

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

FROM PALACE TO CROSSING.

(A TEMPERANCE STORY.)

At the time our story opens George Wyndham was ten years old. He was an only child and foolishly adored by his parents. He was undoubtedly bright and clever, and even now he attempted, with considerable success, to write short stories. He was a born literary artist. His father was of genteel birth, but nothing more; his mother was a lady, poor but clever. The former was utterly broken down by grief and disappointment at the penniless condition in which he had been left, contrary to life long expectations, by a dissipated father who had died a year after his son's marriage. Mr. Wyndham did little else but fret and pine, leaving his wife to earn food for the household by her pen. She wrote articles for the magazines and short stories for one or two London publishers and the payment she received for her literary wares, together with the occasional assistance of a friend almost as poverty-stricken as herself comprised their living. Both parents were delicate and their health precarious—the one from overworry the other from overwork. The Wyndhams lived in a humble cottage situated on the bank of a picturesque river in Montgomeryshire, for which they paid a merely nominal rental. The health of the family bread winner gradually failed until she sank and died on a Christmas Eve but a week before her little son's twelfth birthday. The child was inconsolable and the father dazed at their loss and it was evident that the latter would soon follow his wife to the grave. Up to this time George Wyndham's education had been the loving care of his mother, and she had taken the greatest pains to make her instruction deep and thorough and, at the same time, to harmonize with the child's mental trend.

Mr. Wyndham's death came sooner than any one expected, and he succumbed in less than six months after his wife's death, to an attack of heart disease and his body was placed by her side in the pretty churchyard of Llan—.

Poor little George was now almost alone in the world as there was not one of his parents' relation who could afford to assume the responsibility of supporting and educating him,—however greatly they might have wished to do so. He grieved and lamented sorely and when, in his hours of loneliness a vivid imagination would conjure up visions of his lost mother and of her constant affection for him, his heart was ready to burst with the sickening pain of despair. But a friend was at hand to protect the orphan boy although unknown to him. Being left alone upon the death of his father, the parish clergyman took George Wyndham to the vicarage where he remained for many weeks, being lovingly and affectionately cared for by

every member of the good clergyman's family—as much because he was a sweet winsome child, as that he was an orphan and friendless. George was well known to a bachelor brother of the Vicar of Llan—, who had met him and learned to love him during the many successful summer visits he had paid to North Wales. He was Rector of an important parish in the South of England and, apart from the duties of his vocation, without an object to love. Informed of little George Wyndham's circumstances he determined to take him to his home and to make provision for his future, and with this object he wrote a letter to the child, in answer to which he received the following brief epistle written in a big round hand but clear and firm:

Dear Mr. F,—I do not know how to begin to thank you for your great kindness to a little boy like me; and I am sure I shall never be able to repay you for it. I have been very lonely since my dear mother left me; but when she was dying she called me to her side and whispered in my ear that God would give good friends when she left me, and now her words are coming true. With the Vicar's consent, I shall leave here for Milwood on Monday next. I shall be delighted to see you again and big black Ponto. Your little friend,
GEORGE.

The scanty furniture which had served to adorn his home during the lifetime of his parents was sold to pay sundry debts, and although the boy's good sense would not allow him to protest against this harshness of cruelly exacting shopkeepers, still he could not restrain the bitter tears which filled his large, lustrous eyes and furrowed his pale cheeks as they fell when he saw his mother's chair, writing table and footstool thrown roughly into a cart and taken away from their familiar places in the cottage where they had seemed to him to have grown. No one knew, of course, that George would have given a world to keep these treasures, no one indeed, gave the matter a moment's consideration, and he said nothing—but suffered agonies. Next to them, however, what he most valued were certain unfinished manuscripts of his parents which, since nobody needed them, neither if they had would have made any effort to secure them, he took and they became his greatest treasures and most powerful talisman. With these relics of a devoted mother and of his beautiful home other than which he had never known, George Wyndham bade it a long farewell and, after a long journey, in the course of which he saw many things of which he had only heard before, he reached his new home where he received a royal welcome both from his new father and from Ponto, the Newfoundland dog, whose acquaintance he had made some years before.

[To be continued.]

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