strong ;
Now in fierce curses banded to and fro,
Or taunt unwomanly, or more unmanly blow.

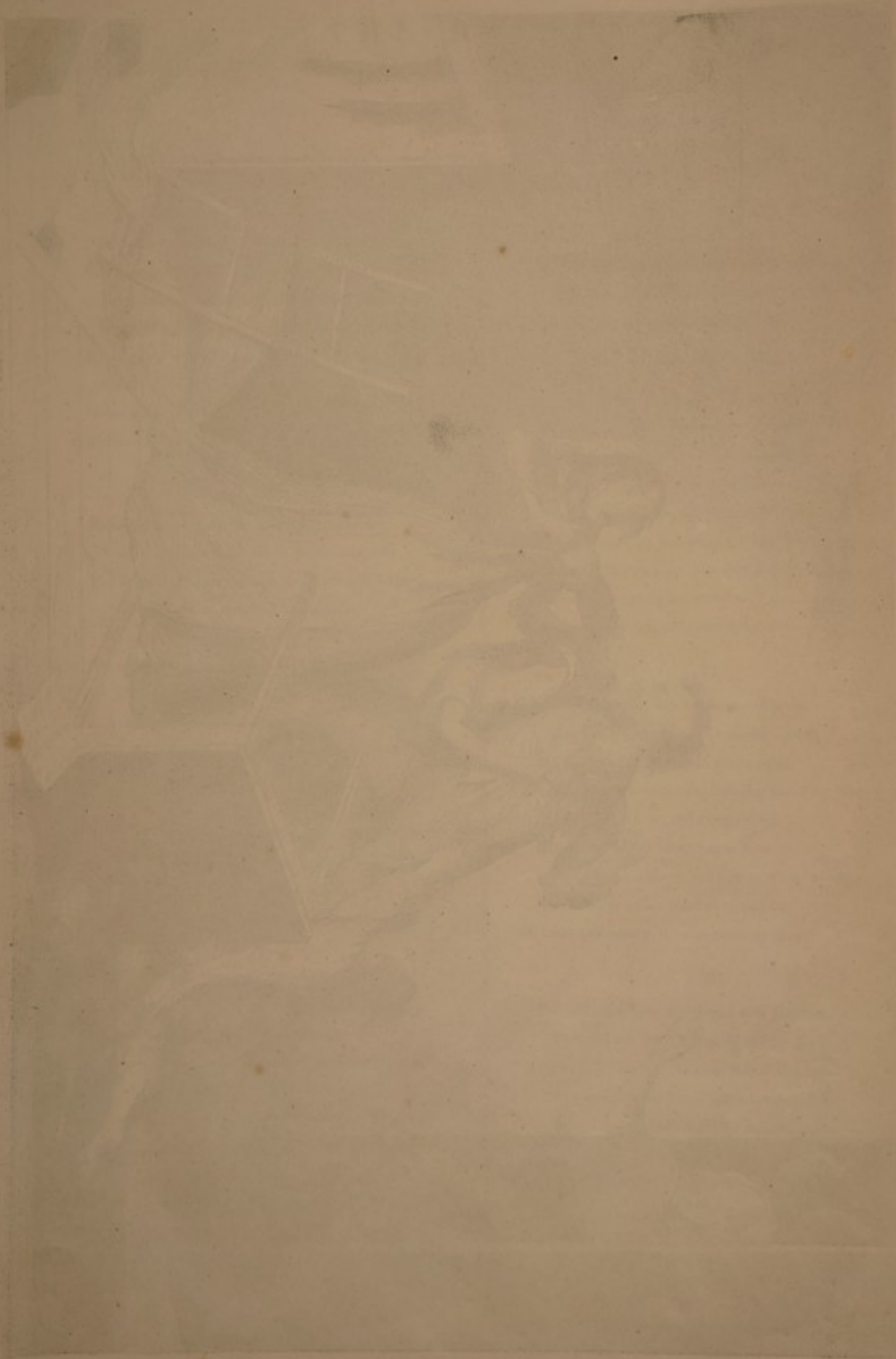
VII.

For still her tongue was tipped with poisonous scorn ;
He could not brook it nightly and by day ;
He cursed, like Job, the hour that he was born,
And driven to madness, like a beast at bay,
Raised up his coward arm to smite or slay :
He thought not which. But still, with loving force,
His little daughter rushed the feud to stay ;—
His hand fell nerveless, and his purpose coarse,
Died in his heart for shame,—or pity,—or remorse.

THE BOTTLE.



