

Temperance Column

"THE BRIDAL WINE CUP"

"Pledge with wine! Pledge with wine!" cried the young and thoughtless Harry. "Pledge with wine!" ran through the bridal party.

The beautiful bride grew pale. She pressed her hands together, and the leaves of her bridal wreath trembled on her brow; her breath came quicker, and her heart beat more wildly.

"Yes, Marian, lay aside your scruples for this once," said the Judge, in a low tone; "the company expects it. Do not so seriously infringe upon the rules of etiquette. In your own home do as you please, but in mine, for this once, please me."

Every eye was turned toward the bridal pair. Marian's principles were well known. Harry had been a convivialist, but of late his friends had noticed the change in his manner, and a difference in his habits.

Pouring a brimming cup, they held it with tempting smiles toward her. She was very pale, though now more composed. Smiling, she accepted the crystal tempter and raised it to her lips. But scarcely had she done so, when every hand was arrested by her piercing exclamation of "Oh! how terrible!"

"What is it?" cried one and all, thronging together, for she had slowly carried the glass at arm's length, and was regarding it as if it were some hideous object.

"Wait," she said, "wait, and I will tell you. I see," she added, pointing her jeweled fingers at the sparkling liquid, "a sight that beggars all description; and yet, listen, I will paint it for you if I can. It is a lovely spot; tall mountains, crowned with verdure, rise in awful sublimity around; a river runs through and bright flowers grow to the water's edge. There is a thick, warm mist that the sun seeks vainly to pierce.

"Trees, lofty and beautiful, wave to the motion of the breeze, and in their midst lies a manly form,—but his cheeks, how deathly! His eyes, how wildly they glare around him, with the fitful fires of fever! One friend stands beside him; I should say kneels, for see, he is pillowing that poor head upon his breast.

"Genius in ruins, on that high and holy looking brow. Why should death mark it, and he so young? Look, how he throws back the damp curls. See him clasp his hands. How he clutches at the form of his companion, imploring to be saved. Oh, hear him call piteously his father's name. See him twine his fingers together, as he shrieks for his sister, the twin of his soul, weeping for him in a distant native land. See! his arms are lifted to heaven. How wildly he prays for mercy. But fever rushes through his veins. The friend beside him is weeping. Awestricken, the dark men move silently away, and leave the living and the dying together."

There was a hush in that princely parlor, broken only by what seemed a sob from some manly bosom. The bride stood yet upright, with quivering lips, and tears streaming down her pallid cheeks. Her arm had lost its tension, and the glass with its contents came slowly toward the range of her vision. She spoke again. Every lip was mute; her voice was low, faint yet distinct. Still she fixed her sorrowful glance upon the wine cup.

"It is evening now; the great white moon is

coming up, and her beams fall gently on his forehead. He moves not; his eyes are rolling in their sockets and are the piercing glances. In vain his friend whispered the names of his father and sister. No soft hand and no gentle touch blesses or soothes him. His head shrinks back. One convulsive shudder, and he is dead."

A groan ran through the assembly. So vivid was her description, so unearthly her look, so inspiring her manner, that what she described seemed actually to have taken place then and there. They noticed also that the bridegroom had hidden his face and was weeping.

"Dead!" she whispered again, her lips quivering faster, as if her heart were broken. "And then they scooped him a grave, and then without a shroud, they let him down in the damp, reeky earth; the only son of a proud father, the idolized brother of a fond sister; and he sleeps today in that distant country, with no stone to mark the spot."

"There he lies, my father's son, my own twin brother, a victim of this deadly poison! Father!" she exclaimed, turning suddenly, while the tears rolled down her cheeks, "father, shall I drink the poison now?"

The form of the Judge was convulsed with agony. He raised not his head, but in a smothered voice he faltered: "No, my child, no!"

