

ONE WOMAN'S STORY.

A POLICE COURT EPISODE.

[It only seems necessary to say that the incident on which this story is based actually came under the writer's observation, while discharging his duty as police-court reporter on an eastern journal. The prisoner was committed to the care of a Home for Friendless Women, where she died soon after.]

She was a trim-looking woman, possibly thirty in years. With eyes lustrous deep like the violet, though now they were drowned in her tears. Drunk in the streets they had found her, freezing to death in the cold—

Next day to the clerk's "guilty?" question, this is the story she told:

"Your honor, I was once young and handsome and counted the belle of the town—That was before misfortune and drink together had dragged me down. You smile—well you may; so they've all done, smiled in that self-same way. As though, like the hunter, the zest was more keen when the game he pursues stands at bay.

"Of course I had beaux by the dozen—where's the pretty young girl who has not? And offers of marriage came thickly till finally I cast my lot. With Fred Jones—he was manly and dashing, and handsome and brave and tall—We were married; folks said 'twas a grand match, and I was the envy of all.

"And what do you think he selected for my present that wedding day? 'A safeguard against nature's trickery,' he said, 'will be useful if I'm called away.' Neither diamonds nor jewels, gold or silver, was quite good enough for his wife. So instead of these emblems he gave me his love and a policy on his life.

"But I, in my womanly wisdom, rebelled at the very thought. And argued and argued against it—'twas life and not death that we sought—Till finally, like other husbands, he yielded, I had my way. And back to the agent we sent it—sent five thousand dollars away.

"Ah, me! how the time flew that summer—it seemed as though it had wings. While we breathed in the sunshine of pleasure, the pleasure true happiness brings. Neither jealousy, pride, hate, nor anger, for once made their black presence known—We were all, more than all, to each other, and lived in a world of our own.

"Well, August rip'd into September and winter succeeded the fall. When father was killed by the timbers that came from a falling wall. And mother, she brooded so o'er it, though she tried all her sorrow to hide. That next June, in the little old churchyard, we buried her by his side.

"Yet for that I was not all unhappy; for 'twas better to smile than to frown. In the face of my God and his wisdom, so I tried to live my grief down. And Will was so kindly and gentle that I clung to him like a child. Till soon the dark cloud blew from over and nature again on us smiled.

"Then Will caught the Western fever, and before the month was old We landed one night in Denver—'twas stinging, bitter cold. In less than a week he sickened, within three months he died. And I wore the weeds of a widow instead of the veil of a bride.

"The rest of the story is simple—too oft it's an old, old tale. Alone, without friends, home or money—a hell on this earthly vale. No work, even could I have done it—rebuffs brought me up to the brink. Till I in my weakness surrendered, and sought to drown all in the drink.

"What need to repeat here the story of my wanderings, South, East, West? What need to dwell on remorse that gnawed like a demon within my breast? Of jibes and jeers as I wandered, despising not less than despised. With thoughts of my wedding-day folly forever before my eyes.

As she ceased and her head drooped forward, the stillness of death prevailed. While the judge was intently studying how the floor of the court-room was nailed—But what need for me to go further? My pen has accomplished its part. In telling this story of pity and woe and a woman's broken heart!

I. R. B.
—In the Metropolitan.

POLICE COURT SCENES.

FROM LIGHTS AND SHADES OF MISSION WORK.—BY BERTHA WRIGHT.

Many are brought to the Home for friendless women through three important ingathering agencies, viz.:—Visitation at the Police Court, the Prison Gate, and dens of vice.

The Police Court of the present enlightened age, with its public sessions, is one of the grandest schools for the education of young criminals ever instituted. Here many are found who, having passed the entrance examination, are branded as belonging to the criminal class, and encouraged in every possible way to begin a career of infamy and shame.

The following notes from the diary of one of the workers will speak for itself:—

Friday.—Court crowded. Cabmen, shantymen, lower town saloon keepers, trunks of all descriptions, polluted the air with fumes of strong tobacco and whiskey, long before the Chief called "Order" and the Magistrate took the chair.

The first case called was that of a saloon-keeper. The charge—selling liquor without a license. Fine—\$50 and costs.

Next, a young girl steps into the dock. She is tall, slight, fair and well-dressed. As the charge of larceny is laid against her, she is covered with shame and confusion. The trial proceeds, rude, coarse jests are heard from the motley crowd in the rear. At length her whole story is

before the court. She was a housemaid in a respectable family; had parents living in the country; was tempted to take what was not her own, and in an evil hour, yielded. "That is enough," said the Magistrate. "As it is your first offence, you may go, but if ever you are brought before me on a similar charge, your sentence will be a severe one."

Her face crimsoned as she turned and met the rude gaze of the crowd, and as she hurried down the aisle to the door, a rough fellow was heard to say to his companion:

"Come on Bill, she's a bouncin' fine-lookin' girl for sweet sixteen. Let's follow her and strike a mash." Before they could reach her, I had drawn her arm through mine, and led her out by another way.

