POOR DOCUMENT



## Literature.

BY HARRIETTE MURRAY.

In a poor, delapidated house in the suburbs of one of the many towns that skirt the beautiful H——, a pale, delicate woman sat mending some garments. Her little hands, with their almost transparent fingers, seemed hardly able to ply the needle. Occasionally she rested her hands upon her lap until the cough ceased, then went on with her task again.

The wind howled around the house and played a mournful dirge through some broken glass in the window, and flared the lamp upon the table beside the silent worker who goes on with her task until it is finished.

Taking up the garments she then went into a small room, and laying them across the bed, she stood for a few moments looking down at the two children who would soon be motherless.

Kneeling beside the bed she prayed earnestly for the strength and faith she would need in the hour of dissolution. "Oh, my Savior," she cried, "I am ready to go when Thou art pleased to call me. But oh, dear Jesus, take my little ones in Thy arms and care for them. Protect them from the snares and wickedness of this sinful world."

A wave of peace seemed to pass over her soul for she arose from her knees repeating, "Leave thy fatherless children with Me. Oh, my Heavenly Father, Thy will be done!"

You could easily see in this thin, pale woman, with white lips, glassy eyes, hectic cheeks, and hard, dry cough, that consumption, that insidious disease, had marked her for its victim.

This pale, suffering woman, twelve years ago, was the beautiful, graceful, accomplished, and devotely pious Ida Atwood, the daughter of a rich merchant. Having ample means at her command, she devoted much of her time to missionary work among the poor. She was woed and won by James Beverley, a promising young lawyer of brilliant talent. He had accumulated some money from his practice, and he inherited a large sum from his father's estate.

He bought a beautiful villa upon the bank of that ever charming stream of water. For locality and beauty of scenery it was unsurpassed. Surrounded by fruit and ornamental trees, gravelled walks, arbors overspread with grape and other vines, and a great variety of beautiful flowers, ever sending out upon the passing breeze their sweet fragrance, making it an earthly paradise. The house was remodelled and furnished with rosewood and mahogany furniture of modern stile from the city.

In this beautiful home Lawyer Beverley and his amiable wife began their married life. No couple ever launched out upon life's tempestuous ocean under a fairer sky and a more prosperous breeze, and for two years love and harmony reigned supreme in their earthly Eden. When a little daughter came to their home their happiness seemed complete.

By his affable manner and ready wit Lawyer Beverley soon became the centre of attraction in places of amusement. Having every confidence in her husband, Mrs. Beverley often persuaded him to go without her, for she did not wish to be selfish and deny him any pleasure.

One morning as he was leaving home for his office in the city, he turned to his wife and said:

"I would like to have two or three friends of mine come out here to dinner tomorrow, if it would not make too much trouble for you, Ida."

"Why, James, you know I think it no trouble, and I am always pleased to welcome your friends," said Mrs. Beverley, looking surprised.

"Thanks. Have you any objections to my bringing home a few bottles of champagne," returned her husband.

"Why, James, for what purpose," asked his wife.

"To treat our friends, should they use it," was the reply.

"I hope you will not, James," and a look of anxiety came into Mrs. Beverley's face.

"Why, my dear, what objections can you have?" inquired her husband, seriously.

"I am afraid of the consequences, James," said his wife.

"Why, Ida, surely you are not afraid that I will become a tippler," and he threw back his head and laughed merrily.

"Just look at me, Ida," and he drew himself up to his full height, "do I look like one who would become a drunkard?"

She smiled up into his handsome face.

"No, James," she answered; "I have no fears on your account. You know I have every confidence in you. It is our influence upon others I am thinking of. From our standing in society our influence upon others is great, and our responsibilities are equally so. Suppose some of our friends, through our example, became a drunkard, and was ruined for time and eternity, would not that person's blood be required at our hands?"

"You take the matter too seriously, Ida. We are not our brother's keeper, dearest."

"I know people use that argument to quiet their conscience. At the same time it does not hinder the blood of the victim from calling to God for vengeance. And the curse will come; but, may God forbid that it should fall upon us," said his wife.

"I presume, Ida, that there is not a family in our set but use it. Will we be different and lose caste by it?"

"Are you sure this is so, James?"

"I know it is so, Ida."

"Do they use it at Colonel Sinclair's?" questioned Mrs. Beverley.

"Certainly. I was in there yesterday, and they offered me wine," returned her husband.

"Did you partake of it?" she asked, anxiously.

"I just wet my lips, so as not to be considered singular," he answered, quickly.

"My dear James, I fear the consequences of this," and her eyes filled with tears.

"You need have no fear on my account, Ida. I certainly depreciate intemperance as much as any man living. I am only trying to accommodate myself to the usages of society and maintain our standing in the best circles," he said, reassuringly.

