

The Man-Trap at Ashdale.

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!"

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

The hand 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.

"O Edward!"

Her voice choked and her eyes filled with tears.

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

"Sarah, I have a little good news for you. If you will only consent to just such a shape, old Killigrew 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 Killigrew it was awful in the extreme.

"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 liquor before him. I wouldn't like to go into eternity with all the sins against humanity that lie 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 Killigrew'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."

the other side of Jerico!" he muttered, 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 every day. If old Killigrew lays hold of me after this fashion, I'm afraid my good resolutions are not going to be worth much. O dear! I wonder what good ever comes of this rum-sellin' and rum-drinkin'?" As to the latter, 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 Killigrew's "man-trap" without being hailed 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 store, in order to avoid, by so doing, the company of one or two young men who always stopped to drink at Killigrew'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 coffee from the landlord, who was keensighted enough to see what had been passing in the mind of Pratt, and feared to lose a customer, assailed him with influences that he had not strength 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 the thoughtless young men have seen the aching, agonizing face of the wretched man, who was being hurried away staggering in that evening, they would not have boasted so glibly 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, he had not sufficient strength of purpose to resist it, allurement after allurement 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 this contest, he was confined 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 was too weak. Evening brought him home with all his bright manhood obscured. One short month sufficed to do the work of ruin. Then his poor wife stood pale, tearless and heart-broken above the grave! He fell so low that he made no effort to rise again—and died in drunkenness and despair.

The poor widow was not long from his side; and now his children's home is the almshouse. The "man-trap" in Ashdale is open still. And for the privilege of scattering ruin and death around him the new owner pays the State fifty dollars a year; and the State takes the money with an eager hand, and seems to think her bargain a good one.

Mrs. Jane Swishelm is in favor of men as cooks, and by way of illustration relates the following: "I never knew the significance of the impulse which leads all boys to want to bake griddle cakes until I saw a French half-breed from Selkirk, beside his fireless cart on the open prairie, preparing his evening meal. He had a large fish boiling on the coals without any intervention of a gridiron. His batter and his 'flapjacks' were in a bucket. He heated and greased a long handled sheet-iron frying pan, poured in enough batter to cover the bottom, set it over the fire, kept on serenely attended to other matters, as though no 'flapjacks' were in danger of being burned, as it would have been if any woman had set it to bake; but just at the right moment he came up, looked in the pan, took hold of the handle, shook it gently, then with a sudden jerk, sent the cake spinning into the air caught it as it came down, square in the centre, with his other side up. The cake was turned as no woman could have turned it, and with an ease which showed that the man was in his proper shape."

"I wonder where those clouds are going?" sighed Flora pensively, as she pointed with her thin, delicate finger to the heavy funeral masses that floated lazily in the sky. "I think they are going to thunder," said her brother.

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A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE.—Dean Swift was walking on the Phoenix road, Dublin, when a thunder shower came on, and he took shelter under a tree, where a party were sheltering also—two young women and two young men. One of the girls looked very sad, till as the rain fell, her tears fell. The Dean, inquiring the cause, learned that it was their wedding day; they were on their way to church, and now her white clothes were wet, and she couldn't go. "Never mind, I'll marry you," said the Dean; and he took out his prayer-book, and then and there married them, their witnesses being present. To make the thing complete, he tore a leaf out of his pocket-book, and with his pencil wrote and signed a certificate, and handed it to the bride. It was as follows: "Under a tree in stormy weather, I married this man and woman together; Let none but Him who rules the thunder Sever this man and woman asunder."

DEEDS OF CHARACTER.—The fact is that in order to do anything in this world worth doing, we must not stand shivering on the bank, and thinking of the cold and danger, but jump in, and scramble through as well as we can.—Rev. Sydney Smith.

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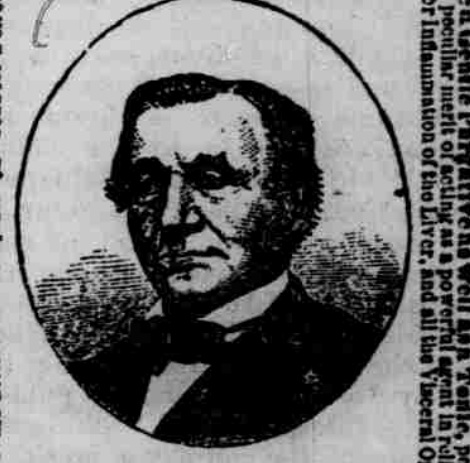
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