

very together, and I don't see very much of him.'

After that there was no more to be said, and as Harry always avoided the subject, I could not very well refer to it myself. But it did seem to me a little strange, for my chum was as free and open a fellow in thought and in speech as you could meet with in a day's march, so that I felt that it must have been a very grave matter that made him so disinclined to speak of so near a relative. However, there was no more to be said, and I took care not to offend again.

I have called Harry my 'chum' with good reason. We were engaged in the same house of business, and in the same department of that house; and we shared lodgings as well, so that being together by night as well as day, it was pretty evident that it would not do for us to quarrel if we were to get along comfortably at all. And I think our friendship was a very real one. It certainly was on my side, for I am bound to say Harry—who was about a year older than I was—could beat me pretty well in everything we put our hands to. But I never felt sore or envious about that, and was quite willing to play 'second fiddle' so far as Harry was concerned. Still I could not help thinking it a little odd that he should be so offhand. His father evidently was not dead, or he would have said so at once. There was some mystery about the affair, but it was none of my business, and I decided to say no more to Harry about it. 'Perhaps I shall come across his father some day,' I said to myself, as I stood one afternoon at the counter of our 'goods delivery' department waiting for an invoice.

'Come along,' I said, thinking it was the invoice clerk as the door swung open. Then I saw it was a stranger entering. 'I beg your pardon,' I began, and stopped short. The newcomer was a shabby, frowsy-looking elderly man. Of course, he might not be able to help being shabby; but he was dingy and grimy also. Two ragged apologies for cuffs came down over his wrists; his greasy frock coat had but one button, and the napless hat he held in his hand seemed anything but the right shape. He had been evidently a tall, well-built man, but he stooped a great deal, and his face and figure had a heavy coarse look, whilst his breath as he came near was so suggestive of smoke and spirits that I stepped back a pace without thinking.

'Good morning,' he said, 'can I speak to Mr. Henry Wakefield?'

The voice was thick and husky, but the tone was that of a man who had been once a gentleman, whatever he might be now.

It all flashed upon me in a moment. The man before me dingy, dissipated, drunken, was my chum's father.

Now I saw the reason for Harry's silence, and the reason, too, for his own rigid abstinence, not only from all intoxicants but from all amusements and enjoyments. 'An old hermit,' our fellows often called him. And the cause of his self-denial and his abstinence was before me. I determined to get him out of the place before the chief of the department came in.

'May I ask you to wait outside a moment,' I said as politely as I could. 'I'll send Mr. Wakefield to you.' He looked at me knowingly. 'You're a cute 'un,' he said. 'Well, I can take a tip as well as any man. I'll wait outside the door, not a step further, mind. I've got a little business of my own with Master Harry. Good day.' And with a bow he disappeared, while I went off to find my chum and tell him as best I could.

He grew a shade paler when I broke the news. 'I've been expecting this,' he said. 'Better come through you than anyone else, Jack; you can keep silent,' and without waiting for my answer he went off. What passed I never knew, but when I went back the unwelcome visitor had gone. I only noticed that Harry was more silent than ever, and that he did not go out to dinner for the rest of that week. He was busy, he said, and a roll and a drink of water would keep him going. But I guessed the real reason, and where every penny went.

About two months after that, one Saturday, just as we were leaving, Harry came up to me. 'Do you mind a sad sight, Jack?' 'Not if it's necessary,' I said stoutly, though I did not relish the prospect; 'Or if it will help you in any way,' I added. He seemed pleased,

but only said, 'Come, then,' and leaving the office, we walked on, and making our way through Bishopsgate and Shoreditch, went steadily along the Kingsland Road, till we came to a large lofty building, which I guessed at once was a hospital, though I was not familiar with the district. After a word or two with the doorkeeper, a porter was told to accompany us, and turning down by the side of the main building along a stone-paved corridor, we paused by a row of doors extending along the passage. Here Harry laid his hand on my arm. 'You remember the man who came to our office for me two months ago,' he said. I remembered well enough. 'You guessed who he was—my father. He was brought here about a month ago after meeting with an accident while drunk. He never rallied, and died yesterday. I asked you to come with me to-day, for I confess I shrank from coming quite alone, and'—he broke off for the porter had opened one of the doors and was waiting.

Silently we went in. Death had refined the face that drink had spoiled, and the one we had come to see lay there as if calmly sleeping.

'It is best as it is, Jack,' said Harry, as we turned away; 'but it is a sad thing for a son to say of a dead father. The drink was his curse and his ruin. He would do nothing for himself, and every penny he could get out of me, or mother, or my sisters either, went for it. You have thought me odd and reserved, Jack, but I have shown you the reason. Keep clear of the drink, lad.' And I have kept clear. I never forgot 'my chum's father.'

## The Golden Goblet: a Christmas Story.

(Maggie Fearn, in 'Alliance News'.)

(Concluded.)

'Seest thou, then, my lord, I dare not pass the loving cup to pledge thy noble guests, lest by doing so the curse of Elvira's house fall upon the house of Baldrick?'

Plaintive and sweet fell the soft, low tones of her voice upon the listening ears around. Howbeit, pleaded she not for others than herself—perchance a generation, yet unborn? Kneelt she not there like Esther of old, Esther the beautiful, saying in her heart, 'If I perish, I perish?'

