

some doubt in her mind, 'Yes, the mouth was gentle and firm; but has lines of suffering.'

'You think so?'

'They were very plain to my eyes.'

And now, looking through my wife's eyes, they were plain to me.

We met Mr. and Mrs. Clare at the dinner-table, and found them all we could desire—quiet, refined, and just social enough to make intercourse pleasant. The lady was charming, though you could not call her beautiful. She was petite in figure, with a soft oval face, and brown eyes that were lustrous, yet tender. I noticed, as she sat beside her husband at the table, that she leaned a little towards him. Afterwards, I observed the same attitude, always when they were together, sitting or standing. And she had a way of looking into his face that was peculiar—a sober, loving kind of way—questioning, and sometimes touched with a doubt, or shadowed by some ever-present memory.

Mr. Clare was very gentle towards his wife, and, it was very plain to see, very fond of her. Nay, 'fond' is too weak a word. He loved her with a pure and deep affection.

I had claret on the table, and offered my bottle to our new guests. But they declined with what seemed to me almost cold politeness.

'It is cooling to the blood,' I remarked, as I lifted a glass of the richly-colored wine to my lips.

'It may cool the blood in some veins, but it burns like fire in others,' replied Mr. Clare, after a moment or two of silence.

I said nothing in answer to this, and the subject was dropped. I found Mr. Clare a man of large culture, simple habits, and fine conversational powers. We were much together, and mutually enjoyed each other's society.

A week went pleasantly by. Bathing, walking, and driving on the beach, sitting in the fresh sea-breeze, and watching the surf as if came seething in upon the shore, or gazing out upon the great, immeasurable ocean—so the time passed almost like a dream.

Every day I took my claret, but Mr. Clare drank only water.

'I wish you would try a glass of this wine,' said I, as we sat at the dinner-table one day, about a week after the arrival of our new friends, and I pushed my bottle towards him.

'Thank you,' Mr. Clare answered, gravely and decidedly, 'but I am better without wine.'

'Are you quite sure of that?' I queried. 'Pure wine gives life to the blood. It is the spurious stuff that sets the veins on fire.'

I noticed that Mrs. Clare leaned just a little closer to her husband, and looked sideways up into his face in that peculiar way I have mentioned.

A faint but quickly fading smile rested on Mr. Clare's lips as he replied, 'There may be idiosyncrasies of blood that will not bear even pure wine. I have heard of such.'

'Have you?' I said, a little curiously.

'Yes,' he answered, after a moment's thought; then added—'About a year ago, I saw a curious statement that impressed me strongly. It was made by a physician of some note, and recorded in a medical journal. It was to the effect, ascertained by dissection, that a too free use of stimulating drinks tended to enlarge the blood globules, as well as those of the brain

and other organs, so that they stood open-mouthed, as it were, inflamed, athirst always, and eager to drink. The physician to whom I have referred, after clearly ascertaining the existence of this morbid change, had an opportunity to dissect the brain of a man who, after being a drunkard for many years, reformed, and lived soberly until he died. To his astonishment, he found that the unnaturally enlarged globules of the blood and brain had not shrunk to their proper size. Though they did not exhibit the inflammation of the drunkard's brain, they were enlarged, and ready, it seemed, on the instant, to absorb the fumes of alcohol, and resume their old diseased condition.'

A low, half-stifled sigh touched my ears. I glanced into the face of Mrs. Clare, and saw that her eyes had the set look of one who is gazing intently on some mental picture. It was not a cheerful picture on which her soft eyes were fixed; I needed no words to tell me that.

'Curious,' I remarked, as Mr. Clare ceased speaking.

'I was struck,' he resumed, after a pause, 'with the impression made by this discovery on the physician's mind. He thought he saw in this morbid state of the brain the physical part of the reason why a man who had once been a drunkard can never again, as long as he lives, safely take one drop of alcoholic liquor. He thought he saw why a glass of wine put the man back instantly to where he was when he drank all the time. He saw the citadel free from the enemy, but undefended, incapable of defence, and its doors wide open, so that there was no safety, except in keeping the foe at a distance, away beyond the outermost wall.'

