

the idea of a total abstinence pledge as fanatical and indeed 'absurd.' He was opposed to the saloon, and would like to see a club formed, with a comfortable club-room, books, magazines, pictures, games, anything, 'dontheknow, to make the time pass pleasantly'; but it was 'absurd to ask men to abstain from a pwopah use of—aw—nowishing dwinks,' because some men made beasts of themselves. He concluded by offering \$50.00 towards the support of such a club.

The current of feeling was setting strongly against the total abstinence idea, and Craig's face was hard and his eyes gleamed like coals. Then he did a bit of generalship. He proposed that since they had the two plans clearly before them they should take a few minutes' intermission in which to make up their minds, and he was sure they would be glad to have Mrs. Mavor sing. In the interval the men talked in groups, eagerly, even fiercely, hampered seriously in the forceful expression of their opinion by the presence of Mrs. Mavor, who glided from group to group, dropping a word here and a smile there. She reminded me of a general riding along the ranks, bracing his men for the coming battle. She paused beside Geordie, spoke earnestly for a few moments, while Geordie gazed solemnly at her, and then she came back to Billy in the corner near me. What she was saying I could not hear, but poor Billy was protesting, spreading his hands out aimlessly before him, but gazing at her the while in dumb admiration. Then she came to me. 'Poor Billy, he was good to my husband,' she said softly, 'and he has a good heart.'

'He's not much to look at,' I could not help saying.

'The oyster hides its pearl,' she answered, a little reproachfully.

'The shell is apparent enough,' I replied, for the mischief was in me.

'Ah yes,' she replied softly, 'but it is the pearl we love.'

I moved over beside Billy, whose eyes were following Mrs. Mavor as she went to speak to Mr. Craig. 'Well,' I said; you all seem to have a high opinion of her.'

'An 'igh hopinion,' he replied, in deep scorn. 'An 'igh hopinion, you calls it.'

'What would you call it?' I asked, wishing to draw him out.

'O! don't call it nothink,' he replied, spreading out his rough hands.

'She seems very nice,' I said indifferently.

He drew his eyes away from Mrs. Mavor, and gave attention to me for the first time.

'Nice!' he repeated with fine contempt; and then he added impressively. 'Them as don't know shouldn't say nothink.'

'You are right,' I answered earnestly, 'and I am quite of your opinion.'

He gave me a quick glance out of his little, deep-set, dark-blue eyes, and opened his heart to me. He told me, in his quaint speech, how again and again she had taken him in and nursed him, and encouraged him, and sent him out with a new heart for his battle, until, for very shame's sake at his own miserable weakness, he had kept out of her way for many months, going steadily down.

'Now, oi hain't got no grip; but when she says to me to-night, says she, "Oh, Billy"—she calls me Billy to myself' (this with a touch of pride)—"oh, Billy," says she, "we must 'ave a total habstinence league to-night, and oi want you to 'elp!" and she keeps a-lookin' at me with those heyes o' hern till, if you believe me, sir,' lowering his voice to an emphatic whisper, 'though oi knowed oi couldn't 'elp none, afore oi knowed oi promised 'er oi would. It's 'er heyes. When them heyes says "do," hup you steps and "does."'

I remembered my first look into her eyes, and I could quite understand Billy's submission. Just as she began to sing I went over to Geordie and took my seat beside him. She began with an English slumber song, 'Sleep, Baby, Sleep'—one of Barry Cornwall's I think,—and then sang a love-song with the refrain, 'Love once again'; but no thrill came to me, and I began to wonder if her spell over me was broken. Geordie, who had been listening somewhat indifferently, encouraged me, however, by saying, 'She's just pittin' aff time with thae feckless sangs; man, there's nae grup till them.' But when, after a few minutes' pause, she began 'My Ain Fireside,' Geordie gave a sigh of satisfaction. 'Ay, that's somethin' like,' and when she finished the first verse he gave me a dig in the ribs with his elbow that took my breath away, saying in a whisper. 'Man, hear till yon, wul ye?' And again I found the spell upon me. It was not the voice after all, but the great soul behind that thrilled and compelled. She was seeing, feeling, living what she sang, and her voice showed us her heart. The cosy fireside, with its bonnie, blithe blink, where no care could abide, but only peace and love, was vividly present to her, and as she sang we saw it too. When she came to the last verse—

'When I draw in my stool
On my cosy hearth-stane,
My heart lous sae licht
I scarce ken't for my ain,

there was a feeling of tears in the flowing song, and we knew the words had brought her a picture of the fireside that would always seem empty. I felt the tears in my eyes, and, wondering at myself, I cast a stealthy glance at the men about me; and I saw that they, too, were looking through their hearts' windows upon firesides and ingle-neuks that gleamed from far.

And then she sang 'The Auld Hoose,' and Geordie, giving me another poke, said, 'That's ma ain sang,' and when I asked him what he meant, he whispered fiercely, 'Wheesh, man!' and I did, for his face looked dangerous.