"If our friends have no more love for us than to thrust us out of their society because we try to live conscientiously, let them do so. For my own part, I would rather have the conviction that I was doing right, than their society without it," answered Mrs. Beverley, quietly.

"It is always well to be conscientious, Ida, but sometimes it is necessary, in order to get along smoothly, to yield a little to public sentiment," he returned.

"Not if it is wrong," replied Mrs. Beverley, with much feeling.

"Well, bye bye, dear. If I do not go I will lose the train. I wish I could see things in the same light you do," her husband answered.

He kissed her lovingly and started on his way.

Mrs. Beverley stood in the doorway watching his retreating figure until he reached the station. Then she went slowly up stairs, entered her room, and closed the door. Kneeling she prayed earnestly that God would give her husband the strength and grace he needed to keep him amidst the temptations that surrounded him.

As the weeks went by a marked change became noticeable in Mr. Beverley. He came home at the usual hour, but sometimes he was irritable, while at others his demonstrations of affection were almost childish.

One day he brought home with him a few bottles of champagne. He uncorked one, and pouring some of the contents into a glass, held it out to his wife, saying:

"Just try the flavor, Ida, if only to please me."

"I cannot do it, James, not even to please you, for I am pledged not to use it, or countenance its use in others," she answered, with trembling voice.

"Well, wife, if you will not drink it, I will."

He raised the glass and drank the contents eagerly.

With tears streaming down her cheeks his wife pleaded with him. But the demon of drink had clutched him, and notwithstanding his wife's prayers and entreaties he drank again and again, and becoming impatient he used the first unkind words to her that he had ever used.

What Mrs. Beverley's feelings were no one but God knew. The serpent had entered their Eden and threw its curse blight over all its beauty. Upon her heart lay a heavy, crushing weight. Such a one as the young wife feels when she wakes to the fact that the husband of her love and affection has started upon the road that leads to degradation and ruin.

Matters went on for another year without any improvement. Then another daughter was born. Mr. Beverley loved his wife and children, and for a time his better self seemed to exert itself. He spent more of his leisure time at home and was kind and affectionate to his wife and children. Mrs. Beverley used all her loving tenderness to throw around him the comforts of his own home. It seemed for a while that success would crown her efforts, for two years passed away, during which time Mrs. Beverley, by her cheerfulness, gave her husband hope and confidence in himself. But it was only the lull that ushers in the tempest.

One day he received an invitation to go upon a fishing excursion.

He arose from the breakfast table and turning to his wife, said:

"Ida, I am going today with some of my friends on a little outing. If I am not back at our usual bed hour, do not be anxious about me."

A blush overspread his face, as his wife looked up at him.

She smiled brightly, but putting her arms around his neck and looking up into his handsome face she said:

"Promise me, dearest, that if they have champagne that you will not drink any of it."

He stooped and kissed the pale smiling face, turned so pleadingly up to his own.

"Yes, I promise you, Ida," he answered.

"Thanks. I will have your promise to cheer me until your return, and may you have a pleasant time."

She watched him go down the street, and when he disappeared within the station, she clasped her hands and prayed:

"Lord give him strength to resist temptation for he will be severely tempted this day."

It was a merry party that started with fishing rods, and hampers filled with good things for a day's sport. The day was fine, and their spirits jubilant from relaxation of business. Jokes passed freely, and the quick repartee called forth much merriment.

"I am going to wet my throat," said Lawyer Tompkin, taking a bottle of champagne out of his pocket. He uncorked it and offered it to Beverley.

"I am not going to drink," said Beverley, pushing the bottle from him.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Tompkin, "Beverley is going to turn saint like his saintly wife."

The blood rushed to Beverley's face. His eyes flashed angrily.

"See here Tompkin, my wife is an angel. Do not refer to her again. Her name is too pure to be mentioned by your polluted lips," he cried, angrily.

"Tut, tut!" said Judge Watters, in his mild, persuasive tone. "We came for some sport and do not spoil the fun by getting up a row, gentlemen."

"Well, judge," replied Tompkin, "Beverley can beat me upon an argument. But I can drink more champagne than he can without getting drunk."

"You should wear a badge, Tompkin, as evidence of such an exalted honor," said the judge, drily.

"He has already received a badge, judge, and wears it in plain view," answered Lawyer Thornton.

"Where?" said the judge, scanning Tompkin, from head to foot.

"Look at his nose, your honor."

This dark sent at Tompkin's large, red nose produced much laughter, and he mentally vowed that he would send Beverley home drunk to his angel wife.

The fishing went on finely. They succeeded in landing some very fine specimens, and the party were in good spirits and drank much champagne.

Beverley kept his promise and refused to drink. He stood firm, notwithstanding the ridicule hurled at him.

