

and put the white cloth on the table for supper; and though I knew that was what I ought to have done before he came home, yet—I don't know how it was—I did not improve. I had grown rather too fond of gossiping with neighbors who were idler than myself, and carrying my child—who certainly was a beauty—about to have it admired. That was our first baby—our dear blue-eyed boy. I almost seemed fonder of showing him off than looking after my home. When rich married people don't think as much of each other as they ought to do, they have many other things to look to for happiness; but if the lamp which led the poor to the altar grows dim, the house is dark indeed—the light of their life goes out with it!"

Lucy looked at Mrs. Grey with wondering eyes; for she was the neatest and nattiest old lady you could see anywhere, and was held up as a pattern to all the young girls in the neighborhood.

"I do not know now how it was, or when it began, but we often forgot to read our chapter. My husband did not continue as good humored as he had been during our early days, and I did not see how much of that was my fault for not making him comfortable, as I had done at first. He was very fond of our baby, but the poor little fellow grew ill and peevish. He could not bear to hear it cry. When it began to cry, he would take up his hat to go out. The very thing which ought to have sent us on our knees in supplication that our infant might be restored to health seemed to break in upon our prayers; and, instead of the hymn—except, indeed, on Sunday evenings—my husband, who had, as I told you, a beautiful voice, would bring home a new song which he wished to learn, so that he might sing it at the Tradesmen's Club at the Blue Lobster.

"Slowly but surely he began, instead of returning home in the evenings, to attend these club meetings. Then I saw my danger, and how foolishly, if not wickedly, I had acted, in not attending to my first earthly duty.

"One morning—I never shall forget it—I rose determined to get my washing over and dried out of the way, as he had promised to return early. There is nothing, except a scolding wife, more miserable to a poor man than finding the fire from which he expected warmth and comfort hung round with steaming or damp clothes that a brisk, good manager would get dried and folded before his return.

"I had made such good resolutions; but, darling," said Granny, after a pause, "I trusted to my own strength. I did not then, as I do now, entreat God's help—ask for God's help to enable me to keep them. I was too fond, in my young, proud days, of trusting entirely to myself—to my own will. Well, dear, I suffered one small matter or another to call me away, and an old gossiping woman and her daughter came and wasted my time; and when I heard the church clock strike, and knew my husband would be in in less than half an hour, and nothing ready to make him comfortable, though he had had a hard day's work at the saw-pit, in wet weather, I could have cried with shame and vexation. My resolve had been so strong—in what?—in my own poor, weak strength! Well, I hurried; but it is hard racing after misspent time. My husband came in, dripping wet, about five minutes before his usual hour. He looked at me, and at the clothes-line that was stretched in front of the fire, and, with a small chopper that he had in his hand, he cut the line, and down went my small-dried clothes on the not over-clean sanded floor. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' saith the proverb; but I did not give the soft answer, and the wrath was not turned away.

"Very well, Katie," he said; 'there is no place here for me to sit and rest, and no supper ready; but I can get sitting, resting, and supper at the Blue Lobster, where many a fellow is driven by an ill managing wife.' And with that he turned out of the door. It was in my heart to follow him, to lock my arms around his neck, and, begging his pardon, bring him back. But I was vexed about the clothes, and forgot the provocation. That was his first night all out at the Blue Lobster, but it was not his last. I saw my error, and I prayed then for strength to do my duty, but somehow my husband had got a taste for the popularity that grows out of a good story and a fine voice, and he had felt that woful night what it was to be warmed, when he was cold, by the fire of brandy, instead of sea-coal. Days passed; our little boy, our Willy, grew worse and worse. Time had been when Mr. Grey would walk the night with him on his bosom, to soothe him to sleep, but now, if the poor child wailed ever so heavily, he could not hear it. Another child had been given to us, but she only added to our difficulties. Then, indeed, I labored continuously to recall what I had lost, but drink had got the mastery. We were backward with our rent; my poor husband lost his customers, for he neglected his business; and both clothing and furniture went to satisfy our creditors, and that craving which cries for more the more it gets. I could not bear the sympathy of my neighbors—for they would give me their pity—held me up as a suffering angel—while every hour of my life I recalled the time when neglect of my wifely duties first drove my husband to the public-house.

"When sober, my poor dear was full of sorrow, but he had not the strength to avoid temptation. He never used any violence toward me, though if I attempted to hold anything back he wished to turn into drink, he would become furious, and tear and rend whatever he could lay his hands on. One terrible night he broke every remnant of glass and china that remained of what once, for a tradesman's wife, I had such a store. Every thing was shattered, every thing trampled on and broken—every thing but that one cup."

"And how did that escape?" questioned Lucy.