PLATE VI.— FEARFUL QUARRELS, AND BRUTAL VIOLENCE, ARE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE FREQUENT USE OF THE BOTTLE.



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THE ROYAL

THE BOTTLE.



PLATE VII. — THE HUSBAND, IN A STATE OF FURIOUS DRUNKENNESS, KILLS HIS WIFE WITH THE INSTRUMENT OF ALL THEIR MISERY

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Seventh.

I.

NOR always thus; the shame, though lingering long,
Was quenched at last; amendment, often tried,
Lived for to-day,—but new temptations strong
Bore him to-morrow on their flooding tide.
The virtue failed, the resolution died,
The noblest feelings bloom'd but to decay.
His health forsook him; pale, and hollow-eyed,
He roamed the weary streets the live-long day;
Old in his natural prime, and prematurely gray.

II.

And though his arm was vigorous as of yore,
And fit for labour, the immortal mind
Was stifled radiance, burning clear no more,
And Reason groped, unguidable and blind.
Fierce as a bonfire flaring in the wind,
His passion grew 'mid tempests of excess;—
Until, too mighty for that brain confined,
It throbb'd against it with a fever stress,
Pulsing to furious ire and frenzied recklessness.

III.

And Lucy, even when the fumes of gin
Wrought in herself, let loose her fluent tongue,
To goad and taunt him with their mutual sin;
Day after day the same reproach she flung,
And, peevish in her drink, her hands she wrung,
And heap'd her idle curses on his head:
“Where is my home?” she cried, “my infant young?
'Twas you that killed it. Oh, that I were dead!
Nor with such drunken wretch compelled to beg my bread.”

IV.

Thus did she vex him—drunken as himself—
Until, one luckless day, to madness wrought,
He seized a BOTTLE from the mantel-shelf,
And hurled it at her quick as desperate thought;

She reel'd—she fell—the blow was murder-fraught;
Her white lips quivered; but nor word nor shriek
Issued beyond them. Helpless and distraught,
He watched the welling blood whose crimson streak
Rolled from her ghastly brow over her quivering cheek.

V.

Profuse in grief, the wondering neighbours ran,—
They raise her head with many a piteous sigh,
Put water to her lips;—Unhappy man!
She turns upon thee her imploring eye—
A last sad look—She feels that she must die.
Listen! she speaks. What is it that she saith?
Nothing!—'tis gone—'twas fading agony.
She speaks again? No—'twas but gurgling breath—
The word remains unsaid—the thought is quenched in death.

VI.

Weep, children, weep! Be tears of anguish shed.
Yet not for her alone, your mother slain;
The living suffer—peace is with the dead.
Yet weep for both, although ye weep in vain.
See how your father stares!—a burning pain
Settles upon his heart. Ay, weep for him!
There is a frenzy seething in his brain.
His breath is thick—his eyes are fixed and dim—
He clutches for support—he shakes in every limb.

VII.

Take him away. Confront him with the law.
Tell him his crime, and bring the witnesses.
He will not answer. Justice hath no awe.
He cares not—knows not. Use him as you please.
He clasps his hands—he falls upon his knees—
He asks you for his wife. Take him away.
But treat him kindly. Let his agonies
Be shut from sight, and hidden from the day.
Reason has fled her throne: extinguished is her ray.

THE BOTTLE.

Part the Eighth.

I.

'Tis hard for spotless Poverty to gain
Its honourable bread; but courage high,
Unflinching zeal, and work of hand and brain,
May conquer all things, ev'n in Penury.
But who shall tell the hopeless task they try
Who, being poor, the added burden bear
Of tarnished fame? Ah! better far to die
Than wage such battle with a world unfair,
And sink o'erwhelmed at last, down-stricken by Despair.

II.

And you, poor children, whither shall ye turn
To hide your mother's fate, your father's shame?
The weak will shun you, the unfeeling spurn;
Your sire has forfeited his honest fame,
And soiled with blood indelibly your name.
Kind is Society to those that rise,
But when the fallen would its Pity claim,
It looks upon them with unfriendly eyes,
And notes their slightest faults with anger and surprise.

III.

In all this mighty world around you spread,
Full of the just, the feeling, and the true,
There is not one to help you to your bread;
It swarms with friends, but has no friend for you;
It teems with wealth, exposed before your view,
But gives your need no portion of its store;
It wants no labour that your hands can do;
It has no vacant seat, or room for more;
Its every place is filled, and closed is every door.

IV.

