



THE MEN ATTEMPTED AN EXPLANATION. PAGE 25

Slippery Paths:

A TEMPERANCE STORY,

BY

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PORTLAND:
HOYT, FOGG AND BREED,
1872.

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PRESS OF F. G. RICH AND COMPANY.

American Studies

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I

Waiting.

A COLD winter storm had been brooding, but all day it was too cold for the clouds to send their feathery flakes down upon the shivering earth. But as evening set in the frosty crystals began to fill the air, the darkness was rendered more impenetrable, and the exultant wind seemed to be holding high revel, with dismal screech and ghostly song.

The house of Capt. Faunce stood a little out of the city, beyond the reach of horse

cars, and this was a fierce storm to meet in the gathering darkness. A light shone from the window out into the gloom, upon the deserted highway, and blinked and flashed out farther and farther, as if in search of some familiar face. The pensile branches of the stately elm near the gate swayed and played in the peering light, making grotesque pictures on the pearly snow, while within the house a bright coal fire glowed in the grate and a warm atmosphere pervaded the room.

Mrs. Faunce was waiting her husband's return from the city, a little nervously. The tea table had been ready, and the chair and slippers in the warm corner much longer than usual, and still he came not.

Before the fire, little Charley, with rosy cheeks, made rosier by the glowing coal, was building mimic forts and camps, and his curly head, bobbing up and down, was making shadow

pictures on the opposite wall. Sister Mary was busy with some feminine contrivance of ribbons and lace, while Fred, a lad of fifteen, was at work upon what he termed, a tough proposition.

It was a bright home picture; one that does the heart good to gaze upon. The cosy sitting room was evidently intended for the freedom and enjoyment of the children. Yet the mother looked upon this picture with secret sadness, scarcely acknowledged to herself.

Her husband had served in the army until a wound obliged him to resign. But he had returned to bring joy, mingled with sorrow to his wife.

The "soldier habit," as he called it, of using intoxicating drinks, had grown upon him in the few months he had been at home. And it was on this account that Mrs. Faunce waited his return the present evening so nervously.

"Father's come," said Mary, as the snow-bound door screamed a protest against being disturbed.

Mrs. Faunce saw, too plainly, that her fears were prophecies.

"Papa, tome see my tamp and soldiers," called Charley, who was always delighted to see his papa make the soldiers "drill" and "present arms."

"Tome quick, papa, tause supper's weddy."

"Come and have supper with papa, darling, and then play soldiers," whispered Charley's mamma, for she saw the necessity of hastening her husband to the table.

"Soldiers—soldiers—yes, *they* don't eat—*they drink*—but Cap'n's eat," replied the father, tipsily.

"Father is *acting soldier*," Fred whispered to Mary, as he put aside his books.

Little Charley left his toys, ate his supper,

and went to sleep in his high chair, was undressed and snugly tucked into his little bed, without even waking for his good-night kiss.

After supper, the Captain dozed in the warm corner, Fred worked at his tough proposition, Mary busied herself with her ribbons; the evening waned, and the children went quietly to bed, while Mrs. Faunce sat gently rocking and thinking, and thinking and rocking.

Her husband had dozed until he began to be himself again; and then he remembered how tipsy he had been. He knew how it grieved his wife, and he thought and resolved, and resolved and thought; then, opening his eyes and glancing across to his wife in the opposite corner, he saw her drooping head and the dropping tears, and he quickly closed them and thought again and resolved again.

"What are you having the blues about, wife," he asked, presently.

"I was thinking of your danger."

"What do you mean, Ellen?"

"I mean that your 'soldier habit,' as *you* call it, is growing upon you."

"Tut, tut, wifey, don't be so foolish."

"I do so wish you would leave off this *habit*," she continued.

"I'm *going* to leave off. I've told you so before."

"But, Hammel, you must decide *now*. There is no safety in delay."

"It's impossible to resist drinking with an old comrade, Ellen."

"Yes, that is it, unless you have pledged yourself. Only think how often indecision has led to ruin. If you would sign the pledge it would be easier."

"Well, well,—we're not in a temperance

meeting, and this is all nonsense, Ellen; I can take care of myself yet," sharply retorted the captain. Then in a gentler tone added, "*You* don't know what *men* have to contend with."

So, Mrs. Faunce, fearing she might irritate, when she wished to win him back to the former life, sought to throw off her sorrow and converse on other matters. She felt sure he did not *intend* to do wrong. Somehow there was a wrong, but not *all* his. He had too easily yielded to the temptations of army life. He was too undecided about reform. But she must win him back to the path he had left.





II.

Business.

CAPT. FAUNCE had been a lawyer of much promise, and had a growing business, when he gave up personal prospects for his country's welfare and, with a company of loyal men, went to the "front."

But a year in the army had left its stain upon his character, and when he returned with a fractured arm, unfitted to enter at once upon the practice of his profession, he was easily led into convivial company. "Campaign life was so jolly," he would say, "that I shall die moping at home."

His wife's earnest words, on the evening al-

luded to, had aroused him to the danger more than he cared to own. He felt restless—he could not sleep. "It was only a whim," he said to himself. "Women are so nervous."

The result was a decision to open an office, and have something to do.

