



Temperance Department.

HERBERT ALSTON.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS, IN "DAY OF REST."

Tears, bitter tears, dropped upon the dainty, perfumed sheet of note-paper over which Lady Alston's graceful head was bowed. Pale beams of wintry sunshine peered through the heavy blue window curtains, and gleamed coldly on the richly carpeted floor of her pretty boudoir. She cared not for sunshine just then; a storm of grief was raging in her bosom; her soul was sick with apprehension of coming sorrow. She was oblivious of all external things, as, with an air of weariness, she sat resting one elbow on her writing-desk, while her jewelled hand was held across her weeping eyes. The minutes passed by, and she resumed her writing, slowly traced a few sentences, then gazing abstractedly at the fire-flames leaping in the polished grate.

A low, playfully-prolonged knock was heard at the room door. Lady Alston hastily dried her eyes, and called, "Come in." A young man entered and saluted her with an affectionate kiss. A glance at the two satisfied you as to their relationship to each other. They had similar full dark eyes, similar wavy chestnut hair, similar beautifully-curved, refined mouths, though that of the young gentleman was almost concealed by the mustache he wore.

"Herbert, you are unwell this morning?" said the lady, looking anxiously up into his face. His countenance was of pale, sallow hue; his eyes were slightly bloodshot.

"I think not, mamma," he said carelessly; "I've had very little rest the past few nights; shall I take a wink on that enviable little lounge?"

Without waiting her reply he threw himself full length upon it, and lay watching her as she turned again to her letter.

"To whom are you writing, mamma dear?" asked Herbert in a sleepy tone of unconcern, as his mother folded the note and placed it in an envelope.

"To Aunt Wylie," she replied. "In a letter that I received from her this morning she half expressed a wish that you would visit her."

"I, mamma?"

"Yes; and now I have told her about the state of your health I expect she will send you a pressing invitation by return."

"Which I should decline to accept," said Herbert, promptly.

"Why so, Herbert?"

"How can you ask that question? A parsonage-house, and then, of all other times, the dead of winter. Whew! It makes one's blood run cold to think of it."

"You cannot call this the dead of winter," said Lady Alston; "it is beautiful spring weather, and is getting better every day. Then, Herbert dear, consider that you would be, at least for a time, out of the way of temptation. Winters is in town again, is he not?"

Herbert answered in the affirmative.

"I thought so. I saw you at three o'clock this morning, as Sir Richard Alston's son should never be seen, Herbert. For his sake, for your own sake, dear, I entreat you—"

"Now don't preach, mamma, if you please. Let a poor fellow have half an hour's quiet for once in his life."

He turned impatiently and closed his eyes for a nap.

Her time for preaching to, or teaching Herbert Alston was past for ever. In previous years she might have done it, and doubtless with the happiest results; but she had ignored her responsibility, neglected her duty, and now her time of remorse and suffering was come. Lady Alston was a thorough woman of the world. Her days and years were frittered away in frivolous amusements, light reading, studying the latest fashions, and so forth. Her thirst for excitement was insatiable. On the shrine of pleasure she unhesitatingly sacrificed her own true happiness, domestic comforts, and the best interests of her only and fondly-loved child. It cannot be denied that she loved him, though in her own peculiar way. She

was proud of him; she was happy in his presence, restless and dissatisfied in his absence; when he suffered she suffered too. Yet she had never manifested genuine love for him, as becometh a good mother. In his childhood she never folded his soft white hands in prayer, nor told him of One who loved little children.

Herbert's powers, both natural and acquired, were very great. His education being completed, he retired from the 'halls of learning' laden with honors. Lady Alston's pride and admiration of him knew no bounds. Contrary, however, to her fond expectations, he did not return home to be a pleasure and a solace to her in her weary hours (and worldly Lady Alston had many of them), nor to cheer her by his manly and affectionate companionship. She could not reap what she had never sown.

Society opened its arms to receive the accomplished, handsome and wealthy young gentleman, and gave him at all times a welcome that had the semblance of genuine heartiness; and Herbert was gratified. He had crowds of so-called friends and admirers, and, alas! could count his 'fast' acquaintances by scores. The influence of the latter upon him was soon apparent. Health began to give way, and in an agony of alarm Lady Alston prevailed on him to take advice. Travelling was suggested; and after considerable demurring Herbert consented to leave for a time the scenes of folly and dissipation to which he had become so fatally attached, and to make one of a party of tourists who were at that time about to visit the chief continental cities, and other places of interest.

