

## THE RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

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

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CHAPTER XXVII.—Continued.

And so when Caffer asked him if he had seen anything of Phil Lambert, he replied,

'No, I ain't, but I've seen his wife, poor soul! Caffer, I knoa that you've gotten a kind heart o' your own. I wish you wad go wi' me efter t' wedding. You can do another good fellow as good a turn, an' better then you ivver did i' your life. Will yo' oblige me?'

'Ah wad do owt fo' you, Aaron, owd friend, same as ivverybody else i' Netherbro' wad, if they had the chance.'

'Ah believe you wad, George. Ah believe you wad; if nobbut you—but niver mind that. Ah'll wait fo' yo' at t' chotch door.'

The marriage service was very impressive and affecting. The vicar put his heart into his work, and in a few well-chosen words as an addendum to the ordinary ritual, treated, not only the wedding-party, but the spectators, to a display of feeling not too common on such occasions.

Old Aaron Brigham was delighted and thankful to observe that the eyes of George Caffer were well filled with tears which he furtively wiped away. The two men met at the church door, according to arrangement, and as they sauntered along the churchyard path, Aaron said,

'They seem to be mekin' a happy start, them two young folks, George. I'se hopeful that they'll be both comfortable an' prosperous. It's rare thing for them that Walter's dead again drink, now, isn't it?'

'Ah weean't deny it, Aaron. I isn't such a fool as not to knoa. Drink's the devil, an' ruins everything. Ah knoa what's best if Ah don't do it. Ah nabbut wish Ah did.'

Caffer sighed heavily, as he spoke, and Aaron—prayed. As they approached the little barber's shop, a low and mean looking abode, though it did stand in the market-place, Caffer became slightly restive.

'Wheear are we goin'? Ah don't want shavin', said he, with a faint smile at his own small joke.

'Mebbe not,' replied the old man, just then in his most genial mood. 'The errand we've come on is to do a kindness for another, not for owt we want ourselves. Come in.'

Aaron turned in at the doorway underneath the barber's pole, whose stripes of white and red, and whose gilded knob sadly needed such brightening up as painter Caffer could only supply, for Netherborough held George Caffer to be 'a splendid fellow at his trade,' a knight of the brush that all Yorkshire would 'find it hard to beat.'

Aaron Brigham walked straight through the shop into the small living-room, that lay to the right of it, and was followed by Caffer, who did not feel much at home, although he had, in days 'lang syne,' been there before.

The scene that greeted Caffer's shrinking gaze was of a widely different sort. The room was clean. Susie Lambert held by that relic of the old and happy times, and would do, though she died on her knees with the pail by her side, and the floor-cloth in her feeble hand. But the evidences of the most sordid poverty and starvation were on every hand. 'Susie,' as Caffer himself used to call her in neighborlike and familiar fashion in the old, respectable days, was seated in an old arm-chair, her head reclining on a pillow, and her face all but as white as it, for Susie must have clean linen, that is to say, so far as she can have it at all. There was nothing on the blank walls of the room except a colored print or two, unframed, and tacked on with

nails, which had been given to the children by their teachers at the Sunday School. What little furniture there was left was broken, and all but worthless, wretched relics of happier times. There was no fire in the grate, though the year was rapidly creeping on to chill November, and Yorkshire folks are partial to a 'bit o' fire' pretty well all the year round. On the table was a quartered loaf, a bit of 'dripping,' a substitute for the butter that might not be had, and a mug of tea, the gift of a neighbor, who knew that Susie Lambert was 'varry bad,' which means that she was ill, very ill indeed. Two or three children, also clean, considering, but wan and thin, and little more than half clad, were sitting on the floor, the eldest trying to keep quiet a baby which was loudly protesting in its own way that it wanted food.

The sight was pitiful, most pitiful, and George Caffer felt a creeping feeling of horror stealing over him—and of shame.

'Why, Susie, my lass,' he said, 'I niver knew that things was so bad as this wi' yo'. Hoo d'ye feel this mornin'?'

'Feel?' said the poor, despairing woman, 'I don't feel; I've gotten past it; an' if it wasn't for t' bairns, nowt would suit me sae weel as layin' me down to dee.'

'Nay, nay, nay!' said Caffer, with a burst of feeling, 'that can't be; that shan't be. Ah'll—'

'How can it be helped, George Caffer, while you and Phil spend half your time and all your money at the "Black Swan?" O, George, George! You were a good, kind fellow once; but I wish to God my husband had niver known yo', an' that you had niver darkened our door! Ah'm goin' te dee, George Caffer,' continued the excited woman, lifting up her two thin hands as if about to imprecate the judgment of heaven, 'and I call—'

'Stop, Susie, stop. Ah can't bide it!' said the scared painter. 'Ah's sorry an' 'sham'd. What can I do—'

'Do!' said the woman, springing to her feet, and placing her trembling hands on Caffer's shoulder, 'Ah'll tell yo' what yo' can do. Here she dropped her voice to a hoarse whisper: 'You took my man Phil te t' "Black Swan," an', this is what's come on it. George Caffer, bring him out again, an' Ah'll bless yo' on my bended knees!'

