

# BOYS AND GIRLS

## Shattered Hopes.

'You are to be congratulated, Mrs. Moffat, Daniel is a son to be proud of.'

These words were addressed by a venerable clergyman to a mother at the close of a school examination.

As the minister passed on Daniel came slowly forward. He was the handsomest as well as the cleverest boy in the secondary department of the school, and every eye was turned upon him in admiration as he received his prizes and walked up with them to his proud mother.

Daniel Moffat was the son of a country surgeon, who died when the boy was nine years old. Happily his mother was a woman of strong good sense and Christian principle, and under her careful training Daniel's character was brought out in its fairest colors.

From his childhood Daniel exhibited talents of a high order, and astonished his teachers with his aptitude for acquiring knowledge. His instructors delighted in him, second-sighted mortals prophesied that the lad would make himself a name in the world. But along with his shining qualities Daniel possessed an amiable disposition, which rendered him a universal favorite. He was affectionate, warm-hearted, and generous, the best of sons, as his proud mother declared.

It was Mrs. Moffat's wish that Daniel should be a clergyman, but her means were narrow; and when Daniel was about sixteen a gentleman who had been a personal friend of his father's used his influence to get him into an important house of business in a large commercial city; accordingly the idea of the church as a profession was abandoned.

It was a disappointment to his mother at the time, but ere long Daniel showed that his talents had not been misdirected when they were put to account in the commercial world. He had a clear head, tact and energy, and soon his aptitude for business was observed by his employers. Speedy promotion rewarded his industry and faithfulness to duty; and as years went by he continued to be in favor with his masters. In the gay, giddy season of youth he walked blameless, bravely withstanding temptation, and turning a deaf ear to the syren voice of 'pleasure.' His quiet little chamber at home, with its dearly prized treasures, had more attraction for him when the duties of the day were ended than the theatre or music-saloon. Janet Moffat was amply rewarded for her watchfulness and care in Daniel's exemplary life, and it gladdened her heart to see that as he grew in years he aspired to a noble life.

As a proof of the estimation in which Daniel was held by his employers, he was selected to fill an important situation when little over twenty years of age. His youth did not stand in his way, nor his want of experience, for, as the junior partner said, 'Daniel Moffat's character was made up of "truth" and "faithfulness."'

What a day it was for his mother, that in which Daniel was apprised of this great rise in his fortunes; her heart leapt for joy; and as for his sister, she was almost beside herself with happiness. It was so delightful to think that Daniel had won the confidence of his masters by the wor-

thy manner in which he had fulfilled his duties.

With high hopes Daniel made his new start in life; whatever difficulties beset the way, he was determined to succeed. But there were difficulties in the life of a commercial traveller of which he had no conception.

Mr. Martin, the junior partner, who was a warm friend of Daniel, gave him a hint or two before he set out, that in some measure opened his eyes. Amongst other things, he was informed that in a certain important district he would require to humor his customers in order to gain the good-will of these customers.

Daniel's heart sank when he was told that there was no hope of getting an order in the district afore-mentioned, save through the medium of the social glass. He had been reared on strict temperance principles, and he had no taste for strong drink. For a moment he was almost tempted to resign his appointment, but the fear of displeasing his employers withheld him; and, besides that, he was now the chief support of his mother and sister. He comforted himself that things were not so bad as Mr. Martin represented; but good-will and 'patronage' could only be obtained through the 'cup of kindness' in K—, as Daniel found to his cost.

In vain he tried to excuse himself, his youth and his natural dislike to strong liquor was nothing to the tippling community. The old way of doing business or no business at all. And he had his employers' interests to think of as well as his own likes and dislikes: if he meant to keep 'faith with them,' there was no help for it but to go in with the habits of his patrons.

Late or early, the inevitable bottle was produced. The first journey disgusted Daniel, and he would gladly have returned to his old place again at a third of his salary, but the old place was filled up, and he could not see his way clear to make a change at the present time. He would try a little longer. A year rolled away; and at the end of it Daniel had got accustomed to the tippling system. He did not approve of it by any means; but he was becoming, in a manner, reconciled to the senseless practice, and (so easily is the habit acquired) in course of time he could toss off his glass as quietly as anybody in the town of K—. Another year played its part in the history of time, and then a slight change became visible in Daniel—when he was at home he was excitable and restless. His mother thought 'travelling didn't agree with him;' but Daniel could have told her that it was not the free air of heaven that was poisoning the sweet waters of health, but the 'distiller's fire.'

'If it wasn't for the sake of the business, I would stick to my old principles,' said Daniel; 'I have no love for strong drink, none whatever,' he was constantly assuring himself.

But the day was coming when 'truth' was to show him in her clearest light the mocker's power. It was what we call the festive season—the beginning of a new year—and Daniel, with a light heart, was steaming on to K—. As the train slowed into the station he recognized one or

two of his principal customers. In a twinkling he was shaking hands with all of them, then followed the compliments of the season, and Daniel must needs adjourn with his patrons to the 'White Swan.' The morning was yet in its first freshness, but the well-seasoned toppers were ready at any time for a 'social glass.' 'Brandy, sir?' 'Yes, sir.' And as soon as the order was given the sparkling liquor appeared on the table.

'Bumpers every round, but all in the way of business,' said Daniel to himself, as he smilingly refilled his glass.

All day long it was a constant scene of tippling; and what with standing 'treat' himself and being treated, Daniel's head was not quite clear when he bade all his friends good-night. His business done, he intended to push on with the last train, but in the commercial room of the 'White Swan' he met in with an acquaintance from his home, and talking over old times he lost the train.

The 'cup of kindness' was replenished, but of course only for 'friendship's sake.' Barbour stopped within the bounds of moderation, but after he had slipped away Daniel filled up another bumper and quaffed it off with fierce gusto. The liquor mounted to his brain, and as the fiery poison coursed through his blood an irresistible craving seized him, and he drank on until he could no longer hold the glass, or see his way to the bottle.

When he came to himself in the dull winter morning he remembered nothing of the past night. But through the thin walls he overheard the landlord telling his wife 'how beastly drunk young Moffat was when the waiter stumbled over him last night.' Then, like a hideous nightmare, the whole scene rose up before him. He was ashamed and affronted, and felt disgraced in the eyes of all the world. Never more could he hold up his head in proud consciousness of unswerving rectitude. His self-respect was gone, his peace of mind, and how would he return to the loving ones at home, whose chief joy was that 'he' could do nothing discreditable?

Daniel was no subject for strong mental excitement. A brain-fever was the result of his disquietude, and he sank under it. His high spirit could not brook the affront that he had brought upon himself. The powers of life were exhausted in the agonies of the tortured spirit, and medical skill was of no avail.

From the first moment that Daniel became conscious of his disgrace until his voice was lost in death, he kept on bewailing his folly, and even in the height of delirium the stammering tongue kept muttering warnings against the arch-deceiver.

It was hard to perish in the bloom of youth, when the leaves of hope were green, and life was bright with golden promise. Hard to pass away to the dark silent tomb in the flush of health and glad young life.

'I thought to have led a noble life, and I had glorious dreams of ease and comfort for the poor old mother in her declining days,' he said, sadly smiling, to the friend who watched his last moments. 'And had I been true "to my early principles," I would have left behind me the