"It contained the infant's supper," replied Mrs. Grey. "I saw his

hand hover over it, and the same moment his poor blood-shot eyes rested on the baby, whose little outstretched arms craved for its food. Some silent message at that moment must have entered his heart; his arms fell down, and without an effort to support himself, he sank into a heap upon the floor in the midst of the destruction he had caused. I tried to get him on to where once a bed had been; we had still a mattress and a couple of blankets."

Lucy did not speak, but her eyes were overflowing, and she stole her hand into that of Mrs. Grey. The good woman soon resumed her story:

"I saw that even there sleep came to subdue and calm him. My poor child ate her supper and fell asleep, and my sick boy was certainly better, and also slept. I crept about, gathering up the broken pieces, and endeavoring to light the fire. A kind lady to whom I had taken home some needle-work that morning—for several weeks, I had been the only bread-winner—in addition to the eighteenpence I had earned, gave me a small quantity of tea and sugar; and an old pewter tea-pot that, however battered, would not break, seemed to me a comforter. He would awake, I knew, cold and shivering, but I hoped that until the Blue Lobster and every house of the same description were closed; and then his thirst would compel him to take some tea. I heard the church-clock strike one, and it was a joyful sound; no open doors, even to old customers, then. I knelt down between the children's blankets and my poor shattered husband, and prayed as I never prayed before.

"I had managed sufficient fuel to boil the kettle and create some degree of warmth, and I waited patiently and prayerfully for the waking. It came at last. The anger and the violence that had been almost insanity were all gone; only the poor broken-down man was there. He asked what o'clock it was. I told him the church-clock had gone half past one. He then asked for water. I brought him a cupful, another, and another, and then a cup of tea. After he had taken it, he gathered himself up and took the stool I moved toward him. I poured him out a fresh cup of tea. He looked for some little time vacantly at the table, and not seeing another cup, he pushed that one toward me. I drank, half filled it again, and moved it to his hand.

"My poor Kate," and kept repeating my name, 'has it come to this—only one cup between us all?'

"And enough, too," I answered, smiling as gayly as I could—'enough to build a house and home on, if we trusted to tea.'

"What is your meaning?" he inquired.

"I was almost afraid to say what I meant, but I took courage, while trembling. 'I mean, darling,' I answered, 'that if we could both be content with refreshment of tea, we'd soon have a better and blither house than ever we had.'

"I've been a bad father and a bad husband," he said—for by this time he had nearly come to himself—but all is gone, and it's too late to mend."

"I made no answer, but just drew down the blanket from the faces of the sleeping children—there never was anything touched my husband like the little child.

"Is all gone?" I asked; and with that he crushed his face down on his clasped hands as they lay on the table, and burst into tears. I knelt down beside him, and thanked God for the tears in my heart, but I was so choked I could not speak; and we staid that way ever so long, neither saying a word. Now it is strange what turns the mind-will take. Even while his face was wet with tears, my darling lifted it.

"Katie," he said—and it may seem to you nothing but a fond old woman's fancy, but I've always thought there was no music in the world ever so sweet as the way my husband says 'Katie' unto this day—'Katie,' he says, 'lets turn the cup, and see what it reads.' Like all youngsters, I believe, we had tossed many a cup, in our boy and girl days, just for laughter. He took it up quite serious like, and turned it, and as he looked into it he smiled. 'There's a clear road,' he went on, 'and a house at the top, and a wonderful lot of planks: they can't be ours, for there is not a plank in or near the pit now.'

"But there will be," I answered, eagerly. 'It was only yesterday, down where the spinny overhangs the pool, I met Mrs. Groveley. She gave me a blithe good-morning, and asked if my goodman was going to turn his leaf soon. 'Tell him to make haste from me,' she said, laughing like a sunbeam; 'for he's too good a fellow to go on much longer as he's been going. There's goodness in him.'

"Are you sure she said that?" whispered my husband.

"So I told him indeed she did, and more. 'She said she was waiting until you'd resolve to turn to like a man, and cut down the small lot of timber that's waiting for your hatchet on the corner farm. 'I'm determined,' she continued, 'no one but he shall fell those trees. As I shall want to use the planks in the spring, he has no time to lose.' She said something not pleasant about the public-house, but I could not let that pass; so I up and told her that it was my carelessness and neglect that turned you from your own fireside."

"You should not have said that, Katie," he answered. 'I've been a bad husband and a bad father, and I did not think there was one in the place now that would trust me with a day's work; and his voice shook and faltered, but he got it out at last. 'Even if I did take a turn, it's not likely you could forgive me!'

"And then I fell weeping at his feet, and laid bare my heart, and re-