I thought I detected a slight shiver in Clare's voice, as, with some warmth of manner, he closed the last sentence.

'I never understood the pathology of this thing before,' said I—'the physical reason why there was safety for the drunkard only in total abstinence. We may have the secret here, but I cannot understand why pure wine should inflame the blood when every globule is in its normal state.'

'There are such things as hereditary conditions,' remarked Mr. Clare. 'Is not a drunkard as likely to transmit the enlarged and thirsty blood and brain globules to his children as a consumptive his tubercular diathesis?'

I was half-startled by the conclusive directness of his query.

'The law of transmission,' he went on, 'acts in no partial way. Whatever we do of habit, whether physical or mental, goes down potentially to our children. It is an estate of which no one can rob them. We bless or curse them in our daily lives.'

There was a shiver in his voice now. My ear felt it almost painfully.

'Were you always so abstemious?' I asked, two or three days afterwards, as my glass of claret brought back the wine question.

'No,' he answered, somewhat gravely. 'In my younger days I drank occasionally; but wine was always too heating for my blood.'

'Perhaps,' said I, 'the article was not always pure. It has long been difficult to get the genuine stuff.'

'It was always pure in my father's house,' he replied.

'Then you are familiar with the best brands,' I remarked.

'Entirely.'

'And know the flavor of good wine.'

'Few knew it better,' he answered, quietly.

I lifted the half-emptied glass of claret that stood near my plate, held it to the light, and then sipped a few drops, saying, as I did so, 'I think this is all right. It should be, for it came directly from the importer's, and I paid him his own price under the guaranty of genuineness. I am afraid of all doctored stuff. Do me the favor'—and I poured a claret glass half full—'just to let a few drops fall over your tongue, and give me your opinion of its quality.'

How could he refuse so slight a request? For an instant there was hesitation. I looked at him, and saw a quick change in his face. His wife leaned closer, and laid her hand softly on his arm. Then he took the glass I held towards him, raised it to his mouth, and sipped a few drops of the fruity wine. My eyes were on his face, watching for the connoisseur's look of pleasure. The expression I saw was more than that. It had in it a quick thrill. Removing the glass from his lips, he held it poised for a moment, then, lifting it again, he drained the contents at a single draught.

I shall never forget the sudden pallor and look of despair that struck into Mrs. Clare's face.

'Pure wine, without question,' said Clare, in a low, changed voice, as he kept tasting the flavor on his tongue. 'Pure wine, sir! You are fortunate in getting so good an article.'

I noticed that he turned himself a little away from his wife, still holding the glass in his hand, and reaching it, I thought, a little forward, as if inviting me to fill it.

'Thank you! I am glad to know it,' I returned, my voice betraying the change in my feelings.

Mr. Clare set the glass down quickly, and went on with his dinner, bending low to his plate. The meal was finished in silence and embarrassment. I ventured to look once or twice at Mrs. Clare, who was only pretending to eat. Her face was pale and anxious. The change in her husband's countenance was as marked as the change in hers. All the old sweetness had faded from his lips, that now touched each other in a hard pressure; and the gentleness had gone out of his eyes.

He arose without speaking, and left the table, Mrs. Clare following. Our chamber adjoined theirs, and thither, after leaving the dining room, I went with my wife.

'Did you see Mrs. Clare's face when her husband drank that glass of wine?' she asked, looking at me very soberly.

'Yes, and I would give this moment half I am worth to recall the thoughtless act. But it never for an instant crossed my mind that he was in danger.'

At this moment we heard, through the partition, that separated our chambers, the voice of Mr. Clare pitched to an unusual tone.

'Come, lie down and get your usual nap,' we heard Mrs. Clare say coaxingly.

'I'm going to walk on the beach, I tell you,' was roughly answered. 'I can't sleep.'

'Then I'll walk with you,' was the firm, but kind reply.

'Not if I wish to go alone, madame! And I do!'

We heard no more. Everything was silent in the room for some minutes. Then the door opened, and the sound of heavy feet was on the stairs. A low cry, like a despairing wail, thrilled upon the air. Afterwards all was as still as death in the adjoining chamber.