

'After so Many Years.'

('Temperance Record.')

During my wanderings as a temperance speaker I visited, a few years ago, the interesting little town of Silverdale. If the reader has ever travelled along the old coach road between London and Bath he will possibly remember it. I was the guest on that occasion of a tradesman I had before heard spoken of as a most industrious and thrifty teetotaller, and one of the best workers connected with the local temperance society. He had worked his way up from the position of a journeyman, mechanic in the employ of an ironmonger, until he had himself become established in a prosperous way of business, and the owner of the shop and premises which he occupied. He was a middle-aged man, married, but without children; his wife appearing to be in every respect a helpmeet for him. I heard, moreover, that he was an active member of the Good Templar lodge, a Sunday-school teacher, and a deacon of the Congregational Church.

I was much struck with the neatness and homeliness of my kind host's surroundings, and the evidences of thrift and comfort everywhere to be seen. The shop, though small, was well stocked, the sitting-room well furnished, a door opening into a small glass-house, where, besides some choice flowering plants, there was a profusion of luscious-looking ripe tomatoes hanging from the vines overhead.

'I was not always a teetotaller,' said my host, as we were chatting together after the meeting. 'In my younger days, until I was two or three and twenty years old I drank heavily. I became a teetotaller to obtain a wife. I set my mind on this little woman, but knew very well there was not the slightest chance of making her mine unless I became one.'

'That there certainly was not,' replied the wife. 'Long before I knew my husband I had firmly resolved never to look at a young man who ever touched strong drink.'

'A very wise resolve,' I said.

'It is seventeen years since I signed the pledge,' said the husband, 'and we have been married sixteen years, and I have had no cause to regret either my teetotalism or my marriage. It was a terrible struggle, however, to get the better of the drink crave, but whenever I was tempted to break away I thought of her. She has been a good little wife to me.'

'I have been a total abstainer all my life,' said the wife, 'and thankful I am that I know not the taste of either beer, wine, or spirits. I think I should die if I had a husband who drank.'

'I think you are both to be congratulated in having remained true to your temperance principles,' and I felt quite delighted to witness the comfort and happiness in their home life, which, to a large extent, was owing to the absence of strong drink.

'It would be very different now, sir, if drink had ever been allowed on this table. I have a good business, a convenient house and shop all my own, the means to indulge in my hobbies of a greenhouse and a small poultry-yard. I am a member of, and an office-bearer in a Christian Church, besides doing what little I can to help on the temperance cause. What more, sir, need we desire? But I know not what might have been had drink ever been allowed to come between us.'

'I shudder to think of it,' said the wife.

Who could think that the accursed thing would ever enter such a home as that! I never dreamt of the possibility even.'

Two years passed away, and I again visited

Silverdale. Not having received any intimation from the secretary as to where I should be entertained, I naturally made my way to the residence of the friends who received me on a previous occasion. I walked into the shop, and while waiting for someone to answer the bell, it seemed to me that the place was greatly changed. The shop had lost its brightness, and dust and disorder had taken the place of neatness on the shelves. Presently Mrs. — appeared, and I was quite startled to notice the change which had taken place in her. She looked years older than she did when I had seen her before, her face being pale and careworn, with trouble in every line of the countenance.

'You are not to stay with us this time, sir,' she said, in answer to my inquiries; 'the secretary of the temperance society has arranged for you to be entertained by his own parents.'

'I am rather sorry,' said I, 'for I have very pleasant recollections of the few hours I spent with you and your good husband when here before.'

'You are not more sorry than I am,' was the reply; 'but things have changed since then.'

'What is the matter?' I asked.

'Have you heard nothing?'

'You are the first person in the town I have spoken to.'

'Then you will be surprised to hear that my husband has broken his pledge,' and unable to control herself any longer she gave way to a flood of tears.

'Is it possible?' I exclaimed. 'I am perfectly astounded that after so many years of happiness and prosperity, and usefulness he should go back to the drink. I thought the dreadful passion which possessed him in his younger days was dead and buried long ago.'

