

THE CAMP FIRE

A Monthly Record and Advocate of the Temperance Reform.

VOL. V. No. 6.

TORONTO, ONT. DECEMBER, 1898.

25 CENTS PER YEAR

Selections

ANSWER HIM SOFTLY.

Speak to him softly. You cannot know,
In the depths below,
How sharp was the struggle, the fight he made,
Ere the price he paid,
And yielded his soul to the tempter's power
In a hasty hour.

Plead with him softly, for it may be—
Like the sturdy tree
Which tested in many a storm its strength,
To be rent at length—
He struggled full oft, and resisted well,
Though at last he fell.

Answer him softly, lest you be tried
On your weaker side,
And fall, as before you so many have done,
Who in thought had won,
Fail, too, ere temptation had spent its force
In its subtle course.

Talk with him softly, for none can tell,
When the storm clouds swell,
Whose bark shall weather the tempest or whose
Its venture shall lose,
Speak gently; the weakest may stand the gale—
The stoutest may fail.

The Issue.

ONLY A HUSK.

An American Story.

Tom Darcy, yet a young man, had grown to be a very hard one. At heart he might have been all right, if his head and his will had been all right; but these things being wrong, the whole machine was going to the bad very fast, though there were times when the heart felt something of its own truthful yearnings. Tom had lost his place as foreman of the great machine shop, and what money he now earned came from off jobs of tinkering which he was able to do here and there at private houses, for Tom was a genius as well as a mechanic, and when his head was steady enough he could mend a clock or clean a watch as well as he could set up and regulate a steam engine, and this latter he could do better than any other man ever employed by the Scott Falls Manufacturing Company.

One day Tom had a job to mend a broken mowing machine and reaper, for which he received five dollars, and on the following morning he started out for his old haunt—the village tavern. He knew that his wife sadly needed the money, and that his two little children were in absolute suffering for want of clothing, and that morning he had a debate with the better part of himself, but the better part had become weak and shaky, and the demon of appetite carried the day.

So away to the tavern Tom went, where, for two or three hours he felt the exhilarating effects of the alcoholic draught, and fancied himself happy, as he could sing and laugh; but, as usual, stupefaction followed, and the man died out. He drank while he could stand, and then lay down in a corner, where his companions left him.

It was late at night, almost midnight, when the landlord's wife came to the bar room to see what kept her husband up, and she quickly saw Tom.

"Peter," said she, not in a pleasant mood, "why don't you send that miserable Tom Darcy home? He's been hanging round here long enough."

Tom's stupefaction was not sound sleep. The dead coma had left his brain, and the calling of his name stung his senses to keen attention. He had an insane love of rum, but did not love the landlord. In other years, Peter Tindar and himself had loved and wooed the sweet maiden—Ellen Goss—and he had won her, leaving Peter to take up with the vinegary spinster

who had brought him the tavern, and he knew that lately the tapster had gloated over the misery of the woman who had once discarded him.

"Why don't you send him home?" demanded Mrs. Tindar, with an impatient stamp of her foot.

"Hush, Betsy! He's got money. Let him be, and he'll be sure to spend it before he goes home. I'll have the kernel of that nut, and his wife may have the husk!"

With a sniff and a snap Betsy turned away, and shortly afterward Tom Darcy lifted himself up on his elbow.

"Ah, Tom, are you awake?" "Yes."

"Then rouse up and have a warm glass."

Tom got upon his feet and steadied himself.

"No; I won't drink any more to-night."

"It won't hurt you, Tom—just one glass."

"I know it won't!" said Tom, buttoning up his coat by the solitary button left. "I know it won't."

And with this he went out into the chill air of midnight. When he got away from the shadow of the tavern, he stopped and looked up at the stars, and then he looked down upon the earth. "Aye," he muttered, grinding his heel in the gravel, "Peter Tindar is taking the kernel and leaving poor Ellen the worthless husk—a husk more than worthless; and I am helping him to do it. I am robbing my wife of joy, robbing my dear children of honor and comfort, and robbing myself of love and life—just that Peter Tindar may have the kernel and Ellen the husk. We'll see."

