

"No," said the local preacher, "I never have said anything about it. I never told my wife about it."

"Why?"

"Because I didn't think it was anything to talk about. Some people might have thought that I was telling a falsehood or trying to give an illustration of my bravery or something of that kind; but the thing occurred just as related."—Michigan Advocate.

A Serpent in the Home.

(Mary Rowley, in Michigan Advocate.)

Such a bright and cheery home it was in which Helen was cradled, cared for, watched over and guided with tender, motherly counsel, until just on the threshold of womanhood. You would not have thought that she herself would have been the one who would have brought the first trace of trouble and care to their home, but such was the case.

Just entering womanhood, with a heart filled with faith and trust in all mankind, she was won by a young man whom the world called worthy. To him she surrendered her whole life with a depth of love and devotion which can only come from one in whom tenderness and love have always been cultivated.

Richard Earle was indeed deemed worthy. He occupied a responsible and profitable position, moved in the best circles of society, seemed to predict that this new home would be very happy.

One thing, however entered into the home, of which the young wife was ignorant for many weeks. It was such a trifle, as viewed by the world at large, it would scarcely seem worth mentioning; but a serpent so subtle, so deadly and cruel coiled itself up on the hearth, and was slowly but surely fastening its fangs in the very heart life of this bright home. It had come to stay.

Strange, you say. Perhaps you would not have called it a serpent, this habit which by means of his genial nature had been able to fix itself so securely upon Richard Earle. Like so many fortune-favored young men, he would occasionally take a social glass with his companions, and imperceptibly it was becoming a fixed habit. Shall I prove to you how truly this was a serpent?

Then years passed away. We will glance at two different scenes in this town.

It is Sabbath evening, and a man and woman sit talking in a subdued tone by the hearth. Silvery white are the locks which cover the brow of the mother, while the hand of the father trembles and is uncertain. Has age made all this change in the parents of sweet Helen? Nay, verily. But ten short years have passed since she had left and entered upon her life of promise. Surely not enough to draw such lines of care and trouble in their faces.

We will turn to the second scene for the cause of all this change, for do you think a deep sorrow can enter the life of a child without tracing furrows of care on the faces of a true mother and father?

In a back alley, up two flights of stairs, in a dimly lighted room, we will find our second picture. The room is spotlessly neat and clean, for Helen, in spite of her free and happy girlhood, had been carefully trained by her mother. On a stool near the window sit two children, the treasures which had been sent to brighten this shadowed home, though the brightness they brought was partially darkened by a terrible cloud of fear lest that serpent, that terrible appetite, should be handed down to these innocent little boys. Very near them sits the mother bending over the sewing which is becoming

her incessant companion. She is the breadwinner now, and early and late she toils, for the serpent which entered ten years ago has steadily and mercilessly continued his deadly work, and Richard Earle, yielding more and more, first becomes careless and neglectful in his work, and finally, returning after a week of debauchery, finds he has lost his position. The pleasant home also slips away, and we find them as they are above.

"Mamma," suddenly the younger one speaks, "does papa really love us?"

Ah, the child had touched upon the secret of it all. When a man is tender, affectionate and thoughtful to his family one day, and then becomes a perfect fiend under the influence of liquor on the next, does he really love them? Richard Earle in his sober moments saw how he was more and more becoming a burden instead of a help to his household, and one memorable day he left them intending never to return.

"Good riddance," I am sure some one is tempted to say. Not so the faithful wife, whose devotion had followed him even to now, and who from the secret place of prayer had sent up agonizing petitions to the all-seeing One. Now was her faith to be put to the severest of tests.

Ten more long years pass away. In a mining town in the West a man is stumbling along the street. You would not have recognized in this ragged, unkempt creature, old before his time, the person of Richard Earle. He does not realize that he is passing a small church which is lighted. He is sober to-night, and what is more, he is thinking. Suddenly there come floating to him these words, sung in a tender, touching strain:

'Beckoning hands of a mother, whose love
Sacrificed life its devotion to prove;
Hands of a father to memory dear,
Beckoning up higher the waiting ones here.'