"Where are you going?" I asked. "I don't know," she replied; "I've lost my situation. My month would have been up next week, and I haven't a cent in my pocket. Oh, if I were only at home!" she sobbed, "this would not have happened."

"Would you like to go home?"

"Yes."

"Then come with me, you can have dinner with us and we will see you safely to the train this afternoon."

A "pass" was obtained from the Mayor, and one more unfortunate rescued from the snares of evil men, and pointed to One mighty to save.

Saturday.—The Smiths' case; which has been remanded for a week, came up this morning. Poor little fellows—one is only ten years of age; the other, twelve. When I entered the court they were sobbing bitterly, and begged the Chief to allow me to sit with them inside the bar. The request was acceded to, and Tommy threw his arms about me and sobbed: "Dear Miss W—, do git me off jist this once, and I'll be a little Christian, so I will."

Their's was the last case called. What am I to do with these little incorrigibles?" said the Magistrate to the Chief, in an undertone. "This is the fourth time they have been brought before me in as many months."

"Their friend, sitting over there, has some plan on foot," said the Chief, "about sending them to an Industrial School, I think."

"Are you prepared to do anything for these boys?" said the Magistrate.

"I have been in correspondence with the Superintendent of the Mimico Industrial School," I replied, "and he is willing to have them admitted, provided you will fill out these forms which I hold in my hand."

"And who is to pay for this benevolence?" he asked. "The Industrial School Act provides that the municipality should be responsible."

"I fear," said he, "that the municipality of the City of Ottawa cannot afford to be benevolent to the extent of \$4 per week. No doubt, there are hundreds of mothers in the city like Mrs. Smith, who would be glad to avail themselves of an opportunity of pawning off their ill-brought-up sons on the municipality."

"But, sir, the municipality will spend hundreds of dollars in a few years in trying to reclaim them after they have become hardened criminals. Would not the old adage: 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,' hold good in this case?" Nothing more was said, but, after giving them another severe reprimand, he dismissed the case. As the little fellows bounded down the aisle, with a hop, skip and jump, fully a dozen street arabs who had watched the case with interest, gathered around them, while one said, excitedly:

"You're a brick, Jim!"

"It was your pluck that got you off," said another.

While one little urchin with a sling in his hand whispered: "Golly! but I felt like levelling my boomerang at the pate of that conceited 'bobby' that runned you in."

Monday found poor Mary Jones, alias Jenny Smith, alias a dozen other names, up again on the same old charge—"drunk and disorderly." Being unable to pay the fine, she was removed to the cells, where we found her giving vent to her passionate temper. However, all her efforts to smash and annihilate everything and everybody who came within reach, made little impression on the cement floor, solid stone walls, and iron bars of her narrow cell.

"Well, Annie," I said, "What is the matter?"

"What brings you here? you heretic,

you hypocrite, you hathen Chinee. What are you prowlin' about this place for?"

"I heard you were in trouble again, and I thought I would drop in and see if I could help you. Turning to the constable, she said, 'Will you unlock this cell and let me in with Annie?'"

"Certainly, miss."

Soon we were locked in together, and, as the kind-hearted constable walked down the corridor, I seated myself on the cold, hard floor, "her ladyship" occupying the only piece of furniture, a small wooden bench.

"Now, Annie, I want to have a little talk with you about—"

"You can talk as much as you have a mind to; 'twont do me any good," was the angry retort.

"Why did you leave the Home last week? You have been doing so well lately, and I thought you were trusting Jesus to keep you from yielding to the old temptation."

"He is not angry with you, dear girl, but it grieves Him to the heart to see you in this state."

"But look (handing her a pocket Bible) He says to you this morning, 'If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.'"

"There is no use talkin', Miss W—, He won't forgive me; He has forgiven me so often already that I cannot expect Him to do it again."

"How many times have you asked Him to forgive you?"

"Oh, hundreds of times!"

"But, He says that we should forgive each other seventy times seven, or four hundred and ninety times. And do you not think that He is far more patient with us, and more ready to forgive, than we are to forgive each other?"

"Do you think He would, just this once?" she said. "It will be the last time, for if I yield again I'll give up tryin'."

We knelt together, and, as I took her hand in mine, it seemed cold and stiff. Never shall I forget the agony of soul through which the poor, weak, erring one passed. Her whole heart seemed to echo the language of the Apostle: "Oh! wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me? until at length she had such a vision of Jesus as her only Saviour, that she could say: 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

Thursday.—Found Mrs. Nelson in one of the cells this morning, just recovering from a state of helpless intoxication. She was in a sad plight, poor thing, having slept part of the night in a coal bin, and lost her shawl, hat and shoes, and was evidently much concerned about her children, whom she had left alone in a house on Albert street. As she was sent down for a month, we went in search of the neglected little ones, and found a beautiful curly-headed boy of five, asleep on the broad windowsill, his pale, wan cheek resting against the pane, while his little sister had crept into a clothes-basket on the floor which was half full of wet linen, and she too, was fast asleep. They had evidently been waiting and watching for mother until at length they had cried themselves to sleep. We took them to the Home, which was only a short distance away and where they were kept until their unworthy mother's release.

