

'The End Thereof is Death.'

A True Story.

('Alliance News.')

Far away in bonnie Scotland, nestling among the Grampian Hills, is the little village of L—, where the subject of this narrative first saw the light. Hugh McGorman was born of honest, God-fearing parents, whose hearts swelled with joy and pride as they saw their only son grow up a sturdy, healthy lad, blest with a larger portion of brains than the one or the other of them had ever possessed. They determined that, though they might be an ordinary common-place couple, their only son should be something extraordinary, that is, if they had anything to say in the matter. So, from the first birthday of the little lad, a certain sum of money was laid aside every year to accumulate, both principal and interest, until he was old enough to be sent to an English University to prepare for whatever career he should set his heart upon following. He was to make a name for himself, but whatever lay in their power to assist him was to be done.

As I said before, Mr. and Mrs. McGorman were an honest and God-fearing couple, fairly well-to-do in this world's goods, and their son was duly taught to observe the Sabbath, to attend church, to read his Bible, and to obey its precepts and observances, and carry them out in his daily life. As soon as he was old enough he was sent to the village school, where he soon overtopped all the other boys, and was taught all that the dominie could teach him. Then he began to attend the Grammar School in the neighboring town, where all his mental powers were soon brought into fullest play by the keen and incessant competition of the other lads. However, Hugh's powers were of the highest order; examination after examination was gone in for and passed with flying colors. His mind, having been well grounded from the beginning, was stored with a rich treasury of knowledge; many friends were acquired by him, and taken backwards and forwards to his quiet village home, where his father and mother always made both him and them right welcome. The proverbial Scotch hospitality was never lacking in this home, and always at this board were the lads pressed, as a matter of course, to take their regular glass of ale or wine. A little matter, perhaps, some may think, but the result of which none could foresee!

Years passed on. Hugh's sixteenth birthday came and went, and soon the accumulated money was drawn upon to send him to Cambridge. He now decided that he would study for a doctor, for which career, there was no doubt whatever, he was eminently fitted, and straightway he plunged into all the work necessary to fit him for such a course. As a medical student he was an immense favorite with all. Handsome, genial, hearty, he made friends with everyone. At all houses where he visited the ready glass of wine or spirits was always offered still, and, as a matter of course, accepted. None but his most intimate chums knew that, after a few years had passed, Hugh McGorman was occasionally taken home to his rooms at night in such a befuddled state through drink that he could not have found his way there alone. None but these bosom friends knew the reason that his oak was sported the morning following these relapses, on pretext of illness, headache, or something similar.

Hugh had always, from his very childhood been accustomed to see wine or spirits

on the table, and to partake of it—(thank God that this custom is becoming slowly but surely a thing of the past)—and so, quite imperceptibly, the subtle habit took possession of him with greater and more resistless force, until at length it became quite a foregone conclusion amongst his student friends that if Hugh was invited to spend an evening out, he would invariably succumb to the influence of drink before the evening was half over, and require assistance to reach home safely.

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'My dear fellow, why on earth can't you make up your mind to refuse to accept any more, when you feel you have had enough?'

'It's impossible, quite impossible! I do not believe I really know when that point is reached.'

'Why, McGorman, you must feel your senses getting muddled, and your wits deserting you, at a certain point. A bright, clever fellow like you! It's not as if you were a half-educated man, or half-witted, or anything like that.'

'No, it's worse, far worse! The desire for more gets stronger hold upon me the more I take, and if I gave it up entirely I believe it would be the death of me.'

'Old friend, you terrify and shock me! If the craving has already come to such a pitch as that, then, the only safe thing for you to do is to sign the pledge at once, and become a total abstainer. I have been a moderate drinker all my life, but I am ready this moment to sign the pledge if you will do the same! Dear old boy, do be persuaded; moderate drinking will never suit you! With your fiery nature, and eager temperament, half measures will never do for you. It must be all or nothing!'

