

WHEN A MAN STOPS DRINKING

My Return to Life

By ONE WHO DID

Illustrated by GEORGE H. CHARLES

CHAPTER IV.

THE awful penalty of excessive drinking was mine at last. I was picked up in the street and rushed to a hospital, with that terrible scourge, delirium tremens, gripping my whole system in a vice of writhing agony. It was of my own making. I knew it was coming, but I was weak with an uncontrollable appetite for whiskey and let myself fall into this awful condition.

I am making my terrible experiences and sufferings public, as an object lesson to drinkers who are slowly reaching this sure condition of misery. The whole story and history of alcohol is a tragedy. My experience is given as a beacon light to those who are embarking upon this slippery road.

In the slimy trail of the alcoholic serpent you will find everything that is dark and dreadful. I did.

The sight of a man undergoing the terrible tortures of delirium tremens is one I trust you will never witness. It would live with you to the day of your death. God grant that horrible sight may forever be spared you.

What is there in whiskey that enters into a man and drags him down to the level of a beast?

I give but a mere outline of the picture of this terrible scourge, which condition, in the fullness of awful detail, God alone knows.

I was placed on a cot, stripped and manacled and put in a strait-jacket. My body writhed and trembled and my parched lips broke as I tried to utter words of condemnation to the attendants who were restraining me. I could plainly see toads squatting in the corners, and serpents coiled about the bed posts were hissing in my ears, while all manner of imps danced about in the air, spouting a blue flame in my face. Such a horrible, torturing condition no man can truly describe. The demons of hell were loosed to torment me.

IN my drunken frenzy I shrieked for alcohol—alcohol in any form. There were days of mental restlessness and nights of sleepless torture.

No chamber of horrors ever described could convey an adequate description of the awful soul killing writhings I experienced. Jumping out of the way of pink elephants, feeling carefully on my bed clothing for gila monsters and lizards, moaning, howling, crying for some one to relieve me from my awful condition, I would finally collapse into a fit. Occasionally a "shot of dope" would be injected to allay my sufferings, but even with that I would continue to writhe and curse, spit and glare, my eyeballs bloody and protruding and ablaze with fury.

Hideous faces were on the walls, the ceiling and the floor; foul things crept along my bedclothes, and glaring eyes peered into mine. At one time I was surrounded by myriads of monstrous spiders and rats which crawled slowly over every limb, while beaded perspiration bathed my brow, and my limbs shivered until the bed rattled.

Strange coloured lights danced before my eyes, and then suddenly the very blackness of darkness appalled me by its dense gloom. All at once I seemed to be struck with a complete blindness. I knew an electric light was burning in the room, but I could not see it—all was so pitchy dark. Suddenly I saw, standing at the foot of my bed, a red devil with hands polluted with blood, and arms filled with crawling, wriggling serpents, stinging and hissing. My very vitals were pierced with agony as the red monster jeered and taunted and pursued his infernal work. Is there no escape from this terrible torture? It would seem as though nothing but death could give me relief, and oh! how welcome it would have been!

To somewhat alleviate my pain the attendant released my arms for a few minutes. All at once I lost the sense of feeling. I tried to grasp my arm in one hand, but the sense of touch was gone. I put my hand to my side, my head, but felt nothing, and yet I knew my limbs, my frame, were there. Then the scene changed. I was falling—falling, swiftly as an arrow—far down into some terrible abyss; and so realistic was it, that as I fell, I saw the rocky sides of the horrible shaft, where mocking, gibing, fiend-like forms were perched, and the air, rushing

past me, made the sweat stream out by the force of its unwholesome blast. Sometimes the paroxysm ceased for a few moments, and I would sink back drenched with perspiration, utterly exhausted, and feeling a dreadful certainty of the renewal of my torments.

There were times when it was absolutely impossible to stand the strain for another minute; but the torture returned, and slimy, gliding, writhing, biting, stinging adders wound themselves about my body and thrust their forked and poisonous tongues into my sides.

My eyes were bleared and glistening, and pain and fright enthralled me; I prayed and begged and entreated that death might relieve me.

Not one man in one hundred thousand could go through my experience and still live.

I was not the only victim in my ward suffering with this awful curse.

I could hear the crackling fumes of burning victims and

jails, insane asylums, reformatories, and hospitals, and sentences thousands of miserable men and yet more miserable women and pitiable children to live most wretched lives. It blights the body and soul and is the chief bane and ruin of thousands of homes.

