

Temperance

Tom.

(By Rev. C. H. Mead, in the 'National Advocate'.)

Never did any one have a better start in life than Tom. Born of Christian parents, he inherited from them no bad defects, moral or physical. He was built on a liberal plan, having a large head, large hands, large feet, large body, and, within all, a heart big with generosity. His face was the embodiment of good nature, and his laugh was musical and infectious. Being an only child there was no one to share with him in the lavish love of his parents. They saw in him nothing less than a future President of the United States, and they made every sacrifice to fit him for his coming position. He was a prime favorite with all, and being born a leader, he was ungrudgingly accorded that position by his playmates at school and his fellows at the university. He wrestled with rhetoric, and logic, and political economy, and geometry, and came off an easy victor; he put new life into the dead languages, dug among the Greek roots by day or soared up among the stars by night. None could outstrip him as a student, and he easily held his place at the head of his class. The dullest scholar found in him a friend and a helper, while the brighter ones found in his example an incentive to do their best.

In athletic sports, too, he was excelled by none. He could run faster, jump higher, lift a dumbbell easier, strike a ball harder, and pull as strong an oar as the best of them. He was the point of the flying wedge in the game of football, and woe be to the opponent against whom that point struck. To sum it all up, Tom was a mental and physical giant, as well as a superb specimen of what that college could make out of a young man. But, unfortunately, it was one of those institutions that developed the mental, trained the physical, and starved the spiritual, and so it came to pass ere his college days were ended, Tom had an enemy, and that enemy was the bottle.

The more respectable you make sin, the more dangerous it is. An old black bottle in the rough hand of the keeper of a low dive would have no power to cause a clean young man to swerve from the right course, but he is a hero ten times over who can withstand the temptation of a wine glass in the jeweled fingers of a beautiful young lady. Tom's tempter came in the latter form, and she who might have spurred him on to the highest goal, and whispered in his ear, 'Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright,' started him down a course which made him learn from a terrible experience that 'at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' Does anyone call a glass of wine a small thing? Read Tom's story and then call it small, if you dare! Whatever he did was done with his might, drinking not excepted. He boasted of his power to drink much and keep sober, while he laughed at the companions who imbibed far less and went to bed drunk. At first Tom was the master and the bottle his slave, but in three years' time they changed places. When too late, his parents discovered that the college had sent back to them a ripe scholar, a trained athlete and a drunkard. The mother tried to save her son, but failing in every effort, her heart broke and she died with Tom's name on her lips. The father, weighed down under the dead sorrow and the living trouble, vainly strove to rescue his son, and was found one night in the attitude of prayer, kneeling by the side of the bed where his wife's broken heart a few months before had ceased to beat. He died praying for his boy!

One evening, as the sun was setting, a man stood leaning against the fence along one of the streets of a certain city. His clothes were ragged, his face and hands unwashed,

his hair uncombed, and his eyes bleared; he looked more like a wild beast hunted and hungry than a human being. It was Tom. The boys gathered about him and made him the object of their fun and ridicule. At first he seemed not to notice them, but suddenly he cried out: 'Cease your laughter until you know what you are laughing at. Let me talk to my master while you listen.'

He pulled a bottle from his pocket, held it up, and looking at it with deep hatred flashing from his reddened eyes, he said:

'I was once your master; now I am your slave. In my strength you deceived me; in my weakness you mock me. You have burned my brain, blistered my body, blasted my hopes, bitten my soul and broken my will. You have taken my money, destroyed my home, stolen my good name, and robbed me of every friend I ever had. You killed my mother, slew my father, sent me out into the world a worthless vagabond, until I find myself a son without parents, a man without friends, a wanderer without a home, a human being without sympathy, and a pauper without bread. Deceiver, mocker, robber, murderer—I hate you! Oh, for one hour of my old-time strength, that I might slay you! Oh, for one friend and some power to free me from this slavery!'

The laugh had ceased and the boys stood gazing on him with awe. A young lady and gentleman had joined the company just as Tom began this terrible arraignment of his master, and as he ceased, the young lady stepped up to him and earnestly said: 'You

have one friend and there is one power that can break your chains and set you free.'

Tom gazed at her a moment and then said: 'Who is my friend?'

'The King is your friend,' she answered.

'And pray, who are you?' said Tom.

'One of the King's Daughters,' was the reply, 'and "in His name" I tell you He has power to set you free.'

'Free, free did you say? But, you mock me. A girl with as white a hand and as fair a face as yours, delivered me to my master.'

'Then, in the name of the King whose daughter I am, even Jesus Christ the Lord, let the hand of another girl lead you to Him who came to break the chains of the captive and set the prisoner free.'

Tom looked at the earnest face of the pleading girl, hesitated a while, as his lip quivered and big tears filled his eyes, and then, suddenly lifting the bottle high above his head, he dashed it down on the pavement, and, as it broke into a thousand pieces, he said:

'I'll trust you, I'll trust you, lead me to the King.'

And lead him she did, as always a King's Daughter will lead one who sorely needs help. His chains were broken, and at twenty-nine years of age Tom began life over again. He is not the man he might have been, but no one doubts his loyalty to the King. His place in the prayer circle is never vacant, and you can always find him in the ranks of those whose sworn purpose it is to slay Tom's old master, King Alcohol!

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