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## The Lunch and the Fly-Trap.

A TEMPERANCE STORY BY A LADY.

"What have you got there," said Mr. Edgar to his little son Charley, as he was just going to his evening's work, from which he seldom returned till midnight.

"A lunch," said Charley, "I am afraid you may want something to eat before you come home, and I don't want you to stop at the Exchange. Please don't, father!"

"What are you talking about, my son? What do you know about lunches and the Exchange? What do you mean?"

"Why, it is in the paper, father, and I asked mother, and she thinks it is to get folks in to drink: Something like a fly-trap."

"A fly-trap! A very dignified comparison your mother has hit upon; truly! Then she had been telling you that I stop at the Exchange, and that I get lunches, and all that? Fine gossip for your mother!"

"O, no, father! she did not say a word about you, and did not know that you went there, until I told her that I found you there the day Bessie was so sick. And, O, father, how bad she looked when I told her!"

"What did you distress your mother for, you 'mischivous fellow? Why did you report such a thing, when you never found me there but once? Do you think I am going to stop and eat anywhere to-night? Why, child, you are crazy!"

"Why, the paper tells them to come just quarter before ten; but please, father, don't stop—come home early, just as you used to when mother used to sing, and play the piano, and you played the flute. O, they were such nice times! I could just lie in the bed, and listen, and it helped me to go to sleep, and have pleasant dreams, too. Come, father, do take it!"

Mr. Edgar was softened, and could not deny the request. He went away not only with a lunch in his pocket, but a weight upon his conscience. He had noticed at the table the troubled countenance of his wife, but dare not inquire the cause. He knew too well already. He repaired to his office, lighted his cigar, and tried to banish unwelcome thoughts, but in vain. What was to be done? A party of his boon companions were soon to assemble at his office, and go from thence to the Exchange. A rare entertainment was in course of preparation, which was to be enlivened with wine and merriment. "Perhaps," thought he, "I can go *once more*, and then break off." But he had no sooner come to this decision, than the pale countenance of his wife, and the importunity of his child, would rush upon his mind. Neither could that formidable fly-trap be forgotten. "Surely,"

thought he, "I was almost *suds'd* the last evening, and dare I venture again? No, there is safety only in flight, and I know it is not an inglorious retreat." He wrote a hasty apology to his friend, stating that the circumstances of his family required his presence, and then returned home. No bright lamp illumined his parlor; only a dim light shone from a solitary chamber. "Poor Mary," thought he, as he found the street-door fastened, "you do not look for me for many a long hour." Noiseless and unperceived, he entered by a side door, and approached the room occupied by his wife and children.

The little son had dismissed his disquietudes for a season, and was sleeping sweetly upon the couch. Little Bessie occupied the crib, and the mother sat by it in her cushioned chair, with her head reclined, resting upon her hand. She would sometimes raise her head, press her throbbing temples, heave a sigh, and then resume her former posture. Mr. Edgar was moved. "Ah!" thought he, "is that my own dear Mary—the only daughter that I severed from dotting parents, whose hearts still bleed over the separation? Is that pale, languid face the same that was once radiant with smiles? Oh, wine! wine! what hast thou done? This heart has been steeped in thy poison till it has ceased to love—to feel—no, thank God! he does—still love—still feel; and, by God's blessing, he will show it henceforth. Here I do most solemnly pledge myself that this liquid poison shall never again enter my lips. Stepping gently forward, and seating himself by the side of his wife, he said, "Why, Mary, are you ill to-night?"

Starting up in surprise, she said, "Why—yes—no, not very. But, Edward, are you sick, that you have come home so early?"

"O, no, not at all; I feel better than usual this evening, but I observed that you looked pale at the table, and have hastened home on your account."

"Dear Edward, do not leave me," said the wife, with a beseeching look, "just stay with me one evening."

"No, Mary, I am not going to leave you; you are to share the entertainment, and it is prepared already," he said, as he drew the paper from his pocket.

"There, Mary, the lunch had well nigh ruined your husband, and I verily believe the 'lunch' will save him, too."

Mrs. Edgar at once recognized the agency that had restored her husband to her side, and smiling amid her tears, she begged the privilege of adding something to the repast.

"No," he said, "nothing but some cold water; let us have Charley's identical lunch, and while you pre-