My Coming Back

I WAGED war with the demon, and I am no longer in bondage. Starting in at the scene of my defeat, I am rapidly working myself up the highway of sobriety, respect, contentment and health.

It was a long, hard, bitter battle, but at last I conquered the enemy. I am now free from the terrible incubus of drink, but the memory of those ruinous years can never be wholly eradicated. My thoughts are now free from remorse or fear; and in my final rise from the cavernous depths of drunkenness and despair to the beautiful light

of soberness, and the possession of an unshackled mind, I have tried to tell my experience with that monster, whiskey. To the silent and secret sufferer, enmeshed in the whirlpool, I give encouragement; and warn all drinking men of the abyss yawning to swallow and clutch and strangle them in deadly embrace unless the habit be stopped at once.

Neither tongue nor pen can truthfully picture the silent and terrible grip that gnaws at the heart of a man who is coming back to a life of sobriety after years of terrible dissipation. It is a tortuous trip. Thousands embark for passage, but few arrive at an absolutely sober destination. Temptations and discouragements are always present.

There is no fixed time when a man cursed and burdened with drink may come to himself; but I was coming back, and in a manner and by a route that proved providential. My time to be free of the demon had been marked out. My last drunken attempt to secure money, paradoxical as it may seem, resulted in my reformation. God certainly "moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

ONE cold February morning in 1914 I called at the office of a fuel company and presented a cheque with the request that I be accommodated with the currency. While pretending to accommodate me, a clerk stepped to the telephone and called up the bank whose cheque I was using. They told the clerk that it was worthless and

the clerk to the assistant manager.

I shot out of the door and was confronted by about twenty coal heavers from the fuel company's yards with shovels and clubs. Of course I surrendered. I capitulated to this vast "army" and was taken to the office. On my arrival a police officer was waiting and took me to the police station. I was trembling and nervous, shattered from drink, and on the verge of delirium tremens. God knows I needed a stimulant, but I had had "My Last Drink," and from that minute I forsook strong drink forever.

The following morning I was arraigned before a judge who had known me in the days when I was a prosperous, respected and sober citizen. As I was brought to the bar, he viewed me with a pitying eye and said:—"Alderman, you are charged with operating a confidence game. What have you to say?"

I admitted the charge was true, told the Judge I was drunk at the time, had only a vague recollection of the transaction, that I was already on parole, and had just been released from the county jail. I begged the court to change the charge in the complaint from "operating a confidence game," which would send me back to the county jail to await action by the grand jury, to "disorderly conduct," which would place me within jurisdiction of his court. After some thought the Judge changed the charge. I pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to sixty days.

The Judge was kind enough to recommend that I be placed in the hospital and requested me to write to him at the end of thirty days and, if convinced that I wanted to stop drinking, he would assist me in securing a release. I remained only a few days, however, my never failing friends coming to the front and securing my release.

After I was sentenced, I was bundled into the prison bus for my journey. This bus will seat about twenty, but

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Drink sentences thousands of miserable women and pitiable children to lead most wretched lives

the shrieks of suffering men. Around their dying beds serpents unfolded coil after coil from out of the darkness, brandishing their forked tongues to sting them and lick their blood as a fierce flame licks up its fuel.

Some in their agony begged to plunge into a lake of fire to escape still greater torture; others stood on their cots shrieking with agony and begging the attendants to throw them down to earth. Demoniical ravings, muttering and curses made a perfect bedlam of the ward; the whole a human tragedy terrible to witness. Some were moaning and crying, shrieking and cursing and dying, while several uttered the most heart-piercing and piteous prayers for death to relieve them that ever passed the lips of man.

EVEN now these terrible combats come back to me like a nightmare and live again in ghostly pantomime in my sleep.

One poor victim, a well known business man, fell on his knees with his hands clasped in prayer, his eyes looking upward, shrieking that death might come at once to relieve him; and it did.

The most impressive and saddest sight of all was that of a young man scarcely out of his teens, chained to a cot, suffering with delirium tremens; some good mother's boy who had been caught and pinioned in the horrible grip of drink.

Look in every direction and you will see the frightful, devastating evidences of drink.

The drink traffic is the cause of most of the crimes committed; it causes an amazing waste of national resources, both physical and human. Pauperism is its offspring; it causes the great majority of divorces and other domestic difficulties which fill our police courts; it is the advance agent of the social evil; causes thousands of premature deaths; chokes our prisons, penitentiaries,