"Hammel Faunce, Attorney and Counsellor at Law," was seen over a door in the city, a few days later, and Captain Faunce was again among business men. Gradually former clients returned, his prospects brightened, and his wife wore the happy face of other days. But the sun did not shine uninterruptedly upon the captain's family. As time passed on, he returned home again and again partially intoxicated, and Mrs. Faunce plead with him, again and again, to give up this dangerous habit. But he always assured her he didn't drink the *poor stuff* that intoxicates, and laughed at her *temperance notions*.

One morning, when the captain was kept in bed by a severe headache, the past rose up before him like a strange infatuation.

"Where was he drifting?" he queried. "And why had he disregarded his wife's entreaties? What was it that caused the sad look in her eyes?"

He wondered if it was a *dream* that some one was kneeling by the bed in the night, and that he heard a low sob and a whispered prayer. He could not look into his wife's eyes, nor on her pale face. He felt thoroughly ashamed.

"But I will own up to wifey, and take care another time," he said to his conscience.

He felt better after he had promised. So, when Mrs. Faunce returned to sit awhile with him, he began, abruptly:—

"Well, Ellen, I've made a fool of myself this time."

The wife took his hot hand in hers, and waited as if for explanation.

"It's too bad," he went on, "to make you so miserable, wife. I did not intend to go so far. But Col. F——, and Maj. E——, and two or three others of our regiment were in town, and we went into Packam's, and—and—I got 'over the bay' before I knew it."

He tried to say all this in a careless way, but he could not yet look at his injured wife.

"Well, dear, I'm very sorry for you. Now, will you promise not to taste liquor again?" asked his wife pleadingly.

"There, Ellen, you've no confidence in me."

"I have in other things, my dear, but I fear you are not quite strong enough to stand alone in this."

"I didn't think you could be quite so unforgiving, Ellen."

"I certainly forgive you, Hammel," she re-

plied, tenderly, "but it is for *your* sake I ask it. It is for the sake of our children, too," she added, almost in a whisper.

"Now, Ellen, you are too rigid in this matter. I'll show *you* and all temperance preachers that *I* can take care of myself without a *pledge*. I don't want anybody dogging after me to keep me from becoming a *drunkard*." He said this angrily. But, in a moment, he added, playfully, "I believe your temperance notions have got into my head, for that brandy *didn't* agree with me last night."

"I wish they might get into your head and heart, too, so deeply that you would *never* touch or taste strong drink again," replied Mrs. Faunce, a little warmly.

Both felt that the subject had better be dropped till the headache was over. But his resolutions to reform were fitful. Sometimes,

when he most needed a clear head, it was the muddiest.

And so the winter and spring wore on, the evil constantly increasing, the tempter entangling his victim still more often, and coiling, secretly, in the pathway of those dear children who, as yet, knew not the power of the wily serpent over their father.

Alas, that he so often "squats like a toad," listens to our heart's secret breathings till he discovers where he may tempt us, and be most sure of leading us into some of his by-paths!





III.

Downward,

TWO years have passed since we left Capt. Faunce.

He could take care of himself. Has that boast proved true? Has he resisted temptation? Has he overcome the tempter? Or, has vice, seen again and again, lost her hideousness and been embraced?

"I can take a little without harm," was the frequent reply to his pleading wife.

And still he went on in the slippery way, and often, bewildered, blind and infatuated, he neglected his business and drank deeper, and was more regardless of consequences.

His office was closed and his friends were almost hopeless. Still, he laughed at their fears—still, he boasted that he could take care of himself.

"You have been saying that you were going to leave off drinking, for a long time, Hammel," said his wife, one day, "It is the old story of all who enter this broad road."

"Well, wife, you think I shall soon be in the gutter, I suppose?"

"I'm afraid of it," she replied softly.

"Stuff and moonshine. It will do for hypocritical temperance lecturers to talk that way, but I'm positively ashamed of *you*, with your common sense to assert such foolishness. Dr. S. has often said that brandy and whiskey are excellent tonics."

"But, my dear, inspiration says 'look not upon —'"

"Good heavens, Ellen, are you going to

give me a temperance lecture every day?"

"I'm not lecturing you, I only wish you to see the ruin that is coming upon you, and—"

"Now, wife, you *are* provoking. Are you to tell me what I ought to do? And must I *promise* like a child?"

Mrs. Faunce attempted to speak, but her voice failed and she found relief in tears.

As usual, her husband felt that he was the injured one, and left the room in anger, while she sought strength from above to bear these accumulating sorrows.

The pleading cry ascended again to the Infinite, "Why must this fearful scourge of intemperance desolate our land and ruin so many homes? Why this apathy? Why is the strong arm of the law palsied?"

Still, like every true mother she must be strong and hopeful, that she might help her children to be so. And when she had grown

calm by communing with the Elder Brother, she sought her children, and for the first time spoke to them of their father's danger.

"He has been led away, and we must win him back," she said.

"I knew ever so long ago that it wasn't all right," said Fred."

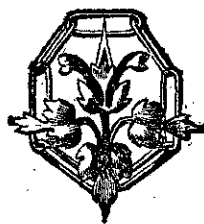
"What can *we* do, mother, to win him back?" asked Mary. "O, mother, I'd rather die than to see my father a drunkard and reeling along the streets; O, mother, mother," sobbed the weeping daughter.

