

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## THE RED, RED WINE:

A TEMPERANCE STORY.

THE REV. J. JACKSON WRAY'S LAST STORY.

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One would surely think that after all the varied experiences that Norwood Hayes had had of the power and curse of drink, it would not have been difficult for him to have kept the pledge he had taken under such strong emotion. Still another witness had been added to the testimony against the drink, for his wife, the mother of Cuthbert and Alice, had just died, a maudlin drink-made idiot. She, too, might have been saved had Norwood Hayes, from the outset of their married lives, despised the strength that was in him, and not the weakness that was in her.

Besides this, Cuthbert was under restraint. True there was a hope that the drink habit might eventually be broken, and he be restored to sanity and his friends, but if so, surely this was all the more reason that Norwood Hayes should observe his vow with all the more rigid austerity.

### CHAPTER XLII.

The culminating point in the history of Netherborough had arrived.

After much delay and no little anxiety on the part of the promoters, the new railway, which was confidently expected to work such wonders, was at last completed.

Netherburghers were at their wit's-end to devise a fitting commemoration that should proportionately outmatch the initial ceremony, and do full justice to this far more auspicious occasion.

In one especial point did this celebration differ from the previous one. On the urgent advice of Norwood Hayes, the free and festive beer-barrel was omitted from the programme; this, in the eyes of a few droughty souls, made the second ceremony far less imposing than the first, but it was certainly far better for everybody concerned. It was through Mr. Hayes, too, that the principal actors in the scene partook of luncheon, instead of an evening banquet. Mr. Hayes hoped by this means to avoid a train of ghastly incidents similar to those that had occurred on the previous occasion.

Of course, Huddleston, the railway king, played the most prominent part in the proceedings, and as a set-off to the absence of free beer, as many of the inhabitants as cared to avail themselves of the privilege, were given a free ride to the neighboring town of Brocklesbank and back. The more highly favored travelling in the same train as the railway king.

Among the rest, old Aaron Brigham, in the character of the 'oldest inhabitant,' received special honors. He was introduced to Mr. Huddleston himself, and after much persuasion he was induced to perform the initial journey in the great man's company.

The rate at which the train moved, some twenty miles an hour at most, was to him something extraordinary, and when Mr. Huddleston at length asked him, 'Well, Mr. Brigham, and what do you think of railway travel?' he answered in his broad East Riding doric, 'Weel, sir, it seems to me thet it is a reear and grand reeate te gan te hivven at, bud it mun be a parlous bizness if t' rod lees t'other woy;' and I doubt not that to Aaron the latter seemed the likelier similitude of the two.

Luncheon was provided in a big marquee, specially provided for the occasion, and erected in the station-yard. The chair was occupied by Mr. Huddleston, who was supported by the Mayor of York, several directors of the railway company, the chief of the landed pro-

pietary, Mr. Norwood Hayes, and many more of the prominent inhabitants of Netherborough and Brocklesbank. Grace was duly said, and the luncheon commenced.

Norwood Hayes, true to the pledge he had so solemnly taken, abstained from partaking of any alcoholic liquors, of which there was a plentiful supply, during the course of the luncheon. He was, however, greatly perturbed in mind as to what he should do when the toast list was reached. There was no doubt in his inmost soul as to what was the best and most manly thing for him to do, and perhaps the question would not have arisen had it not been for the fact that he had been chosen to propose 'Success to the new railway.'

He had taken the pledge, and he was conscious that throughout the luncheon he had been, and was, the object of the closest scrutiny of his son-in-law, Walter Bardsley. He felt that Walter had followed his example in scrupulously abstaining from intoxicants, and more, he felt on his present course of action might, in all probability, rest the future of his son-in-law, and the happiness of his girl.

But how could he help himself, he asked. That was where he made the mistake. He could not help himself. His only help must come from above.

The Chairman had already proposed the usual patriotic and loyal toast, and the eyes of the guests, after consulting the toast list, were already beginning to fix themselves on Norwood Hayes, and still the struggle went on within him.

