

HIS SHARE OF THE PROFITS.

(By Mary Humphrey.)

'I tell you, Sarah, it would mean ruin—absolute, hopeless ruin. That man doesn't know what he is talking about. The people of this province are not ripe for total abstinence. The traffic is a necessity, and I might as well have my share of the profits. If I refuse to sell liquor—the wines that these gentlemen want on their tables—they will simply deal elsewhere, and we may sell out and close our doors.'

The speaker threw off his heavy overcoat, and thrusting his hands into his pockets, commenced rapidly and nervously to pace the large and handsome apartment. He and his wife had just returned to their home, and she sat, still with her sealskin sacque and pretty bonnet on, like one ill at ease with her surroundings.

'But it is so dreadful,' she said, 'the harm this traffic is doing.'

'Oh, those temperance lecturers are a ranting lot. Their greatest pleasure in life is telling the most harrowing stories—'

'Alec, dear, you know as well as I, that every word he said was true, only too true.'

Ay, he knew it better than she did. He stood before her like an animal driven to bay, a hunted, miserable expression in his earnest brown eyes. 'What would you have me do?' he said. 'Say the word and I'll go down this gutter—and roll my hogsheads into the gutter—they're worth thousands of dollars—and we shall be beggars. Shall I—shall I do it?'

A little shriek, as a pretty baby escaped from his nurse and toddled forward eagerly into his mother's outstretched arms. She folded him to her heart and laid her gentle cheek upon his fluffy curls, and thought about the happy life which she had planned for him.

'Remember, if I do this deed we are beggars,' said the husband and father, sternly.

'Don't be hasty, Alec; let us take a night to think of it,' she murmured.

Next day his mood had changed. 'It is absurd,' he said. 'If I don't sell liquor somebody else will and I simply take the food out of my children's mouths to enrich other people.'

His wife shed many tears over their cruel predicament, but forbore to urge him, and in future each, by tacit consent, carefully avoided the temperance lecturers and total abstinence agitators.

Business prospered. The children, two daughters and a son, grew up amid 'all the refinements of a Christian home.' But over in his 'general grocery,' day by day, week by week and year after year, there went on that deadly distribution whose return was misery, degradation and death.

'One of our best citizens,' the town called Alec Guthrie, for he was a steady supporter of the church, an earnest worker in all philanthropic and charitable projects, a faithful, true-hearted friend. None deplored more deeply than he the spread of drunkenness among the young, 'the abuse of alcohol,' as he expressed it.

'Total abstinence is not necessary,' he would declare. 'Not at all. Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake,' etc. He did not pretend to be more strict than St. Paul. He had liquor in his sideboard constantly, used it himself with unflinching regularity, and 'no one ever saw me the worse,' he would declare with pride.

'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink,' says the Word. Possibly he never saw the warning, Bible student though he was. Nevertheless woe was on his track.

More dearly than aught on earth, except his wife, Alec Guthrie loved his son. And the time came when, for his sake, wine was banished from the sideboard and from the house, when the wine vaults were kept both locked and guarded; and young Harold simply 'dealt elsewhere,' buying from his father's rival that which had become a necessity to him, and reeling to his shadowed home.

Alec Guthrie stormed and threatened: 'You have no right to sell drinks upon your premises; liquors among your stock of goods conveys no privilege of retailing drinks,' he said.

'I have every right to invite a customer into my parlor and treat him, if I wish,' retorted the other.

'He is no customer of yours.'

'Excuse me he seems to find my biscuit better than your own, and makes a purchase daily. My fancy groceries are choice.'

Then the father pleaded: 'He is my only son, and he is drinking himself to death. Pity me—give him no more!'

'Pshaw! I am used to that sort of talk. You get your share of it, too, I fancy. What is your son more than any other man's? Half the young men in the town are in the same condition—through the abuse of alcohol.'

Harold tired of study, left his college, gained a situation through his father's friends in a distant city, but soon lost it, and came home to loaf about and torment his people. He was a dissolute looking fellow now; his manly beauty was a thing of the past; his sisters were ashamed of him; his parents looked upon him with ever increasing pain.

