

Tales and Sketches.

THE SCOTT ACT PASSED.

BY G. C.

"Where are you, dear wife?" cried the good Farmer Brown,
 "Lay your work, for a minute, aside and come down,
 Do I look any younger? I feel like a lad;
 And I've something to tell you, will make your heart glad.
 The cause we so love, is triumphant at last;
 Thank God for our victory; the Scott Act has passed.

"When our teams to the Town have gone loaded with grain,
 How often awake half the night have we lain:
 With the lantern left down in the kitchen to burn,
 Awaiting our boys' long-expected return,
 Delayed as they were we both well understood,
 By the licensed temptations to drink on the road;
 When liquor had drawn all sense from their heads,
 Else their teams had been stabled; and they in their beds.
 Our prayers, my dear Mary, that this might not last,
 Are answered to-day for the Scott Act has passed.

"I know what you're thinking of now, that sad night,
 When the frozen earth gleamed in a mantle of white,
 When stern winter reigned monarch, supreme and severe,
 And we waited in vain till the morning drew near.
 O! how anxious we grew as the hours fled by,
 Till we heard a faint tinkle of bells drawing nigh.
 I opened the door; there were horses and sleigh
 But stark frozen and dead in the latter there lay
 Both our loved ones, for whom we had waited so long,
 Who but lately had left us so joyous and strong.
 Oh! I never could tell how we passed through that day
 I can only remember when friends went away
 At evening, how lonely and heart-sick we felt,
 As hand clasped in hand by our bed-side we knelt,
 To pray the great Father our grief to assuage,
 With his sore-needed grace, in our childless old age.
 And he who sends ever the mourner's relief,
 Gave us strength to sustain our great burden of grief.
 No voting can ever undo the sad past,
 But I thank God to-day that the Scott Act has passed.

"Great Father of mercy thou knowest what I feel!
 On behalf of the homes of our land I appeal;
 May the hearts of the men who are making our laws,
 By thy wisdom inspired, be true to truth's cause;
 May they vote to outlaw the vile drug that destroys,
 Our innocent girls, and our brave, noble boys,
 That robs home of all peace, and all comfort, and then
 Transforms into demons both women and men;
 Its fell tide of ruin o'er broken hearts rolls,
 And people's the nethermost Hell with lost souls.
 May the licenses issued this year be the last,
 And the whole land rejoice that the Scott Act has passed.

THE BURNISH FAMILY.

A PRIZE STORY PUBLISHED BY THE SCOTTISH TEMPERANCE LEAGUE.

CHAPTER VIII (Continued).

The appearance of most of the young people was, certainly, not prepossessing. The preconceived idea that beauty had been their snare, and that passion had betrayed them, soon vanished when they were seen. The largest class in such institutions have been neglected and cast upon the streets from childhood by drunken parents—left to form what associations they might, and corrupted before they would know much of the evil or the sorrow of their sin. These were, for the most part, the children of drunken parents. Others were country girls, who had come to London as servants, whom idleness or vanity, or a love of pleasure, prepared for evil; then came the holiday, the picking up of bad acquaintance, male or female, the allurements of the drinking house, or public garden—also a drunkenery—the staying out at night beyond the time allowed; then the blackness of dark-

ness, ending in the streets, the prison, the hospital, the suicidal potion, or leap into the turbid river; at best, in a few cases—a very few—the Penitentiary. A fraction—a mere fraction—of those unfortunates who enter the Penitentiaries or Reformatories, are the victims of the seducer's daily arts, or deluded by their affections.

There was one among the inmates of this house whose appearance interested Mabel. She was about twenty-two years of age, very pale and thin, and worn with both sickness and sorrow. She was working some delicate embroidery, and seemed to shun observation. Near to her, was an older person, with a face and form that even the coarse garb she now wore could not wholly disfigure. She had a wedding-ring on her finger. Another among them, a poor invalid, was lame; and another, whom Mabel noticed, was very young, and wept incessantly. The rest had nothing particular to distinguish them. There were unmistakable traces of the past in a certain hardness of look and manner; but now they seemed orderly, industrious, and contented, at least, so long as Mrs. Basil's influence lasted.

