

WHAT CAN SHE DO?

By E. P. Roe.

(Continued.)

"No, but father listen to me before you refuse. Mr. Rule says I'm fit to enter college, and that I can lead my class too. I've been studying for this three years. I've set my heart upon it, and in his earnestness tears gathered in his eyes. 'The more fool you, and old Rule is another,' was the coarse answer. The boy's eyes flashed angrily, but the mother here spoke.

"You ought to be proud of your son, John; if you were a true father you would be. If you'd encourage and help him now, he'd make a man that—"

"Shut up! little you know about it. He'd make one of your snivelling white fingered loafers that's too proud to get a living by hard work. Perhaps you'd like to make a parson out of him. Now look here old woman, and you too, my young cock, I've suspected that something of this kind was up, but I tell you once for all it won't do. Just as this hulk of a boy is getting of some use to me, you want to spoil him by sending him to college. I'll see him hanged first," and the man turned to his breakfast as if he had settled it. But he was startled by his son's exclaiming passionately—

"I will go."

"Look a here, what do you mean?" said the father, rising with a black, ugly look.

"I mean I've set my heart on going to college and I will go. You and all the world shan't hinder me. I won't stay here and be a farm drudge all my life."

The man's face was livid with anger, and in a low hissing tone he said—

"I guess you want taking down a peg, my college gentleman. Perhaps you'd like to know I'm master till you're twenty-one, and he reached down to his feet, and he struck me if you dare," shouted the boy.

"If I dare! haw! haw! I don't cut the cussed nonsense out of your this morning, then I won't did," and he took an angry stride toward his son who sprang behind the stove.

The wife and mother had stood by, growing whiter, and with lips pressed close together. At this critical moment she stepped forward, her infuriated husband and seized his arm, exclaiming—

"John, take care. You have reached the end."

"Stand aside," snarled the man, raising the strap, "or I'll give you a taste of it, too."

The woman's grasp tightened on his arm, and in a voice that made him pause and look fixedly at her, she said—

"If you strike me or that boy I'll take my children and we will leave your roof this hateful day never to return."

"Hain't I to be master in my own house?" said the husband sullenly.

"You are not to be a brute in your own house. I know you've struck me before, but I endured it and said nothing about it because you were drunk, but you are not drunk now, and if you lay a finger on me or my son today, I will never darken your doors again."

The unnatural father saw that he had gone too far. He had not expected such an issue. He had long been accustomed to follow the lead of his brutal passions, but had now reached a point where he felt he must stop, as his wife said. Turning on his heel, he sullenly took his place at the table muttering—

"It's a pretty pass when there's mutiny in a man's own house." Then to his son, "You won't get a d—cent out of me for your college business, mind that."

Rose, the daughter, who had been crying and wringing her hands on the doorstep, now came timidly in, and at a sign from her mother, she and her brother went into another room.

The man sat for a while in dogged silence, but at last his tone that was meant to be somewhat conciliatory, said, "What the devil did you mean by putting the boy up to such foolishness?"

"Hush!" said his wife imperiously, "I'm in no mood to talk with you now."

"Oh, ah, indeed, a man can't even speak in his own house, eh? I guess I'll take myself off to where I can have liberty," and he went out, harnessed his old white horse, and started for his favorite grocery in the village.

His father had no sooner gone than Arden came out and said, passionately, "It's no use, mother, I can't stand it; I must leave home to-day; I guess I can make a living, at any rate I'd rather starve than pass through such scenes."

The poor, overwrought woman threw herself down in a low chair and sobbed, rocking herself back and forth.

"Wait till I die, Arden, wait till I die, I feel it won't be long. What have I to live for but you and Rose, and if you, my pride and joy, go away after what has happened, it will be worse than death," and a tempest of grief shook her quivering frame.

you, though even the thought of your going away breaks my heart."

"I will stay," said the boy, almost as passionately as he had said, "I will go."

"I now see how much you need a protector."

That night the father came home so stupidly drunk that they had to half carry him to bed where he slept heavily till morning, and rose considerably shaken and depressed from his debauch. The breakfast was as silent as it had been stormy on the previous day. After it was over, Arden followed his father to the door and said—

"I was a boy yesterday morning, but you made me a man, and a rather ugly one too. I learned then for the first time that you occasionally strike my mother. Don't you ever do it again, or it will be worse for you, drunk or sober. I am not going to college, but I will stay home and take care of her. Do we understand each other?"

The man was in such a low, shattered condition that his son's beating cowed him, and he walked off muttering—

"Young cocks crow mighty loud," but from that time forward he never offered violence to his wife or children.

Still his father's conduct and character had a most disastrous effect upon the young man. He was sored, because disappointed in his most cherished purpose, at an age when most youths scarcely have definite plans. Many have a strong natural bent, and if turned aside from this, they are more or less unhappy, and their duties instead of being wings to help forward in life, become a galling yoke.

This was the case of Arden. Farm work, as he had learned it from his father, was coarse, heavy drudgery, with small and uncertain returns, and these were largely spent at the village rum shops in purchasing slow poition for the husband, and misery and shame for the wife and children.

