

ACROSS THE TRACK.

It is no use, mother, not a bit of use to try. You might as well attempt to catch and chain the wind in its wildest course, as to stay Abner Markley in his; better let him alone.

Don't talk so, husband. I must, indeed I must. His mother would have tried to save my boy, in the same situation, I know. It may be as you say, but I'll try all the same; and if I fail—no, no, I must not fail; I can't bear to use that word. Well, I'll do my duty, and trust to God for the result, answered Ruth Mild, as she wiped away the tears that stole gently down her sweet motherly face.

You don't think of the danger to our own boy. If you bring him here, Ruth, God only knows where it might end. You forget. And Abel Mild glanced with an anxious eye through the open door into the next room, where sat a little maiden, the miniature picture of her mother—fairer and fresher in coloring than she.

Oh, Abel! that child, little more than a baby!

In her sixteenth year, and he handsome enough to make a girl forget mother, father and the whole world, for him. Don't do it, mother. It is a hereditary sin, from father to son. Would you see your child the wife of a drunkard?

A shiver, a little cry of terror, and for a moment the sweet face paled. She hesitated, and Abel Mild thought he had triumphed.

No. God will spare me that, I trust—I know. And so I will trust him—aye even though he slay me.

And offer your own lamb to the sacrifice! Abel said, in a tone that told the dark forebodings that possessed his spirit.

Again she faltered, and leant, with her head buried in her hands, as if praying. Again her eyes were looking into Abel's, clear, and showing no doubts in her heart.

He knoweth my heart—its weakness and its strength. He will not try me beyond my power to bear. If you love me, Abel, say no more. Never before in our twenty years of married life, have I murmured against your will. Now I feel that I am doing his, she said, raising her eyes upward.

There was an expression on her face more beautiful than Abel had ever seen, even in those days when he thought there was not as lovely a face in the world—an expression so holy, so trusting, that Abel went up to her, drew her head on his bosom, and kissing her said:

May He you trust bless and reward you, Ruth, my dear, good little wife. Forget what I've said, and go your way, which has ever been the right one.

Thank you, Abel. You have made me happier. And now I will go. He leaves his office at three o'clock, dines at four; if I start now, I will be there just the right time. He will have finished, and be in his room.

Abner Markley, as Abel Mild had said, was handsome enough to win the heart of any woman. He was sitting in his room, as Ruth hoped to find him. And when he jumped up to welcome her, she thought of her husband's words.

What an unexpected pleasure Mrs. Mild! he said, placing her in the comfortable chair from which he had just arisen.

Yes? I'm glad to find you disengaged. I have another pleasure awaiting you. See! Looking over my treasures I found this, and have brought it for you—to give you, if you wish.

She held toward him a little velvet case, which he hastened to take and open.

Ruth Mild anxiously watched his face while he gazed on the miniature he held.

My mother! Is it? Yes, I know it! Oh thank you, dear Mrs. Mild. How very, very beautiful! But I cannot remember her thus. Here her eyes are so laughing, her lips ready to break into smiles. I'm glad to have this to look at; for always, when thinking of her, I can only call up a face, beautiful enough, but oh! sad! so very sad!—her eyes looking as though they had shed oceans of tears. And she once looked like this?

Yes, my boy. She sat for that in her wedding dress, a week before she became your father's wife. I was her bride's-maid. She was the merriest girl in the village when your father won her from us, and carried her off to the city to live.

Mrs. Mild—he turned his eyes from the beautiful picture to hers, and asked—what changed my mother so terribly? Was my father not kind?

She hesitated.

Tell me—all. I remember nothing of fa-

ther. I have been told I was only five years old when he died. Was it his death—

No, no; but—

Speak freely, Mrs. Mild.

May I? Well, it was the manner of your father's death which broke her heart; but it had been terribly wounded before, Abner. She was a drunkard's wife.

The good woman's voice had sunk so low, he had to lean forward to catch the words; and then started back with a wounded cry, which caused her to say:

I've hurt you. Forgive me.

Yes, yes. But go on. Tell me all. Say it as you chose, he said, sinking back into his chair, and covering his face with one hand, the other still holding his mother's picture.

She talked on, picturing to him in graphic colors the young bride leaving them, so happy, so trusting; of the first surprise and mortification; the dreadful fears when she was no longer surprised; then the suffering, all alone—she could confide that sorrow to none; of hope entering her heart again when she watched for the little one's coming.