When Mabel returned to the private room of the matron, she resumed the conversation by asking about the tall young woman who shrunk from observation.

"That is," said Mrs. Basil, "a difficult, and, here, an unusual case. Jane C. is a woman of education, born to good prospects. She lost her parents in her childhood; and, leaving school, went to reside with her brother, a solicitor, whose business lay chiefly in the insolvent court. He was what is called a gay man, and a free liver—very unfit to have the charge of a young sister, who, though haggard and sickly looking now, must then have been beautiful. Men of his own stamp frequented his house, some of them of desperate fortunes as well as principles. One, a handsome profligate, won the heart of this poor girl. Her brother, meanwhile, was wishing to extend his connexions by effecting a marriage for his sister with an old man of property—a drunkard, whom she loathed. Dispute ensued, which, of course, tended to confirm her predilections for her unworthy suitor, who was forbidden her brother's house. In an evil hour, she met him clandestinely, at a public garden. The wine-cup—the seducer's potent and ever ready ally—was introduced, and she returned no more to the home she had left. For a time, she hoped that the seducer would yet do her justice by marriage; but, to her horror, she discovered in a few weeks that he was a married man. Her reproaches incensed him, and he cast her forth into the streets. She applied to her brother, who had married in the interval, and, with all the indignation of mock virtue, he pleaded the impossibility of profaning his home with her presence, and left her to her fate. Starvation was before her. She lodged in one of the wretched houses which alone receive such destitution. Vice was on every side, and she was drawn into the vortex; but not without many struggles to get free. Oh! the misery that must be endured by those who, while pursuing vice, have not yet lost all the love of virtue. Perdition itself can have no greater torture. Sick and wretched, she sunk into despair; and, after being two days without food, sold her shoes from her feet for fourpence, spent the money at four chemists' shops for laudanum, and took the deadly potion."

"What! poisoned herself?"

"Yes; she was discovered soon after, in a convulsive stupor, on a bench in St. James's Park, carried to the Westminster Hospital, and there, by great efforts restored. A young relative of the Burnish family was then walking the hospitals—Mr. Shalton Keen—took an interest in her case, and wrote to Lady Burnish, who admitted her here. For six months after she came, I could make nothing of her, so heavy a gloom was on her spirits that nothing could rouse her. She performed her work mechanically, but seemed sinking away; and even now, though nearly two years have elapsed since her admission, I know of no situation to which she would be eligible. She is too weak for household work. No one would trust her with children—she is too melancholy, even if there were no other objections. Then her health is permanently affected; and the more I think of the case, the more it perplexes me as to the future. There seems, beyond these walls, no place for her but the place appointed for all living."

Just then, amid the sighs of sympathy this poor Jane's case excited, a thought of that lost Annie, whose fate had troubled Mrs. Alerton's death-bed, crossed the mind of Mabel. "Perhaps," she thought, "I may find that wanderer here. She was nearly twenty years younger than my step-mother, and cannot now be more than twenty-six or seven."

"I observed one young woman who wore a wedding ring," said Mabel.

"Yes; and is a married woman," replied Mrs. Basil; "Mary L. is a totally different character, a passionate woman, goaded into vice by illusion. She married at eighteen, a man who was said to have only one fault. Ah, that one fault! so lightly spoken of, what a prolific source of other; it proves! He was a drunkard; not, indeed, a confirmed drunkard, or a drunkard at all, in the general sense, for his indulgences were only occasional. But my creed of morals, Miss Alerton, is not made to exempt particular sins. If I have my pocket picked, the person doing the deed is a thief, if he never picked a pocket before or after. So also with lying; it is not the number told that makes the lie. However, this girl resolutely intended to reform her husband's one fault, of course. Then came poverty, angry words, cruel blows, and yet more cruel indifference; every womanly feeling was outraged, not merely by his brutality, but by his villany.