It was a picture for angelic eyes to gaze lovingly upon, as that mother, with her own heart sorely crushed, sat and talked to her children of the many ways in which they could seek to keep their father from the company of bad men, who would lead him on to ruin. Thus talking and planning for the future, they all grew calm, and when they separated it was

with a firm purpose to fight their common enemy.

Thus days and weeks dragged on, with alternations of hope and fear, while the father's love for strong drink grew stronger, and every effort of friends to reclaim him seemed fruitless. Mrs. Faunce would always say, "kindness may yet win him." And so she strove to bear all this patiently.

But this weary waiting was growing more hopeless, and the question so often asked, but never answered, came again to that waiting wife's lips,—“Why is it?”



IV.

Changes.

MOTHER you look sick to-night, let me stay with you.”

“No, no, darling, it is better for you not to stay, your father would be angry to find us both waiting for him.”

“But I’ll go when I hear him coming, mother,” urged Mary. “And, mother, I can’t sleep if I go to my room and know that you are here waiting. May I stay?”

“No, dear, it will be a sad watching for your young heart, and trouble comes fast enough, my daughter. Now go to your rest. Good-night, darling.”

"Good night, dear, good mother."

And then Mrs. Faunce was left alone, an anxious watcher for her misguided husband's return. Her thoughts turned to her children and the future awaiting them. She saw how great was the barrier arising between them and society. She felt that society was very much to be blamed for the intemperance that was ruining thousands of homes and blighting millions of innocent lives; often giving them no choice, but *forcing* them to share, not only the misery of the inebriate's home, but also its degradation.

"O, must it be so with *mine*? O, God, if it be possible, remove this bitter cup from their lips."

She heard footsteps at the door, and hushed her throbbing heart to go and open it. Two men entered, bearing her husband between them. For a moment her strength failed, but

she soon led the way to her room. The men attempted an explanation, but the look of agony in her pale face silenced them, and they quickly withdrew.

The shock, to Mrs. Faunce, was like wresting the last hope from her heart. The foundations seemed giving way. Of what avail were cries or tears? For a moment she had lost sight of her guiding star. But with the return of calm thought to her bleeding heart came solicitude for her children.

"O, must *they* be dragged down to shame and poverty, and misery?" she cried. "O, my Father, *if* it be possible remove this bitter cup from their lips."

Thus prayed the inebriate's wife, as she saw the gulf yawning beneath her feet.

* * * * *

Squandered time and money, and constant dissipation produced their legitimate results.

Downward ever faster, and deeper and deeper in vice, sank the husband and father. The pleasant home passed into other hands. The home of so many dear memories of long ago—the home of sorrow and misery now.

The story is a true picture. Those weary hearts are found in many homes. Those loving, clinging hearts, watching the dear one, drifting, drifting, drifting—and whither?

The newly born babe in the home of Capt. Faunce brought new care and anxiety to Mrs. Faunce, and taxed the willing fingers of sister Mary, who knew but little rest now.

But the helpless infant appealed to the father as nothing else had since the old happiness had faded out of his heart. The better nature was stirred—the fountain of love was reached, and he made an effort to break away from the vice that enslaved him. He remembered his former boast.

“For their sakes,” he said to himself, “for their sakes, I’ll give up this miserable life.”

With some vague purposes of reform, he remained at home until he felt that he could encounter his old associates. Two weeks had passed by, and hard fought battles had been waged each day between resolve and desire. Charley timidly kept near papa, as if he would keep him from falling again. His wistful eyes often made the Captain wince, and inwardly curse himself. At length he resolved to seek employment. He had so recklessly turned from all who sought to help him that now it was hard to ask a favor.

“For their sakes,” he again whispered to himself. “I must—I must, for their sakes.”

And he hurried by the drinking house, and hoped to escape the notice of old cronies. But the enemy of man does not let a victim elude him so easily.

"Hallo! what's in the wind now? Cap'n, Cap'n, I say, Cap'n!" greeted him—and he faltered for a moment, then quickened his steps.

"Taken to cold water, Cap'n?" shouted the man.

"Tied to the apron strings," yelled another.

Captain Faunce turned and walked deliberately to the door, and shaking his fist, growled between set teeth, "I've been on the road to hell long enough. I'm going to knock off. I've fought the rebs south, but 'tis harder fighting the devil at home."

And turning he walked away, shaking his fist and muttering as he went, and hurrying on as though the fiends were clutching at him.

Again he stood in business places, but so changed—so fallen—a wreck of his former self. He looked helplessly around. He hoped for—he hardly knew what—but some one

to speak a kind word—some one to help him return to a better life.

Familiar faces came and went past him, as he loitered. Some nodded a recognition—some, who had been friends, heeded him not. He asked for employment—was refused. Again he asked, and was again refused.

"No one can trust you, Captain, you'd be drunk before night."

"But I'm going to reform, if I can."

"Pshaw! you are out of cash, I guess."

The business man turned to his business, and the fallen man passed on, asking—asking, until, wearied and discouraged, he knew not where to go. The little hope he had when he left his home in the morning was fast going out.

