

'Let us drink to the health of our hostess,' said some friend present. 'Excuse me, I will drink with you with all my heart, but in water, if you please,' replied the hostess. 'May I follow this example?' asked a young man, with a fine though somewhat sad face, who stood near. All eyes were turned to young Maynard. He, a man, refusing to drink wine and desiring to drink a *health* in water! What an innovation upon the usages of society! Of course civility subdued all astonishment; but after the withdrawal of the guests the matter was solved. Mr. Fleming attempted to remonstrate with his wife. 'I was so proud of my wines, and it really was very unaccountable in you, Agnes, to behave as you did at this first supper in our home. You know that champagne never hurt any one.'

'I have seen too much of its ill effects to agree with you there, my husband. A long time ago my heart condemned the habit of convivial drinking, and, though this matter has never come up for discussion, I formed the resolution, as the head of your household, that this should be my habit. You will not condemn me? Think of your poor college friend Allis, a beggar and a madman.'

'Oh! that is but one of a thousand cases, Agnes; and then, too, what possible influence can you have?'

'We none of us shall know what influence we exert in this world,' replied the wife. 'I had a definite object, too, to-night in my refusal. In the midst of our company was one who had made a solemn resolution to avoid everything that would lead him to yield to his one fault. Noble, generous, highly cultivated, he has been nearly lost through the inability to resist this temptation. To-night was his first trial. I saw the struggle, and was determined, as a true woman should be, to help him in it. At any rate, I have helped him this once; he will be stronger the next time to refuse.'

'Now let me tell you of what a woman is doing in the case of a confirmed inebriate; and in giving you this tale you must come with me, my husband, and learn for yourself.' And we too, my reader, will follow.

Their walk ended at the door of a small brown house with nothing to brighten its gloominess except a little vine that struggled to climb over one of the windows. A bright-eyed, dirty little fellow was playing outside the door. 'How is your mother to-day, my boy?' 'She's in there; you can go in,' answered the child.

'Come in,' said a weak but gentle voice, as she heard the question. The room was bare indeed; a few plain chairs, a table, a bureau, made up the furniture. Near the window was drawn a couch covered with a well-worn counterpane, though neat and tidy, and here in a sitting posture was one who in her day had been beautiful to look upon, although the features were wasted by long illness. She smiled as she welcomed them. Steadily she plied her needle; which was indeed painful to behold, for she seemed already dying, without a complaint, without a single murmur or a thought of the hard fate that compelled her to work for her daily bread. One could scarcely believe in such perfect cheerfulness, although you could see that she was suffering intensely. Mr. Fleming was very much interested, and when he bade her good-bye he said to Agnes, 'Has she no one, in her weak condition, to labor for her? When did her husband die?' He had not noticed, as we had done, a man reeling along the road and turning in at the gate from which he had just emerged. 'She is not a widow; better if she were,' said Agnes. 'She must see day by day the gradual death of the soul, while the body is unwasted. That wretched inebriate we have just met is her husband; and this is the reason why she plies her needle, rather than he shall be dependent upon the charity of others. When they first were married he had a neat shop in the town, and was one of the most promising young men to be found. It is a common story; the shop had to be given up, then they moved into a smaller house and were obliged to sell most of their furniture. Then it was that she first commenced sewing. She has been a heroine, and indeed a good wife. She is ever hoping for the time when her husband will be again as in the old days, but the man seems literally giving over to the demon of intemperance, but if a woman's love and a woman's prayers will aught avail at the mercy-seat, surely hers will not be lost. God pity her!'

Many months after this visit there was a great temperance movement throughout all the towns far and near. Many who had been reformed themselves went about rousing the people by a portrayal of their own wonderful rescue from a condition that was worse than death.

One evening we went by invitation to the hall, heart and hand with the movement. We could scarcely get a seat. The speaker that evening was a tall, wan, haggard-looking man, but he had

been an outcast from society. That peace which had fled from his own hearth when he gave way to temptation, but which had returned to him, urged him to proclaim the glad tidings to other homes. With what touching pathos did he portray all the sufferings in the drunkard's home—the sickness of hope deferred, the loss of all happiness here and all hope of the hereafter. More than one thought of our poor friend, Mrs. Lane. After the speaker had finished his appeal, and the whole company joined in singing "Auld Lang Syne," there was a death-like stillness in the room for a moment, which was broken by a movement in the aisle, and some one seemed eagerly pressing forward. A confused murmur of voices arose all over the room as one and another saw one whom all knew so well grasp the printed pledge with the eagerness of a dying man.

The first name subscribed to that solemn promise of total abstinence that night was *Robert Lane*. With one accord a glad shout went up from the whole assembly; men of all classes pressed forward to give him a good hand-shaking. It was a proud tribute paid to a woman's influence when he turned to them and said: 'My wife has done it all, Heaven bless her! Patient through all my infirmities; working for me, praying for me, when I could neither work nor pray for myself; if God will only raise her to health again, I will be to her a good husband as long as He spares my life. Hear this promise, friends, and may it be ratified in heaven.'

You need not be told that a pretty cottage has been built since that night by our friend Robert, and furnished by his wife's industry. Her health was restored as a miracle. Her reward has been equal to her great self-sacrifice; she will never be really strong again, but a happier wife the world does not contain. Moreover her husband has reformed many of his old associates who, like himself, were going the downward way.

'O Agnes!' said Cousin Lucy one day, flying into the room, 'do you know I am going to marry George Maynard?—the best man, I think, that ever lived. And he says that he owes a life-long debt of gratitude to you; that when he was ready to falter, if he had not had the kindly encouragement you so nobly gave him, helping him to shun temptation, he never would have been what he is to-day. And I too, dear Agnes, date my happiness from the hour I saw that first toast drank in cold water.'—*National Temperance Advocate*.

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### AS A LITTLE CHILD.

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A mother and a little child of six years were together one afternoon, the former busily engaged plying her needle, the latter building a wonderful castle with a box of jointed bricks. They were almost constant companions, for all the elders of the flock were at school, whilst Nellie was still her mother's pupil. A bright, merry, intelligent young creature was the little scholar. She needed neither coaxing nor driving; but loved to learn as the mother loved to teach.

As she labored away at her building on that summer afternoon, the small architect reminded one of a bird by her ceaseless motion. She flitted about, piling brick upon brick; sometimes talking, sometimes singing, as she drew back now and again to observe the effect of her work.

And, childlike, she chattered for a time, hardly noticing how brief were her mother's answers, or that, very often, there was no reply at all to her many questions. But this state of things was so contrary to custom that it attracted Nellie's attention, and, turning towards her mother, she saw that her hands were lying idle in her lap, and that her eyes were filling with tears.

In a moment the bricks were on the ground and the castle a mere wreck. The child darted to her mother, exclaiming, "Mamma, mamma! what is the matter? Are you ill? Do tell me what you are crying for?" and at the same time she softly wiped the tear from Mrs. Matthews' cheek, and followed this act by a loving kiss.

The mother lifted the child on her knee, and clasping her arms around her, wept quietly for a few moments. Then, as soon as she could speak, she said, "Your father and I are in great trouble about something. You are too young to understand why I am crying, darling, and I cannot tell you about it or I would, because I know my little Nellie would like to comfort her mother."