He returned decidedly benefited by his two years' absence. For awhile, Lady Alston's hopes of his complete reformation were high, but anon were sunk again in gloom. At first he skimmed reservedly around the outer circle of the vortex of London questionable society; but ere long he was found pursuing his former follies with greater zest than ever, and was being gradually, surely borne down to ruin and death.

There was one whom Herbert, in his more thoughtful moments, was pleased to style his 'evil genius.' His name was Winters. Herbert first met with him at the clubs. Had he paused for reflection he might well have trembled at discovering what a great influence for evil this man exercised upon him. Herbert was in reality the dupe and victim of Winters, though the poor fellow knew it not. Lady Alston, in her clear-sightedness, perceived it, although she had seen but very little of Winters. She was not slow in discovering what sort of a man he was—outwardly almost irresistibly fascinating, both in person and manners; inwardly a knave—a prowling, destructive wolf in attractive garb. Lady Alston hated him; and on his account her soul trembled for her son's safety.

It was strange and inexplicable with what blind infatuation Herbert followed, and allowed himself to be led by Winters. It was a cause of wonder even to himself sometimes; yet he never sought by word or deed to break off the acquaintance.

When overwhelmed with unavailing regret and sorrow concerning her son, Lady Alston would write to her husband's sister—a clergyman's wife living in Gloucestershire—to tell her her hopes and fears. Mrs. Wylie ever proved a faithful counsellor and a devoted friend to her oft-distressed relatives. While enjoying so great an amount of domestic happiness herself, her heart was always ready to sympathize with those who lacked her joys. She was Sir Richard's only sister, and had married, though not with her brother's full sanction, a truly good clergyman, whose lot was cast in a village of considerable size in the county before mentioned. Sir Richard had anticipated for his beautiful and accomplished sister a more brilliant alliance; and Lady Alston, then a newly-married young lady, expressed her unaffected surprise that "Agnes Alston should throw herself away on a country clergyman, and bury herself alive in an unknown village, when she might have been an ornament to the best circles of society." Agnes Alston thought differently, and acted according to the dictates of affection and conscience.

A day or two succeeding the one on which we saw Lady Alston writing to Mrs. Wylie, an answer arrived; also a note for Herbert, begging him to visit Rookby. His aunt said: "Though it is not the season in which the country looks temptingly inviting, yet, if you will come, dear Herbert, I promise

you that you shall not have to complain of dullness. Mind I can take no denial! Hurry away from physicians, and London smoke and din, immediately on receipt of this, and come and breathe freely in this charming locality for a few weeks."

Lady Alston watched him as he read the epistle. "Well, Herbert?" she said interrogatively, as he replaced it in its envelope. "Aunt very coolly says that she will take no denial," he replied.

"I am glad to hear it," said his mother.

"What's that?" said Sir Richard, looking up from his morning paper.

"Aunt Wylie wishes Herbert to visit Rookby for a time. I feel persuaded it would prove beneficial to him."

"Of course, of course," said Sir Richard, briskly. "Go by all means, Herbert. This exhilarating weather would brace you up finely."

"There's no one there," said Herbert with a suppressed yawn. "Even Walter is at school, I suppose."

"Mr. Barton, or 'the Squire,' as he is called there, is an excellent neighbor; you would find him a congenial companion," said Lady Alston. "Then there is Amy, could you desire a more admirable cicerone?"

"I can't do it," said Herbert, after a meditative silence. "What with their everlasting dolorous psalm-singing and prosy sermonizing, they would ding-dong me out of this world into the next in no time."

Sir Richard smiled as he rose to stand with his back to the fire. "You are slightly out of your reckoning there, Herbert," he said. "When I was about to visit Rookby for the first time, I had similar notions and prejudices, but I confess I was most agreeably surprised to find I had made a wrong estimate of the character of Agnes and her husband; and the foolish notions I had conceived about their mode of living were dispelled before I had been with them a day. I suppose I may say with truth that there are not happier or more cheerful people in England than the Wylies; their home is a perfect little paradise."

After considerable persuasion, Herbert consented to leave town. "Just for a week," he said, adding, "I feel so wretchedly low or I would not consent to it. Mind, mamma, if Winters or any of them make enquiries for me, I am in Paris. I shall keep them in the dark about this."

Without hesitating his mother promised to circulate the falsehood. It was a bright morning on which Herbert stood with railway wrappers on his arm, to bid Lady Alston farewell. "I think you may expect me back this evening, mamma," he said, with a gloomy smile. "I fear I shall not have nerve enough to immure myself in Wylies's monastic-like house."

"Nay," she returned with a light laugh, "I will give you at least three months."

