

Tales and Sketches.

Magdalen.

Young brow o'er heart of sorrow,
Magdalen!
What remaineth for the morrow
Dost thou ken
How the cruel cross will rend thee
And the few who would befriend thee
O'ut hope and prayer can lend thee,
Magdalen!

Beer and a Baby.

BY KATHERINE ARMSTRONG.

"To true, its pity, and pity its, its true
It was less than two years ago, in
bright, broad daylight, when the sharp
report of a pistol startled the dwellers
in one of the quietest of the smallest
streets of South Kensington, where,
judging exteriorly of the small but
handsome stone houses, the tasteful
architecture, the richly draped win-
dows, and the cleanly and altogether
well-kept air, one would think the re-
fined monotony of respectable life and
routine were the rule of the neighbor-
hood, rather than the melancholy, misery
and madness, which that tragic sound
suggested and proved were the reality.

Now, I shut my teeth together
and pass on, like the Levite, to the
other side. I can do no good, so I
turn my face away, whether it be in
Pimlico or South Kensington, which,
though it seem to be the abode of
"sweetness and light," has its own
wretched crimes and vicious happenings
—the result of drink—to answer for.
Oh, the awful slavery to beer and
to rum that I have witnessed here,
in London! It sounds too awful to
tell, yet I know of cases, really of fre-
quent occurrence, of mothers taking
their daughters' hard-earned money and
spending it in drink, enticing them
from service when, thanks to the
"Girls' Friendly Society," they had ob-
tained clothes and a situation—paw-
ing the girls' clothes and seducing her
own flesh and blood to share the drink
and disaster that followed, for she, of
course, loses her situation. This is
no exaggeration. I will cheerfully
furnish my proof to any cynical statis-
tician who cares to apply to me. But
to my story.
Major Blank-Blank, a retired officer,
formerly in the 4th Regiment married
a young wife when he was no longer
youthful, the daughter of a clergyman
in Dorsetshire. He had been accus-
tomed to the comfort of a well-kept
club. I have had tea at more than
one "swell" club in London, and be-
lieve me, the gentlemen are taken very
good care of. Whatever the male
house-keepers' troubles are they do not
appear in badly washed dishes, sloven-
ly served meals, dusty chairs and gen-
eral furniture, and ill kept rooms and
hall-ways: for dusty, smoky London
clubs are as cheerful as industry and
well-drilled servants can make them.
So you can understand the bachelor
life of Major Blank-Blank had been
an even tenor of ever-recurring crea-
ture comfort and animal enjoyment.
His wife had led, at the Dorsetshire
home, which we will call Kenelm Rec-
tory, a happy, gushy life, in the society
of an intellectual father and mother, and
affectionate brothers and sisters, com-
prising as happy a household as that
rare object, an old-fashioned house-
keeper, can make it. In the midst of
housekeeping miseries that came to her
in her after life in London, when she
looked back to the old routine of home,
it seemed to her that there everything
had moved on wheels, by themselves,
without any special propelling force
from behind; for her mother's time
was mostly given up to her father in
his intellectual pursuits, and the old
servant-housekeeper managed the two
other maids, so that if they were not
"jewels" of servants, at least the
angles of disorder or discontent were
not annoyingly apparent.
But all this was changed when she
came to London to live. Major Blank-
Blank had a fair income; she had a
little money of her own, and her
father's many friends generously sent
wedding presents of silver and linen
and china, and other regulation bridal
gifts, so that it took eighteen large
wooden cases to hold them. At the
outset all promised fair. The house-
rent was not very high; the servants,
two of them, demanded reasonable
wages, and their "beer," of course,
but were smooth spoken and promising;
the shops were close at hand and full
of attractive household goods and gro-
ceries—all that a young housekeeper
longed for; the tradespeople as oblig-
ing as possible.
So, at least in the first few weeks,
it seemed all right, and Mrs. Blank-
Blank took pride in the *recherche* din-
ners she achieved for their London
acquaintances, but after a while with
all her planning, she discovered that
her first quarter's bill exceeded her al-
lowance. Sad, but not disheartened,
she went on to the next turn, hoping
to save the deficit of the past months
by economy in the present. But the
difficulty only became graver. Then,
not to "bother" her husband, she
took advice of an acquaintance, a
housekeeper of experience. Small
comfort she got, only the light of
truth upon what had been mysterious
and saddening, knowledge that brought
misery but no "power" with it.
The servants were robbing her in
every conceivable and petty way. They
were in league with the butcher and
baker and fruiterer and greengrocer,
either to increase her bread bill, her
meat bill, and her vegetable supply
by getting substance and selling it back
again, or "hoecussing" the accounts.
Then at night, when she was busy with
guests, the butcher's porter or the gro-
cer's porter, or two fruiterer's man was
let in the area gate to spend the even-
ing and get jolly, or "fuddled" as they
call it, over the beer belonging to
Major Blank-Blank's cellar, or beer
bought with money purloined out of
profits from things sold out of the lar-
der, or obtained from, and sold again
to, the trades people.
She questioned them kindly or
sternly, and they either gave warning
to go and left, or assumed a virtuous
indignation, that was so well acted it
was a pity that it could not have been