It was a revelation to the man. The tavernkeeper's speech, meant not for his ears, had come on his senses as fell the voice of the Risen One on Saul of Tarsus.

"We'll see!" he said, setting his foot firmly upon the ground; and then he wended his way homeward.

On the following morning he said to his wife: "Ellen, have you any coffee in the house?"

"Yes, Tom." She did not tell him that her sister had given it to her. She was glad to hear him ask for the coffee, instead of the old, old cider.

"I wish you would make me a cup, good and strong."

There was really music in Tom's voice, and the wife set about her work with a strange flutter at her heart.

Tom drank two cups of the strong, fragrant coffee, and then went out—went out with a resolute step and walked straight to the manufactory, where he found Mr. Scott in his office.

"Mr. Scott, I want to learn my trade over again."

"Eh, Tom! what do you mean?"

"I mean that it's Tom Darcy come back to the old place, asking forgiveness for the past and hoping to do better in the future."

"Tom!" cried the manufacturer, starting forward and grasping his hand, "are you in earnest? Is it really the old Tom?"

"It's what's left of him, sir, and we'll have him whole and strong very soon, if you'll only set him to work."

Work! Ay, Tom, and bless you too. There is an engine to be set up and tested to-day. Come with me."

Tom's hands were weak and unsteady, but his brain was clear, and under his skilful supervision the engine was set up and tested; but it was not perfect. There were mistakes which he had to correct, and it was late in the evening when the work was complete.

"How is it now, Tom?" asked Mr. Scott, as he came into the testing-house and found the workmen ready to depart.

"She's all right, sir. You may give your warrant without fear."

"God bless you, Tom! You don't know how like sweet music the old voice sounds. Will you take your place again?"

"Wait till Monday morning, sir. If you will offer it to me then, I will take it."

At a little cottage Ellen Darcy's fluttering heart was sinking. That morning after Tom had gone, she found a dollar bill in the coffee cup. She knew that he had left it for her. She had been out and bought tea and sugar, and flour and butter, and a bit of tender steak; and all day long a ray of light had been dancing and shimmering before her—a ray of the blessed light of other days. With a prayer and hope she had set out the tea-table, and waited; but the sun went down and no Tom came. Eight o'clock—and almost nine.

Hark! The old step! quick, strong, eager for home. Yes, it was Tom, the old grime upon his hands, and the odor of oil upon his garments.

"I have kept you waiting, Nellie."

"Tom!"

"I didn't mean to, but the work hung on."

"Tom! Tom! You have been to the old shop."

"Yes, and I'm bound to have the old place, and —"

"Oh, Tom!"

And she threw her arms around his neck, and covered his face with kisses.

"Nellie, darling, wait a little, and you shall have the old Tom back again."

"Oh, Tom! I've got him now, bless him! bless him! my own Tom! my husband! my darling!"

And then Tom Darcy realized the full power and blessing of a woman's love.

It was a banquet of the gods, was that supper—of the household gods all restored—with the bright angels of peace, and love, and joy spreading their wings over the board.

On the following Monday morning, Tom Darcy assumed his place at the head of the great machine shop, and those who thoroughly knew him had no fear of his going back into the slough of joylessness.

A few days later, Tom met Peter Tindar on the street.

"Eh, Tom, old boy, what's up?"

"I am up, right side up."

"Yes, I see; but I hope you haven't forsaken us, Tom?"

"I have forsaken only the evil you have in store, Peter, the fact is, I concluded that my wife and little ones had fed on the husks long enough, and if there was a good kernel left in my heart, or in my manhood, they should have it."

"Ah, you heard what I said to my wife that night?"

"Yes, Peter; and I shall be grateful to you for it as long as I live. My remembrance of you will always be relieved by that tinge of warmth and brightness."—*The West Shore.*

THE BOSS SCOTCHMAN'S WAY.

