

The Philharmonic Club

WILL HANBURY'S STORY

(By Helen Shipton, in 'Dawn of Day').

The fire was burning brightly in our little 'house-place' at home, and the wind was howling outside, and my mother and a neighbor who was sewing for her were gossiping over their work by the table, and I—Will Hanbury—was sitting by the fire and staring at it till my eyes ached.

I wasn't listening much to what they were saying, not even when my mother said how glad she was to see me spend an evening for once quiet by our own fireside, and then went on—for fear, good soul, that Mrs. Bennett should think I wasn't steady—to say how lads would be lads, and as long as they didn't get to the public-house and take more than was good for

here nor there just now; what I'd done was nothing to be proud of, but I didn't want it to come to light; and I was considering as I sat there what I should say to the chaps next day if any of them guessed what I'd been up to.

The beginning of the trouble was this:

There were a lot of us that were fond of music, and fond too, maybe, of making a noise; and we thought we'd like to get up a brass band. But that meant a deal of expense for instruments, and the rent of a place to practice in, and what not; and altogether it was more than we could see our way to.

So some of us went to Mr. Glyn, the curate, and asked if he could help us a bit, and he did, for he got some of the rich folks to subscribe, and made himself responsible for the rent of the room (which we were to

That blew over for the time, but some of the members were very angry about it, because they said it wasn't like playing in a 'public' in an ordinary way, but a special occasion that ought to have been allowed. But Mr. Glyn never went back from what he'd once said, and they'd found that out by this time.

The next thing was that we went to the Milford flower-show, and most of us perhaps had a little more than we should have had, and some of us were out-and-out the worse for liquor. When Mr. Glyn heard that, he said that the rules had been broken, and that he should suspend all the members for a time, and turn out one or two that had been the worst.

I was one that was suspended, but I suppose if I'd chosen to speak up for myself I needn't have been, for I was a teetotaler then, and I am still, and I could have brought more than one to say that I hadn't taken anything stronger than gingerbeer that day. But I didn't like Mr. Glyn, and we all thought he was taking too high a hand with us, and we meant to hang together.

So we that were only suspended said that we shouldn't come back to the club unless all were allowed to come back; and at the same time we talked ourselves up into a fine passion about the injustice and unfairness we'd met with—after all the time and trouble and money we'd spent on the club, that Mr. Glyn should take upon himself to close it and bring it to an end just because he'd asked for a few subscriptions and had got us into his power!

I was thinking it all over as I sat by the fire, 'halting betwixt two opinions,' as the Bible says, which is as uncomfortable a state as a man can find himself in. First I thought of our 'wrongs' till my temper got hot, and I wished I'd taken part with the other chaps heart and soul, and not risked offending them all for nothing; and then I cooled down again, and thought what fools they were, and wished that they'd be content to let ill alone.

And all the time, as I said before, my mother—and her neighbor went on talking, and I heard, and wasn't listening. It was all about gowns and bonnets at first, and then about funerals, and then about all the different complaints that all their relations had died of, going back to grandfathers and grandmothers on both sides, and then all the complaints that folks in the parish were now suffering from, and then suddenly I began to listen, for one of them said a name that was in my mind already: 'Mr. Glyn.'

'Ay!' said Mrs. Bennett with a sigh. 'I suppose that's what's the matter with him, poor young man!'

'What's the matter with him?' I said, looking up. 'He was all right this forenoon, I know.'

'Oh! it's nothing fresh,' she said, 'but his heart's all wrong, we know. He may live a-many years, I believe, but he'll go off sudden when he does go. And if he was to have any sudden shock I suppose he might drop off any time, at a moment's notice, as one may say.'

I got up, and I looked from one to the other of them. I didn't know I was doing it, but I hit the table between them so that it made them both jump. 'Look here,' I said, 'is this true, or is it just old women's tattle?'

Mrs. Bennet sat up straight and gave a sniff; but mother answered me gently, as she always did, bless her!



'LOOK HERE, IS THIS TRUE.'

them it was only right that they should want to amuse themselves a bit of an evening.

I had my own reasons for being at home that night, and I was a good deal put out over the business, and I was turning it over in my mind as I sat there by the fire.

It's an awkward thing for a young man to fall out with his mates, with the chaps he's always been used to work with and go about with. Nobody knows till he comes to live in a place like ours how many ways there are of making a fellow repent it if he sets himself in any way against the rest, or how much afraid we are—and have good cause to be—of being thought to set ourselves up to be different. I've known a man hide a good action as if he'd been committing a murder. But that's neither

repay to him amongst us), and altogether he got us fairly started. But he said that he must make some rules, and have a right to turn out any member who misconducted himself, and most of us agreed to that willingly enough, as indeed it was but right. Well, the thing was started, and we called ourselves the 'Philharmonic Club,' and all went on right for a time, though some said they hadn't reckoned on a parson being at the head of it. As long as we were only learning, though, it didn't much matter, for Mr. Glyn didn't often interfere. But by-and-by we began to think ourselves first-rate performers, and then there was a bother because we were asked to go and play at a brass band competition, and it was held at a public-house; and Mr. Glyn said, 'No! it was provided in the rules that there was to be no playing in public-houses.'