Unhappy boy, but more unhappy maid!
Left to yourselves so young, so badly taught,
Without a friend, no wonder that ye strayed
To easy crime; and that your youthful thought,

By vulgar pleasure lured, was early caught.
Vice smiled before you—Virtue only frowned.
Flutter, poor flies!—enjoy the life you've sought.
Destruction tracks you on that haunted ground;
Its nets are widely spread, its meshes hem you round.

V.

So pass the years of Life's prolific morn—
So grows—so flourishes the evil seed—
So, in the soil of penury and scorn,
Springs to luxuriant height the noxious weed.
Can nothing save you, or arrest your speed?
Ah, no! the lesson stares you in the face:
But vain its teachings—ye are lost, indeed!
Yet linked together, ev'n amid disgrace,
Affection in your hearts holds its accustomed place.

VI.

Not lost in all things, poor neglected girl!
Not hardened quite; for, ever to the young
Love is necessity; and 'mid the whirl
In which you live, unbidden thoughts have sprung,
And from your eyes the drops of Pity wrung
For that old man, so desolate, so mad—
That living lumber to a corner flung;—
Hearts may be good, though conduct may be bad—
They seek the maniac's cell, affectionate but sad.

VII.

He knows them not. He rolls his empty eyes.
He feels a presence on his stagnant brain,
But is not conscious. Speak not! his replies
Are hideous words, or moans of one in pain.
Away, away! 'tis cruel to remain.
But if the spectacle might ward their fate,
The filial visit were not all in vain.
Too late! too late! immeasurably late—
The world they move in, calls: their joyous comrades wait.

THE BOTTLE.

