HIS LAST QUARTER

BY ARTHUR RYAN.

[DETROIT CATHOLIC WITNESS]

"COME, Jake, let me have one more drink—only one more, and I'll go home—I s'pose I'm wanted there!"

Thus, in a thick, husky voice, pleaded a gray-haired man, at the bar of one of our hotels—one very popular among visiting and transient guests, as it is kept, and well kept, on the European plan. Large red blotches and wrinkled furrows marked his aged face, the once glossy hair, now tangled, matted and unkempt, the erect carriage despite the years, the dulled and bloodshot eyes, the language, all curtained the fast fleeting semblance of a gentleman—a man of refinement, intelligence and high position.

His threadbare garments, not ragged but in places neatly darned and patched, showing lingering tokens of decency, told, too, of some tender hand that even in poverty cared for his personal appearance. The barkeeper, whose appearance bespoke more than the position he held, said in a kind voice: "You had better no take any more, Judge—you will feel better without it!"

"Only just one more drink!" said the old man, "one more to steady my nerves, and I'll go home—Jan's sick and I'm wanted there!"

"You have too much on now for a sick room," said the barkeeper, still kindly. "Let me advise you to go home now."

"See, here's the money," said the old man, laying down a quarter of a dollar, "I don't ask you to trust me!" Then the old man added in a sotto-voce tone: "They gave it to me to buy medicine for her with, but I don't believe in so much doctor's stuff—it's killing the girl!"

"I don't wish your money. You can have no more liquor here to night, Judge—I've said it, and 'tis as good as sworn to," replied the barkeeper firmly.

"Then, curse you, I can get it somewhere else," said the old man, bitterly, as he turned away and went out into the night.

"Was that not Judge ——?" asked a gentleman who had observed this scene from across the bar-room.

"It is the wreck of Judge ——," replied the barkeeper.

"Good heavens! When I last saw him, he stood as high as any man in this city. I was here to purchase goods, and, having been swindled by an auctioneer, had business with him. My! how he has changed!"

"Yes, sir—he has been going down very fast. I never give him any liquor when I can help it; but, as he said just now, he can get it elsewhere, and such poison, too, as will hurry him off faster than the liquor we keep."

"You do not drink, I perceive?"

"No, sir; good barkeepers seldom do. Like physicians, they know the effect of their medicines and distrust them! When they see, day after day, the wrecks of men, once wealthy, honorable and intelligent, staggering before them, or hear the maudlin follies of drunken men in decent garb, they are led to reflection, and shun the danger—even as the mariner avoids the reef on which he sees the shattered hulk and broken spars of a ship once strong and beautiful!"

"True—true, but it seems almost impossible to realize that Judge—— has fallen so low!," said the gentleman, as he turned away.

* * *

"I'll find it elsewhere" was the cry of the poor tottering inebriate as he left the buffet. And he did. A short distance down Mott street, he entered a low and dingy dive in the basement. When the door was opened to admit the old man, the stifling fumes of tobacco smoke, the smell of liquor and a choking closeness met the wayfarer on the street; and a shivering of sickness, fear and pity passed through his frame. Singing, card-playing and cursing were the diversions of the inmates, the clinking of glasses was frequent, and as the hours sped on the faster grew the pace. Into this atmosphere staggered the Judge and in broken, hoarse tones called for whisky.

"Let's see the color of yer dough first. No thrust iz the wurd wid me," said the tough bully behind the crude bar coated with greese and spilled liquor.

For a second the eyes of the old man flashed, as if a single spark of the fire of his lost manhood was struggling up through the ashes of his ruin, then he put his trembling hand in his pocket and drew forth the quarter. "Give me back the change!" said he, as he filled the thick-bottomed glass to the brim; "give me back the change; I want it to buy medicine!"

"There's no medicine like whiskey, old man—mind that now!" said the barkeeper, as he very unwillingly counted out 20 cents, for this was a five cent bucketshop.

"Aren't you going to stand treat, chummy, old boy? I'm as dry as all out doors, and haven't nary a red," said a one-eyed, barnacle-faced, bloated object, approaching him. The judge looked at him with a shudder, and the barkeeper draw back five cents and set out another glass, taking it for granted that the request would not be refused.

"Here's to you—prosat, as we used to say in our college days," said the "creature" as he poured a glass of liquid hell-fire down his galled throat, smacking his black blistered lips as if the beverage were nectar.

"Come, sit down, judge—don't be in a hurry to get out of good company!" said the barkeeper, whose eye was on the remaining 15 cents.