Not one of that party knew of the battle he was fighting with himself. Seeing champagne drank so freely, the old craving desire came back with all its infernal force.

He had never asked God to give him strength to resist temptation. He relied upon his own firmness to keep the promise made to his wife, and in the midst of such trying temptations, in his own strength he was as weak as a child.

He had reached that point that comes to everyone sometime in their lives when their decision means weal or woe. Had some kind friend been near to give him a word of encouragement, he would, in all probability have remained true to his promise, for he could not forget the pale, upturned face of his wife, when she lovingly pleaded for his promise not to drink that day.

That evening, just before the party separated, Tompkin laid his hand upon Beverley's shoulder and in a friendly way said:

"I am sorry for the little unpleasantness between us this morning, and I hope you will forgive me. I did not mean to insinuate anything about your amiable wife. I only wish I had one as good."

"It was nothing," replied Beverley. "I soon forgot all about it."

"Not so with me," said Tompkin. "It has been in my mind all day, and we will settle the matter by drinking each other's health."

He pulled a flask from his pocket and handed it to Beverley.

The bitter taunts of his companions during the day had aroused his antagonism and made him more firm in refusing to drink. But when the tempter came in the disguise of a friend, he was powerless to resist any longer.

Clutching the bottle he raised it to his lips and drank the contents eagerly.

A satanic smile spread over Tompkin's face.

Patting his victim upon the shoulder, he said, in a tone of triumph:

"Now that is what I call real gentlemanly."

Why did he start back and a look of alarm cross his face? Was it the sighing of the wind in the pine branches over their heads, or was it the avenging angel speaking to his guilty conscience of the ruin of a soul. He seemed to hear the words:

"Blood for blood! Retribution! Retribution!"

Night came on and Mr. Beverley did not return home. As hour after hour passed Mrs. Beverley's anxiety increased until it became agony. She went from room to room feeling as if a sword was suspended over her head by a single hair. She went up to the nursery and bending over her sleeping darlings kissed their sweet, innocent faces, murmuring "God bless you."

The clock in the hall struck twelve. She went down to the sitting room and stood by a window looking out upon the lawn, where the full moon shone brightly upon shrub and flower, giving it the appearance of fairyland. But it had no charm for her. She turned from the window with a sigh, and taking up the Bible, sat down, soloquizing:

"I have a friend who will never forsake me."

Turning over the leaves carefully she read the precious promises:

"Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is Everlasting Strength.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.

"The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him. Upon them that hope in His mercy.

"The righteous cry and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth around about them that fear Him and delivereth them.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee."

She closed the Bible with a composed mind, feeling that it was sweet to trust in an Almighty Being, Whose love and care is over all His children. Even the sparrows are not forgotten by Him.

The clock tolled out the hour of one. She started up, exclaiming:

"Dina, go to the door. I thought I heard a noise there."

Dina opened the door and looked out, then starting back, cried:

"Good Lor' missus. Mar's Bev'ry fat down on his face."

Mrs. Beverley ran to the door and there by her husband beastly intoxicated.

"Oh—Ida—you—you—up—yet," he muttered, making an effort to rise. "I—thought—you—bed—long—go——did—pon—my—word—Ida."

"Oh, James, James!" cried his wife, wringing her hands.

"Keep—cool—wifey—I—say——keep—cool—wifey—those—fellows—made—me—little—mellow—see—all—joke—you—see."

"Oh, that I could have foreseen this!" she exclaimed, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"No—no—need—foreseeing—things—Ida—things—come—without—foreseeing—you—see——all joke——why don't—you laugh, Ida——all joke——you see—ha—ha—ha!"

He laughed out in muttered tones that sounded like echoes from the world of woe.

With Dina's assistance she got him into the sitting room and down upon the sofa and he was soon asleep.

(Continued on 7th Page.)


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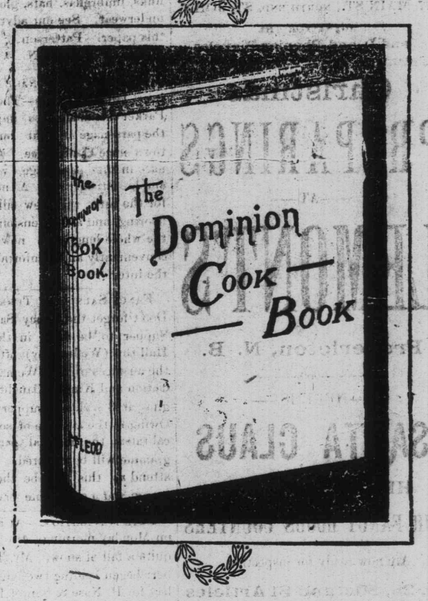


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