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THE TEMPERANCE PLEDGE.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

"I want a quarter of a dollar, Jane."

This was addressed by a miserable creature, bloated and disfigured by intemperance, to a woman whose thin, pale face, and heart-broken look, told but too plainly that she was the drunkard's wife.

"Not a quarter of a dollar, John? Surely you will not waste a quarter dollar of my hard earnings, when you know that I can scarcely get food and decent clothes for the children?"

As the wife said this, she looked up into her husband's face with a sad, appealing expression.

"I must have a quarter, Jane," was the firm reply.

"O, John! remember our little ones. The cold weather will soon be here, and I have not yet been able to get them shoes. If you will not earn any thing yourself, do not waste the little my hard labour can procure. Will not a sixpence do? Surely that is enough for you to spend for—"

"Nothing will do but a quarter, Jane, and that I must have, if I steal it!" was the prompt and somewhat earnest reply.

Mrs. Jarvis laid aside her work mechanically, and rising, went to a drawer, and from a cup containing a single dollar in small pieces, her little all, took out a quarter of a dollar, and turning to her husband said, as she handed it to him—

"Remember, that you are taking the bread out of your children's mouths!"

"Not so bad as that, I hope, Jane," the drunkard replied, as he clutched the money eagerly, something like a feeble smile flitting across his disfigured and distorted countenance.

"Yes, and worse!" was the response, made in a sadder tone than that in which the wife had at first spoken.

"How worse, Jane?"

"John!" and the wife spoke with a sudden energy, while her countenance lighted up with a strange gleam. "John, I cannot bear this much longer! I feel myself sinking every day. And you—you who pledged yourself—"

Here the voice of the poor woman gave way, and covering her face with her hands, she bent her head upon her bosom, and sobbed and wept hysterically.

The drunkard looked at her for a moment, and then turning hurriedly, passed from the room. For some moments after the door had closed upon her husband, did Mrs. Jarvis stand, sobbing and weeping. Then slowly returning to her chair near the window, she resumed her work, with an expression of countenance that was sad and hopeless.

In the mean time, the poor wretch who had thus reduced his family to a state of painful destitution, after turning away from his door, walked slowly along the street with his head bowed down, as if engaged in, to him, altogether a new employment, that of self-communion. All at once a hand was laid familiarly upon his shoulder, and a well-known voice said—

"Come, John, let's have a drink."

Jarvis looked up with a bewildered air, and the first thing that caught his eye, after it glanced away from the face of one of his drinking cronies, was a sign with bright gold letters, bearing the words, "EAGLE COFFEE HOUSE." That sign was as familiar to him as the face of one of his children. At the same moment that his eye rested upon this, creating an involuntary impulse to move towards the tavern door, his old crony caught hold of his coat collar, and gave him a pull in the same direction. But much to

the surprise of the latter, Jarvis resisted this attempt to give his steps a direction that would lead him into his old, accustomed haunt.

"Won't you drink this morning, Jarvis?" asked the other with a look of surprise.

There was evidently a powerful struggle going on in the mind of the drunkard. This lasted only for a moment or two, when he said loudly and emphatically.

"No!"

And instantly broke from his old boon companion, and hurried on his way.

A loud laugh followed him, but he heeded it not. Ten minutes' walk brought him to the store of a respectable tradesman.

"Is Mr. R— in?" he asked, as he entered.

"Back at the desk," was the reply of a clerk.

And Jarvis walked back with a resolute air.

"Mr. R—, I want to sign the pledge!"

"You Jarvis?" Mr. R— said, in tones of gratified surprise.

"Yes, me, Mr. R—. It's almost a hopeless case; but here goes to do my best."

"Are you fully sensible of what you are about doing, Jarvis?"

"I think I am, Mr. R—. I've drunk nothing since yesterday morning, and with the help of Him above, I am determined never to drink another drop as long as I live! So, read me the pledge, and let me sign it."

Mr. R— turned at once to the constitution of the Washington Temperance Society, and read the pledge thereunto annexed:

"We, the undersigned, do pledge ourselves to each other, as gentlemen, that we will not, hereafter, drink any spirituous liquors, wine, malt or cider, unless in sickness, and under the prescription of a physician."

Jarvis took the pen in his hand, that trembled so he could scarcely make a straight mark on paper, and enrolled his name among the hundreds of those who, like him, had resolved to be men once more. Thus done, he laid down the quarter of a dollar which he had obtained from his wife, the admission fee required of all who joined the society. As he turned from the tradesman's store, his step was firmer, and his head more erect than, in a sober state, he had earned it for many a day.

From thence he proceeded to a hatter's shop.

"Well Jarvis," was uttered in rather a cool, repulsive tone, as he entered.

"Are you in want of a journeyman, Mr. Warren?"

"I don't want you, Jarvis."

"If you will give me work, I will never get drunk again, Mr. Warren."

"You've said that too many times, Jarvis. The last time you went off when I was hurried with work, and caused me to disappoint a customer, I determined never to have anything more to do with you."

"But I'll never disappoint you again," urged the poor man, earnestly.

"It's no use for you to talk to me Jarvis. You and I are done with each other. I have made up my mind never again to have a man in my shop who drinks rum."

"But I've joined the temperance society, Mr. Warren."

"I don't care if you have; in two weeks you'll be lying in the gutter."

"I'll never drink liquor again if I die!" Jarvis said solemnly.

"Look here, you drunken vagabond," the master hatter said, in angry tones, coming from behind the counter, and standing in