

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

Contributed by the I. O. G. T.

All lodges, and others interested in temperance work, are earnestly solicited to contribute for this column. Correspondence to be sent to Secretary, Cambridge Union Lodge, McDonalds Corner.

"Let all who love our Order and desire its progress—who love our Order and desire its maintenance—who would extend a knowledge of our beautiful organization, and perpetuate its principles, which aim to promote fraternity, to unite men and women in acts of benevolence and incite them to a generous emulation for the good of all mankind, that our Charity may be co-extensive with the universe, winning by gentle influence and example the erring and unfortunate victims of the tyrant alcohol to a place in our inner sanctuary, where sweet Peace sits enthroned, and Purity has an abiding place, and Love is the guiding star, unite in a determination to sustain and support this Temperance Column."

W. E. B.)

RALPH CLARKSON'S GUARDIAN ANGEL.

By P. B. Bostwick.

(Concluded)

"A wine drinker, a heartless profligate in everything."

"Nay, father, heartless he is not. It is unjust, cruel; he does not deserve it; if he were all this, I have one firm defence to make for what I intend to do!" she broke off, and her cheek became crimson beneath the tears that flowed over it.

"And what is that reason?"

"I love him!"

He glanced at her sorrowfully, while a look of sadness for a moment shaded his face, then replied:

"And are you not persuaded that he seeks you from love in return, and not for the thousands left you by your mother?"

There was a touch of sarcasm in his voice; and it fell harshly on the struggling heart of his daughter.

"I know that he loves me for myself alone. I am as certain of it as that my pulse beats. I want no better proof than beats in my own bosom—heart answers to heart in this!"

There was something beautiful in the confidence which filled that young heart—beautiful but dangerous.

For a moment the eyes of her father lighted up with admiration, but he saw the precipice on which she was standing, and proved how deeply his interests were enlisted in her welfare, by the trouble which he sought to bring her away.

"I consent to this sacrifice—will not consent!"

"I grieve that this is your determination, father," said Grace, with meek dignity, "but my word, my soul is pledged. I cannot war forever against his pleadings and my own heart. He has faults, I acknowledge he has, no one admits that more frankly than myself, but he will amend them. You do not know how warm and true his nature is."

Her father shook his head.

"Let it be so, then," she added, smiling through her tears, "I can love him spite of his faults."

"Very well, Grace, I see that you are determined to have your own way, and there is no legal power to prevent it. Oh! my daughter," he added, with emotion, "would to heaven you had picked your affections upon a more worthy object."

Two months after the dream was accomplished. Grace Arlington knelt by the side of that dangerous man. The good pastor who had held her at the baptismal font, pronounced the words of union, but his voice broke and he looked compassionately on the young creature kneeling at his feet, as if the task he was performing was painful to his good heart.

The ivy that crept over the little porch, and the tall windows were filled with a dirge-like wind, and the tablet sunk in the wall to her mother, seemed like a scroll written over with reproaches.

Ten years have passed—ten long eventful years. It is midnight, and the last solemn chime lingers on the air with a mournful cadence, for it is the death of the old, and the birth of the new year.

The bells from many a church steeple pealed forth their merry chimes upon that eventful evening, but as their silvery tones rang out upon the midnight air, a solemn strain could be heard mingled in their joyful strains, for it also tolled the death-knell of the departed year.

A weary watcher is plying her busy needle. Her eyes were dim and sunken, her cheeks thin and pale, her lips pinched and purple, and her slender fingers so shriveled with the icy chill that was fast plying her, that the plain gold ring on her wedding finger, and the thimble that she held, were every now and then dropping into her lap.

Her delicate form was shivering, even under the heavy shawl that she had thrown about her shoulders, and she looked often with a wistful glance at the scanty basket of fuel that stood beside the little stove.

Another hour passed and the clock struck one.

"He must soon be here, now," she whispered, in a half-frightened tone. "I will lay aside my work, and make our little room as cheerful as I can."

She drew the coals in the stove together, throw on them a handful of the carefully saved fuel, and fanned the faint flame until it roared and sparkled merrily.

She then looked about the room, to see if aught could be mended, but the few articles it contained were all in their accustomed place, and everything as neat as the hands of love could make it.

An arm-chair was drawn from the corner, close to the fire, the dressing gown that hung upon it spread out anew, a pair of slippers were placed beside it. The lamp was trimmed afresh, the table dusted, and a carefully covered dish set upon it, and beside it was placed a knife almost as bright as though the blade had been silver instead of steel.

"I have done best I can," said the pale watcher, as again she sank into her chair. "Oh! that I were sure of only one kind word," she continued. "Hark!" She started up and listened. "It is he, and how he bangs the gate. I shall have a fearful time with him."

She hastened to the front door, and gently opened it.

A man staggered in, and finally, reached the room his gentle wife had made so bright and cheerful.

But what was her reward? A volley of oaths so foul that it seemed as if an army of fiends had spoken with one voice.

He cursed the niggardly fire, though to make that, she and her children had been half-frozen all day. He swore at the patched dressing gown, though out of her thin wardrobe she had planned it. He raved at the bread and meat, though his own lean fingers had served them both.