"Oh, no, I must go home; I'm wanted there—Jan's sick," muttered the old man, indecisively however.

"You'll at least stop and have a drop o' hot stuff wid me," continued the barkeeper, still mindful of the 15 cents left.

The poor man long since had weakened to this prevalent bar-room invitation, and he now accepted with the same feelings as many times before. Two hours later, reeling beastly drunk and without a cent of his 25 cents in his pocket, he was hurled rudely into the street amid the drunken shouts of his companions, by the vendor of the devil's poison, whose den is literally in the shadows of the halls of justice.

* * * * * * *

At that same hour, in a wretched, dark room, almost unfurnished, in a rickety, squalid tenement house in Baxter street, a poor, thin, pallid girl, not yet passed out of her maidenhood, lay upon a miserable straw bed—dying. The traces of beauty were still evident, in her great brown eyes, glistening with heavenly brightness, as they peered out through the cold, slimy mists of this cruel, wicked world, into the fleecy whiteness and golden tinged effulgence of the next. Her delicate features, now worn and drawn, bespoke the purity, innocence and refinement of a virgin about to meet her God and Maker. The spectre veil of death was upon her, and the remaining mortal frame, frail and wan, with the ravages and abuse that had been hurled in vain against it by the cohorts of the devil, was now about to free the eternal soul—the sweet-scented flower whose fragrance had been wasted in the mingling of the corrupted air or earthly passions.

By the side of this virgin martyr, quivering in agony, knelt a boy, but a year or two younger than his saintly sister. His dress and rough hands showed that he was no idler—he had labored for her—for his inebriate father—for, reader, these were the children of Judge ——. By her side he knelt and prayed and wept, for he knew his dear loved sister and only friend and companion was chilled by the visit of Death. The little thin hand which he tightly closed to his bosom was cold as ice—her face was white, her lips were blue and bloodless, and her breath came and went in faint fluttering gasps, and when her lips moved, only a faint whisper reached his ear

"Why don't father come? I am dying, Henry!" she whispered.

"O! God, I know it, Jane!" he moaned. "Father would go for the medicine, and—and—I wish I had gone, but I did not dare to leave you!"

"Kiss me, dear brother—kiss me—I shall be with dear mother soon!" grasped the poor dying girl, and each breath grew fainter and weaker. He pressed his lips to hers, and his burning tears coursed down her pallid cheeks. He thought he heard a footstep ascending the rickety stairway—he turned his head to see if it were his father coming. But—no, he was mistaken. It was only the strong winter wind whistling through the crevices and cracks of the time-worn house. He heard a sigh—a quiver—a gasp—and, turning, he bowed his head over the corpse of his dear loved sister. With that sigh her spirit had left the tenement of mortal suffering and was back in the arms of God. Amid the squalid wretchedness of that tenement had perished the girl who had been delicately and tenderly reared in comfort and luxury by one of the most devoted of mothers—a mother who, with a broken heart, had faded away, as she once saw her noble husband descend step by step to the drunkard's pit of degradation.

* * * * * * *

In the morning, from the various station houses, the wretched "pickings-up" of the night were marshaled to the "Tombs" to be dealt with by the presiding justice of the day—a miserable, squalid herd of all nations, colors, and grades of both sexes—specimens of what poverty, ruin and whiskey could make from that which once was human. Filthy — sickening — disgusting — too much so for description The justice was about commencing his examination, when a lad of sixteen or seventeen, roughly but decently dressed, with a fine intellectual countenance, but one which bore the look now of some keen and terrible mental agitation, entered the court room, and, as he looked at the justice, he asked in a tone of agony:

"Oh! sir, is my father here?"

Before the justice could reply, a voice from amid the crowd of squalid features, husky and hoarse, cried:

"Yes—yes. What is the matter, Henry?"

"Father, Jane is dead!" groaned the boy, as he glanced with tearful eyes upon his wretched parent in the prisoner's dock. A sigh of misery burst from the man's lips, and he sank senseless to the floor. He was instantly recognized by the kind-hearted justice, who had means taken to restore him to consciousness, and then caused him to be taken home—if home it could be called—where lay, white and cold, the second of the victims whom he made through the accursed aid of the spirit alcohol.

* * *

My story is told, and in it there is more truth than romance. May it not be read as an idle tale. Twenty years ago this incident was told in the Chicago Daily News. From the cherished memory of a dear friend I rewrite the tale, not for to be up-to-date, because human passions are ever the same, but to point a moral from an adorned tale.