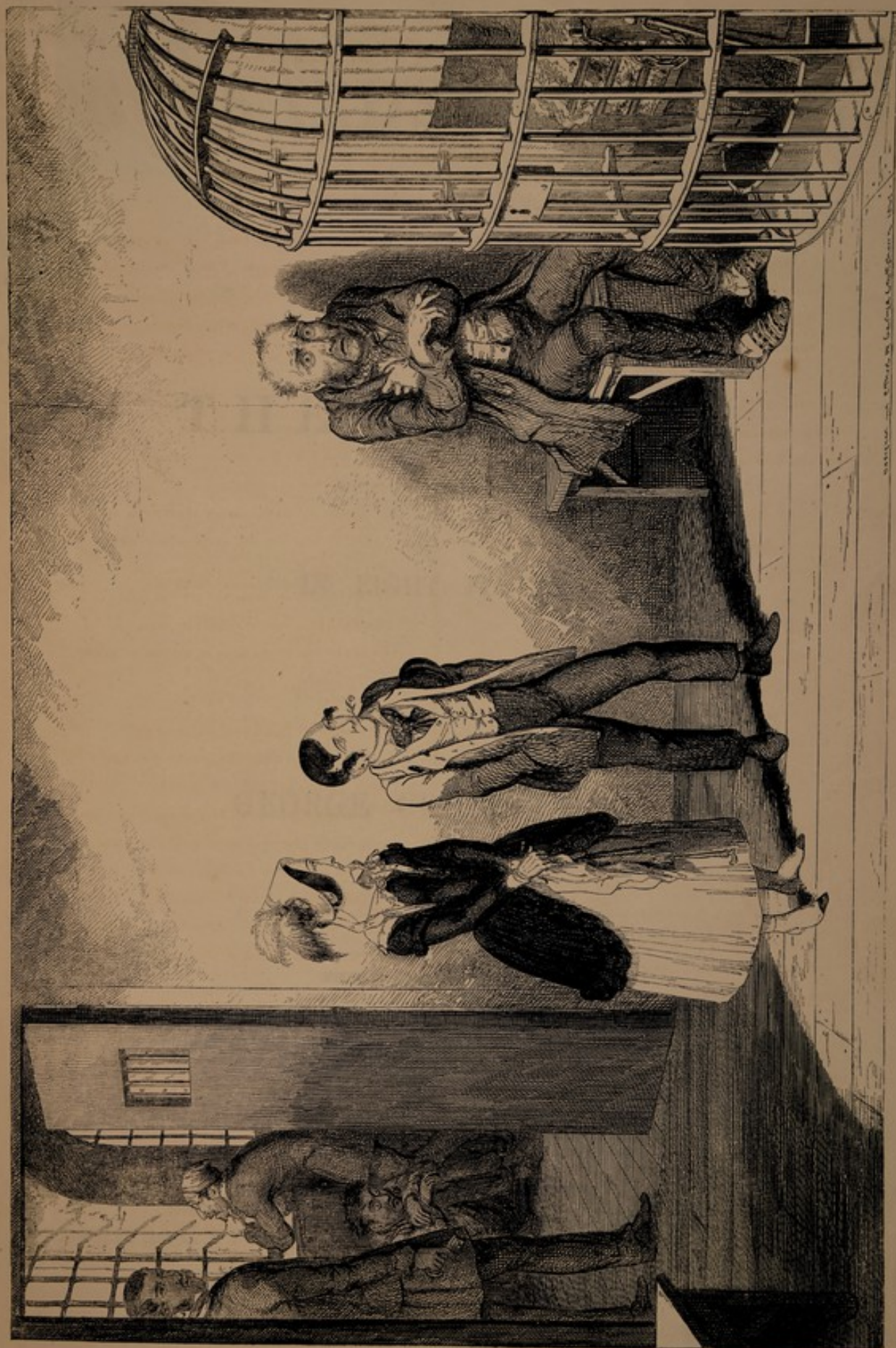
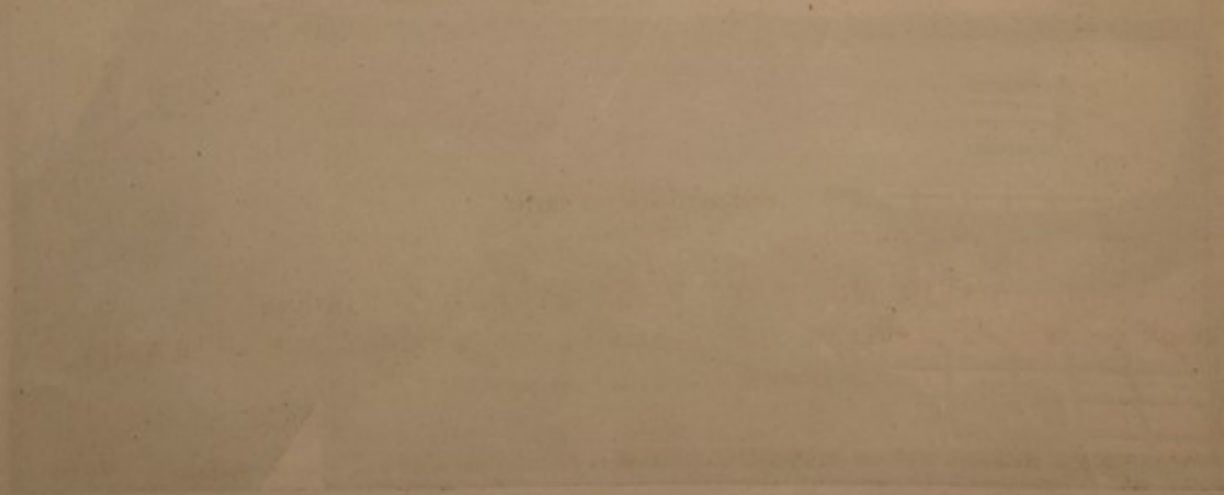
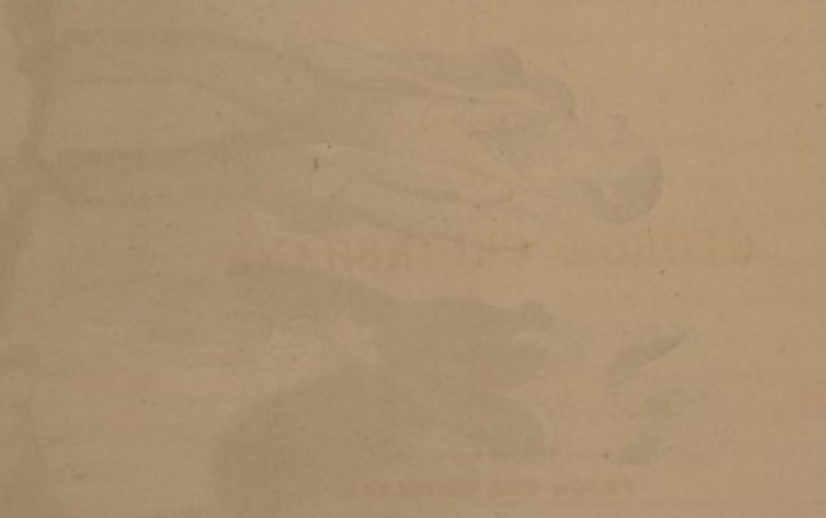


PLATE VIII.—THE BOTTLE HAS DONE ITS WORK—IT HAS DESTROYED THE INFANT AND THE MOTHER, IT HAS BROUGHT THE SON AND THE DAUGHTER TO VICE AND TO THE STREETS AND HAS LEFT THE FATHER A HOPELESS MANIAC.



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