Day after day the contest was renewed—and each day, wearied, ashamed, discouraged from repeated refusals, he returned home, pass-

ing the tempting display of *bottled demons*, struggling with appetite and with the jeers of the men at the drinking house.

He turned once again toward his home in Crooked street, with the old appetite burning into his soul.

Now was the tempter's hour. *Now*, when despair was sweeping over him afresh—when the barrier between him and the better life seemed rising higher, and hope, but just revived, had been rudely extinguished.

Now, the tempter was by his side, whispering in his ear, "fool, why not drown all this in the sparkling cup. It can't be much worse, why not?"

The struggle was a fearful one; but the evil prevailed—the tempter had done his work—the victory was his.

But was no one responsible for this?

When he entered those busy streets, asking

for employment, day after day, were there none who might have spoken a kind word and helped him in his efforts to return to industry and virtue? Were there none who had prepared the way by unkind words and taunts of past degradation? Or, who shall say that the guilt rested only at the door of him who entered the grog shop?

What of him who dealt out the sparkling draught? What of those who *legalized* the sale? who advocated placing temptation in the pathway that man may become virtuous by resisting it!

Let such shake the dust from their garments and look up to God, thanking Him that they are not like others.

But a day of retribution will surely come. God will reckon with them, and let them see to it that they make sure their escape from the woe pronounced against those who put the cup to a neighbor's lips.



V.

Tempted.

MARY?"

"I'm here, mother."

"You are spoiling your eyes sewing in such a bad light, dear."

"Never mind me, mother, I'll be done presently."

Cheerfully as this was said by the loving daughter the tears were even then falling on her work. She could not be spared from home to accept a place secured by good Dr. Wilkins; so, through a kind neighbor, she had obtained work from a "slop-shop."

"'Tis hard work for your little hands, but

mebbe you'll get used to't," said the woman, as she helped Mary over the hard places and showed her how to make the garments.

"I'se know'd what 'tis to work, allers. But 'tis different with the likes of yer. My ole man had dilerum tremens, and it carried him off kinder sud'n. There, now, don't cry, I hadn't oughter tell yer."

Mary plied her needle, day after day, nursing her sick mother and caring for baby Nell. No wonder that sometimes she murmured because her lot was so hard. No wonder that she recalled the hopes that were blighted just as her girlhood was unfolding.

Late one afternoon, Mary had completed her work and started on her dreaded errand of returning it to the shop, that she might obtain the much needed pay, and also secure more work.

Her last visits to the establishment had

awakened an undefinable dread of the clerk in attendance. She did not like his bold gaze, nor his coarse compliments. But she would not tell her mother and thus add to her care. Perhaps she was too sensitive. She must expect unpleasant things *now*. Thus trying to reason with herself she hurried on and entered the store. As she gave the bundle to the man he bestowed such a glance of smirking familiarity upon her that she felt like rushing from the place.

There was another person waiting, so she felt more courage to remain; besides, she *must* have the pay. She waited impatiently while the woman beside her received her pay and another bundle of work and went out.

It was already growing dark—lights were here and there appearing, the gas was lighted in the streets—she resolved to go. Just then the man returned and gave her a bundle.

"You must take these shirts home again, they are not well made," said he, closely watching her face.

A feeling of despair came over her. She knew his words were false, but what could she do without the money?

As she looked up, she saw the same sultry look which had startled her when she entered. It was a bad look, she knew. So, taking the bundle, now *so* heavy, when hope was gone, she hastened from the store.

She fancied that danger was near and timidly hurried on. One voice whispered, "It is I, be not afraid." And like a weary child she seemed to place her hand in the invisible hand of Jesus and walked quickly along the narrow streets.

Soon, she heard a step following her, a hand touched her arm, and she saw that it

was the man who had spoken to her in the clothing store.

"You want your money, Miss"—said the man.

"Yes, my mother needs it."

"Go back with me, and I'll give you much more than that," he said.

Quicker than thought Mary glided from him and darted down the street.

At first, the man started after her. But it would not do at such an early hour. So, with muttered vengeance, he turned back.

Mary paused not till she reached her home, and even then glanced back to make sure he was not following, then sank exhausted, and for days could not leave her bed. The bundle was sent back unopened, and the hard earned money lost.



VI.

Waiting.

I'M sorry I used that bad word, because you feel so about it. But it keeps me feeling wicked all the time, when the boys follow me in the way they did then."

"Perhaps you don't try to make them like you, Fred. You will be astonished to see how soon kind words will make friends of them."

"O, I don't want them to like me. But it is pretty hard, sometimes, to keep from fighting them."

"He that ruleth his own spirit is stronger than he that taketh a city," replied the mother.

"Well, mother, I've seen them knock off father's hat, and pin paper on his back, and I know 'twas to provoke me. And I won't bear it, if father does drink—I *won't*."

"Did Jesus try to do good to wicked boys, mamma?" asked Charley.

"Yes, dear."

"'Cause I told Jim Piper that it was wicked to swear and, mamma, he caught hold of me and said he would cut my tongue off if I preached to him."

"You must keep away from the boys, darling."

"But I want to be like Jesus."