He stops, he lingers. The picture of his sainted mother and patient father, both brought to an early grave through him, rises before him. While his mind is still dwelling on this the sweet voice continues:

'Beckoning hands of a little one, see,
Baby voice calling, O father, to thee,
Rosy cheeked darling, the light of your
home,
Taken so early, is beckoning, "Come."'

Now he remembers, now he thinks of darling baby Helen, the sweet flower that had come to his home and faded so quickly. He remembers the soft baby caresses, and also the night when she left them, and he had sought to bury his blind grief in drink. And he thinks of little Helen's mother, his faithful wife, whom he had so shamelessly deserted, her brightness and her devotion, a flood of tenderness sweeps over him. His heart is softened. He is still standing by the church, and now, as if to crown the sacredness of the moment, there comes in tones of melting tenderness:

'Brightest and best of that beautiful throng,
Centre of all and the theme of our song,
Jesus, our Saviour, the pierced one, stands,
Lovingly calling with beckoning hands.'

His forgotten Saviour, the Divine One, pierced for him! He can almost see him with his thorn-crowned brow and bleeding hands and feet, looking down on him with such a sad, reproachful look, but with a look withal so tender, beseeching and full of love. With a heart almost broken he walks into the church, thinking of his loathsome past life. In the light of the actual presence of the Saviour, how despicable, how weak, how low his past life seems. As he enters the

door the song is ended, and the leader rises. "He is able to save to the uttermost." Will you come?

Down to the front, down prostrate at the altar, the penitent goes, and there we will leave him and stop just one moment before another scene. It is in a tiny home many miles away. A sweet-faced mother, with her two manly sons, just past boyhood are seated in the pleasant sitting-room of this home, secured with much self-denial. Helen Earle's faith, though severely tested with regard to her husband, still burns brightly, for many assurances has she received that God hears and answers prayer. And now, in the selfsame hour in which Richard Earle starts thoughtfully past the church, his faithful wife and their sons have met in the sitting-room to plead with God and claim his promises. Somewhere, in some place known only to God, they know their wanderer is, and while they together plead comes the assurance of answered prayer. Verily when God speaks devils tremble and fall, for when they rose from their knees with this glad assurance, written on each face, in that holy moment the cruel serpent stealthily, as if in shame, glided from the hearth, and left forever.

I wish I might paint to you in words which would adequately describe it, that meeting which occurred just three weeks later in this same tiny home. How sweet Helen, with a face perfectly radiant, first greets the wanderer, then the sons welcome their father, now for the first time a father to them in truth; how the aged parents of Helen grant pardon and give their blessing to the one who has caused all their woe. Words fail, but truly, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.'

The Little Drummer's Last Call.

A pathetic story of the Civil War was related by a corporal of an Illinois regiment who was captured by the Confederates at the battle of Wilson's Creek, and is repeated in 'Women of the War.'

The day before this regiment was ordered by General Lyons to march toward Springfield, the drummer of the company fell ill. There was no one to take his place, and while the captain was wondering how he should supply the lack, a pale, sorrow-stricken woman appeared at his tent door, begging an interview. She brought with her a little boy of twelve or thirteen years, whom she wished to place in the regiment as drummer-boy. Her husband had been killed in the service, and she thought that the boy, who was eager to 'join the army,' might earn something toward the support of the family.

"Captain," she said, after the boy had been accepted, "he won't be in much danger, will he?"

"No, I think not," replied the officer, "We shall be disbanded in a few weeks, I am confident."

The new drummer soon became a favorite, and there was never a feast of fruit or other hardly-procured dainties that 'Eddie' did not get his share first. The soldiers were stirred by the child's enthusiastic devotion, and declared that his drumming was different from that of all the other drummers in the army.

After the engagement at Wilson's Creek, where the Federals were defeated, Corporal B., who had been thrown from his horse, found himself lying concealed from view near a clump of trees. As he lay there, with his ear to the ground, he heard the sound of a drum distinct, but rather faint. In a moment he recognized the stroke of Eddie, the