

She lay on the bed, breathing heavily. As he approached, the light fell on her face, and he saw that it was flushed and swollen. A moment later and his eye caught a fancy toilet bottle that she grasped in one hand. With a sudden terror creeping over him he drew it away and held it to his nostrils.

"Great God!" he groaned, sinking into a chair. "It is brandy, and she is drunk—my wife is drunk!"

Long he sat there, his eyes riveted on the distorted countenance. This, then, was the meaning of those frequent headaches.

Many things that he had before failed to understand now became clear to his mind. No wonder they only came on in his absence. It came back to him of coming home once before unexpectedly, and being told by the girl that her mistress did not wish to be disturbed, he had not entered her room.

How long had she had the habit, he wondered, and was it an inherited appetite? If so—oh, wretched thought!—would their boy, too, be a victim?

Sitting thus in the dim light, with only his harrowing thoughts for company, the flushed face on the pillow seemed to fade gradually away, and in its stead he saw that other face, the one he had so long kept locked out of sight in that "secret chamber," and he vaguely wondered if this were his punishment, and if he deserved so much, when he had tried to make amends and she would not hear him. A step on the stairs and a low knock roused him, and hastily moving the lamp to throw a shade on the sleeper's face, he opened the door.

Kate was there, with the baby asleep in her arms.

"Mrs. Clayton is sleeping. I will take him," he whispered, as if afraid of waking her.

"Here is his milk," the girl answered, in the same tone, handing him the nursing bottle.

He nodded and was once more alone with his terrible trouble and disgrace, which the sight of the helpless child in no wise lessened.

He sat, softly rocking and thinking, taking no note of the flight of time until the little one stirred and began to cry.

"He must be hungry," he thought, and whatever else happened he did not want Kate to come to the room again.

Greedily the little fellow drank of the—now thoroughly cold—milk, and immediately fell asleep again, but only for a few minutes this time, and then his cries and pallor indicated severe suffering. Desperate, at last, he went to the bedside and spoke to his wife.

No reply. He shook her gently at first, then more roughly, but it was some time before she roused enough to take any interest.

"Ollie, Ollie! Glen is very sick. Can't you do something for him?"

"Glen—sick?" she repeated, thickly.

"Yes; don't you hear him crying? Ollie, I tell you, you must get up and take him."

She essayed to rise, but failed to stand until the third effort, then, feebly, she held out her arms.

"When did you come home, Frank?" she asked, huskily; then, as a sudden wave of memory rolled over her, she bowed her head and burst into tears.

Silently he stood regarding her and her inefficient efforts to hush the child.

"Shall I go for the doctor, Olive?"

He never said Olive unless in a very stern mood.

"I don't know—how can I tell? What have you given him?" she sobbed.

"I have only given him some of this milk," he answered.

"Was it cold?"

"Of course. Kate must have left it here two hours before."

Ollie was walking the room now, thoroughly sobered and alarmed.

"Then go for the doctor, and call Kate, quick."

Terrible were the hours that followed to the young parents, but morning found the little one quietly sleeping.

What passed between husband and wife that day was known only to themselves, save that she confessed to having acquired a liking for stimulants when a girl, by taking cordials and brandies to make her bright and vivacious.

She must have been full of repentance and promises, however, for Frank seemed almost hopeful at the end of the conference.

During the seven years which we must now pass over, Frank Clayton moved twice to escape the pity of friends and the scorn of foes, for his wife's bacchanalian habits could not long remain a secret anywhere. Servants could not always be bribed to keep still tongues. Besides, Ollie's continual call for liquors at the various drug and fancy stores soon excited suspicion, even if her appearance did not betray her. His friends advised him to leave her, but he turned coldly from them. The unfortunate man's domestic life was one of extreme bitterness, but so far pride had kept him from renouncing the mother of his child.

Long since he had ceased to counsel her or exact promises. The former she seemed unable to remember, the latter to keep. Doubtless she still loved her husband and son, but she loved the demon that was fast destroying body and soul better, and all will power seemed gone.

They were removed to Carson, Nevada, now among total strangers, and Frank was not doing well in his business, and life seemed more unendurable than ever.

On this particular evening they had been having a