"You can be like Jesus if you are loving and kind, and perhaps you can play Sunday-school with the little boys. But you can't do much with these large, rude boys, my little son."

"O, you good mamma, I wish papa was good, too."

Mary was just entering the room, weary and feeling so wretched she could hardly keep from crying. She heard the wish of Charley, and it found an echo in her heart, but she felt almost ready to believe that her father never would be good again. The way seemed so dark—the burden so heavy—the faith so weak.

"Why is it, O, why is it?" she questioned. And there seemed to answer back—*Why?*

She had been assisting in an infant school. The term was near the close, and she had just been informed that her services would not be required next term. She felt that her father was a blight to every hope and effort. Could she tell mother?

"I have something very unpleasant to tell you, mother," she said, softly.

"Well, dear?"

"I shall not teach next term."

"Why not?"

"I'm not wanted." And her lip quivered as she strove to keep back the tears.

Mrs. Faunce crossed the room, and kissing her daughter, whispered, "God is only behind a cloud, my daughter. He is watching your efforts, and your reward will be none the less precious because you are not successful."

"But what shall we do, mother?"

"Dear child, God will show you the way, only wait."

Sobs choked Mary's reply. "I can't help it, mother, but it seems so dark."

Mrs. Faunce felt that the way was indeed dark. The network of evil was enclosing her dear ones. Their characters must become defamed. But she would strive the more earnestly to counteract the debasing influences. And with Mary's help she could do much for her boys. But *how* could she protect her

daughter from the many pitfalls and snares on every side.

* * * * *

When Charley proposed playing Sunday-school the boys would not listen to it.

"Jim will thrash us if we play meetin'," said a dirty boy, who preferred to tie tin dippers to poor kittens, to frighten them.

"We won't tell him," replied Charley.

"O, he'll know it," cried another. "He says you are all too stuck up."

"Playing Sunday-school isn't stuck up," persisted Charley, still trying to interest them.

"Yes 'tis stuck up," shouted Jim, who had been close by. "There's your brother feels so *mighty*. I'll lick him yet, see if I don't. And your father an *old drunkard*."

This was too much for little Charley, even in pursuit of his Sabbath-school work. So he retreated to his mother, telling her all his troubles.

"It is *very* hard, my son, and I don't think you are old enough to do these wicked boys any good. We will ask dear Jesus to open the way, and by and by perhaps you can have a Sunday-school in Crooked street."

And then winningly turning his thoughts to the bright pathway Jesus had opened, and telling him it could be entered only by bearing trials, she succeeded in encouraging him to enter again the battle-field of every-day life.

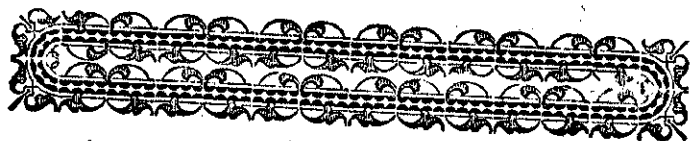
It was much easier to soothe Charley in this way than Fred, who felt that it was an injustice to them all for God to allow his father to make them so wretched. He did not often express this feeling to his mother, but she knew it quite as well as if he had told her each day. The disgrace that fell upon him like a shadow from his father soured his proud

heart, in spite of all the sunshine of his mother's words and life.

As Fred was turning into Crooked street, soon after, he saw Jim Piper shaking Charley and swearing at him. Fred sprang forward and knocked Jim down. Jim caught Fred by his leg and threw him down, too. In a moment the street was filled with ragged boys shouting, "give it to him," "lick him," "he's a coward," "don't let him get off." It would have gone hard with Fred but for a policeman who heard the row and came and rescued him.

The matter was ended for that day, but Fred knew that he was watched, and that Jim would seek revenge.





VII.

Mysteries.

A MONTH had passed since the affair between Jim and Fred, and hostilities had daily been renewed by the street boys.

Fred struggled hard to bear it patiently, for mother's sake. But he felt that it could be borne more easily if his father had not been that disgraceful thing *a drunkard*. But to bear that disgrace and these insults was too much.

"I will not bear this any longer," he said to Mary one evening. "That ugly Jim Piper does all he can to provoke me. And for a

month I've borne it without noticing him. But I can't bear it any longer."

"I wouldn't care a bit for *him*, Fred, he is so ignorant."

"But you would care if you had seen what he did to-day."

"Well, what was it?"

"Just as I turned into this street, I saw father stumbling along, as he does, *you know*. Jim knocked off his hat, daubed it with mud, and bent in one side, then put it on father's head again. Father swore at him, and Jim chuckled over it in high glee. I knew he did it to provoke me, and I could hardly keep from rushing upon him. I tell you, I'll thrash that boy yet," continued Fred, his eyes flashing as if his purpose could not be changed.

Mary felt as indignant as her brother. She felt, too, that Jim richly deserved the punishment Fred threatened. But she had the pru-

dence to keep from expressing this. She saw that Fred was in great danger. She knew how he chafed at the insults of that bad boy, and how sorely his father's conduct tried him. So, resting her hand on her brother's, she replied gently, "Forgive him, Fred."

