



'The Curse': A True Incident.

(F. Willey Turner, in the 'Daily News.')

(Concluded.)

'No, I can't do it; I cannot leave him alone in this wicked city, Benedict. He has sunk very low as it is, but without me —' She shuddered at the unuttered thought.

'Are things no better, Maggie?' I inquired gently. She shook her head.

'Then how do you manage to live?'

'I work these,' she answered, holding up a beautifully embroidered shirt of finest silk.

'Sweating, I suppose?'

'No, I can't say it is. I get four and six for each shirt and I am allowed my own time. I do two a week and could easily do three if my eyes were not so bad.' I glanced at the fugitive light as it struggled through the patched glass, and marvelled that she could see at all.

'No, it is not sweating,' she went on. 'The manageress at the shop at Clapton is very kind to me, and often pays my tram fare home.'

'And what do you pay for this—this garment?'

'Six shillings a week, and I live every day in fear of being turned out for someone who will pay more.'

'Six shillings a week,' I calculated aloud, 'and nine shillings wages, leaves three shillings for food. Doesn't Harold earn any money?'

'Sometimes, yes; but I need not tell you how it goes,' she said sadly. 'This is what he does now.' She pulled a box from under the bed, and took out an ill-printed, yellow-backed novellete. 'When he wants money, he comes in and writes at these things for days together. He gets twenty, sometimes thirty shillings for them, and then I see nothing of him till the money is gone.'

I turned over the pages of the penny dreadful, and even in that lurid, blood-curdling tale it was easy to detect the facile touch of the skilled penman. The yellow abomination was as the debris of an intellect in ruins. I thought of the bosom friend of my youth, and of the wasted life that was once so fair with promise.

'What a curse drink it!' I said, more to myself than to her. At the words she rose up, her thin frame convulsed with wrath, ungovernable, and fierce. Her nostrils dilated, her hands clenched, her eyes blazed.

'A curse!' she cried; 'it's the curse! There's not a soul in this vile slum but's blasted by it. It taints the very milk in the mother's breasts. It robs us of home and friends and God, and makes a hell of this earth. A curse! There's no curse on the devil's lips like unto it.'

I waited until she grew composed, then spoke of her boy.

'Teddy is well, and at school; he will be

here presently.' She put a light to the fire as she spoke.

'Is it wise to keep him here, Maggie?'

She trembled in every limb as she answered, 'No, it is not wise. I know it is not wise, dear friend, but I cannot part with him yet, not just yet. He is the only comfort I have in this hard world; but by and by he shall come. Tell father to be patient with me a little longer. I will save my boy if it costs me my life.' She laid her hand on my arm as I rose to go. 'For the sake of old times, I have told you all,' she said; 'but when you get back, do not bear too hardly on my husband; think of him as he was when you were friends together.'

As I stumbled down the dark and broken staircase, two visions appeared to me, but they seemed too remote to belong to this world. In the first I saw a number of boisterous girls, with rumpled hair and mirthful eyes, dragging their laughing host—Pickwickian fashion—under the mistletoe. It was the night of Maggie's engagement. In the second I saw a white-veiled bride, radiantly happy, kneeling at the communion rail by the side of her handsome husband, and heard again the affectionate intonation of the old pastor.

Swallowing a Square Yard of Land.

Capacity of swallow varies very much. Most of us have heard of the American who, after a visit to his doctor, told his companion that he had discovered his saw-mill down his throat, adding that he was going to get another, but the doctor had advised him this time to run it by water. Many a fine estate has gone down a man's throat in drink, and it is about time that working people took some notice of the value of what they are swallowing.

In these days the chief desire of most men is to get a little plot of ground for themselves, on which to build a house, which they can cultivate and call their own.

'WHY NOT GET THIS PLOT OF GROUND?' If you only drink a pint of beer a day, you swallow enough land in a year to build your house on and give you a respectable-sized garden: you swallow 365 square yards of land—a good-sized field—for every time you drink 2d of beer or spirits you swallow a yard of good land.

You think this nonsense? Well, listen for a moment. Take the value of an acre of land at £40 (and you ought to get land for that which, if not swallowed, would give good crops and feed good cattle year after year); in £40 there are 9,600 pennies, so if a drink costs 2d you may put it that in £40 there are 4,800 drinks. Now, in an acre of land there are 4,840 square yards, just a yard a drink. Just keep this in mind, and next time you want a drink say, 'No, I'll keep the land,' and put 2d in a saving's-box, and when you have done this six times, put the 1s into the saving's bank. And when the shillings have accumulated, you will have little difficulty in becoming a landed proprietor, and you can continue the saving till, by means of your building society, you can build a comfortable little cottage. And then continue it, and lay by for old age, so that you can end your days in your own home, amongst your own people, and not in a workhouse.—'Hard Facts Leaflet.'

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Concerning Certain Emotions.

(Mabel Nelson Thurston, in the 'Interior.')

It was a day of low gray skies and sweeping lines of rain, and Philippa's cousin having beaten her way through half a mile of storm to Philippa's door, was met by the announcement that nobody had seen the lady in question for more than an hour.

'She might have gone over to the club, or down town shopping, or to see the lame one or to read to the blind one,' the pink-cheeked maid declared regretfully. 'You see,' with the uncertainty born of a year's experience with Philippa, 'there's so many things she might be doing.'

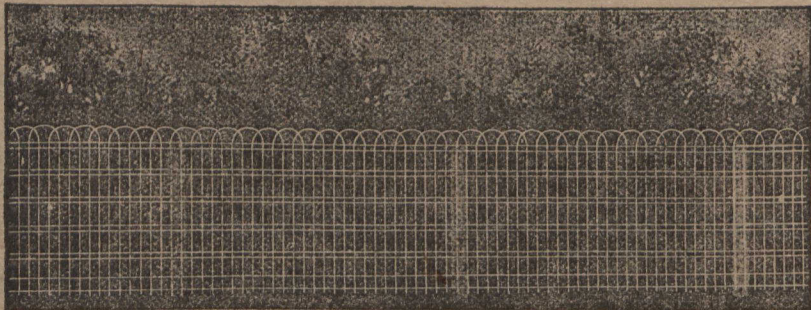
'I see,' Philippa's cousin replied, 'but I might as well search the house before I go.'

She handed her umbrella and cravenette to the little maid and set out upon her search. Philippa being the object, she neglected no closet on the way—Philippa was, in fact, rather more apt to be found in a closet than anywhere else. But this time Philippa was not in a closet; she was in the middle of the garret floor surrounded by piles of rags. She lifted a glorified face as her cousin's eyes appeared above the railing which guarded the stairway.

'Isn't it delicious!' she exclaimed. 'Don't you remember when we were children, how mother used to come up and pick over rags on rainy days, and we were allowed to choose three apiece, and what a time we had choosing? I wonder why I never thought of doing this before—I haven't had such a good time in ten years. Just hear that rain on the roof!'

'I thought it was raining when I came over,' Philippa's cousin replied significantly. She was tired and a little cross from her search. 'You might at least drop breadcrumbs behind you when you vanish from the face of the earth. It's the proper way,' she said.

Philippa sprang up with an exclamation of delight. 'There are times,' she declared, 'when even the least imaginative have their moments of inspiration—only we won't have



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