"O LORD, HALP ME!"

Striker Stowe was a tall, powerful, Scotchman whose position as "boss striker" at the steel works made him generally known. Nearly all of the men in his department were hard drinkers, and he was no exception to the rule. But one day it was announced among the workmen that he had been converted, and sure enough, when pressed to take a drink, he said, "I shall never drink mair, lads. Nae droonkard shall inherit the kingdom o' God."

The knowing ones smiled and said, "Wait a bit. Wait until hot weather—until July. When he gets as dry as a gravel pit he'll give in. He can't help it."

But right through the hottest months he toiled, the sweat pouring off in streams, yet he seemed never to be tempted to drink. Finally, as I was taking the men's time one day I stopped and spoke with him.

"Stowe," said I, "you used to take considerable liquor. Don't you miss it?"

"Yes," said he, emphatically.

"How do you manage to keep away from it?"

"Weel, just this way. It is now ten o'clock, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Weel, today is the twentieth o' the month. From seven till eight I asked that the Lord would halp me. He did so, and I put down a dot on the calendar near the twenty. From eight till nine He kept me, and I put down another dot. From nine till ten He's kept me, and noo I gie him the glory, as I put down the third dot. Just as I mark these I pray, 'O, Lord, halp me—halp me to fight it off for another hour.'"

"How long shall you keep this up?" I inquired.

"All o' my life, was the earnest reply. 'It keeps me sae full o' peace and happiness that I wouldn't gie up for anything. It is just as if he took me by the hand and said: 'Wark awa', Striker Stowe, I'm wi' ye, Dinna be fearfu'. You teck care o' yeer regular wark, and I'll see to the de'il an' the thirst, an' they shall na' trouble you.'"

—*Exchange.*

WHO IS THE CRIMINAL?

A ragged, shivering little boy was brought before a magistrate for stealing a loaf of bread, from a shop window. The shop-keeper himself was the informer. The Judge was about to pass sentence on the little wretch, when a kind lawyer offered the following considerations in mitigation of his offence.

"The child," he said "is the oldest of a miserable group. Their mother is an incorrigible sot; their father lies low in a drunkard's grave. This morning, when the act was committed, the mother lay drunk upon the floor, and her children were crying around her for bread. The elder boy, unable to bear such misery any longer, rushed from the hovel, resolved to obey that paramount law of nature which teaches us the principle of self-preservation, even in disregard of the law of the land. He seized the penny loaf from the grocer's window, and, returning to that wretched home, spread the unexpected morsel before his hungry brothers, and bade them 'eat and live.' He did not eat himself. No; consciousness of the crime and fears of detection furnished a more engrossing feeling than that of hunger. The last morsel was scarcely swallowed before the officer of justice entered the door. The little thief was pointed out by the grocer, and he was conducted before the public tribunal. In the midst of such misery as this, with the motive of this little criminal before us, there is something to soften the heart of man, though I deny not that the act is a penal offence."

"But the tale is by no means told. This little circle, now utterly fallen and forlorn, is the wreck of a family once prosperous, temperate, frugal, industrious and happy. The father, strange as it may appear, was once a professor of religion. The very first drop of that accursed tincture of destruction which conducted him through the path of corruption to the grave, was handed to him by this very man who now pursues the starving child of his former victim for stealing a penny loaf. The farm became encumbered: the community turned its back upon the miserable victim of intemperance; the Church expelled him from the communion; the wife sought in the same tremendous remedy for all distracting care an oblivion of her domestic misery. Home became a hell, whose only outlet was the grave."

"All this aggregate of human wretchedness was produced by this very shop-keeper. He has murdered the father, he has brutalized the mother, he has beggared the children, he has taken possession of the farm, and now prosecutes the child for stealing a loaf to keep his brothers from starving!"

"But all this is lawful and right; that is, it is according to law. He has stood upon his license. The theft of a penny loaf by a starving boy, where his father laid down his last farthing for rum, is a penal offence!"—*Selected.*