And, when, angel-like, and woman-like, too, she gave him a smile for every frown, an endearing word for every oath, and could have wound her arms about him to win him back to reason and himself, he raised his heavy hand and dealt her a powerful blow; and she struck her till every nerve quivered, with anguish, and she his wife, and the mother of his beautiful children!

It was many hours ere she awoke from the stupor into which the cruel blow of her husband had thrown her.

When she did the bright sun was shining cheerily into that unhappy and desolate home, as if his genial rays would fain shed warmth and comfort there.

She arose weakened, exhausted, and staggering toward the little stove, endeavoring to kindle a fire.

Soon after, loud knocking was heard at the street door. She hastened to open it, and was met by two policemen.

"Does Ralph Clarkson live here?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, while an inexpressible pain entered her heart at the thought of what could be the nature of their business with him.

"Is he in?"

"Yes, sir, come this way," she answered, leading the way to their little room.

A look of pain and sorrow passed over the speaker's face, as he glanced around the scantily furnished apartment, and then upon the husband still lying upon the floor, oblivious of everything passing around him. No fire, no food, but cold and cheerless.

"Madam," continued the speaker, in a kind voice, "we have come to arrest your husband."

"My husband! And are you going to take him to prison?"

"Yes, that is our painful duty."

"Oh, heavens! not that, not that. Pray, what has he done?"

"Yesterday he severely stabbed a man in a drunken brawl, and as he is in a critical condition, we must hold your husband in custody until he is pronounced out of danger by his physician, and perhaps longer, if he cannot pay the costs."

"My husband in prison! My Ralph a murderer! Father in heaven, this is too much—too much!" she exclaimed, in agonized tones, and fell fainting upon the floor.

"Tom," said he to his companion, "you take Clarkson to the station house, and I will take care of this poor woman," and he lifted her tenderly up, placing her upon their little bed, and then hastened for a physician and some food and fuel.

"Poor woman! poor woman!" he muttered to himself, as he hurried along through the keen, frosty air, "how you must suffer this cold weather, and that vagabond of a husband. She has seen better days, I know. Poor woman! God have mercy upon you."

On the outskirts of the city of A—, stands a huge building, dark and fearfully gloomy, uprearing itself and frowning over the cheerful dwellings, and beautiful specimens of architecture that surround it, like a blasted fortress, cumbering a beautiful country with its huge proportions.

The very sight of this prison house is enough to make the soul shudder.

Many a wretched heart has withered within its walls, or broken in the intense agony of its suffering. Many a head has turned gray while watching those damp, naked walls year after year, till hope, and even the wish for liberty grew faint with suffering.

Within these walls, a prisoner, with no hopes of release, lay Ralph Clarkson. They had given him a cell to himself, and there, in solitude, he lay tossing to and fro on his straw pallet; ever and anon he sat up and looked at the bolted door with blood-shot eyes, and lips that trembled as he gazed.

She came at last, and the sound of her footfall on his dungeon floor stole to that feverish heart like dew upon a bruised flower.

The devoted wife sat down beside his couch, and tried to force back the tears that lay so heavily upon her forehead, but, as she laid her hand upon his forehead, and gazed into his face, so changed with the midnight revel, and his own bitter thoughts, sobbed burst from her bosom, and bending down, she kissed him again and again, as if she feared he might deem them a reproach.

He turned away, and muttered hoarsely to himself.

"Can nothing be done—must we remain here forever?" said the wife, conquering her tears.

He sat up and made an effort to appear calm.

"Leave me, Grace," he said; "leave me to the fate I have so well merited."

"Leave you, my husband! no, never! Where you go, there I will be; and where you die, there will I be buried."

Her face was like that of an angel, as she thus adapted the most beautiful poetry of love.

"Grace, Grace, I am not worthy of such love," turning aside his head to hide the gathering tears. "God bless you my noble wife," he added, his voice choked with emotion.

A knock at the door warned them that their interview must end.

For a moment Grace was folded to her husband's bosom, and she was gone. The starlight of his life was darkened, and he was alone in his gloomy prison, a prisoner without hope—without a ray of light to brighten his future life.

The day of the trial at length arrived, and a more beautiful one never dawned. The sun burst forth in all his majesty and splendor above the mountain tops that reared their lofty heads heavenward, capped with the eternal snows of winter, which sparkled and glistened in the rays of the morning sun with a brilliancy that vied with the most precious jewels.

Long before the hour for the opening of the court-room doors arrived, a large crowd had collected in the yard, and when the doors were thrown open, the court-room was immediately filled to its utmost capacity with eager and expectant faces.

When the prisoner was brought into the court-room, his handsome face pale from agitation and recent confinement, and with an expression of intense anxiety in his eye, all before not deeply interested for the friends of the unfortunate man, were moved to pity, and strongly repressed in his favor.

After the usual preliminaries had been gone through with, the witnesses for and against the prisoner examined, the counsel for the people, Mr. H—, arose and made a few remarks. He was a tall, thin man, of a grave and stern expression of countenance; his hair was slightly tinged with gray, and his piercing gray eyes shone from underneath his shaggy eyebrows like a hawk's.