Many have thus been gathered in, among whom were a large number of young girls who were rescued from entering upon a criminal career, and sent home to parents and friends. Visitation at the prison gate at the hour when female prisoners are discharged, has been another means of getting some to seek shelter in the Home.

One cold January morning, an aged woman, clad in a thin calico dress, without a shawl, cloak or warm wrap of any kind, appeared at the gate. She was homeless and friendless, having been arrested the previous August for vagrancy, and so frail and feeble was she that it was with the greatest difficulty that she was led to the street cars, in which she was conveyed to the Home.

Comparatively few, however, come directly from the prison—some having homes of their own, others turning a deaf ear to the pleadings of those who seek their best interests, while quite a number are driven off in cabs before an opportunity is afforded of reaching them.

* [It was the last opportunity I ever had of speaking to her. After serving her sentence she was admitted to the Home and, as she had evidently not recovered from the effects of excessive drinking, was confined to bed for a few days, where she was visited by the good Countess of Cavan, to whom she gave a beautiful testimony as to what Jesus had been to her in the past week. A few moments later she was found still and cold in death.

House to house visitation by the Bible woman has been another means of gathering in the lost ones. On more than one occasion she has visited houses of vice, and led to the Home a number of the inmates, who were too intoxicated to know where they were going. Four were thus rescued from a den in a narrow lane in lower town one evening, the mistress of the establishment having remained in the Home for two years, while one—a beautiful girl of sixteen, an orphan—was removed to the hospital, where she died a few days later from the effects of dissipation.

Help Them, You Can.

BY M. ARTHUR SHAVER.

There are hearts that are breaking,
Sad lives with grief quaking,
Lowly hands that need shaking:
Help them, you can!

There's a tear that needs brushing,
A sobbing seeks hushing,
Gory anguish that's gasping:
Help it, you can!

"ONWARD."

Does Alcohol Help Digestion?

We are frequently told that, if not actually food, alcoholic liquors assist greatly in the digestion of food, and thus, like salt, are a valuable adjunct to other articles, and enable us to derive greater benefit from them. Now this comparison is the most unfortunate that could possibly be made. "For," says Dr. Carpenter, "salt is not a mere casual adjunct to our necessary food, but is itself an indispensable ingredient in our diet. It is contained in large proportion in the blood, and in every fluid secreted from it, and enters into the composition of most of the tissues. Now, all that salt is," he continues, "alcohol is not. It is not one of the proper components of the blood or of the tissues, and its presence in the circulation is entirely abnormal."

The remarkable effect of alcohol on animal tissue out of the body, in hardening and toughening its fibre, would suggest the *a priori* probability, that it would retard rather than aid digestion. It produces the same effects in the stomach, both on the coats of that organ and on whatever it may contain. This has been demonstrated by actual experiment. Dr. Figg, of Edinburgh, gave the same quantity of meat to two dogs. He then forced an ounce and a half of spirit down the throat of one of the dogs. In the stomach of the dog that drank the spirit the meat was found just as he ate it—undigested. The other dog's stomach was empty,—the meat having been all properly digested. Spirituous liquors have been known to protract the digestion of food in the human stomach as long as eight-and-forty hours.

Alcohol prevents digestion also in another way. That process is effected by the action of the salivary, gastric, and other fluids on the food. The peculiar principle, however, on which digestion depends is *pepsin*, a powerful solvent of organic matter. Now the gastric juice will not digest alcohol, but is itself neutralized thereby. Alcohol is one of the most powerful solvents known, being strong enough to dissolve sulphur, iodine, ammonia, potash, camphor, resin, and all the organic vegetable alkalies. When taken into the stomach it instantly changes the pepsin from its soluble and active form to a solid, inert precipitate, which has no effect whatever on the food in the stomach. Alcohol is thus a prompt and powerful antagonist to the digestive process.

The continual neutralizing of the gastric juice—the true digestive fluid—by the use of alcohol, overtaxes the glands by which it is supplied in the effort to secrete the quantity necessary for digestion, till chronic dyspepsia is produced. And who are so subject to that complaint, which saps the very foundation of life, as confirmed dram drinkers? This characteristic effect of alcoholic liquors is well described in the old convivial song of Bishop Stett, in the play of "Gammer Gurton's Needle,"—the earliest specimen of the British drama,—

"I cannot eat but little meat,
My stomach is not good;
But sure I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.
I love no roast, but a nut-brown toast,
And a crab laid on the fire;
And little bread shall do me stead;
Much bread I nought desire."

"ONWARD."