Of course he 'got in' with the worst set of young men in the town. Then his progress downward, though gradual, was steady. He worked his way to the inside of a prison cell, and from thence, through implication in a burglary, was handed on, with three or four of his chosen set, to the penitentiary.

'My son! my son! wailed his mother. 'Would to God we had been beggars a thousand times, and more—'

'Sarah, do you remember—'

'Remember? Ay, as well as I do my child's happy laughter, the feel of his soft baby arms about my neck, his silky curls against my cheek. Why, oh, why?—Alec, do it now—knock the end out of every hogshead—pour the vile stuff through the street!'

'Too late—too late,' groaned the unhappy man.

'For us, alas, yes, but not for others. There are other precious boys growing up in this town. We will not be their ruin. We will do what we can to warn their parents to save them, and God may bless us yet.'

He did her bidding. Men and horses went to work, and before night every drop of the costly fluids—deadly poison—flowed like a river of blood past the great doors of his general grocery. Drunkards flung themselves into the gutters, lapping up the fluid like dogs, and fell in a heavy stupor about the streets. All the town congregated around the grocery door, and not a few compassionate women wended their way up the richly carpeted staircase in the handsome home, to mingle their tears with those of the desolate mother.

'Mothers,' she said, 'oh, mothers, be warned—' and choked and sobbed and could say no more.

But in the street below, Alec Guthrie's voice was raised tremulously at first, but growing stronger with intense purpose, as he preached to the thronging street such a total abstinence sermon as they had never before heard. Not a man or woman stood unmoved.

'Thank you, Alec, thank you,' said his pastor, as the two men clasped hands. 'I have been as the blind leading the blind. God forgive me. Henceforth we will work together to build up the homes which we, by our example and encouragement, have helped to destroy. No more wine on my table from this night—no more "trifles," or wine jellies, or sauces, or puddings. It is—I see it now—it is an accursed thing.'

Then began such a work of grace as the little town had never known. The news of it penetrated even to young Harold Guthrie in his lonely prison. 'Had they done it sooner,' he said, 'I would not have been here. They taught me to drink, and when I had learned my lesson to perfection, all other evil was easy.'

But God was merciful. He came out of the penitentiary five years older, but immeasurably a wiser and a better man, and, though the consequences of his early training were to himself a life-long shame, the aged couple, whose stay and comfort he became, pointed with pride to the son who, though once worse than dead, had been so mercifully restored to them.

Harold assumed control of his father's business, and though their rival persisted in his pernicious traffic, the

Guthrie trade afforded a comfortable living, and when urged to take out a license, since the thing was a necessity, and he might as well share the profits, his reply was ever the same, 'It is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him through whom they come.'—'Union Signal.'

ONE WOMAN'S LIFE.

(By Mary Dwinell Chellis.)

Two ladies, meeting after years of separation, talked of the days when they were school-girls with little thought of what the future might bring to them of care or anxiety.

'I doubt if there was ever a merrier group than used to gather under the old elm when lessons were over for the day, and we were free to enjoy our hours of recreation,' remarked one.

'We were merry indeed,' was replied. 'Life was all before us, and there was no undertone of sadness in our merriment. You remember Sallie Marden?'

'Certainly I do, although I have not heard of her for twenty years. She was not one to be easily forgotten. I remember how strong and well she was, boasting that she was never tired, and glorying in her superb health.'

'She has needed all her health and strength.'

'I heard she made an unfortunate marriage.'

'That was generally known by her old friends, but I never dreamed how unfortunate her marriage was until I saw her a few months ago, and she told me the story of her life since her father's death. She married soon after he died, and went away among strangers, her mother going with her. As you will remember, she always felt sure of herself; so when she decided to marry Mark Houston, she had no misgivings. She loved him, as she told me, while her cheeks flushed with the memory of that love.'

'Well they might, for she was a girl of deep feelings; proud and self-willed, but with such a warm, loving heart, that she could never treat anyone unkindly, without afterwards asking forgiveness. An unfortunate marriage would be a terrible thing for her. I heard her husband was intemperate.'

'He was, and he became a perfect sot. He squandered every dollar of the property left to herself and her mother, besides treating her with the utmost cruelty. It does not seem possible that the Sallie Marden of our school-days would ever submit to personal abuse, but she did submit to it year after year. It made me shudder to hear her describe the life she led with that wretch.'