With a significant whistle, Herbert slowly descended the staircase. In less than an hour he was whirling along the Great Western line to Gloucestershire. He had no travelling companion but a brandy-flask, which he made frequent use of; consequently, by the time he reached the terminus his spirits were exuberant, and his flask empty.

A drive of five or six miles was then before him, which he had to accomplish in not the most comfortable of conveyances. However, he forgot all inconveniences as the carriage moved slowly on through scenes of quiet beauty.

Warm was the welcome which Herbert met at the Grange. Mrs. Wylie perceived at once what was the cause of Herbert's declining health, and her heart longed to influence him for good. Her delicate kindness of manner was not lost upon him. He was one who could fully appreciate the smallest act of love.

That day at dinner Mr. Wylie deemed it necessary to make an apology for the absence of intoxicants from his table. After remarking that he had seen such a dreadful amount of misery directly and indirectly resulting from the social drinking customs of our day, he said; "I am of opinion that one of the worst things I could do to an enemy would be to enforce upon him intoxicating drink, and so expose him to most cruel and insidious temptation. How then can I, as a reasonable and responsible being, perpetrate such an enormity on my dearest friends? Herbert, excuse me, but I cannot, dare not, offer you anything intoxicating at my table."

He was almost startled by the quiet yet

thrilling tone of earnestness in which Herbert uttered the words, "Thank you, uncle."

Had he known how many times the young fellow before him had resolved to shake off the fatal, clinging habit of intemperance, and as many times been overcome; how, in harrowing moments of reflection, he had wept, yes, even shed tears, as he thought of his powerlessness to combat with the fearful enemy, drink; had he been aware of the ardent desire to amend and live nobly which sometimes burned in Herbert's bosom, he would no longer have wondered why the words were so thankfully spoken.

But as if the arch enemy of mankind were fearful of losing his prey, plausible temptations presented themselves to Herbert. He felt a depression consequent upon his indulgence in the morning; the travelling, too, had wearied him in his weak state. "Would not a glass of wine do him good?" he asked himself; but how was he to get it? He thought of an expedient.

After dinner his cousin Amy said, "Is it too late for a walk, do you think, mamma?"

"Yes, dear; besides, Herbert is tired. I advise rest this evening, so that you may take a long ramble to-morrow."

(To be Continued.)

RESISTED.

Four young men, clerks and students, while on a summer-vacation tramp through Northern New England, engaged for a guide to a certain romantic forest waterfall a boy named Forrest Graves. Forrest was a fine, athletic fellow, who could outwalk and outclimb any amateur in the mountains, and his moral courage was quite equal to his physical health and strength.

After he had guided the young men to the waterfall, and they had satisfied themselves with sight-seeing, they invited him to lunch with them.

"Thank you, I have my own lunch," and the boy went away by himself. Later, when full justice had been done to their repast, and a flask of brandy had furnished each of the young men with a stimulating draught, Graves was called.

"You must drink with us, if you will not eat with us," now, said the owner of the flask, and the most reckless of the party.

"No, sir, thank you," was the boy's courteous response.

"But I shall insist upon it."

"You can do as you please, and I shall do as I please."

The young man sprang to his feet, and with a bound stood beside the boy, too much absorbed in his own purpose to heed the quivering lips and flashing eyes of another.

"Now you are bound to try my brandy, I always rule."

"You can't rule me."

These words were scarcely uttered when the flask was seized and hurled into the stream where the clinking of glass betrayed its utter destruction. Then a clear, defiant tone rang out—

"I did it in self-defence. You had no right to tempt me. My father was once a rich and honorable man, but he died a miserable drunkard, and my mother came here to live to keep me away from liquor till I should be old enough to take care of myself. I have promised her a hundred times I wouldn't taste it, and I'd die before I'd break my promise."

"Bravely said. Forgive me, and let us shake hands. My mother would be a happy woman if I was as brave as you. I wouldn't tempt you to do wrong. I shall never forget you, nor the lesson you have taught me."

The most reckless was the most generous, and seeing his error apologized frankly.

How many boys need to be kept from strong drink; and, alas, how many men and women! Who dares tempt them? Let it not be you and I.—*Youth's Companion.*

THE SANITARY EDITOR of the New York Independent, Dr. Ezra M. Hunt, writing of the "Tobacco habit," says: "While neither are needed for the economy in health, the ability of tobacco to limit health, to unnerve the system, and to prepare for premature break-down is, we think, greater than that of alcohol." May his timely warning be widely proclaimed, especially among young men and boys everywhere.

No MAN was ever accepted of Christ for what he brought to Him. They are best welcome who bring nothing, and yet expect all things.