The reformation which brought for a brief time such holy happiness, as over the little one's—the baby boy's—cradle she stood with him, she trusted in again—again to be disappointed. On and on to the violent death she told him, and then Ruth Mild pleaded as only a mother can plead. And when she finished by saying:

Yes, my boy, the last time we met, she held you in her arms, and pressing her pale lips to yours, she said:

Oh, Ruth, if I could take my darling with me, I would gladly, gladly close my eyes to earth! And if I leave him, shall I ever find him again? Will he come?—O God will my boy come up there?

Ruth Mild's voice was trembling, scarcely audible, as she repeated the dying mother's words.

Abner's bosom was convulsed with emotion. He did not try to conceal it, as he sobbed forth:

Yes, yes, mother, with God's help I will come to you.

Ruth Mild had conquered. Abner Markley became one of her household. In every way she endeavoured to hold him firm. Little Alice, with her dove-like eyes, was a source of deep and pure pleasure to the young man. She was so different from every other girl he knew—so gentle, so artless and childlike. Hours that used to be spent in drinking and clubrooms were spent reading to her, telling of the wonders of the old world, over which he had travelled, or in singing with her.

Those were happy evenings to all. Father Mild forgot his fears, as he watched the young folks and listened to the beautiful music they made—Alice at the piano, Abner with his flute, and the old man's second self, young Abel, with his violin. A year passed thus bringing Abner, as he felt nearer to mother. The tongues of many with their dark predictions had ceased, and those who had trusted pronounced Abner Markley saved.

I wish I could excuse myself from this party to-night, Abner said. And little Allie asked:

Must you go?

I think so. I did not intend to. I'd made up my mind to send an excuse, but the Judge came into my room this afternoon and insisted. You know he is our chief, and it is a respect due him to accept his invitation; but I will not stay long. There are some pretty wild fellows going—determined to have a 'time,' as they say; but I'll slip from them, and hasten back home to you, my little dove-eyed darling Allie here. Sit up for me; I have something to tell you, and something to beg for, he whispered. And then, as she stood in the door, he said:

There, run in out of the cold. I must be more careful of you. Stop a moment. Kiss me, Allie?

She drew back. He knew that her cheeks were crimsoned, although it was too dark to see.

Mother will not care; kiss me, darling. I will tell her all to-morrow. Thank you. Now run in, he said.

And she darted off to shed a few happy tears, and watch and wait for his coming.

God bless her! I wonder if mother is watching over us to-night? I wish she were alive, to know my darling, Abner said, as the door closed on Allie's retreating form.

It was a brilliant throng that gathered in the saloon of Judge Armstead. Abner Markley was a universal favorite, and all welcomed him warmly.

That party was decidedly the party of the season. The music grand, the supper a perfect success. How the wine sparkled! And

some of the women's eyes brightened, I'm sorry to tell, as they sipped the tempting glass.

Abner Markley forgot for the time the dove-like eyes of Allie, as he looked into the bright, flashing black ones of a girl whose influence he had known before. And when she held to him a glass of champagne, saying:

How can you resist? take it, he replied:

I could resist the wine, but not you. And taking it from her, drained the glass—another and another.

The hours passed on. Allie watched and waited.

Not until he had placed his tempter in her carriage did Abner start for home, and then he had his senses sufficient to know he could not return to Allie as he was.

In the gray light of morning, when little Alice, weary with watching, had fallen asleep with her pale face against the window, there came a slow, heavy tread along the pavement. The door bell aroused her from a frightful dream. She started, confused and terrified, to listen.

Strange voices reached her ear, talking in awed tones. She sped on to the passage to catch the words:

Found dead on the track.

Down the steps, with a wild cry, and beside the bier she fell; her arms clasped about the dead—her dead—she cried:

No, no, not dead! Abner speak to Allie, your Allie. See; I've waited for you as you bade me. Abner! Abner!—Father, has he fainted? turning her face, with an appealing look, toward her father, who, shaking his head sorrowfully, tried to take her away.

Dead! she cried, in a tone that brought the tears to the rough men's eyes, and they turned off as Abel Mild lifted his child away and placed her in her mother's arms.

I do wish we had not had wines last night, said Mrs. Armstead the next morning, while sipping her coffee.

Why not? asked her husband.

Why, did you not notice young Markley used considerable, and felt the effects too? You know he had given it up for a year. You remember I suggested we should dispense with it.

Nonsense! Give up a social custom for the sake of one fellow who is too weak to resist! I shall never do it.

