

The Drunkard's Wife.

BY IRA A. STONER.

A WOMAN sits beside the crib
In which her baby lies,
Her face is sad, her thoughts afar
Seem straying with her eyes.
Those wandering eyes are large and bright,
Her face exceeding fair;
But in them one can plainly read
A spirit of despair.
'Tis sad to know, that happy smiles
From these bright eyes have fled,
And the heart, that once with gladness swelled,
Now aches with pain instead.
I'll tell you why this woman weeps
And lives a wretched life;
No fault belongs to her, but ah!
She is a drunkard's wife.

The house is small, the ceiling low,
The rooms are mean and few:
The broken windows and the roof
Let howling winter through.
In this poor house the voice of song
Is scarcely ever heard;
No sympathizing persons calls
To speak a friendly word.
The husband comes at eventide,
Though often not till late,
But no one welcomes his return,
Nor meets him at the gate.
He brings no gladness to his home,
But wretchedness instead;
He brings its inmates grief and shame,
In place of daily bread.

A friendless woman, there she sits;
Her eyes are dim with tears;
As in her memory there comes
A thought of others years.
She thinks about her happy youth,
When life was bright and gay;
Of her father's home, and of the girls
With whom she used to play.
Those girls have grown to womanhood,
Are wives and mothers too;
But they have cheerful, happy homes,
And husbands kind and true.
Their lives are free from all the ills
And woes that blight her life;
It ne'er has been their wretched lot
To be a drunkard's wife.

She thinks about the happy day
When she became a bride:
The day she took the marriage vows,
Her husband by her side.
He'd promised to be true to her,
And she believed his word,
Though she knew that he was fond of rum,
And that he oft had erred.
But when he promised to reform,
Then plead and promised still,
She gave to him her hand and hear
Against her parents' will.
Her husband's old acquaintances
Seemed bound to blight his life;
He soon became a drunken sot,
And she a drunkard's wife.

A woman sits beside her child,
With heavy heart and sad,
She has no food, no coal, no hope,
Is ill and poorly clad.
The husband cares for naught but rum;
To love her he has ceased;
Intemperance has changed him now
Into a brutish beast.
Behold the woman on her knees,
Her hands are clasped in prayer.
There are frozen teardrops on her cheeks;
Neglect has brought them there;
Before her is the sleeping child;
Her simple prayer is said,
She never more will weep again.
The drunkard's wife is dead.

A TEACHER asked a little boy, "What is hope?"
"It is never feeling disappointed," answered the
child. And this is as good an answer as some wise
men have been able to give.

JIM BARLOW'S FRIGHT.

BY DAVID KER.

"You may talk as you like, I ain't afraid of
nothin'. Let me see the man as can frighten me,
that's all!"

In truth, it might well seem no easy matter to
frighten Jim Barlow, who was a great hulking
fellow, more than six feet high, strong enough to
knock down a horse, and the terror of the whole
village when he was out of temper, which happened
almost every day.

On this particular evening Jim Barlow had been
having his supper at the little village inn, and
boasting, as usual, that nothing could frighten him.
As a rule no one dared to contradict him when he
did this; so he was rather taken aback when old
Job Cox said to him, very slowly and solemnly,
with a knowing nod of his gray head at every
word:

"Tell 'ee what, my lad, it ain't the bull as
bellows the loudest what's the best fighter. It's
one thing to thrash a weaker man thyself in broad
daylight, and it's another thing to be tackled in the
dark by half-a-dozen thieves with pistols—or may-
hap by some at worse. If thee were to meet a
ghost, now" (in those days many ignorant English
villagers believed in ghosts), "what would thee
do?"

Fighting Jim gave a scowl like a gathering
thunder-cloud, and clinched a fist as hard and
heavy as a sledge-hammer. Had not Job been so
gray and wrinkled he would probably have been
rewarded for his sermon by being knocked down on
the spot. As it was Barlow had to content himself
with flourishing his huge fists defiantly, and stoutly
declaring that "if all the ghosts in the churchyard
were to get up at once he wouldn't care a straw!"