"I *can't*, Mary. I know it's what *you* call wicked in me. But why don't God hear your prayers for father? Mr. Hale, our foreman, says praying don't do any good, for if it did every body would become converted. And I think he's pretty nearly right."

"Why, Fred, how can you say so? I think Mr. Hale is a wicked man if he talks that way."

"But *why* don't father stop drinking and not make us all so miserable and unhappy? I'm sure you and Charley and mother are always praying for it."

"May be we haven't faith enough. But I

think father will reform sometime. I'm almost sure of it. God is preparing us for some work he has for us. It is hard to wait,—it looks dark, and we may think God takes no thought of us. But don't you remember the beautiful words of Jesus, 'the very hairs of your head are all numbered?'"

"I don't see what you make out about the present unhappiness. What is the use of taking all these round about *views*?" replied Fred, impatiently.

"You know, Fred, it would be hard for father *now* to resist the temptation to drink, when he sees everywhere in the city open bars and free liquor. If he did not *see* it, he would give it up. He does try now, sometimes, mother says."

"That makes no difference, Mary, about the prayers being unanswered. Why don't God hear the prayers of all good people and stop

all this business—for other hearts are breaking besides ours?”

“I asked mother that question once, and she said *that* was taking up the great question of God’s allowing any sin. So, as Doctors of Divinity don’t understand it, you and I must not try to decide the *why*. Mother says God has wise purposes for allowing sin. And after we *have sinned* He gives us a way of escape from the punishment we deserve. So we had better not blame God, but *try* to act rightly.”

“Now, Mary, I don’t want to talk any more about *that*. I can’t think as you do. But I think I shall go away from all this soon. I tell *you*, so you need not worry if I don’t come home some night.”

“Fred, I’m ashamed of you, to think of such a thing! How *can* you add to mother’s troubles in such a way?”

“*That* is the great reason I’ve not done this

before. I knew mother would feel so about it. But it might be better for her. *Here*, I work and work; and then must give part of my wages to father for him to use disgracing us. It is a great wrong.”

“You had better suffer wrong than to do wrong,” replied his sister, gently.

“Well, about Jim, he thinks I’m a coward. I don’t care so much for what he *thinks*, though, but he shan’t go on in this way—I’ll conquer that boy.”

“Try and make him your friend, be kind to him, that will conquer him, as mother says when Charley has trouble with the boys.”

“It will be a blessing to Jim to have a good sound thrashing and I’ll conquer him that way.”





VIII.

Conquered.

FIRE, *fire*, FIRE—sounded on the midnight air. Men and boys rushed past the black house in Crooked street taking up the cry—*fire, fire*—and louder and louder grew the noise.

Fred hastened to join the throng; the fire was near—just around the corner—in an alley some old buildings were all aflame, and the wind was still bearing destruction to others. The sight of the crackling blaze, the smoke and cinders, the water pouring from the engines, only to be licked up by the thousand

red tongues, and the flames shooting higher and higher was fearfully grand—it was life struggling frantically with death.

High up in one of the windows a head was seen, then quickly was gone. Breathlessly the crowd gazed while ladders went up and the water drenched the windows. A moment more and a youth rushed from the blazing building, dragging with him a dazed and blinded lad nearly his own size, just in season to escape the falling roof.

A shout went up—"he's safe, he's safe;" as the deliverer fell to the ground, nearly suffocated, and badly burned. He was carried out of the alley, and the lad whom he had rescued was also conveyed to a place of safety.

It was Fred Faunce, who had impulsively risked his life, as he saw the peril of the boy. It was Jim Piper whom he saved.

Jim did not suffer very much, so that in a

few days he was out again; and he kept the noisy boys away from that part of the street, while Fred was confined to the house.

When any of them followed the Captain to pin rags on his coat, Jim terrified them by threatening to whip them.

"That starchy Fred has killed me off," Jim told the boys. "I thought he was a spoony he kept so nice, but he's no coward, I tell ye."

As Fred recovered, his impatience at the circumstances that controlled his life, grew stronger. He did not trouble his mother with his discontent; but to Mary he often uttered the bitter thoughts, which these hours and days of inactivity strengthened.

Mary reported the change in his old enemy, Jim, and added, "mother says God has opened a way for us to do some good in Crooked street."

"If father was a *man* we could do something, even here," Fred replied. "I almost wish I had died in the fire, only I'm not good enough to die, I suppose."

"Well, Fred, I think sometime father will stop drinking."

"He *never* will, May, so long as he can get anything to drink. It's no use to talk that way.

"Well, it might be worse; *our* father is never cross when he's been drinking. Mrs. Riggs says that some men beat their wives and children, and she told me of a man who chopped off his little boy's hand when he opened the door to enter the house after he had driven him out into a storm.* So it isn't so bad as it might be."

"You're just like mother, always finding

* A true story—the man was afterward reformed.

some bright side or something hopeful. I'm thankful if you can enjoy it."

Just then Mrs. Faunce entered the room, and heard Fred's reply.

"And can't my son find a bright side?" she asked. "When this bad, ignorant boy has become your friend, isn't it a bright side that through him you can reach all those poor boys in Crooked Street, if you choose?"

