

# CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE

DEVOTED TO

Total Abstinence, Legal Prohibition, and Social Progress.

Vol. XX.]

MONTREAL, MAY, 1854.

[No. 9.

## The Man-Trap at Ashdale.

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Footsteps were heard—a form darkened the door—some one entered—but Mrs. Pratt did not look up, nor pause in her work.—The sun had gone down, and twilight was gathering dimly. Mrs. Pratt leaned closer to the window that she might catch the fading rays, and a little while longer continues her work.

“Sarah!”

“Well?”

Mrs. Pratt did not turn nor look towards the speaker. Her voice was a low, sad murmur.

“Sarah!”

The hand of the speaker now rested lightly on her shoulder.

With a quick movement, and with some surprise in her manner, Mrs. Pratt turned herself from the window.

“O, Edward!”

Her voice choked and her eyes filled with tears.

“Sarah.” And Mr. Pratt seated himself beside his wife, placing his hand gently on hers, as he did so, and looking earnestly and tenderly in her face. “Sarah, I have a little good news for you; if good news can come in just such a shape. Old Killigrew is dead.”

“Dead!”

Light and shadows were blended on the face of Mrs. Pratt. Death is an awful thing, come in almost any shape it will; and in the case of a man like Killigrew, it was awful in the extreme. Yet, the intelligence caused a throb of pleasure in the heart of Mrs. Pratt.

“Yes; he fell dead about two hours ago, while standing behind the bar. He died with the toddy stick in his hand, and a glass of liquor before him. I would’nt like to go into eternity with all the sins against humanity that lie on his conscience.”

And Mr. Pratt shuddered as he spoke.

“Is the tavern to be closed?” asked Mrs. Pratt; hope and anxiety blending in her voice.

“I saw Parker, old Killigrew’s son-in-law, as I came along, and he told me that not another drop of liquor should be sold there while he lived. He means to farm the place himself. It’s first rate land, though neglected and run down.”

“Will he keep his word?”

“Parker? Yes, indeed. If he says a thing, you may depend on his doing it. He has always been opposed to the old man’s keeping a bar.”

“And what a curse to Ashdale that bar has been! O, Edward!”

No wonder Mrs. Pratt was overcome by her feelings. No wonder she said that bar had been a curse. Ten years before, as she stood beside her young hus-

band, she had the proudest, happiest heart in Ashdale. —Since then, alas! none was so humbled and grief-stricken; for, in that bar, her loved and honored husband had trailed his manhood in the dust of a debasing sensuality.

Than Edward Pratt, a kinder-hearted man could not be found. But, he had neither a decided will, nor strength of purpose. The current in which his life boat happened to be, usually bore him a long; and even when conscious that it was gliding towards a dangerous sea, he opposed to it only a slight resistance.

Very soon after their marriage, Mrs. Pratt discovered in her husband a fondness for stimulating drinks. A prompt yet gentle and loving remonstrance accomplished all she had hoped to gain. The dangerous tempter was banished from their house.—All would have been well, from that time forth, had not the tavern of old Killigrew, the only one in Ashdale, stood directly on the way along which Mr. Pratt daily went to the store where he was employed as clerk.

Often, in returning home, he would be in company with young men who never passed Killigrew’s without a word with the companionable landlord, and a taste of his well-mixed liquor. It was not in the amiable and compliant Mr. Pratt to say “no” on these occasions.

Soon his wife became aware of the temptation that was in his way: and of his almost daily yielding to its enticements. She talked with him soberly, yet gently and lovingly as before. Her words aroused no impatience—no anger—no stubborn self-will. He loved her too well to pain her even with a frown.

“I’ll not darken old Killigrew’s door again if it troubles you, Sarah. I don’t care for his liquor. As you say, it does me no good.”

“I shall be so happy!” sobbed Mrs. Pratt, hiding her tearful face on the breast of her husband. “There is nothing else in life to trouble me.”

On the next morning, as Mr. Pratt was passing the tavern, old Killigrew, who, if not behind the bar mixing up his tempting compounds, was sure to be at his door watched out for customers—called out.

“Hey? Neddy, my boy! What’s your particular hurry?”

“I’m a little late,” replied the young man, evasively, keeping on his way.”

“Stop, stop,” called the landlord. “Here! Why, my dear fellow? one would think you had the business of the world on your shoulders. A man should never be in too great a hurry to speak a word with an old friend. What’s become of Phillips? I haven’t set eyes on him for a week.”

“The truth is,” said Pratt, who now paused, “it is