

A WOMAN'S STORY.

One night, at a temperance meeting, A woman stood up to speak; Her eyes were sad, her face was pale, And her voice at first was weak, But soon she gained more courage, Firmly she raised her head, And told a tale most touching: And this is what she said:—

I want to tell you my story, Because I have suffered so Through the drink, which to day is causing Such misery, sin, and woe. I tell it in hopes that some who are here May give up the drink 'for ever,' Because 'tis a cruel and deadly thing, And the dearest ties it will sever.

I was married quite young to a man who was loved And honored by all who knew him, So I knew that my heart would be happy and safe, When gladly I yielded it to him. I was happy and proud as a girl could be, On the day that he made me his wife; And I meant to be true, God knows, when I vowed, As long as He gave us life. I can't tell how happy we were the first years, Until two little children were given; We both tried to make our home happy on earth, And prepare for a better in heaven.

About then I was stricken with fever, And many despaired of my life; And oft I saw Harry, with tears in his eyes,

Kneeling down to pray for his wife. God heard those prayers that he offered, He raised me once more from my bed; But oh! in the years which have followed; How I've wished I had died then instead. For when I had thus far recovered, The doctor then ordered me wine, And sometimes a little brandy, Or porter from time to time; With reluctance I followed his orders, My husband was sorry too; But soon my reluctance all vanished, I took it and loved it too.

Long after the fancied need had passed, I took it, but secretly; But soon the love became so strong, I cared not who might see, I shall never forget my husband, When he first saw me worse for drink; I heard him moan in anguish, And he looked as though he would sink. But soon I threw all shame aside, I drank from morn till eve, I felt that if I did not drink I surely should not live. I lost my love for husband, For children and for self, I ruined all our happiness, I ruined our home and health.

But once when I'd been drinking Right on for a week or more, I saw a sight which startled me As I entered our cottage door. Our youngest child, our darling, Was lying with fevered brow, His little lips all parched and dry; I think I see him now; And as the door I entered, He held out his tiny hand, And begged for a drink of water; But alas! I could not stand; My heart felt pained for a moment, But I sank into a chair, And strangers came to tend him, While his mother sat sleeping there. And in his place, when I awoke, A waxen figure lay, A sunbeam lighting up his face, The first of coming day.

I was saddened with pain and sorrow, I was humbled and ashamed, For only I, his mother, Could honestly be blamed. I seemed to loathe the drink then And promised that at length I would give up my evil ways, But only in my strength. When, alas for evil customs! Upon the funeral day, The sight and smell of the cursed drink Took all my strength away.

Once more I fell its victim, Till God, in His love and power, Put forth His hand to stop me; But again 'twas in death's dark hour.

From the time of the death of our baby, My husband had seemed to fade, And soon he, like our little child, On his bed of death was laid. They said of decline he was dying; I knew 'twas the work of his wife; I knew it was I who had killed him, For whom I'd have laid down my life. I knew that his heart, so good and true, Was crushed with its sense of shame For the sin and vice of the woman To whom he had given his name.

'Twas not many weeks he was spared me But I filled them with penitent love; And my husband, he freely forgave me, And begged me to meet him above. As I held his dear hand with death chilling

I promised most solemnly then, I would look up for help to my Saviour, And meet him in heaven again. And now, though I know I'm forgiven, I go on my saddened way, With only the hope of heaven To cheer me from day to day. I have finished now my story, I do trust it a warning will be, And if any here love the wine cup, Give it up, friends, to-night, and be free."

—Rosina H. Sadler in Alliance News.

HOW IT ALL CAME ROUND.

(L. T. Meade, in "Sunday Magazine.")

CHAPTER XXXVII.—THREE FACTS.

Dinner was more than half over when she reached Prince's Gate. She was glad of this. She went straight up to her own room and sent for her maid.

"Ward, I am very tired and not very well. I shall not go down again to-night, nor do I wish to see any one. Please bring up a cup of strong tea here, and a little dry toast, and then you may leave me. I shall not want you again to-night."

"You won't see Mr. Harman again to-night, miss. Am I to take him that message."

"Yes; say that I have a headache and think I had better stay quiet; I will be down to breakfast as usual."

Ward went away, to return in a few moments with the tea and toast.

"If you please, Miss Harman, they have just sent the wedding dress and veil from —. Are you too tired to be fitted to-night?"

Charlotte gave a little involuntary shudder.

"Yes, I am much too tired," she said; "put everything away, I do not want even to look at them. Thank you, Ward, this tea looks nice. Now you need not come in again. Good night."