'Oh, nonsense! there's no harm done as yet! I can't do a thing like that all of a hurry. I must think over it, and sleep upon it. My time at the hospital is nearly up, and when I blossom out into a full-blown medical practitioner, and get away from all the other fellows, and from the thousand and one temptations of town life, I shall be sure to be better, and feel the influence of the cursed thing less and less. You know my father has bought me a practice in Glasgow, and I am very shortly to be married.'

'I only hope it may be so! but my experience is the other way about. Strike now, while the iron is hot! If you wait until you are setting up a practice of your own, you may have even less inclination then to get rid of this habit than you have now.'

'Oh, bosh! old man! let's change the conversation now. I won't do it at present, so that's flat,' and putting his hands in his pockets, his hat at the back of his head, and whistling a gay waltz tune, Hugh McGorman sauntered out of the room.

The young man who was left alone there looked after his friend with a grieved and sorrowful expression, and whispered to himself in a low voice: 'I'm awfully mistaken if it's not the ruin of him, body and soul. He is far more under its influence than he dreams of, but there, it's no earthly use saying any more at present. I shall not leave off, however, as long as he is here, trying to get him to sign the pledge, for I am convinced 'tis his only salvation. With such a career before him, too! and such bright prospects! Oh, the pity of it, that he should be ruined, and dragged down to hell by drink!'

The foregoing conversation took place one bright morning in June, between two medical students; both bright, good-looking young fellows, evidently Scotch, from their

accent, and evidently very close friends, as might be gathered from the nature and tone of their dialogue. A few of Hugh's chosen associates had deputed McAllister to speak to him upon this subject, and to try if something could not be done to save him. McAllister himself had originated the idea of signing the pledge, and I don't suppose one of the whole company of students was a total abstainer. When he returned to his friends, and told them the rebuff he had received, they were sorry, naturally, but being happy-go-lucky, easy-going fellows, they thought little more about it, and indeed were horrified at McAllister's proposition of signing the pledge.

'Indeed, I should hope he would not sign the pledge, nor you either. Why, he is the very life and soul of our convivial evenings; we could not do without him. Anyhow, we have done our best, so let us say no more about it. He will be leaving town in a month or two, to set up for himself, so we must hope for better things; and thus the subject was dismissed.

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After a honeymoon spent in Switzerland, and a visit of a fortnight's duration to his father and mother, Dr. McGorman and his wife had settled down in their new home in Glasgow. Amidst the excitement of his final examinations at the hospital, the farewells to his fellow-students, closely followed by his marriage, and the time spent in Switzerland, the demon who ever tracked his footsteps had not been felt nor succumbed to so much as usual, but already a shade might be noticed upon the bright, open countenance of the young bride. Already it might be noticed at the few dinner parties to which they were invited among their small but fast increasing circle of friends, that the young wife's eyes rested with an anxious expression upon her husband when the ladies left the room, and the gentlemen were left over their wine. The iron had already entered her soul, for such a besetting sin cannot long be concealed from the wife of his bosom by any man.

Patients were to be had in ever-increasing numbers by the new doctor, whose reputation for cleverness and skill had preceded him, and it was well-known that for surgical cases that required a clear head and a steady hand he had carried off the palm at the hospital, and in consequence his practice here was soon all that he could wish, and as much as he could attend to. Then whispers began to circulate; 'Had So-and-so noticed how very queer Dr. McGorman looked last night when he was fetched to set Brown's leg?' or 'Had Mrs. Jones noticed how strong Dr. McGorman's breath smelt of alcohol when he was leaning over the bed the other morning?' and so gradually the suspicion grew into conviction, and the conviction into certainty, until people began to go elsewhere when any accident or other occurred in the evening. 'For fear, you know, that Dr. McGorman might not be in a fit state to know what was best to be done.' And from avoiding calling him in the evening, they began to avoid him altogether; his patients, his friends, and finally his acquaintances dropped off one by one, until he felt 'that discretion was the better part of valor,' and that he had better seek some other sphere of labor before he was left without a single patient at all.

Alas for his poor young wife! In a poor London lodging she brought forth her first-born child—a little daughter—and then and there gave up her own bright, but disappointed young life. In bitter tears of agony