Before him stood the wine-glass—empty.

'And now, ladies and gentlemen, it is my very pleasant duty,' said the Chairman, 'to call on Norwood Hayes, Esq., to propose the toast of the occasion, "Success to the new railway."'

The victory was lost and won. The very devils laughed in anticipation of their triumph, and a quiver passed over Walter Bardsley's face as he saw Norwood Hayes rise, reach for a bottle of wine that stood handy—it was only claret, and prepare to fill the glass that stood before him.

'Surely not in claret, Mr. Hayes,' said the chairman. 'Some more generous wine than that is befitting the occasion.'

But neither in claret nor in any other wine was that toast destined to be drunk that day.

Just at the moment when Norwood Hayes stood with the claret bottle poised in his hand, half undecided as to whether he might not just as well be 'hung for a sheep as a lamb;' just as Walter Bardsley had realized that one of his most needed props, a man of self-control, was giving way before his very eyes.

As he stood, a picture of weak-kneed vacillation, a cry of such awe-inspiring horror rose from the crowd assembled in the station-yard outside, as blanched the faces of most of those present, some of which were already deeply flushed with the volatile fumes of wine, and sent that unspeakable, undefinable thrill of fear through the hearts of all. Something had happened.

What was it? They all, with one accord, rose, deserted the festive scene, and made their way into the open, not knowing, hardly daring to think, what awaited them.

The first thing that met their gaze was a crowd gathered round and about the gates at the level-crossing, just beyond the station. On the outskirts were women weeping hysterically, and children, hardly knowing what had happened, stunned with the general sense of horror.

A way was at once made for Mr. Huddleston and those with him, amongst whom were Norwood Hayes and Walter Bardsley. Some of the onlookers looked half reproachfully at the railway king, as if they would have said, 'See what your new railway has brought us!' but surely Mr. Huddleston was not to blame, though I think he felt the misfortune as much as any present.

Passing rapidly on to the lines, they were confronted with a ghastly sight. On the down rails lay the body of a horse, crushed and mangled into a shapeless mass, almost beyond recognition. It lay in a pool of blood, and rails and gates and everything around were marked and sprinkled with its life-blood. Just beyond, a little crowd stood round a dying man, over whom a graceful girl was stooping, doing her best to support him, but it was of no avail. At a glance Walter Bardsley recognized his sister, Jennie; another glance revealed the fact that the dying man was his erring brother, Dick.

'There's been an accident,' said Mr. Huddleston in an undertone, as they made their way to the side of the dying man.

'I thought as much, but how it has come about is more than I can conceive. The gates are shut, and I gave most stringent orders that every care should be exercised. Still it's no time to find out how it's happened. It has happened. Do you know who the man is?' he added, turning to Walter.

'Yes. He's my brother.'

'Your brother! And who is that with him?'

'She is my sister.'

The tone was matter of fact, but Mr. Huddleston knew enough of human nature to know that his young companion's heart was breaking. He knew how the accident had happened, though no one had told him.

Mr. Huddleston said nothing in reply, but Dick felt his sympathy, perhaps all the more that he made no formal, feelingless parade of it. Instead, he showed it. He took charge of affairs. Sent for the doctor. Not daring to move the injured man till he arrived. Saw that the half-dazed station men kept back the crowd. Sent one for brandy and water. It was about the worst thing he could have done, but nobody knew or cared to know better then, and in any case it did no harm this time, for Dick would never touch it again. The doctor happened to be sober, but all that he could do was to tell them the sufferer was dead.

Tenderly and reverently they bore the crushed body to the house of Mr. Norwood Hayes.

They did not finish the toast list that day; did not even re-enter the marquee, and the free trains ceased running—there would have been no one to ride had they continued—and so the day that was to have been the most brilliant in the history of Netherborough, finished under the sobering influence of the shadow of death.

(To be Continued.)

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