"Good night, Miss Harman," said the maid, going softly to the door and closing it behind her.

Charlotte got up at once and turned the key. Now, at last, thank God, she was quite alone. She threw off her bonnet and cloak and going straight to her bed flung herself upon it. In this position she lay still for over an hour. The strong tension she had put on herself gave way during that hour, for she groaned often and heavily, though tears were very far from her eyes. At the end of about an hour she got up, lathed her face and hands in cold water, drank a cup of tea, and put some coals on a fire in the grate. She then pulled out her watch. Yes; she gave a sigh of relief—it was not yet ten o'clock, she had the best part of twelve hours before her in which to prepare to meet her father at breakfast. In these hours she must think, she must resolve, she must prepare herself for action. She sat down opposite the little cheerful fire which, warm though the night was, was grateful to her in her chilled state of mind and body. Looking into its light she allowed thought to have full dominion over her. Hitherto, from the moment she had read those words in her grandfather's will until this present moment, she had kept thought back. In the numbness which immediately followed the first shock, this was not so difficult. She had heard all Sandy Wilson's words, but had only dimly followed out their meaning. He wanted to meet her on the morrow. She promised to meet him, as she would

have promised also to do anything else, however preposterous, at that moment.

Then she had felt a desire, more from the force of habit than from any stronger motive, to go home. She had been met by Hester Wright, and Hester had taken her to see her dying husband. She had stood by the death-bed and looked into the dim and terrible eyes of death, and felt as though a horrible nightmare was oppressing her, and then at last she had got away, and at last, at last she was at home. The luxuries of her own refined and beautiful home surrounded her. She was seated in the room where she had slept as a baby, as a child, as a girl; and now, now she must wake from this semi-dream, she must rouse herself, she must think it out. Hinton was right in saying that in a time of great trouble a very noble part of Charlotte would awake; that in deep waters such a nature as hers would rise, not sink. It was awakening now, and putting forth its young wings, though its birth-throes were causing agony. "I will look the facts boldly in the face," she said once aloud, "even my own heart shall not accuse me of cowardice." There were three facts confronting this young woman, and one seemed nearly as terrible as the other. First, her father was guilty. During almost all the years of her life he had been not an honorable, but a base man; he had, to enrich himself, robbed the widow and the fatherless; he had grown wealthy on their poverty; he had left them to suffer, perhaps to die. The will which he had thought would never be read was there to prove his treachery. Believing that his fellow-trustee was dead, he had betrayed his sacred trust. Charlotte could scarcely imagine a darker crime. Her father, who looked so noble, who was so tender and good to her, who bore so high a character in the eyes of the world, was a very bad man. This was her first fact. Her second seemed, just because of the first, even a shade darker. This father, whom she had loved, this poor, broken-down, guilty father, who, like a broken idol, had fallen from his high estate in her heart, was dying. Ah! she knew it now; that look on his old face could only belong to the dying. How blind she had been! how ignorant! But the Wrights' words had torn the veil from her eyes; the guilty man was going fast to judgment. The God whom he had sinned against was about to demand retribution. Now she read the key to his unhappiness, his despair. No wonder, no wonder, that like a canker it had eaten into his heart. Her father was certainly dying; God himself was taking his punishment into His own hands. Charlotte's third fact, though the most absolutely personal of the whole, scarcely tortured her as the other two did to-night. It lay so clearly and so directly in her path, that there was no pausing how best to act. The way for action was too clear to be even for an instant disobeyed. Into this fire she must walk without hesitation or pause. Her wedding-day could not be on the twentieth; her engagement must be broken off; her marriage at an end. What! she, the daughter of a thief, ally herself to an upright, honorable man! Never! never! Whatever the consequences and the pain to either Hinton or she must part. She did not yet know how this parting would be effected. She did not know whether she would say farewell to her lover telling him all the terrible and bitter disgrace, or with a poor and lame excuse on her lips. But however she did it, the thing must be done. Never, never, never could she drag the man she loved down into her depths of shame.

To-night she scarcely felt the full pain of this. It was almost a relief, in the midst of all the chaos, to have this settled line of action around which no doubt must linger. Yes, she would instantly break off her engagement. Now she turned her thoughts to her two former facts. Her father was guilty. Her father was dying. She, in an under-hand way, for which even now she hated herself, had discovered her father's long-buried crime. But she had not alone discovered it. Another had also gone to see that will in Somerset House; another with eyes far more practised than hers had read those fatal words. And that other, he could act. He would act; he would expose the guilty and dying old man, for he was the other trustee.

