

I tried to comfort her with suggestions as to where Alfred might be. "No doubt," I said, "he went home with a friend, and we may look any moment for his return. Why should the absence of a few hours so alarm you?"

There was a stony glare in her eyes as she shook her head silently. She arose, and walking to the window, stood for several minutes looking out upon the snow. I watched her closely. She was motionless as marble. After a while, I saw a quick shudder run through her frame. Then she turned, and came slowly back to the lounge from which she had risen, and lay down quietly, shutting her eyes. Oh! the still anguish of that pale, pinched face! Shall I ever be able to draw a veil over its image in my mind?

Suddenly she started up. Her ear had caught the sound of the street bell which had just been rung. She went hurriedly to the chamber door, opened it, and stood out in the upper hall listening.

"Who is it?" she asked, in a hoarse, eager undertone, as a servant came up after answering the bell.

"Mrs. Gordon's man. He called to ask if we'd heard anything from Mr. Alfred yet."

Mrs. Martindale came back to her chamber with a whiter face and unsteady steps, not replying. The servant stood looking after her with a countenance in which doubt and pity were mingled, then turned and went down stairs.

I did not go home until evening. All day the snow fell drearily, and the wind sighed and moaned along the streets, or shrieked painfully across sharp angles, or rattled with wild impatience the loose shutters that obstructed its way. Every hour had its breathless suspense or nervous excitement. Messengers came and went perpetually. As the news of Alfred's prolonged absence spread among his friends and the friends of the family, the circle of search and enquiry became larger, and the suspense greater. To prevent the almost continual ringing of the bell, it was muffled, and a servant stationed by the door to receive or answer all who came.

Night dropped down, shutting in with a strange suddenness as some heavier clouds darkened the west. Up to this period, not a single item of intelligence from the absent one had been gained since, as related by one of the young Gordons, he parted from him between two and three o'clock in the morning, and saw him take his way down one of the streets, not far from his home, leading to the river. It was snowing fast at the time, and the ground was already well covered. Closer questioning of the young man revealed the fact that Alfred Martindale was, at the time, so much intoxicated that he could not walk steadily.

"I looked after him," said Gordon, "as he left me, and saw him stagger from side to side; but in a few moments the snow and darkness hid him from sight. He was not far from home, and would, I had no doubt, find his way there."

Nothing beyond this was ascertained on the first day of his absence. I went home soon after dark, leaving Mrs. Martindale with other friends. The anguish I was suffering no words can tell. Not such anguish as pierced the mother's heart; but in one degree sharper, in that guilt and responsibility were on my conscience.

Three days went by. He had vanished and left no sign! The whole police of the city sought for him, but in vain. Their theory was that he had missed his home, and wandered on towards the docks, where he had been robbed and murdered, and his body cast into the river. He had on his person a valuable gold watch, and a diamond pin worth over two hundred dollars—sufficient temptation for robbery and murder, if his unsteady feet had chanced to bear him into that part of the city lying near the river.

All hope of finding Alfred alive was abandoned after a week's agonizing suspense, and Mr. Martindale offered a reward of five hundred dollars for the recovery of his son's body. Stimulated by this offer, hundreds of boatmen began the search up and down the rivers, and along the shores of the bay, leaving no point unvisited where the body might have been borne by the tides. But over large portions of this field-ice had formed on the surface, closing up many small bays and indentations of the land. There were hundreds of places, into any one of which the body might have floated, and where it must remain until the warm airs of spring set the water free again. The search was fruitless.

Mrs. Martindale, meantime, had lapsed into a state of dull indifference to everything but her great sorrow. That absorbed her whole mental life. It was the house in which her soul dwelt, the chamber of affliction wherein she lived, and moved, and had her being—so darkly draped that no light came in through the windows. Very still and passionless she sat here, refusing to be comforted.

Forced by duty, yet dreading always to look into her face, that seemed full of accusations, I went often to see my friend. It was very plain that, in her mind, I was an accessory to her son's death. Not after the first few days did I venture to offer a word of comfort, for such words from my lips seemed as mockery. They faltered on my tongue.

One day I called, and the servant took up my name. On returning to the parlor, she said that Mrs. Martindale did not feel very well, and wished to be excused. I had looked for this; yet was not the pang it gave me less acute for the anticipation? Was not I the instrumental cause of a great

calamity that had wrecked her dearest hope in life? And how could she bear to see my face?