She lifted the glittering goblet, and letting it fall suddenly to the floor, it was dashed to pieces. Many a tearful eye watched the movements, and instantaneously every glass was transferred to the marble table. Then, as she looked at the fragments of crystal, she turned to the company, saying, "Let no friend of mine who loves me hereafter tempt me to peril my soul with wine or any other poisonous venom. Not firmer are the everlasting hills (God helping me) than my resolve never to touch or taste the terrible poison. And he to whom I have given my hand, who watched over my brother's dying form in that land of gold, will sustain me in my resolve. Will you not, my husband?"

His glistening eye, his sad, sweet smile was the answer. The Judge had left the room; but when he returned, and with a more subdued manner, took part in the entertainment of the bridal guests, none could fail to see that he, too, had determined to banish the enemy, and at once, from that princely home.

Reader, this is no fiction. I was there, and heard the words which I have penned, as nearly as I can recollect them. This bride, her husband, and her brother who died in the gold regions of California, were schoolmates of mine. Those who were present at the wedding of my associates never forgot the impression so solemnly made, and all from that hour forsook the social glass.—*Selected. Copied from "Touching Incidents and Remarkable Answers to Prayer."*

EASTER

*"The flower that Bethlehem saw bloom
Out of a heart all full of grace,
Gave never forth its full perfume
Until the cross became its vase."*

Bethlehem saw "the flower," Calvary the "vase," and Easter the resurrection fruitage. Jesus "is become the first fruits of them that slept," "the first begotten from the dead," "alive forevermore." Jesus said that having killed the body, men have nothing more that they can do." But God can bring something to pass. When the

world did its worst, God did His best, for Easter is sunrise in the soul. "He rolled the sea away" long before; and now He comes by His angel to roll away the stone that forbade the resurrection. Easter is God's new morning in the forgiven soul. "The Sun of Righteousness has risen." There is "healing in His beams." His ultra violet rays bless all new-born spirits. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Angels are interested in the new birth; they are as truly present when souls are born again as was the angel that rolled away the stone from the mouth of Jesus' tomb.

"The flower of Bethlehem" is not a "cut flower" destined to wither in a day. It is more than the century plant that blooms once in one hundred years. It is "the flower" of all centuries. We sympathetically place flower wreaths on the caskets and graves of the dead. Jesus, the flower of the ages, gives Himself to newborn souls, regenerated by His Spirit, abides with them through life, and in death says: "Fear not, I am with thee." "The rose of Sharon," "the Lily of the Valley," and the "Flower of Bethlehem" point to beauty, perfection and immortality as possible through Him. Easter in the soul! Let us have it!"—B. T. GASKIN.

THE EASTER SPIRIT

Each milestone in the passing year brings its own special message. Christmas speaks of universal love; the New Year breathes retrospect, and often sadness; Thanksgiving, as its name implies, a giving of thanks for benefits showered upon us. Easter brings the greatest message of all—namely, that of Hope. It comes at a time when the winter is over and all nature is preparing to awaken once more to a full and splendid life. It comes to us in memory of a Life that was given and thus regained. It comes to tell all mankind that after the darkest of all days, there is the glory of a beautiful beyond. Were it not for Easter and the great message of hope that this festal brings, it would be scarcely possible to endure the trials and miseries of this present life. The heart that receives the Easter spirit, that carries the Easter spirit with it throughout the year, can face all troubles of life, all difficulties, all discouragements, knowing they are but temporary, and that brightness and happiness and peace are beyond. How can man, struggling through his daily toil, often disheartened and despairing, still fight on? Because he has the Easter spirit in his heart; the spirit that whispers to him that a better day is coming and he will reap the results of patient endeavor. How can woman, oppressed and ill-treated, continue her rounds of petty duties? Because the still, small voice in her inmost heart whispers that tribulations pass away, and a glorious future awaits her.

This Easter message is not only for the poor and downtrodden,—it is for all. There is the man of wealth or the woman of wealth boasting precious homes, in idleness and selfishness. To such as these in the quiet hours of the night creeps the little shaft of light. There must be something beyond this world of pleasure. In every human heart there is some hope of future life. Nature speaks of resurrection, and human nature falls in line. The trees and the flowers, the grain and the beautiful grass, all come to life again, and our hearts sing with them the joyful Easter song of happiness and hope. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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