

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## THE RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

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

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—(Continued.)

Well, the annual feast of the Old Fellows was held in Netherborough, not a great while after poor Tom Smart had fallen in his fight with Apollyon. After the annual business of the club was transacted, a dinner was provided in the club-room of the inn. Of course, much strong ale and still stronger liquors were freely quaffed by all and sundry; toasts were honored, speeches were made, and social hilarity was the order of the day.

Of course, the leading magnates of the town were present. Dr. Medway of the purple countenance was there as the club-doctor, and his younger rival as an invited guest. Lawyer Everett was there as the club-solicitor; and besides other semi-officials, and honorary members, several invited visitors from the town and neighborhood. Among these was Walter Bardsley and his younger brother-in-law, Cuthbert Hayes. These two had been more than ever intimate as companions and friends, and it was the subject of universal remark in Netherborough that both of them had changed during the brief space that elapsed since Walter's wedding-day.

Of course, the worthy vicar was a distinguished guest, as was also the Rev. Daniel Dunwell, the excellent Nonconformist minister. His presence was always welcomed with a triple round of cheers. His speeches were so sound and sensible, so full of wit and humor, and his apt and timely jokes and stories never failed to set the table in a roar. Not but that on occasion Mr. Dunwell was most grave and serious in his advice to the men of the club. He spoke lovingly and well of the value of forethought, thrift, and their kindred virtues, not forgetting, too, to speak of the wisdom and necessity of insuring happy provision of the world to come.

On this particular occasion, Mr. Dunwell excelled himself. By his wonderful combination of pathos and humor, he roused the company to a pitch of enthusiasm not common to them, even when under the spell of his own fascinating speech. All this was the more remarkable because it was evident to everybody that Mr. Dunwell was 'not at all himself.' He was wan and worried in appearance, had dark rings about his sunken eyes, and the smiles and general jauntiness that were more or less suitable to the occasion were evidently assumed, and maintained only by a strong effort of the will. His more intimate friends had noted this change in him for many days past, but only a very few of them ascribed it to its real cause. The fact is that Tom Smart's dreadful misadventure at the sacramental service, and his mysterious disappearance, had fallen on the pastor of 'Zion' like a blow, and had brought him face to face with questions such as he had never asked himself before.

At the close of his address everybody seemed wishful to take wine with him. He was ever courteous and genial, and had not the heart to disoblige. Little by little, and quite unawares of it all, he passed the bounds of moderation and became flushed and 'elevated.' The red flag of danger showed itself upon his face, but, alas! he himself could not read the warning. Others noted it; some with a wicked pleasure; some with a degree of pain.

Mr. Norwood Hayes saw it, and was grieved! he saw it develop and was angry. He was led, at length, to look at him steadily with a view to catch his eye, his own eye being filled with meaning and rebuke. His friend and pastor, however, was too obfuscated to

readily read the warning. When he did perceive it, he intimated his intention to retire. This was greeted by a protest so strong, so universal, that he sank again upon his seat with a foolish smile upon his handsome face.

Meanwhile Dr. Medway, the soaked and seasoned medico, who avowed such faith in the medical virtues of port wine, and who showed his faith by his works, alike in his prescriptions and his practice, leaned towards Lawyer Everett, his boon companion, in many a revel, and whispered to him. Everett professed, so far as religion was concerned, to be an unbeliever, and never lost an opportunity of scoffing at or putting shame on those who held a nobler creed. His eyes gleamed and an evil smile came across his face. Turning to his neighbor on the other side, who was no other than that pink of honor, Dick Bardsley, he whispered in turn to him. The precious trio allied themselves forthwith to devise and work out a piece of deviltry.

A little later on, Lawyer Everett rose to his feet and was greeted with a round of cheers. He also was a glib and taking speaker, and had the ear of his audience at once. Addressing the president of the evening, he said: 'I venture to express the hope, Mr. President, that you will pardon the liberty I take in attempting to interfere with the prescribed list of toasts on this occasion. I think, sir, that when you hear the toast that I would propose, I shall have your heartiest permission and approval.' Here he paused, looking to the chair inquiringly. The president nodded a gracious permission to proceed.