I went home very heavy-hearted. My husband tried to comfort me with words that had no balm for either his troubled heart or mine. The great fact of our having put the cup of confusion to that young man's lips, and sent him forth at midnight in no condition to find his way home, stood out too sharply defined for any self-delusion.

I did not venture to the house of my friend again. She had dropped a curtain between us, and I said, "It shall be a wall of separation."

Not until spring opened was the body of Alfred Martindale recovered. It was found floating in the dock at the end of the street down which young Gordon saw him go with unsteady steps in the darkness and storm on that night of sorrow. His watch was in his pocket, the hands pointing to half-past two, the time, in all probability, when he fell into the water. The diamond pin was in his scarf, and his pocket-book in his pocket, unripped. He had not been robbed and murdered. So much was certain. To all it was plain that the bewildered young man, left to himself had plunged on blindly through the storm, he knew not whither, until he reached the wharf. The white sheet of snow lying over everything hid from eyes like his the treacherous margin, and he stepped, unheeding to his death! It was conjectured that his body had floated, by an incoming tide, under the wharf, and that his clothes had caught in the logs and held it there for so long a time.

Certainty is always better than doubt. On the Sunday after the saddest funeral it has ever been my lot to attend, Mrs. Martindale appeared for the first time in church. I did not see her face, for she kept her heavy black veil closely drawn. On the following Sunday she was in the family pew again, but still kept her face hidden. From friends who visited her (I did not call again after my first denial) I learned that she had become calm and resigned.

To one of these friends she said, "It is better that he should have died than live to be what I too sadly fear our good society would have made him—a social burden and disgrace. But custom and example were all against him. It was at the house of one of my oldest and dearest friends that wine enticed him. The sister of my heart put madness in his brain, and then sent him forth to meet a death he had no soul left to avoid."

Oh! how these sentences cut, and bruised, and pained my heart, already too sore to bear my own thoughts without agony!

What more shall I write? Is not this unadorned story sad enough, and dull enough of counsel and warning? Far sooner would I let it sleep, and go farther and farther away into the oblivion of past events; but the times demand a startling cry of warning, and so, out of the dark depths of the saddest experience of my life, I have brought this grief, and shame, and agony to the light, and let it stand shivering in the face of all men.

"LOOK ME UP."

The curio of drink is not only that it steals away a man's brains, but it robs him also of his will-power. The victim becomes stupid in mind and feeble in body. He cannot summon up the will necessary to break away from his habit—and, at last, wretched, and knowing his weakness, he asks to be placed where he shall cease to be a free man.

"Is there any one here who wishes to see me?" asked Judge Hood at the close of the calendar in the Newark Criminal Court.

A respectable-looking man with a pale face walked up to the desk, and in a slightly tremulous voice said:

"If you please, Judge, I want you to lock me up."

The Magistrate stared wonderingly at him and asked:

"What for?"

"For vagrancy, your Honor, and drunkenness. My name is George Collins. I am a jeweler and well known here. I have a wife who will have nothing to do with me. I was respectable once, but drink has brought me to this. I saw my wife last night, and she advised me to get locked up as the only way to keep me from the bottle," and he raised his hand and brushed away an unhidden tear.

"Are you not ashamed to come here and tell me this, in open court?" said Judge Hood, evidently interested by the man's quiet and intelligent manner.

"Yes," was the sad reply, "but it is the only way. My will-power is entirely gone. I have no longer any control over myself. I obtained work in New York last week, and as soon as I was paid I went straight to the saloon counters and drank all the money away."

"Well," said the Judge, sadly, "lock him up on a charge of vagrancy till evening, and I will make inquiries," and the poor wretch of what once was a man was marched off to the cells.—*Irish World*.

The Ohio State Journal tells of three drunken legislators appearing on the floor of the State Legislature recently. One was brought there to vote on the License Bill. Another hurled billingsgate of the worst kind at the speaker. A judge in the Common Pleas Court in the same city (Columbus) left his seat of dignity to shed maudlin tears over the defendant. The Journal asks, "Is this Democracy?" Why, no, don't you know what that is? It's personal liberty, and you mustn't touch a man's personal liberty, you know, or you will bring the whole fabric of government down in ruin. Ask the *Bracers' Journal* if you won't.—*The Voice*.