In a pause between the verses I heard Geordie saying to himself, 'Ay, I maun gie it up, I doot.'

'What?' I ventured.

'Naething ava.' And then he added impatiently, 'Man, but ye're an inqueesitive buddie,' after which I subsided into silence.

Immediately upon the meeting being called to order, Mr. Craig made his speech, and it was a fine bit of work. Beginning with a clear statement of the object in view, he set in contrast the two kinds of leagues proposed. One, a league of men who would take whiskey in moderation; the other, a league of men who were pledged to drink none themselves, and to prevent in every honorable way others from drinking. There was no long argument, but he spoke at white heat; and as he appealed to the men to think, each not of himself alone, but of the others as well, the yearning, born of his long months of desire and of toil, vibrated in his voice and reached to the heart. Many men looked uncomfortable and uncertain, and even the manager looked none too cheerful.

At this critical moment the crowd got a shock. Billy Breen shuffled out to the front, and, in a voice shaking with nervousness and emotion, began to speak, his large, coarse hands wandering tremulously about.

'O! hain't no bloomin' temperance horator, and mayhap oi hain't no right to speak 'ere, but oi got somethin' to saigh (say) and oi 'm agoin' to saigh it.

'Parson, 'ee says is it wiskey or no whiskey in this 'ere club? If ye hask me, wich (which) ye don't, then—no whiskey, says oi; and if ye hask why?—look at me! Once oi could mine more coal than hany man in the camp; now oi hain't fit to be a sorter. Once oi 'ad some pride and hambition; now oi 'angs round awaitin' for some one to saigh, "'Ere, Billy, 'ave summat.'" Once oi made good paigh (pay), and sent it 'ome regular to my poor old mother (she's in the wukus now, she is); oi hain't sent 'er hany for a year and a 'alf. Once Billy was a good fellow and 'ad plenty o' friends; now Slavin 'isselk kicks un hout, 'ee does. Why? why?' His voice rose to a shriek. 'Because when Billy 'ad money in 'is pocket, hevery man in this bloomin' camp as meets un at hevery corner says, "'Ello, Billy, 'wat'll 'ave?"' And there's wiskey at Slavin's, and there's wiskey in the shacks, and hevery 'oliday and hevery Sunday, there's wiskey and w'en ye feel bad it's wiskey, and w'en ye feel good it's wiskey, and heverywhere and halway it's wiskey, wiskey, wiskey! And now ye're goin' to stop it, and 'ow? T'manager, 'ee says picters and magazines. 'Ee takes 'is wine and 'is beer like a gentlemen, 'ee does, and 'ee's a beast, and t'manager, 'ee kicks un hout. But supposin' Billy wants to stop bein' a beast, and starts a-tryin' to be a man again, and w'en 'ee gets good an' dry, along comes some un and says, "'Ello, Billy, 'ave a smile," it hain't picters nor magazines 'ud stop un then. Picters and magazines! Gwad 'elp the man as hain't nothin' but picters and magazines to 'elp un w'en 'ee's got a devil hinside and a devil houtside a-shovin' and a-drawin' of un down to 'ell. And that's w'ere oi 'm a-goin' straight, and yet bloomin' League, whiskey or no whiskey can't help me. But and he lifted his trembling hands above his head, 'If ye stop the whiskey a-flowin' round this camp, ye'll stop some of these lads that's a-followin' me 'ard. Yes, you! and you! and you!' and his voice rose to a wild scream as he shook a trembling finger at one and another.

'Man, it's fair gruesome tae hear him,' said Geordie; 'he's no' canny'; and reaching out for Billy as he went stumbling past, he pulled him down to a seat beside him, saying, 'Sit doon, lad, sit doon. We'll mak a man o' ye yet.' Then he rose and, using many r's, said, 'Maister Chairman, a' doot we'll juist hae to gie it up.'

'Give it up?' called out Nixon. 'Give up the League?'

'Na! na! lad, but juist the wee drap whusky. It's nae that guid onyway, and it's a terrible price. Man, gin ye gang tae Henderson's in Buchanan street, in Gleska, ye ken, ye'll get mair for three-an'-saxpence than ye wull at Slavin's for five dollars. An' it'll no' pit ye mad like yon stuff, but it gangs doon smooth an' saft-like. But' (regretfully) 'ye'll no' can get it here; an' a'm thinkin' a'll juist sign yon teetotal thing.' And up he strode to the table and put his name down in the book Craig had ready. Then to Billy he said, 'Come awa, lad! pit yer name doon, an' we'll stan' by ye.'

Poor Billy looked around helplessly, his nerve all gone, and sat still. There was a swift rustle of garments, and Mrs. Mavor was beside him, and, in a voice that only Billy and I could hear, said, 'You'll sign with me, Billy?'

Billy gazed at her with a hopeless look in his eyes, and shook his little head. She leaned slightly toward him, smiling brightly, and, touching his arm gently, said—

'Come Billy, there's no fear,' and in a lower voice, 'God will help you.'