

Poetry.

THE MEETING-PLACE.

"The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."—Isaiah 55: 10.

Where the faded flower shall freshen,
Freshen never more to fade;
Where the shaded sky shall brighten—
Brighten never more to shade;
Where the sun-blaze never scorches,
Where the star-beams cease to chill;
Where no tempest stirs the echoes
Of the wood, or wave or hill;
Where the morn shall wake in gladness,
And the noon of joy prolong;
Where the daylight dies in fragrance,
Mid the soft of holy song,
Brother, we shall meet and rest
Mid the holy and the blest.

Where no shadow shall bewilder,
Where life's way leads to the end;
Where the sleep of sin is broken,
And the dreamer dreams no more;
Where no bond is ever severed,
Partings, clappings, sob and moan,
Midnight wailing, twilight weeping,
Heavy noisance—all are done;
Where the child has found its mother,
Where the mother finds the child;
Where dear families are gathered
That were scattered on the wild—
Brother, we shall meet and rest
Mid the holy and the blest.

Where a blasted world shall brighten,
Underneath a blue sphere,
And a softer, gentler realm shine,
Shed its healing splendor here;
Where earth's barren valleys blossom,
Putting on their robe of green,
And a purer fairer Eden
Be where our wastes have been;
Where a King, in kindly glory,
Such as earth has never known,
Shall assume the righteous sceptre,
Claim and wear the holy crown—
Brother, we shall meet and rest
Mid the holy and the blest.

—Dr. Donar.

The Fireside.

THE MAN-TRAP AT ASHDALE.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

Footsteps were heard—a form darkened the door—some one entered—but Mrs. Pratt did not look up nor pause in her work. The sun had gone down, and twilight was gathering dimly. Mrs. Pratt leaned closer to the window that she might catch the fading rays and a little while longer continue her work.

"Sarah!"

"Well!"

Mrs. Pratt did not turn nor look toward the speaker. Her voice was a low sad murmur.

"Sarah!"

The sound of the speaker now rested lightly on her shoulder.

With a quick movement and with some surprise in her manner, Mrs. Pratt turned herself from the window.

"Oh, Edward!"

Her voice choked and her eyes filled with tears.

"Sarah!" and Mr. Pratt seated himself beside his wife, placing his hand gently on her face as he did so, and looking earnestly and tenderly in her face.

"Sarah, I have a little good news for you, if old King's death is dead."

"Dead!"

Light and shadow were blended on the face of Mrs. Pratt. Death is an awful thing, come in almost any shape it will, and in the case of a man like King, it was awful in the extreme. Yet the intelligence caused a thrill of pleasure in the heart of Mrs. Pratt.

"Yes, he fell dead about two hours ago, while standing behind his bar. He died with the toddy stick in his hand and a glass of whiskey before him. I wouldn't like to go into eternity with all the sins against humanity that are on his conscience. The very thought makes me shiver."

And Mr. Pratt shuddered as he spoke.

"Is the tavern to be closed?" asked Mrs. Pratt, hope and anxiety blending in her voice.

"I saw Parker, old King's son-in-law, as I came along, and he told me that not another drop of liquor should be sold there while he lived. He means to farm the place himself. It's first rate land, though neglected and run down."

"Will he keep his word?"

"Parker! Yes, indeed. If he says a thing you may depend on his doing it. He has always been opposed to the old man's keeping bar."

"And what a curse to Ashdale that bar has been, Oh Edward!"

No wonder Mrs. Pratt was overcome by her feelings; no wonder she said that bar had been a curse. Ten years before that bar beside her young husband, she had the proudest, happiest home in Ashdale. Since then, alas! none were so humble and grief-stricken; for in that bar her loved and honored husband had trilled his manhood in the dust of a debauched career.

Then Edward Pratt a kinder-hearted man could not be found. But he had neither a decided will nor strength of purpose. The current in his lifeboat happened to be usually borne him along; and even when conscious that it was gliding toward a dangerous sea, he opposed to it a slight resistance.

Very soon after their marriage Mrs. Pratt discovered in her husband a fondness for stimulating drink. She prompt, yet gentle and loving, rebuked him, accomplished all she had hoped to gain—the dangerous temper was banished from their house. All would have been well from that time forth, had not the tavern of old King, the only one in Ashdale, stood directly on the way along which Mr. Pratt daily went to the store where he was employed as a clerk.