The Lord of Baldrick stood erect with the Golden Goblet in his iron hand. What could he? He held the cherished embodiment of an honored and superstitiously ancient custom in his agitated grasp, and before him, the idol of his young manhood, knelt his winsome bride, pale as the exquisite robe which draped her. The crisis of a hundred lives awaited his word. Elvira stirred.

'My lord, a favor at your hand.'

'The favor must surely be thine, fair lady,' said he. And yet the cloud of frowning perplexity died not from his brow.

'I would fain name a champion, my lord,' she said, her face hidden.

There was a stir amongst the company. The knights leaned forward in their places, the ladies looked with curious eyes at the kneeling figure in its ivory, shimmering gown. The Lord Roderick bit his lip. A sharp cruel jealousy cut into his heart. Whom would Elvira name? Yet for his order of chivalry he dared not deny her request.

'Name thy champion, fair dame,' said he, haughtily, 'and on my honor as a belted knight he shall stand forth and plead thy cause.'

The Lady Elvira uncovered her face, and, stretching forth one white hand she said, in a clear though soft voice, which penetrated to the far corners of the hall,

'I demand as my champion the loyal knight whom it is ever my delight to love and honor—the Lord Roderick Baldrick.'

The spell was broken, and a flutter of admiring whispers rose and fell amid the guests. Ladies stole a color or a flower from their elegant broderies, and showered them gracefully at the Lady Elvira's feet, and knights tossed their embroidered gauntlets to do homage to so rare a choice. The minstrels swept their hands across their but too long silent harp strings, and all again was mirth and merriment. The Lord Roderick stood with his head

thrown back, his proud eye kindling, and his haughty lip unbending. He raised the kneeling lady, and in his turn dropped upon one knee before her.

'Thy champion, dear lady, will champion thy cause to the death. Fear nothing while thy Roderick can break a lance or cross swords with the stoutest. Thou hast well done, Elvira, to make thy husband thy champion. What pride might not have granted chivalry must, and love thou hast at thy will, sweetheart.'

Then he sprang again to his feet, holding out the Golden Goblet, and speeding his lightning glance once more from eye to eye.

'What ho! my lords and ladies; what say you to the suit of the noble Lady Elvira? Shall the custom of the Baldricks be maintained at so fearful a risk, and against my honor as a lady's champion? Prithee, speak your minds, good gentlemen.'

'No knight within the castle will drink of thy loving cup to-night, my Lord Roderick,' answered they, their hands on their sword hilts as became knights when vowing a vow.

'Well spoken, my lords!' cried the young lord. 'Well and truly spoken. But, list! the Lady Elvira would fain have my ear.'

He took her by the hand, and thus they stood side by side on the dais.

'I crave but a moment's patience, my dear lord,' said she, her blue eyes tender with feeling. 'In an old, old rubric which my lord has read there is a beautiful story of love and sacrifice. It is a Christmas story, and this is Christmas eve. Shall not the Christmas chimes from the great tower ring out the thousand sins which curse the land, all slander and all greed, all narrowing strifes, and ancient customs false to truth, and forms that bring a blight on good? The Golden Goblet brings no curse if no tempter lurks within. Let the Lord Roderick be the first of his noble race to break the yoke of this seductive tradition, which may otherwise bring to one of his own house and lineage in future days a terror and a bane. And then, prithee, good knights and ladies all, the heart shall be lighter and the mirth be happier if the Christ spirit be made welcome at the feast.'

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The legend of the Golden Goblet is still upon the annals of the house of Baldrick; and it keeps its fair armorial splendor yet upon the niche in the marble alcove in the festal hall. The Lady Elvira has but a name, and a tomb, and a portrait, in the great gallery, but the good wrought in life lives on after death.

There is no curse resting upon the house of Baldrick, and there is no Christmas loving cup in the banquetting hall to tempt to evil, for one of the noble house had dared to stand alone, and demand a champion for the cause of God and for the right, and helped to

'Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindler hand,'

to

'Ring out the darkness of the land,' and  
'Ring in the Christ that is to be.'

## A Good Test.

Some years ago when the Rev. Professor Finney was holding a series of meetings in the city of Edinburgh, many persons called upon him for personal conversation and prayer. One day a gentlemen appeared in great distress of mind. He had listened to Mr. Finney's sermon on the previous evening, and it had torn away his 'refuge of lies.' Mr. Finney was plain and faithful with him, pointing out to him the way of life clearly, as his only hope of salvation.

The weeping man assured him that he was willing to give up all for Jesus—that he knew of nothing he would reserve—all for Jesus.

'Then let us go upon our knees and tell God of that,' said Mr. Finney. So both knelt and Mr. Finney prayed, 'O, Lord, this man declares that he is prepared to take thee as his God, and to cast himself upon thy care now and forever.'

The man responded heartily 'Amen.' And went on: 'O, Lord, he says that he is willing to give thee his business whatever it may be, and conduct it for thy glory.'

The man was silent—no response. Mr. Finney was surprised at his silence, and asked 'Why do you not say "Amen" to that?' 'Because the Lord will not take my business, sir, I am in the whiskey trade,' he answered.—The 'Australian Christian World.'