'We have had with us for many years at these annual festivities,' resumed the lawyer, 'the presence of our brilliant and eloquent friend and brother, if he will allow me the honor of calling him so, the Rev. Daniel Dunwell.' Here there was vociferous applause. 'I was quite sure,' continued the speaker, 'that the name would get that unmistakable greeting. Well, I have heard the reverend gentleman speak on many occasions, in many places, and on many subjects, but I must say that I have never heard him to such advantage, never felt so spellbound, never had all that is best in me' (which was not much) 'so roused and strengthened as by the lucid, lively, witty, pathetic, humorous, beautiful, and brilliant speech we have heard from his lips to-night. I am willing to bear all the responsibility of this somewhat irregular toast, even to the providing of sufficient champagne of the Nonpariel Brand in which to do it honor. I would suggest that the gentleman whom we delight to honor, be given a little time before he responds, seeing that he has been taken by surprise. Fill your glasses, gentlemen, and let us ask the president to lead us in drinking health, long life, and prosperity to the Reverend Daniel Dunwell.'

They all rose from their seats, 'did full justice' to the toast, and to the Nonpariel too, and joined thereafter in a tumultuous cheer. Mr. Dunwell was taken by surprise, and he was grateful for the pause provided for him before he ventured to reply. Alas, he employed the time in seeking inspiration from the flowing bowl, just as the plotters had expected. Then he arose, and the precious trio who had planned the shameful snare, knew that the hour of their triumph was at hand.

No sooner had he risen than he dropped again into his seat. Again he made the effort to stand upon his feet, and leaning both

hands upon the table, he lifted up his face. And what a face! His hair was in disorder, his eyes were dull and heavy, and his eyelids could not succeed in their struggle to keep unshut. His features were red and swollen, and his mouth was unable to shape itself to utter the incoherencies he aimed at. He swayed from side to side, mumbled a few sounds of unintelligible drivel, and then literally slid down in a huddled heap upon his chair!

A great silence filled the room! A silence of surprise; a silence of disgust; a silence of sorrow and dismay; a silence of exultation and delight.

Then Mr. Norwood Hayes announced that Mr. Dunwell had been taken ill, and opening a side door close by the end of the raised table where the president sat surrounded by the leading guests, he and another succeeded in getting him removed.

The whispered interpretation of the supposed 'illness' given to his comrades by Dr. Medway in this cruel and vile plot, was sufficiently expressive; and, alas! was also more than sufficiently true. 'He's as drunk as a lord!' said he, with an exultant chuckle, that revealed the baseness of the man. The kindly intentioned effort of Mr. Hayes and a few other staunch friends to impose and urge the 'illness' theory on the general public as the cause of Mr. Dunwell's strange conduct at the club feast, did something to check the tide of feeling that was setting fast against the unhappy man, but both he and they felt that his career at Netherborough was all but ended; and, so far as he was concerned, he was more than willing that this should be. The story of this fall is terrible in the telling.

The idea must not be entertained for one moment that Daniel Dunwell had been anything other than a Christian man, a true disciple of Jesus Christ in everything that made his life worthy and useful, except in his attitude on the drink question. In defence of that position he had the support of popular custom, common wont and usage, and the conventional Christianity which refuses to regard the grim destroyer of soul and body as a forbidden thing.

Since that memorable Communion Service which ended so desperately for poor Tom Smart, Mr. Dunwell had never been himself. Crushed down by an overwhelming sense of the utter collapse of all hope for the poor reformed drunkard, now that his feet had been tripped up in the very sanctuary of Christ, he had for weeks past found himself unequal to the preparation of his sermons. He groaned in bitterness of soul to feel that he could not do it without a stimulus from the decanter, and yet he hated himself the more for his confession of weakness, this acknowledgment of hands that he could not break.

(To be Continued.)

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