Susie Lambert could say no more, she sank all but exhausted into her chair, with her questioning eyes fixed, fixed like barbed hooks, on Caffer's face. The look held him, drew him. For one moment he made a pause.

'Speak, George, lad, an' save 'er life,' said old Aaron, who had been a silent observer, and a talker with God.

'Susie!' said Caffer, and there was a look on his face that had not been there for many a long year. 'What you ask me shall be done. Ah'll bring Phil oot o' t' "Black Swan," an' Ah'll keep him oot. Ah will, Susie, Ah will, owd lass. Ah will by the help of God!'

'Cheer up, Mrs. Lambert,' chimed in the delighted Aaron, 'I've faith i' George, I'll help him all I can, an' you an' me both on us knoa hoo to ask of God.' Here he put a little money on the table, quietly, promised to send his housekeeper, Esther, to help her, and left the room. Caffer had seen the coin secretly laid upon the table, and his heart went out to the old man in love and honor. He had but one coin, half-a-crown in his pocket, but it quietly went to bear the old man's shilling company.

'I think you can save poor Susie's life, friend Caffer. I think you can save Phil, poor fellow, both body and soul.'

But Caffer had become strangely quiet. Not

one word did he say. Aaron pressed him a little.

'Don't you think sae, George?' he said, gently and persuasively. Caffer stood still, and said, as he looked anxiously at his venerable companion,

'But hoo sall Ah save myself, Aaron? There's the rub. Ah niver thowt about that till Ah lost sight o' poor Susie Lambert's white feece. Ah wad if Ah could, but—'

'Could!' said Aaron, laughing lightly, as if in the fulness of a great confidence, but quite as well aware as Caffer of the difficulties in the way. 'Could! Of course you can. You an' the Lord God Almighty can do that, George, my boy, an' a good deal more. I should like to help you at it, an' I've just thowt of a way. Lily Lodge wants paintin' badly, both outside an' in. I been thinkin' o' Revin' it done for a year or two back. It'll want two coats o' paint at least, mebbe three. Noo I'll give the job to yo', and I'll feed an' sleep you while it's done. We can agree aboot that when we seetle aboot wages. Or I can feed yo' an' yo' can sleep at your oan hoose. My Esther can mek' yo' as mitch tea an' coffee as yo' like, or you can ha' milk—owt that I can get yo' but beer or ony of its relations. They'll niver come into Lily Lodge until Good Friday fals on Ash Wednesday an' nut then.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

So Aaron was minded to keep his hand on Caffer, and even if the painting of Lily Lodge is done without permanent effect upon the man, he will find some way of keeping up the siege, until the citadel is captured, and the 'strong man armed' expelled for ever. Yes, Caffer's soul was all alive with hope; his heart throbbed with a new life; his face bore the glow of a high resolve.

'Aaron Brigham,' said he, grasping him by the hand, 'by the mercy of God and you, I'm a saved man!'

'God grant it,' said Aaron Brigham, and the angels said, 'Amen!'

'When sall Ah begin?' said Caffer.

'Why, just noo, to be sure, things 'll want cleanin' doon before you put t' paint on. Let's get to work at once.'

Nothing loath, the painter went with him to Lily Lodge, and was soon at work with pail and soap and scrubbing brush, preparing the woodwork for its first coat of paint. Esther Harland was told to provide him with something to drink, and then, as soon as he well could, Aaron Brigham went in search of Phil Lambert, on whom he had designs of a similar sort. He could not help smiling at the thought that as he had captured Caffer by the bait of Phil Lambert's possible salvation, and of his wife's recovered health and happiness, so he would try to save Lambert by holding out the same inducement. Caffer might be rescued from the drunkard's fate if Phil Lambert would join him, Aaron Brigham, in this holy hunt for the emancipation of a soul. That was the way he meant to put it. As he paced the Spaldon Road towards the little shop in the market-place with its variegated pole, the prayers of the good man were neither few nor feeble that in this mission also God might be with him.

The barber was not at home; he very seldom was. 'Ha you ony idea where I shall drop on to him?' he asked the eldest girl, who was standing at the shop-door with the restless baby in her arms.

'I expect you'll niver miss 'im if yo' call at the "Black Swan,"' she said. 'Feyther's there a good deal mair then he's here. Ah wish he'd stop there, that I do.'

(To be continued.)