'It never died,' was the sad reply; 'it only slumbered, and the awakening is terrible. It is breaking my heart,' and she sobbed again most piteously.

I tried to say what I could by way of comfort and the encouragement of hope, asked to be remembered kindly to the husband, and to say that I would endeavor to see him in the morning. I then left for the meeting.

At the close of the meeting I received a message from Mrs. —, saying that she and her husband would be much pleased to receive me as their guest, and would take it as a great kindness if I would stay with them. Of course, I accepted the invitation, only glad of the opportunity promised of making some effort to restore the erring one.

After supper and a little chat, Mrs. — withdrew, leaving her husband and myself alone.

'I am surprised beyond measure,' said I, 'to hear that you have broken your pledge. How could you, my friend, after so many years?'

'You may well ask,' he said. 'It came about in this way, to put it in as few words as possible. Me and my wife had a word or two about a little matter, and to spite her I drank a pint of beer. I had no idea what the consequences would be, but I had no sooner tasted than the old passion revived, and I have been drinking ever since. My business is fast going to ruin, I have given up all meetings, withdrawn from the church, and ceased to attend the services at the chapel. I am going to the devil, sir, or, rather, after these many years, the devil has returned to me.'

For long that evening I wrestled with him, and with God for him, but all seemed of little avail, whether from callousness or despair one could hardly say.

'Look here, sir,' he said to me at last; 'I can give you a passage of Scripture that applies exactly to my case: "When the unclean

spirit is gone out of a man he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

He wished me good-night, and I have not seen him since.

WANDERER.

Delivered.

(By Helen R. Robb.)

"Papy, kin I go to Sunday-school?" Lish asked coaxingly, climbing to his father's lap, with Spot, his little gray and white kitten under one arm, as he and kitty always did when 'papy's' work was done.

'No,' his father answered; and nothing more did he say, though he sat looking out toward the river, with its long bridge, till all the pink and white clouds had grown gray. Then the clouds drifted down the sides of the big old mountain that Lish meant to climb when he was a man. Curled up in his father's arms, he thought about it now, and wondered again what the world on the other side would look like when he would some day stand on the top and peep over the edge. Then, somehow, all at once, it was morning, and the sun was shining all over his little bed.

It was a lonely life for the little boy in the Tennessee mountains, for he had no mother, and no one lived in the little log cabin in the hollow except his father and him. Often, the only sound was the whistle of an engine and the rumble of the cars that flew past every day.

When 'papy' drove off to town with barter, Lish could play in the branch, where the stones were slippery and green, and the sun made queer patterns on the grass and sparkling spots on the water wherever it could creep through the tiny spaces between the leaves of the willows and water-oaks; or he could build houses of mussel shells on the river bank; or even climb up the side of the mountain as far as the old lightning-struck pine where a little red squirrel of Lish's acquaintance had his home. But he promised he would never go on the railway track, and he had always kept his word.

This was Sunday morning, and as Lish sat on his favorite limb of the apple tree beside the cabin door, with Spot clasped in his arms, he saw the Jennings children coming along the dusty road, all with clean hands and faces. Sa'an had on a new pink calico apron, and Tildy a green sunbonnet; and, oh, wonder of all, Josh had perfectly new shoes, tied together by the strings, and slung over his shoulder, their clean white soles shining in the sun.

Lish understood it all in a moment, and dropping from his lookout to the ground, he ran to find his father.

'O papy,' he cried, 'the Jenningses is all goin' to Sunday-school, an' even the baby's clean. An' Josh has shoes, an' he's goin' to put them on 'fore he gits thar, an' wear 'em! He's goin' to wear shoes in summer time!'

His father nodded and went on mending the piece of harness he held between his knees.

Lish lingered, rubbing his toes into the hot ground, and looking shyly into his father's sunburned face.

'Can't I go, too, papy?' he ventured, at last. 'I ain't got money to waste in shoes fer you to burn out on the rocks this time o' year,' was all the answer he got.

But the next Sunday morning his father