In respectable Pushton, a drunkard's family, especially if poor, had a very low social status. Mrs. Lacey and her children were not of bad associations, so they scarcely had any. This ostracism, within certain limits is perhaps right. The preventive penalties of vice can scarcely be too great, and men and women must be made to feel that wrong doing is certain to be followed by terrible consequences. The fire is merciful in that it always burns, and sin and suffering are inseparably linked. But the consequences of one person's sin so often blight the innocent. The necessity of this from our various ties, should be a motive, a hostage against sinning, and doubtless restrains many a one who would go headlong under evil impulses.

But multitudes do slip off the paths of virtue, and helpless wives, and often helpless husbands and children, writhe from wounds made by those under sacred obligations to shield them. Upon the families of criminals, society visits a mildew of coldness and scorn that blights nearly all chances of good fruit. Only society is very unjust in its discriminations, and some of the most heinous sins in God's sight are treated as mere eccentricities, or condemned in the poor, but winked at in the rich. Gentlemen will admit to their parlors, men about whom they know facts, which if true of a woman, would close every respectable door against her, and God frowns on the christian (?) society that makes such arbitrary and unjust distinctions. Cast both out, till they bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

But we hope for little of a reformation tendency from the selfish society of the world; changing human fashion rules it, rather than the eternal truth of the God of love. The saddest feature of all is that the shifting code of fashion is coming more and more to govern the church. Doctrine may remain the same, profession and intellectual belief the same, while practical action drifts far astray. There are multitudes of wealthy churches, that will no more admit associations with that class among which our Lord lived and worked, than will select society. They seemed to be designed to help only respectable, well connected sinners, toward heaven.

This tendency has two phases. In the cities the poor are practically excluded from worshipping with the rich, and missions are established for them as if they were heathen. I have no objection to costly and magnificent churches. Nothing is too good to be the expression of our honor and love of God. But they should be like the cathedrals of Europe, where prince and peasant may bow together on the same level, as they are in the Divine presence. Christ made no distinction between the rich and poor regarding their spiritual value and need, nor should the christianity named after him. To that degree that it does, it is not christianity. The meek and lowly Nazarene is not his inspiration. Perhaps the personage he told to get behind him when promising the "kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," has more to do with it.

The second phase of this tendency as seen in the country is kindred but unlike. Poverty may not be so great a bar, but moral failings off are more severely visited, and the family under a cloud, through the wrong-doing of one or more of its members, are treated very much as if they had a perpetual pestilence. The highly respectable keep aloof. Too often the quiet country church is not a sanctuary and a place of refuge to those whom either their own or other's sin has wounded, a place where the grasp of sympathy and words of encouragement are spoken, but rather a place where they meet the cold critical gaze of those who are hedged about with virtues and good connections. I hope I am wrong, but how is it where you live my reader? If a well-to-do thriving man of integrity

takes a fine place in your community, we all know how church people will treat him. And what they do is all right. But society—the world, will do the same. Is christianity—the followers of the "Friend of publicans and sinners," to do no more?

If in contrast a drunken wretch like Lacey with his wife and children come in town on top of a wagon-load of shattered furniture, and all are dumped down in a back alley to scramble into the shelter of a tenement house as best they can, do you call upon them? Do you invite them to your pew? Do you ever urge and encourage them into your church and make even one of its corners home like and inviting?

I hope so; but alas, that was not the general custom in Pushton, and poor Mrs. Lacey had acquired the habit of staying at home, her neighbors had formed the habit of calling her husband a "dreadful man," and the family "very irreligious," and as the years passed they seemed to be more and more left to themselves. Mr. Lacey had brought his wife from a distant town where he had met and married her. She was a timid, retiring woman, and time and kindness were needed to draw her out. But no one had seemingly thought it worth while, and at the time our story takes an interest in their affairs, there was a growing isolation.

All this had a very bad effect upon Arden. As he grew out of the democracy of boyhood he met a certain social coldness and distance which he learned to understand only too early, and soon returned this treatment with increased coldness and aversion. Had it not been for the influence of his mother and the books he read, he would have inevitably fallen into low company. But he had promised his mother to shun it. He saw its result in his father's conduct, and as he read, his mind matured, the narrow coarseness of such company became repugnant. From time to time he was sorely tempted to leave home which his father made hateful in many respects, and try his fortunes among strangers who would not associate with him a set; but his love for his mother kept him at her side, for he saw that her life was bound up in him, and that he alone could protect her and his sister and keep some sort of a shelter for them. In his unselfish devotion to them his character was noble. In his harsh cynicism toward the world and especially the church people, for whom he made no allowance whatever—in his utter hatred and detestation of his father, it was faulty, though allowance must be made for him. He was all so peculiar in other respects, for his unguided reading was of a nature that fed his imagination at the expense of his reasoning faculties. Though he drifted in a narrow round, and his life was as hard and real as poverty and his father's ingratitude, he was not made for him. He was all so peculiar in other respects, for his unguided reading was of a nature that fed his imagination at the expense of his reasoning faculties. Though he drifted in a narrow round, and his life was as hard and real as poverty and his father's ingratitude, he was not made for him. He was all so peculiar in other respects, for his unguided reading was of a nature that fed his imagination at the expense of his reasoning faculties. 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