Often when returning home he would be in company with young men who never passed King's without a word with the companionable landlord and a taste of his well mixed liquor. It was not in the amiable and compliant Mr. Pratt to say "no" on these occasions.

Soon his wife became aware of the temptation that was in his way, and of his almost daily yielding to its enticements. She talked with him soberly, yet gently and lovingly as before. Her words aroused no impatience—no anger—no stubborn, no self-will. He loved her too well to pain her with even a frown.

"I'll not darken old King's door again, if it troubles you, Sarah. I don't care for his liquor, as you say, it does me no good."

"I shall be so happy!" sobbed Mrs. Pratt, leaning her tearful face on the breast of her husband.

"There is nothing else in life to trouble me."

On the next morning as Mr. Pratt was passing the tavern, old King—who if not behind the bar mixing up his tempting compounds, was sure to be at his door watching for his customers—called out:

"Hey! Noddy, my boy! what's your particular hurry?"

"I'm a little late," replied the young man, evasively, keeping on his way.

"Stop, stop!" cried the landlord. "Here! Why my dear fellow, one would think you had the business of the world on your shoulders. A man should never be in too great a hurry to speak a word with an old friend. What's become of Philip?"

"Heaven's sake, my eyes on him for a week."

"The truth is," said Pratt, who now paused, "it is the opinion of his friends that he has been coming here a little too often."

"Poh! Nonsense! too often! I never saw him when I thought he'd been drinking too much. It's ridiculous! And he's silly enough to mind them! Well, well, if he thinks he's in danger he'd better stay away. He must have a weak head."

Killgrew spoke contemptuously. Pratt felt the landlord's sneering manner almost as much as if it had been applied to himself. It cost him no light effort to say "Good morning," and pass on without taking a drink at the bar.

I wish this old man-trap was on the other side of the street," he murmured as soon as he was fairly beyond the sphere of his dangerous attractions: "or that I didn't have to pass it three or four times a day. If old King's ways hold me after this fashion, I'm afraid my good resolutions are not going to be worth much. Oh dear! I wonder what good ever comes of this rum selling and rum drinking? As to the harm, one needn't go far to look for that."

Musing thus, Pratt went on his way. At dinner time, both in coming home and returning to the store he succeeded in getting past old King's "man-trap" without being lured by the watchful landlord. But his good resolutions were not proof against the influences that assailed him in the evening. Later than usual he lingered at the bar, in order to avoid, by so doing, the company of one or two young men who always stopped to drink at King's. He thought he had escaped them, but it was not so. They were in the tavern porch as he came along, and having taken their cue from the landlord (who was keen-sighted enough to see what had been passing in the mind of Pratt, and felt of his cold, clammy forehead), they followed him with an air of triumph, of mind to resist. "Just to satisfy" them, as he said, he consented to drink a single glass. But that did not satisfy either them or the tavern-keeper. A second glass was almost forced upon him; then followed a third; which purposely made stronger than usual completed the overthrow of his reason.

Could those thoughtless young men have seen the aching, agonizing face of the waiting anxious wife, when her husband came staggering in that evening, they would not have boasted so gleefully of having "sent Pratt home as merry as a fiddler."

From that time the weak young man stopped almost daily at the tavern to drink. The temptation was in his way, and he had not sufficient strength of purpose to resist its allurements. This was continued for months, until, under the gentle, yet often fearful, solicitations of his wife, he again resolved to stand up firmly against the pressure of a current that was too steadily bearing him onward to the sea of destruction. And he did stand up firmly for a time. But in that contest the odds were against him. Old King's son-in-law, who was going on in his mind, and took a weekly pleasure apart from his love of gain, in assailing the young man's good resolutions on every occasion that was presented. Sometimes after alluring him into his bar—either through personal influence, or by means of gay young men who frequented his house—Killgrew could not induce him to take anything but a glass of water. Often, however, he gained his purpose more fully, and maddened the young man's brain with his fiery notions.

And so the work went on. There was a pitfall in Pratt's way, and he knew it, and he stumbled there. Ah! if the pitfall could only have been removed. It served no use whatever; gave nothing to the common good; was a constant source of annoyance, injury and loss to the people of Ashdale. It had been dug by Killgrew, and was always kept deep and dangerous by him, in order that he might profit by the weakness and injuries of those who weakly or unwarily stumbled over the half concealed brink.

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