

THE RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

THE REV. J. JACKSON WRAY'S LAST STORY.

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CHAPTER VI.

It was quite impossible for blithe, light-hearted Alice Hayes to stop long indoors on that eventful summer's day. So after having regaled 'Liza and the cook with a full, true, and particular account of the afternoon's ceremonies, she donned her hat again, and went forth to compare notes with her chosen friend, Jennie Bardsley, over a quiet cup of tea.

As the Bardsley family are bound to have much to say and do in this drama of real life, it will be well to have them before us once for all. Old Richard Bardsley—Ricky Bardsley was the name by which he had been known in his own generation—was a drysalter of established name and position in Netherborough. His business had been built up by himself, and in such vigorous fashion that when the old man died his three sons found it good enough and strong enough to maintain all three of them, and so they went into partnership.

Of the three brothers Bardsley, Richard, the elder, was a clever business man, and had he been as steady as he was capable, it is hard to say to what pitch of prosperity the business might not have attained. Keen, pushing, energetic, with a quick eye to see an advantage, and ready skill to lay hold of it when it was got, Richard Bardsley, as a manager, was worth his weight in gold. Rather, let me say, would have been, if only he had been independent of the curse of Netherborough, which, through three generations of hard drinkers, still held the Bardsleys more or less in its dread hereditary grip. But Richard and his second brother, Henry, were jovial fellows; free-handed and free-hearted; and as capital boon companions, were ever in request. Both of them were strong, substantial, vigorous young fellows physically, and, though neither of them was remarkable either for strength of mind or extent of knowledge outside the mysteries of drysalting, and the sale of it, they were a couple of 'lively young fellows,' and great favorites with the 'set' with which they had socially allied themselves.

Walter Bardsley, the youngest brother, was quite different. Slight in build, and somewhat short in stature, he offered quite a contrast to his more robust brothers. I do not doubt that he possessed a fair measure of business capability, but he thought a good deal less about the trade than they did, and contented himself with the round of duty that came with every day, with no great desire to increase its scope. You had but to look at his thoughtful eyes, his broad intellectual brow, his whole face indeed, to perceive how completely the material in him was dominated by the mental, and how the moral held them both in check.

Walter had been a member of Mr. Norwood Hayes' Bible class, which had met for many years in the larger vestry of Zion Chapel. Then it was that the lad began to admire Mr. Hayes, and begin the process of devotion, that ended in little less than idolatry. Walter was well read; for all the stores of Mr. Hayes' well-stocked library had been placed at his disposal. Books were not much in the Bardsley's line, and the family book-case was ominously innocent of volumes, either of instruction or recreation. While he was still in his teens, Walter had come under the influence of that splendid soul, and noble pioneer in the great Temperance movement, Robert Gray Mason. He 'signed the pledge,' and at the date we come to know him, he was a staunch and devoted supporter of the small and feeble Total Abstinence Society, which, like Mrs. Partington's mop before the Atlantic waves, was trying to sweep away the curse of Netherborough. It was a day of small things; still, all honor to

the bold and faithful few, though their success was small.

The three brothers Bardsley had two sisters, Annie and Jane. The former was, to all intents and purposes, the mistress of the household, for as yet, none of them had ventured to bind themselves in matrimonial bonds. It is true that the mother, widow of Ricky Bardsley, was still nominally at the head of affairs, but the old lady had been practically superseded by her eldest daughter. She was still 'consulted,' but as she could seldom leave her chair without assistance, nothing very serious came of that.

Jane Bardsley, or Jennie, as she was called, was at once the youngest daughter and the youngest child. She was a bright, sprightly, and charming young woman of twenty.

The Bardsleys lived on the business premises, which were situated quite in the central position of the High Street, and not far from the place where the imposing block, owned by Mr. Norwood Hayes, quite put the old-fashioned drysalting establishment into the shade. To this latter, as I have said, came Miss Alice Hayes to see her friend, who, young lady-like, greeted her with much effusion. Miss Jennie had been a delightful observer of the bouquet incident.

'Why, Alice, you just looked lovely,' she said, 'and you went through it as easily as though you had been presenting bouquets for a month, to get your hand in. I saw Walter watching you. I tell you, he was that proud, the dear silly goose, that he stood a full inch higher in his shoes at the thought that you belonged to him!'

'O, nonsense,' said Alice deprecatingly, but blushing with pleasure, nevertheless. 'I don't belong to him yet, and, maybe I never shall, who knows.'

'Yes, dearie, who knows,' echoed Jennie in a low tone, and half checking a sigh the while.

'What's that mean,' said Alice quickly. 'Is it for me or yourself? If for me, don't trouble. I've faith in "my ain true laddie." If for yourself,' continued the chatty maiden, running on as usual, 'I saw Reuben Stanford in the crowd this afternoon; but he looked so strange—'

Alice paused in dismay, for the beautiful girl to whom she spoke blushed hotly to the very roots of her hair; then she turned pale as the white roses pinned at her breast, then her chin dropped upon the roses, large tears flowed down her face, and her lips quivered with a speechless ache of heart. The curse of Netherborough was again at work on 'that glorious day.'

Regretful Alice bit her lip in her vexation. She might have known; she ought to have known what it was that made Reuben Stanford 'look so strange.' When the tongue runs over fast, says the old proverb, it runs over far, and Alice's had a very free flow, though mainly a harmless one. She sought to turn the current of conversation.

'Are your brothers going to the banquet to-night?' She knew they were, but she must say something.

The only answer she got was a weary sigh, and a half-hopeless look, and the words, 'I hope he won't be there.'

And yet Reuben Stanford, 'the handsome Vet,' as he was called, was just the sort of 'social acquisition' that is always in great request at such gatherings as these. Never a finer young fellow passed through the halls of the Veterinary College than Reuben Stanford. Physically, mentally, and in the main, morally, he was every inch a man. This bright young man, who had won the heart of sweet Jennie Bardsley, seemed to win the hearts of all. No club, no public dinner, no charity ball, no anything of a social nature in or around Netherborough, could be called complete without the

presence of the genial, witty, handsome Reuben Stanford. This is the sort of man who is pressed to go on to perilous ground for other people's enjoyment and his own danger. These are they who come to be sympathetically spoken of as 'nobody's enemy but their own'; but, alas, they have enemies by the hundred, and these are their so-called 'social friends!' Friends who worship with them at church on Sunday, and on Monday help to send them to the devil, the grimmest devil that hunts for the souls of men!

Jennie Bardsley had a terrible heartache; this brought on a terrible headache.

And why? What was the cause of her grief? Only this, good Christian friends,—Mr. Norwood Hayes was coming along the street that morning just before luncheon time. At his office door he met the Vicar and Reuben Stanford. The former had an ailing carriage horse; the 'handsome Vet.' had been to see it, and both were now on their way to Bardsley Brothers for the healing drugs required.

'Good morning, Vicar,' said Mr. Hayes, who,

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