Charlotte was very ignorant as to how the law would act with regard to such a crime as her father's. Doubtless there would be a public trial, a public disgrace. He would be dragged into the prisoner's

dock; his old white head would be bowed low there, and he was a dying man.

In the first shock and horror of finding that the father she had always almost worshipped could be guilty of such a terrible crime, a great rush of anger and almost hardness had steeled her heart against him; but now tenderer feelings came back. Pity, sad-eyed and gentle, knocked at her heart, and when she let in pity, love quickly resumed its throne. Yes; whatever his crime, whatever his former life, she loved that old man. That white-headed, broken-hearted man, so close to the grave, was her father, and she his only child. When she spoke to Sandy Wilson to-day she had felt no desire to save the guilty from his rightful fate. But now her feelings were different. A great cry arose in her heart on his behalf. Could she screen him! could she screen him from his fate! In her agony she rose and flung herself on her knees. "My God, help me; my God, don't forsake me; save my father. Save him, save him, save him."

She felt a little calmer after this broken prayer, and something to do occurred to her with an instant power of tranquillizing. She would find out the doctor whom her father consulted. She would ask Uncle Jasper. She would make him tell her, and she would visit this man early in the morning, and whatever the consequence, learn the exact truth from his lips. It would help her in her interview later on with Mr. Wilson. Beyond this little immediate course of action, there was no light whatever; but she felt so far calmed, that about two o'clock she lay down and sleep, which was healthy and dreamless sleep, which was sent direct from God to put strength into the brave heart, to enable it to suffer and endure. Many weeks before Mr. Home had said to Charlotte Harman: "You must, keep the Christ bright within you." Was His likeness to shine henceforth through all the rest of her life, in those frank eyes, that sweet face, that noble woman's heart, because of and through that great tribulation? We have heard tell of the white robes which they wear who go through it. Is it not worth while for so sacred a result to heat the furnace seven times?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—THE DOCTOR'S VERDICT.

In her terrible angst and despair Charlotte had almost forgotten Uncle Jasper; but when she came down to breakfast the following morning and saw him there, for he had come to Prince's Gate early, and was standing with her father on the hearth-rug, she suddenly remembered that he too must have been guilty; nay worse, her father had never tried to deceive her, and Uncle Jasper had. She remembered the lame story he had told her about Mrs. Home; how fully she had believed that story, and how it had comforted her heart at the time! Now she saw clearly its many flaws, and wondered at her own blindness. Charlotte had always been considered an open creature—one so frank, so ingenuous, that her secrets, had she ever tried to have any, might be read like an open book; but last night she had learned to dissemble. She was glad when she entered the cheerful breakfast-room to find that she was able to put her hardly learned lesson in practice. Knowing what she did, she could yet get up and kiss her father, and allow her uncle to put his lips to her cheek. She certainly looked badly, but that was accounted for by the headache which she confessed still troubled her. She sat down opposite the tea-urn, and breakfast was got through in such a manner that Mr. Harman noticed nothing particular to be wrong. He always drove to the City now in his own private carriage, and after he had gone Charlotte turned to Jasper.

"Uncle Jasper," she said, "you have deceived me."

"Good heavens! how, Charlotte?" said the old uncle.

"My father is very ill. You have given me to understand that there was nothing of serious consequence the matter with him."

Uncle Jasper heaved a slight but still audible sigh of relief. Was this all? These fears he might even yet quiet.

"I have not deceived you, Charlotte," he said, "for I do not believe your father to be seriously ill."

He fixed his keen gray eyes on her face as he spoke. She returned his gaze without shrinking.

"Still you do think him ill?" she said. "Well, any one to look at him must admit that he is not what he was."

"Jus me very my tr Now it source, been of I wish truth, suited. "Ho any?" "Ha Uncle He felt the wor the last yet who was awl tain sen change! mornin side soft "My I own, I wish, m I could, very a himself be; but on the not be a believe fear. O rest more th Charlotte that I a your fat "You Your no being so exact tr ha, of c If you v self ask "By and the shocked. "Just spare hi know." "My "Well your pe must. "You like "No, What is "Sir i Street." "I wi lotte. She le heard he would go out-door time his physica house. Presently Yes, the gaged fo but if C her in be She gave her, and and disu were als waiting knowing still less added de herself o from the who wait the peri the table handed l trated Lon the pag day she created. One b called by summon away an came. S with a lit peared to girl had l terms th that agai appeal. man's pr was, her l