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SOME THINGS TO REMEMBER.

If we are going to censure our fellows, let us at least blame them only for what in them is justly censurable. People are born into this world with vastly different outfits of intelligence comeliness, and health, and they are born into vastly different environments. We should not blame them for the absence of qualities or instincts which they had no means of inheriting, nor the lack of knowledge, or manners, or dispositions which their environments gave them no opportunity to acquire. If we are to blame them at all, we ought to limit our censure to such faults as they might reasonably have avoided. Some folks try very hard to be good, and to make the very most and best of what they have, but have such distorted materials to work with that they never win more than a very moderate success. Other people don't seem to try half as hard, but being born sounder, sweeter, and more sane, with better wits and better instinct, work out what is in them under advantageous conditions and find the best things in life fairly tumbling into their laps. They are not really so deserving as their brethren, who started with less and made more effort, but we applaud them a great deal more, and like them a great deal better.

It is the law of this world that to him that hath shall be given. The man with five talents who makes the most of them gets five cities; the man with two talents, two cities; the poor creature with only one talent very likely has not sense enough to use that, and will probably lose what he has and come on the county. But he is our brother, too. Are we to sniff at him and insist that he is worthless, and contrast him, to his detriment, with the five talent man whom we are glad to call our friend? We shall pay for it if we do. It is our affair to help the one-talent man, if we can, to get his poor talent out at usury. It may not be possible for us to accomplish it, but if we avoid him altogether we shall avoid all chance of helping him, and ill will it be with us when our fastidiousness has finally done its perfect work and we have no companions at all except five-talent people who do not need our help.—From "The Point of View," in the Christmas (December) Scribner's.

Powerful Speeches.

Speeches in political season are very powerful. The gold and silver question are the topics of the day. Bryan, with his thousands of speeches, has not done as much good to the sufferers of coughs and colds as Menthol Cough Syrup has. It is the most valuable remedy in the season of coughs and colds there is. It is known to the public as not having its equal. Try it; only 25c a bottle. It is sold everywhere by all druggists and general dealers. T. F.

JUSTIN McCARTHY'S NEW WORK.

A CATHOLIC JOURNAL FINDS FAULT WITH THE "LIFE OF POPE LEO XIII."

The Catholic Watchman, of Madras India, is not enthusiastic over Mr. McCarthy's "Life of Pope Leo XIII." It points out a number of inaccuracies which ought to have been avoided, and concludes its clever review with these sensible words:

"The worst thing about the book is the apologetic tone in which it is written, as if it were an appeal to Protestants not to think too hardly of the Catholic Church. The tendency of the Protestant mind is to set itself up as a tribunal before which the Catholic Church is brought to be judged; and this book panders to that idea. Nothing in the life of Leo XIII. requires any apology, and a Catholic author ought to have written in a very different tone."

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VERY ENTHUSIASTIC MEETING OF ST. MARY'S BRANCH, NO. 31, E.B.A.

St. Mary's Branch, E.B.A., held their annual election of officers on Dec. 20th. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year:—

Chaplain, Rev. Father MacGuire; President, J. R. O'Niell; Vice President, John Burke; Rec. Sec., J. T. O'Connell, elected by acclamation; Fin. Sec., M. J. Barry, elected by acclamation; Treasurer, ——; Stewards, M. Christie and D. Curtin; Marshal, S. J. Trotter; Assistant Marshal, Wm. Heally; Inside Guard, Frank Scott; Outside Guard, M. McGrath; Surgeon, Dr. W. V. Lynch.

The President having welcomed Rev. Father MacGuire as chaplain to the Branch, gave the outlines of the progress made during the past year ending by saying that he had every confidence in the officers just elected to give the Branch a highly creditable standing before the Convention which is to be held in Lindsay during the coming year. (Applause.)

The Rev. Father MacGuire was then called on for an address, in which he said that it gave him much pleasure to act as our chaplain, as the aims of the Society were excellent, mentioning particularly the spirit of fraternity, patriotism and charity which it endeavored to inspire its members with, giving as noble examples Daniel O'Connell, Sir John Thompson, Father Tom Burke and others. He then congratulated us on our progress during the past year, and concluded by wishing us every prosperity for the future.

Votes of thanks were given to the Rev. Father MacGuire for his very kind and encouraging words, and also to Brothers J. R. O'Niell and C. Podger for their past services to the Society.

The meeting then adjourned.

M. J. BARRY, Secretary.

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