

he opinion of his friends, that he has been coming here a little too often."

"Pooh! Nonsense! Too often! I never saw him when I thought he'd been drinking to much. It's ridiculous! And he's silly enough, to mind them. Well, well. If he thinks he is in danger he'd better stay away. He must have a weak head!"

Killigrew spoke contemptuously. Pratt felt the landlord's sneering manner almost as much as if it had been applied to himself. It cost him no light effort to say, "good morning," and pass on without taking a drink at the bar.

"I wish this old man-trap was on the other side of Jericho!" he muttered, as soon as he was fairly beyond the sphere of its dangerous attractions; "or that I didn't have to pass it three or four times a day. If old Killigrew lays hold of me after this fashion, I'm afraid my good resolutions are not going to be worth much. O, dear! I wonder what good ever comes of this rum-selling, and rum-drinking? As to the harm, one needn't go far to look for that."

Musing thus, Pratt went on his way. At dinner time, both in coming home and returning to the store, he succeeded in getting past old Killigrew's "man-trap" without being hailed by the watchful landlord. But his good resolutions were not proof against the influences that assailed him in the evening. Later than usual he lingered at the store, in order to avoid, by so doing, the company of one or two young men who always stopped to drink at Killigrew's. He thought he had escaped them; but it was not so. They were in the tavern porch as he came along, and having taken their cue from the landlord, who was keen-sighted enough to see what had been passing in the mind of Pratt, and feared to lose a customer, assailed him with his influences that he had not strength of mind to resist. Just to "satisfy" them, he said he consented to drink a single glass. But that did not satisfy either them or the tavern-keeper. A second glass was almost forced upon him; then followed a third; which, purposely made stronger than usual, completed the overthrow of his reason.

Could those thoughtless young men have seen the aghast, agonizing face of the waiting, anxious wife, when her husband came staggering in that evening, they would not have boasted so gleefully of having "sent Pratt home as merry as a fiddler."

From that time the weak young man stopped almost daily at the tavern to drink.—The temptation was in his way, and he had not sufficient strength of purpose to resist its allurements. This was continued for months, until, under the gentle, yet often tearful solicitations of his wife, he again resolved to stand up firmly against the pressure of a current that was too steadily bearing him onward to the sea of destruction.—And he did stand up firmly for a time. But in this contest, the odds were against him.—Old Killigrew saw the struggle that was going on in his mind, and took a wicked pleasure, apart from his love of gain, in assailing the young man's good resolutions on every occasion that was presented. Sometimes, after alluring him into his bar, either through personal influence, or by means of gay young men who frequented his house, Killigrew could not induce him to take anything but a glass of water. Oftener, however, he gained his purpose more fully, and maddened the young man's brain with his fiery potations.

And so the work went on. There was a pitfall in Pratt's way, and over and anon he stumbled therein.

Ah! if the pitfall could only have been removed. It served no use whatever, gave nothing to the common good, was a constant source of annoyance, injury, and loss to the people of Ashdale. It had been dug by Killigrew, and was always kept deep and dangerous by him in order that he might profit by the weakness and injuries of those who weakly or unwarily stumbled over the half-concealed brink.

"Why did not the people of Ashdale cause the pitfall to be closed up? Why did they not remove this man-trap?" is asked, in a tone of surprise.

"They had no power to do so, we answer

"No power!"

"You may look surprised, but it is even as we say. Killigrew had the law on his side.

"The law!"

Yes, for all you seem so incredulous.—The law of the State in which Ashdale was situated, provided, by special enactment, for the digging of just such man-traps as the one maintained by Killigrew. And any person, not having the love of man nor the fear of God before his eyes, could, by the payment of a few dollars into the State Treasury, obtain the right to make for himself such a pitfall in any high way or street, in any village, town, or city in the Commonwealth.

"Preposterous!"

It is true—alas, too sadly true. Witness the crowded jails, almshouses and insane asylums; witness the crime, destitution and squalid misery that rest like black clouds over all parts of the State where population clusters thickly—and those licensed man-traps are to be found by the score in every neighbourhood. It is true, alas! too sadly true.

But for this pitfall in his way all might have been well with Pratt; but his feet were ever stumbling on its fatal bring. Steadily, for nearly ten years, had he been going down, down, down; and at the period when he came home sober, for the first time in many months, and announced to his wife the death of Killigrew, he was almost helpless in the power of his adversary. All manly strength was gone when the temptation was before him. It was in vain that he went out in the morning strong in his purpose to keep sober through the day; the sight of Killigrew's tavern fired his appetite to a degree that left him no power of resistance. It was in vain that he started homeward in the evening, promising himself that he would meet his wife and children without a stain on his lips. Alas! he could not bear onward against the whirlpool of desire that instantly encompassed him when he came within fatal proximity to Killigrew's.

Well might his sorrowing, despairing wife feel a thrill of pleasure in every heart fibre at the announcement of Killigrew's death. He had been doing an accursed work in Ashdale for years. Broadcast had he sown the seeds of anguish and desolation; and in her heart and home had many of these evil seeds fallen, taking quick root, springing up and bearing bitter fruit. Not did she attempt to stifle this pleasure, as unseemly, in view of the passage of a fellow mortal to his great account in eternity. She was glad the tavern-keeper was dead—so glad, it was useless to affect concealment.

The promise of that hour did not prove vain. The tavern was closed, and Edward Pratt went daily to his business and returned home at evening a sober man. It, as was often the case, he felt a desire for stimulating drink, he quenched the desire in draughts of pure cold