"But, mother, God makes things easy to some and they never feel a hardship all their lives. And others, *just as good*, have nothing easy, but *everything* hard and wretched. Why is it?"

"If we had remained in our old home, and your father had never been tempted into wrong doing, you would have seen the easy side you speak of. Somebody was having a hard side then. Did we pity such and try to help them? Think of it my son, and

try to learn the lesson God is teaching you."

Fred was softened a little, but in a moment the bitter thought came back.

"Yes, mother, I see what you mean, but why did God make such a difference? He could have made everybody happy. Do you think it right for God to—"

"Fred, Fred, do not go on so—"

"But I think it so strange, mother—and sometimes I get quite confused with such questions. It seems as though God only loves a few, and bestows his favors upon them."

"But the important question for you, Fred, is whether or not you love God. Do not think so much about the hard or easy side. One thing is certain, God does not love us for what we *have*, but for what we *are*.

Fred was thoughtful and silent, and his mother softly repeated the words of inspiration:

"How unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

* * * * *

After weeks of suffering Fred was again at his place in the Printing House, and Mary had gone to work with a dressmaker; and Capt. Faunce was daily drinking up a part of their earnings.

The future looked dark—the way out of this misery uncertain—and the long deferred hope was wearing away the life of Mrs. Faunce.

Charley was now earning a little as errand boy, and was quite delighted to be able to "help mamma," as he said.

Little Nell was the sunbeam of the household. She had no memories of another and better home and could not realize the poverty

of the present one. As her mother stitched away upon the work she obtained through kind Mrs. Riggs, Nellie's prattle beguiled the weary hours.

Jim Piper had asked Fred to forgive him for "treatin' him so mean." "You saved my life," he said, "and now I'm going to work and behave better." Fred forgave the past, and sought to help him in his new purpose, and soon found employment for him. Jim told Charley he would help him play Sunday-school, now. So Charley coaxed the boys to meet in a shed, near his home, and hear him read stories. Jim helped get the boys in, and then he staid by to make them "behave," he said. But he was very attentive, and by and by, when Charley asked the boys to learn verses from the Testament, Jim took part with the others.

And so those lives were working out their

separate problems, and the monotony of poverty was making deep, hard lines in the characters of each.

But to Fred, now fast growing into manhood, the influences were most dangerous.

Not that *vice*, of the type around him in Crooked street, could lure him. But his employers were too much absorbed in their business to think of the morals of the young men employed by them. And so Fred, with his intemperate father and the temptations to spend his evenings with jolly company, had no restraint save that of dear mother and sister's love. He often tried to believe that God did not notice anything about him. And this was the quicksand beneath his feet.



IX.

The Demon Cast Out.

A BRIGHT spring sunshine was gladdening and warming the expectant earth; early flowers were peeping from their sheltered beds, and the grass sent up its soft blades. A delicate foliage had taken the place of dry twigs, the birds were returning to their summer resorts, and the balmy air sent a thrill of delight through all nature.

The old black house, in Crooked street, had one overhanging tree, and a few shrubs, and the shimmering sunbeams glanced upon all with a kindly beaming.

But all this gladness of nature and genial sunshine seemed a mockery to that suffering household.

Capt. Faunce had entered his home a few hours before, partially intoxicated, and crazed by bad whiskey. And as he stumbled against a chair and then the table, he thought that the room was whirling about him. His wife attempted to help him, but, with an angry oath, he pushed her from him. Next, little Nellie was in his way, and, catching her by the arm, he attempted to swing her over his head, and dropped her into a kettle of hot water, just taken from the stove. The mother caught her child, but too late — she was fearfully burned, and she now lay in her arms, moaning and convulsed.

Dear Nell, the loving pet, knew not the gentle hand of her mother, nor the caress of her sister. The Doctor came, but gave them

no encouragement that she could survive.

"God has need of these little buds," he said, "and, after all, is it not in mercy that He sometimes takes them?"

Mrs. Faunce felt the force of his words. She knew that for her innocent child it would be far better to be taken from misery and temptation and danger. So, with a subdued heart, she watched the little sufferer, and bathed her with cooling lotions.

When Charley came in and found Nellie in this condition he was overwhelmed with grief. His mother whispered to him of Jesus, and that Nellie was one of the "little ones," till she soothed his bitter weeping.

Fred had entered, unnoticed by his mother, and was listening to Mary's story of Nellie's suffering.

The mother looked up, and was startled by the strange expression in the eyes of her boy.

Motioning Mary to attend to Nellie, she arose and stood by Fred. She tried to speak, but words failed. Fred led her to a chair and gently smoothed her hair upon her brow, then kissing her, whispered, "Mother."

"Do not fight against God, Fred. It is better for Nellie to go away from all this to a pure life."

"If God is *just*, He *will bring retribution* upon those who sell liquors and those who license the sale. I saw father in that accursed shop in H—— street, and here is Nell dying, and *he* killed her."

Mrs. Faunce saw that words were useless. She felt, too, that it was better for her son to allow him to give expression to his thoughts; and she saw also that a new life had sprung up in his heart. He seemed to have burst the shell of boyhood, and suddenly stood before her a *man*. This gave her strength, for she

longed for some manly arm to help, and strong mind to guide. For the moment she thought not of the danger that might come to him through this new spirit.