He was the only thing about him that looked like life; and when he began to speak, it was in a slow, distinct, unimpassioned manner, and without the least attempt at eloquence. He said:

"It is useless to dwell upon this case. The evidence given by the witnesses here present, is too conclusive to admit of any argument on my part. If the prisoner at the bar is not guilty of murder, then there is no truth in this; and if the twelve jurymen do not bring in a verdict of guilt, then justice has been overthrown and deprived of her sceptre."

The counsel for Ralph, Mr. M—, had remained a quiet listener throughout the entire trial, until now.

At the conclusion of Mr. H—'s remarks, he arose and made a speech in defence of the prisoner, that was a master piece of oratory and eloquence.

For two long hours he held that vast audience spell-bound by his eloquence, and often even moved to tears at some tender allusion to the prisoner. The drop of a pin could have been heard, so still was the death-like silence that prevailed.

In his concluding remarks, he said: "Gentlemen of the jury, can you look upon the frank, manly face of the prisoner at the bar, and say within yourselves, that murder ever entered his heart? I think not, unless your hearts are made of stone, and I believe they are not, for your faces, beaming with intelligence and sympathy, verify the assertion. Look at his devoted, heart-broken wife, mark her deep sorrow; can you condemn him who is dearer to her than all others upon earth, and make her home ever after desolate? Her hope in the jury to-day is strong. She believes they will not doom her husband to an ignominious death, and a dishonored grave. She even hopes they will not consign him to long, weary years of imprisonment. May He dispose the hearts of these twelve men, on whom the fate of this man now hangs, so that they shall show that, like Himself, they are lovers of mercy."

At this juncture, the physician attending the wounded man, rose and testified that he was out of danger, and would soon be fully recovered from the injuries he had received.

The jury retired, and after three long, weary hours—hours that seemed as long as the grief-stricken wife, returned a verdict of "guilty of assault, with intent to kill."

After a careful review of the case, the judge, in consideration of the prisoner's wife, and the interest manifested by his numerous friends, made the sentence as light as he could consistently do, and sentenced him to eight years' imprisonment.

"Joy, joy, my husband! You are free again; free, free! Look here!"

Grace had a pandemonium from the Governor in her hand; but she trembled so, that when she held it toward her astonished husband, it fell fluttering to the stone flags.

He did not pick it up then, for a dearer burden lay against his heart—his wife—his own true wife, who wept upon his bosom as she had never wept before in her whole existence.

Again, the bells merrily chime the birth of a new year. The death-month and the birth-month have come together once more. The bells have rung, the snow has woven, as no monarch's robes are woven, the white Christmas robe, and at the baptismal font, we welcome and christen the new year. Dear reader, let us take a peep into the home of Ralph Clarkson. A cheerful fire glows in the grate, shedding its soft, mellow light over all. The room is furnished with everything a refined taste can suggest. In one corner stands a handsome piano, at which is seated a beautiful lady singing, in sweet musical tones, a glorious anthem to the dying year, and as the last note dies away into silence, the little French clock chimes the hour of twelve. She turns and places her hand in that of her husband, who is bending tenderly over her with a look of deep, unselfish love beaming from every feature. The wife looks confidently, yet shyly, into the face bent over her, while tears—tears of joy and happiness glisten in her eyes.

"Ralph, I am so happy," she murmured, in soft, low accents.

"Heaven bless you, my dear wife; I am glad for your sake; but can you forget, Grace—can you forget the scenes of one year ago to-night—my cruelty?"

"Do not speak of it, Ralph," and a soft white hand is placed chidingly over his lips. "I can forgive and forget all, dear Ralph. With the old year, let us bury the painful recollection of the past."

"God bless you, my angel wife," he exclaims, while the silent tear rolls down his cheek.

Reader, we will drop the veil over a scene so sacred. Let us leave them in their new-found happiness, for if happiness is not theirs, then there is no such emotion to be felt on this earth.

Ralph Clarkson is now an honored and respected citizen of the city of A—, and a member of good standing in the Temple of Honor; and to his faithful and devoted wife he owes all.

Was she not his "Guardian Angel?" (The End.)

Why He Married.

In the north of England, where rabbit coursing is much in vogue, swift, well-trained dogs often win large sums in prizes. It is therefore little to be wondered at that the owners of those animals should bestow so much attention upon them.

An old Yorkshire culler, well known for his success in the coursing field, recently surprised all his mates by marrying a very unprepossessing woman. He had always been reckoned a confirmed bachelor of the sex.

"Why has he gone and got spliced, lad, at thy age?" one of his friends asked him.

"Oh, that's not much of a tale," answered the old man, stolidly. "I agree 't'ys at Betsy's what is no beauty—if she had been I shouldn't have wed her. But there's dog o' mine, he was simply pipin' for somebody to look after him while I was away at 't' pit. I couldn't bear to leave him in the house by hisen, so I hit on the idea of marryin' Betsy. She's not handsome, but she's mighty good company for the dog."

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