done before an audience at Drury
Lane Theatre.
If the meat went too fast, and she
said, "the joint ought to have lasted
longer," smooth spoken Jane would re-
ply, "I'm sure I can't tell, ma'am,
meat is a thing I never touch."
If the vegetables disappeared, Laz-
zio would reply, "I don't care for
greens, ma'am, they're things as never
did agree with me."
Or a pudding or a tart, left over
from dinner, not making its appear-
ance at luncheon the next day, Lizzie
and Jane in chorus, would say, "Sweets
is a thing I never touch." "Tarts I
can't bear, ma'am."
Perhaps it might be true, but the
half consumed food was either sold to
a near lodging-house woman, or to
some accommodating tavern-keeper's
wife in exchange for beer, "four-ale"
or "six-ale" (the latter on extravagant
nights), or, when they went in for a
jollification generally, "ale" and "stout"
and whiskey.
At last, making discovery after dis-
covery, and proof pressing upon sus-
picion, she began the weary London
house-keeper's round of discharging
and getting fresh servants, only, alas!
so much worse than the first that she
would fain have welcomed back the
first discharged ones. She strove to
bear it alone, to keep up the sweet
smile to guest and to friend, and com-
plain as little as she could, but the
unrest in her eyes would not be hidden.
She had read Herbert Spencer on so-
cial and maternal influence; Dinah
Mulock on "Woman's Influence"
even dipped into a French novel or
two of a season, and found them as
morbid as life was fast growing to be
to her. Sometimes in her Bible she
got comfort out of the Prophet Isaiah,
and sometimes hope from the blessed
St. John, and then, one day, her baby
boy was born.
Her friends from home surrounded her
then. The mother came in to nurse
her, the father to bless her, and life
seemed brighter to her now that for
days she might legitimately lie on her
back, and be shut out from that soul
wearying basement kitchen, and let
someone else see the house kept, or at-
tempt to secure the home from the
depredations of the domestic thieves.
Now, it is a generally accepted fact
that in London a large proportion of
the washerwomen are confirmed drunk-
ards, and conspicuously so are monthly
nurses. There are, it is true, noble
exceptions among the latter; but these
are rare. Young mothers will fare
(and are faring) better with the advent
of good, educated women nurses now
being trained in the hospitals, but
this is only the beginning of a brighter
era, and many a one must have the Sairy
Gamps and the Betsey Prigs who are
the type of the attendants in the young
mothers room, unless they "look alive"
about them.
But Major Blank-Blank's wife was
not so to fare. They, her friends, suc-
ceeded in getting her a nurse "an
excellent creature"—a teetotaler, won-
der of wonders! and a most efficient
and cleanly woman. So the young
mother recovered rapidly; the routine
of perfect cleanliness, perfect ventila-
tion and well cooked food, and strict
attention to the doctor's orders on the
part of the nurse resulted in a good
progress toward health. Then came
the first happy day of trial of strength,
a drive in Richmond Park, and a rest
of an hour at a friend's house on the
way home. The father and mother
took the young mother on her first
journey, but, not to fatigue her, the
baby (bottle fed) was left at home with
the excellent nurse, although Mrs.
Blank-Blank did not like to leave her
baby, and said so. The day was beau-
tifully fine, the month was (late) June,
and the noble old trees in Richmond
Park never looked more noble and
strong than in their burst of fresh
green leafing.
As had been arranged, they stopped
on the way for the young mother to
have tea and an hour's rest on the sofa,
at the house of a relative near the park.
Suddenly she said "Mamma, please take
me home. Mamma, I must go at once."
She laid her hand on her heart "Mam-
ma, I know my little boy is ill. I feel
it here."
They smiled at her fears, but obeyed
her and drove home at once. As they
entered, something seemed unaccount-
ably strange to the young mother, and
she looked in a dazed manner about
her.
"It is your poor head, darling; lean
on me and we will soon go upstairs to
baby," said her mother.
They went upstairs, but baby was
gone! no nurse, no baby!
The poor mother, weak and appre-
hensive, sank fainting into a chair.
(Continued next week.)
"THE single skull race" exclaimed
an old lady, as she laid down the
paper. "My gracious I didn't know
there was a race of men with double
skulls."

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