'They must have been poor.'

'They were; so poor, they were constantly moving, for which she said she was glad, as she was among strangers who knew nothing of her past life.'

'What of her mother?'

'She died soon after Sallie's marriage.'

'Were there children?'

'Yes; Sallie has three daughters.'

'Why did she live with her husband?'

'Because, as she said, she was too proud to leave him. She thought separation and divorce a terrible disgrace; but as her children grew older, her love for them and her sense of responsibility for their future, decided her. Alone, she knew she could earn enough to support and educate them. She had done more than that, but when her property was gone, her husband demanded the money she earned.'

'And she gave it to him? I would not have believed it of her.'

'She would not have believed it of herself; but one never knows to what depths of humiliation a drunkard's wife may be brought.'

'How did she earn money?'

'She washed and ironed, went out scrubbing, sewed, cooked, and, in short, did everything and anything that could be considered honest work.'

'But she might have taught. She was one of our best scholars.'

'Situated as she was, it would have been impossible for her to obtain a position as teacher. In thinking on what she might have done, you must not forget that she was known in the communities in which she lived only as a drunkard's wife.'

'How could she endure such a life? I should suppose she would have broken down utterly?'

'She did not. She said she was determined she would not. Through it all her strength did not fail, and when I saw her, she told me she was never in better health. She had not seen her husband for ten years, although she supposed him to be living somewhere in the Far West. Her love for him had died slowly but surely; while her children had never loved him.'

'She is a wonderful woman, and I hope her children will repay her for what she has done for them.'

'She feels repaid already. She says they are loyal to her in every fibre of their nature. They are not like their father or his family. They belong to her and her only, and she is so thankful for them, she does not wholly regret her marriage.'

'But why did she make such a marriage? She was an attractive girl who might have pleased a worthy man.'

'She thought him worthy. She knew he drank an occasional glass of liquor, but that did not trouble her. Her father was a moderate drinker all his life, and she never thought him the worse for it, although she can see now that he would have been a far better man without it. Her grandfather was a moderate drinker, as were most of her family friends. She seems to have had then no idea of the danger of moderate drinking, but she realizes it now, and wonders at her former ignorance.'

'And such has been Sallie Marden's life! She must have changed wonderfully since I saw her.'

'Less than you would suppose. She looks no older than you or I. Her life has not been unlike that of thousands of other women, except that few have strength to do what she has done. You would recognize her at once, and you could not be with her ten minutes without knowing that you are in the presence of a woman pledged heart and hand to do what she can to stay the tide of intemperance which threatens us.'

'It is not strange that she should be an enthusiastic worker for temperance. Suffering what she has, how could she do otherwise? She knows by experience how great is the need for such workers.'

'And we know by the experience of others. It is time for every woman in our land to make her influence felt against the sale and use of all intoxicating drinks. Some of us should do this for very thankfulness, and some—alas! too many—should do it for fear of what may come to our sons and daughters when they have passed beyond our control.'—The National Temperance Advocate.'

COMPANIONSHIP.

A writer in the 'New York Ledger' says:—

Parents ought at all times to have a watchful eye upon their children's companions, and that, too, in their own home-circle. It should never be too much trouble to have the children's friends around the house. To be sure, they make a good deal of noise and confusion, but this is for the most part harmless pastime, although it may, on certain occasions, be extremely annoying.

Every parent should systematically cultivate the acquaintance of children in other families. When people have children to train, they take upon themselves with this responsibility an obligation to do the very best for them that their circumstances will allow, and this obligation can never be met by shirking one of the things that is all-important, a strict watch over the mates of the little ones.

A house that is too good to be opened for games and pleasures for the young, will some day have a cloud hanging over it, caused by the wrong-doing and wrong-going of these same responsibilities. Nerves that are too sensitive to bear the noise and racket of children's company are very likely, in later years, to be torn with agony at a wasted life, misspent time and possible criminal conduct.

By all means set apart some portion of the dwelling for the benefit of the younger members of the household, and let their friends, their pleasures and their welfare have their proper place in the management of home affairs.