But this boast came back to his memory rather
unpleasantly an hour later, on his lonely walk
homeward through the darkness, along a deep,
narrow, gloomy lane, overshadowed by tall hedge-
rows, the twisted boughs of which looked like the
clawed hands of monsters clutching at him as he
passed.
All the ghost stories that he had ever heard in
his life came crowding upon him at once as he
neared the dismal hollow, where a pile of stones,
lying in the black shadow of several huge over-
hanging trees, marked the exact spot on which a
man had been found lifeless two or three years
before. The boaster's heart died within him, and
the tune which he tried to whistle in order to keep
up his failing courage melted into a tremulous
quaver, and then ceased altogether. Most heartily
did Bully Barlow then wish, when it was too late,
that he had either never started home alone or had
spoken more respectfully of the ghosts before
doing so.

Hark! what was that? Could it be merely the
echo of his own heavy tread, or was it a dogging
footstep following close behind him? There! he
heard it again, and this time too plainly for any
mistake. It was no echo; it was something—Jim
shuddered to think what—keeping step for step at
his heels.

Had Job Cox and his other acquaintances seen
him at that moment they might well have thought
little of his boasted courage. Never was any man
more utterly and helplessly terrified. His brawny
limbs trembled as if in a fever, his breath came
thick and short, and the cold dews of agony stood
upon his forehead.

Once only, as he hurried forward, half striding
and half running, did he venture to cast a terror-
stricken glance back over his shoulder at his ghostly
pursuer, whose haunting tread he could still hear
behind him as plainly as ever. But he only caught

a glimpse of a dim, shapeless, horrible creature,
whose deformed head seemed to be armed with two
long straight horns. Just at that moment the
moon broke through the clouds and showed him
what seemed to be a tall, gaunt, white figure stand-
ing right in his path and stretching out two
skeleton arms to seize him. With a loud cry of
horror he fell down senseless.

At dawn the next morning—and this is a true
story—a labourer found Bully Jim lying face
downwards on the wet grass, at the foot of the
finger-post, which his fears had magnified into a
skeleton, while beside him grazed the pursuing
ghost in the shape of a stray donkey.

From that night Jim was never heard to boast of
courage.

Cowardly boys, as well as men, are often like the
bad men of whom we read in the Psalms, who were
"in great fear, where no fear was."

TOM'S PRAYER.

It was cold in Tom's room. He undressed
rapidly, thinking the while of to-morrow's baseball.
He had stood in the cold finishing a little story by
his bedroom lamp. Now he was thoroughly
chilled. Should he get in bed to say his prayer?
N-no; that wouldn't be manly and decent after
spending so much time to read; so he dropped on
his knees, and this was his prayer:—

"O Lord, take care of us to-night, and fill us
with thy light, and cause us to walk in thy way,
and fill us with joy and peace, for Christ's sake.
Amen."

While he said these words rapidly, quick thoughts
of the just-completed story chased themselves
through his mind; still he had said the words—
mainly extracts from his father's daily morning
prayer—and with one bound Tom was in bed.
But he had a conscience, and his conscience was
not sleepy.

"If any fellow came to you with a request like
that, what would you say?" asked conscience.
"You would tell him to wait till he wanted some-
thing before he took up your time. A fellow with
a tongue and temper like yours ought to want
something."

"I do," said Tom, "I'll try again."

This time he knelt reverently by the bedside and
prayed:—

"O Lord, I thank thee for having so much
patience with me. Please help me to govern my
temper and make me honest in trying to do right,
and please help me to serve thee like a man."

Which prayer do you think was heard?—*Sel.*

BRYANT'S TENDER CONSCIENCE.

THE following very pretty anecdote is told of the
late William Cullen Bryant, the poet, by a former
associate in his newspaper office, which illustrates
the good man's simplicity of heart. Says the
narrator:—

"One morning, many years ago, after reaching
his office, and trying in vain to begin work, he
turned to me, and remarked:—

"I cannot get along at all this morning."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Oh," he replied, "I have done wrong. When
on my way here, a little boy, flying a kite, passed
me. The string of the kite having rubbed against
my face, I seized it and broke it. The boy lost his
kite, but I did not stop to pay him for it. I did
wrong. I ought to have paid him."

This tenderness of conscience went far toward
making the poet the kindly, noble, honourable, and
honoured man that he was, whose death was felt
as a loss throughout the land.—*Selected.*