Before the morning light returned the death angel had borne the little one to a brighter home above.

When all was over, and the children had left the room, Mrs. Faunce knelt by the little bed and entreated the Elder Brother to guard those he had left her, and save them from the many pit-falls hidden in their pathway.

In the morning Mrs. Faunce led her husband to the little bed, where lay the child—the pet. Not a word could she then speak to him who had so forgotten his own family, and neglected and disgraced them.

When he saw that life had fled, and the little form was cold, he sank into a chair and

covering his face groaned piteously. His wife rested her hand on his shoulder and wept with him. She did not attempt to console, she only waited till he should speak to her. He arose and walked the room in agony.

"Can Heaven forgive me, wife?" groaned the wretched man. "Tell me how I did this."

Then she told him how he entered intoxicated and crazed, and how Nellie came to her death.

"Oh, my God, my God, have *I* done this? have *I* blighted this dear life? How blind—how mad I've been!"

* * * *

After the precious dust had been consigned to the earth, and the family were again in their desolate home, the father told them that he had resolved *never* again to taste the intoxicating cup.

Days came and went, and yet he resisted his appetite. The struggle was often a fear-

ful one, but wife and children helped him by tender forbearance, by memories of long ago, by histories of those who had overcome. Still it seemed doubtful whether good or evil would prevail. The weakened moral, the diseased physical powers were on the side of the enemy; while conscience and love stood over against them and, reinforced by wife and children, resisted their assaults upon the shattered constitution.

But soon a fever prostrated him, and during hours of fearful delirium he needed strong men to guard him. For days this lasted and, at times, he thought he was among vipers and fiery serpents and demons, and in vain he struggled to escape from them.

Doctor Wilkins said if he could keep his patient along a few days he might be a redeemed man. And when, one morning, he entered and found him pale and helpless, but

calm, and with returning reason beaming from his eyes, he felt that the crisis was passed.

Strength slowly returned to those feeble limbs, and painful, indeed, were the meditations of the humbled man. Yet the demoniac had been freed from the grip of the demon, and was now "in his right mind."

For many days life seemed to hang by a slender thread. But each day strengthened the hopes of wife and children that a new life was dawning in the soul of him they so tenderly cared for and watched over.

It was now June, and one little rose bush, that, in spite of all obstacles, had taken root beneath the window of the dingy walls, sent out its buds and succeeded in gaining strength to expand them into full bloom.

Capt. Faunce, now convalescent, had been helped to a seat near the window. The sweet fragrance reached him and awakened thoughts

of the past that had long slumbered. The bright home and happy faces of dear ones came back like a sweet picture.

Mary was sitting near, busily at work. Her father watched her in silence until his wife joined them and also commenced sewing with an energy that necessity and hope alone can inspire.

This, with the memories awakened by the roses caused the invalid to groan and press his hand upon his head.

Both wife and daughter started, thinking he was suddenly ill.

"No, no," said he, "I was thinking of the past."

"Do not, father, it will make you sick again."

"Yes, I must speak, for I need your sympathy as well as your help in my new life."

Then he spoke of his purpose to reform, af-

ter Nellie's birth, and his weary efforts to find employment — his groping, brooding, bitter thoughts — and then his turning to the old life and madly going down, down, in the slippery way his wife had warned him of so often.

Now God had left him to take the life of his child. The God he had mocked had left him to his evil ways. And now he could see His hand and was humbled.

The retrospect was painful, and Mary quietly withdrew while the injured wife and erring husband sat together in the deepening twilight, communing as they had not for years, with a reciprocal tenderness, and with hopes of brighter days.

"Nothing but strength from above will enable you to keep the purpose you have made, to seek the safer pathway you long ago left."

"I think I have sought that aid, wife, and I wished to speak of that, too; and to tell you

that I trust in *your* Savior, and feel He has forgiven me for hating him. One evening, when my sins seemed like mountains between myself and God, I heard Charley softly reading, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' And then I heard him pray for *me*. He did not know that I heard—he thought I was asleep. But it was *that* promise and *that* prayer that brought peace to me."

And there, in the deepening shadows they prayed together, and felt the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon them.





X.

Sunshine.

FOUR years have passed and again we look into the home of Capt. Faunce.

Just outside the city, a few miles from its din and bustle, he has rented a neat cottage; health has returned to his weakened frame—happiness to his heart. His wife once more wears the sweet smile of love, and the cheerfulness of long ago; her hair a little silvered, her step a little less buoyant than when we first saw her.

Yet to Mary, sunshine and spring flowers and song of birds, come only to relieve her

weariness. The exertions and exposures of those years of poverty and sorrow were too severe for one so delicate. No one knows better than she that the slow fading of her life is nearly over. But she dwells not upon the past. She is thankful that her dear father has been saved, and her mother rewarded for all her long suffering and faithfulness. Her father is a respected citizen—a disciple of Jesus. Is not this enough?

And Fred, too, has ceased to pry into the secrets of the Infinite—his Saviour is his Elder Brother.

He seeks to lead the fallen back to virtuous and industrious life, and to surround them with good influences, and to turn the public mind to the great evil that is desolating thousands of homes.

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