

do think she was as good a mother as anybody ever had, and as good a wife; but at times she used to break out. You'll think she ought to have kept from it all the more from seeing what father was like when he had been drinking; but it was just as if when she had once touched it she *couldn't* keep from it, however hard she tried. Not that she was what you would call given to drinking; and it was enough to break your heart to see how sorry she always was afterwards. She had been married very young—when she was three months of sixteen, and my father thirty-five; and there's so many temptations in the barracks for men and women both. I suppose it was partly his example—poor father!

"She would go on sometimes for months and months, and never seem to think of it, and then there'd be a break-out. She never meant to do it, you see, Miss; it was just as if she couldn't help it. After my father left it off he wanted to break her of it too. He thought perhaps if she had a little every day—just a little, and no more—it would cure her; but she wouldn't. She said if she once tasted it she must have more.

"It was very different at home after he altered his ways, and we got a nicer-looking home and better clothes and all. Father seemed to be proud of us like, and proud that he had saved his money for us; but it only made him grieve all the more when my mother broke out (not often, you know, and always against her will), because he felt (I know he did) as if it was his drinking that had driven her to it.

"They do say that those as give it up get weaker for it, but it never seemed to make any difference to him, not till my little sister died. And that knocked him over like, quite sudden. There was nine years between the next eldest and Lily, and so we all thought a lot of her—and she was a dear little thing; but father couldn't make enough of her, and when she died (she was only three years old) it broke him down so that he never seemed like the same man afterwards. It didn't seem natural to see a great strong man like him taking on so about such a little child as Lily. He was worse over it than mother was, and he never got over it, for all we did our best to make it up to him. He used to sit at home grieving, and nothing that we did could comfort him; and

he got ill and weak, and when the doctor came he said he wouldn't ever get well. But we didn't know he was so near dying as he was.

"One day he'd been asleep, and he woke with a start and called out, 'Look, there's Lily! our Lily come back. Don't shut the door,' he says to mother, 'you'll be shutting her out.' And then he smiled as he hadn't smiled for ever so long; but it wasn't at us, for he held out his arms towards the door, and there wasn't nobody there. Then he fell back again, and when I went to him—scared-like, for I hardly knew what it all meant—he was dead. We had always been so fond of each other, and I hoped I could maybe have comforted him after a bit—and then he was dead, and it did seem so hard."

"Hard for you, dear, not hard for him. There was Lily to comfort him instead, and you wouldn't grudge her that, I know."

"No, no, you're right, Miss, and perhaps my turn will come yet—but I fretted sorely over it then. We were all of us afraid that mother would give up altogether when father wasn't by to keep her straight. But if you'll believe me, all that father had said to her didn't seem to do so much good as the thinking of him after he was dead; it was like as if she felt herself bound to conquer the temptation as he had, for his sake. She never *said* anything about it—not that I remember—not till she was dying (for she didn't live very long after him)—and then——"

What need is there to ask for the words? And indeed the brave little woman is having a hard fight to keep back her tears. The little simple story, so simply told, of love and temptation, failure and victory, is surely complete already. But one knows that this was, after all, but the first chapter in the real life-history, and that the sequel is to be read here—in this little room, a bright spot in the midst of so much darkness and misery and sin—in these deep-set patient eyes, and the cheery smile (in spite of the longing for "home," as she says Ireland must always be to her), and the pride in her children's love. And one feels instinctively, as one stands looking out to the paling sunset sky with its bars of soft grey cloud, that there is a "happy ending" coming, which will be but the beginning of a fuller, brighter, fairer day.