Mother! exclaimed Fred. Armstead, rushing in—Mother, Abner Markley is dead!—found dead across the railroad track. Concussion of the brain, they say.

Concussion of the brain, they say! Can that decision of the physicians bring relief to the conscience of those who placed the wine before him, or of hers who held it to his lips? It could not to mine. There would be a constant, endless whisper of "murdered" in my ear, sinking to the very depth of my heart.

I would sooner be the stricken little Allie, or Abner, cold and dead, than be either of the hospitable hosts who, for the sake of one soul, could not give up a social custom, or the vain girl whose thoughtlessness or indifference, to say the least, won him to death.

SAVED BY A WORD.

Halloo! Here, my friend, what's the matter! The speaker was Mr. Sparton, and his words seemed to possess a magic power over the poor wretch who lay in the gutter at his very feet.

Friend! repeated the man, staggering to his feet, and gazing curiously into Mr. Sparton's face, this is the first time any one has called me friend for many months. I once had friends, but I had money then.

Have you none now?

No, said the man. I paid my last dime for drink, just in there, pointing to a saloon across the street, and they put me out because I had no more.

Where do you live? asked Mr. Sparton. Live! I don't live anywhere.

Well, where do you stay? In any place I can. I have not known a home for many years.

Mr. Sparton, seeing that the man was unable to help himself, and had no means of support, offered to take him home with him. The poor wretch was only too glad to accept the offer, and, with the support of his new friend, managed to walk to that gentleman's residence. He was led into the dining-room, greatly to the surprise of Mrs. Sparton; but matters were soon explained, and she immediately procured the poor fellow something to eat, also making him a cup of strong coffee. By the time the half-famished man had eaten his supper, he was both warm and drowsy, and, by Mr. Sparton's advice, soon retired to rest.

The strange guest did not awake until it was time for breakfast the next morning. He was invited to sit down and eat with the family, and took the proffered seat with thanks, and in a manner which showed very plainly he had seen better days. After they were all seated at the table, the conversation was opened by Mr. Sparton, who asked the stranger if he rested well.

Thank you, I did indeed. I slept very soundly. It was the first time I had rested on a bed for over two months.

An exclamation of pity broke from the lips of the entire group. He then continued,—I presume it is my duty, after your kindness to me, to give you my name, and also the history of my past life.

We hold you under no obligations, said Mr. Sparton, still we would be glad to learn your history.

My name is Frank Edwards, said the stranger, I am the son of Mr. Charles Edwards, merchant, who died some six years ago in the city of C—. Perhaps you have heard of him.

Being answered in the affirmative, the man hurriedly related his sad story. His love for liquor had first commenced in his college days, when he was one of a set of merry, thoughtless students. After his graduation, the appetite increased, and, as time passed on he became a confirmed drunkard. His father broken-hearted, died, leaving all his wealth to his wayward boy. While it lasted, the young man had plenty of friends to join with him in reckless debauchery; but, when his fortune was all squandered, friends deserted him, and he became the poor, deserted vagrant whom Mr. Sparton found in the gutter.

If I could only gain one true friend, concluded the man, who would trust me with work to do, that I might gain a decent livelihood, I would earnestly try to please. But every one turns away from the poor drunkard, and refuses to trust him. How I have lived for the last few months I cannot tell you, I only wonder that cold and want have not killed me.

Mr. Sparton was struck with the apparent truthfulness of the man, and also his gentlemanly manners, which went to prove the truth of his story. So he took him down to his store, and gave him some light task. He seemed willing to work, and, as Mr. Sparton was just then in need of help, he concluded to retain him for a while, at least.

Weeks passed, and he still kept him. He proved a most efficient clerk.

A few years passed, and the former vagrant had managed to save enough money to take an interest in his benefactor's business. He is to-day among the most respected citizens of the city of New York.

Such is the result of kindness, and a word kindly dropped from the lips of a passer by upon some degraded wretch, may be the means of saving him. Years have passed since the facts related in this story transpired, and Mr. Sparton has never had occasion to regret the night he called a poor drunken wretch "friend."

The individual who tried to clear his conscience with an egg, is now endeavouring to raise his spirits with yeast. If he fails in this, it is his deliberate intention to blow out his brains with a pair of bellows; and sink calmly into the arms of a young lady.

A man was fined £5 at the College police-office, Dublin, for assaulting another; and as he paid the money into the court with considerable reluctance, he shot glances at the victim of his indiscretion, and said, Wait till I get you into Limerick, where beating's cheap, and I'll take the change out of you.

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