

# A Christmas Regeneration

## By Lindsay Denison

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### FOUGHT THE FLOWING BOWL

Eastern Monarchs and Religious Leaders Long Ago Lifted Their Voices Against Drunkenness.

Temperance movements and prohibition crusades date back at least 3,000 years. It was China that first tried to be bone-dry. Early reforms along temperance lines are attributed to the priests of India and Persia. But the Chinese claim that in the eleventh century before Christ their emperor, so disgusted over the prevalence of drunkenness, ordered all the grapevines in the kingdom uprooted.

A hundred years before this bone-dry effort, in the twelfth century before Christ, King Wen tried partial reform in China. Wen, founder of the Chou dynasty, promulgated an "Announcement Against Drunkenness," according to ancient Chinese documents handed down by Confucius.

King Wen declared "drinking has long been a national vice." He ordered that wine be used only in connection with sacrifices—and even then drunkenness was not to be tolerated.

The temperance reforms also existed in Egypt centuries before Christ. Here's what a teacher said to a youth who had been looking upon the flowing bowl too freely:

"Drink not beer to excess. The words that come out of thy mouth thou canst not recall. Thou dost fall and break thy limbs and no one reaches out a hand to thee. Thy comrades go on drinking; they stand up and say: 'Away with this fellow who is drunk.' If anyone should then seek thee to ask counsel of thee, thou wouldest be found lying in the dust like a little child."

### Petroleum in Mexican Lake.

For hundreds of years Mexican Indians had a horror of what they called the pest spot of Lake Chapala, near the shore at Tizapan. They would not bathe in it or sail around it, declaring that the water was oily. Then, after a time, they cautiously began to paint wooden boats with this oil, which proved so effective in keeping out the water that it became the general custom to use it. They did not know that this was petroleum gushing up through the water—a magnificent flow, about two miles out in the lake, which on this day gushes apparently without varying. When the water is low petroleum floats in solid masses, each large globe weighing about 25 pounds.



LONG about two thousand years ago a Little Child came into this world through a stable. Probably stables weren't very clean and sweet two thousand years ago—not nearly as nice as they are today. But the things that Little Child brought to the world were so dear and beautiful and good that most of us have come into the way of thinking that his memory and everlasting presence and influence are exclusively the property and the privileges of the righteous, of those who abide in ways and places which are clean.

But it is nevertheless true that the soft tug of the Little Child's baby hands is felt today by folks who are not very nice and who live in places far more deplorable than ever was that Nazarene stable. Wherefore:

Cowles and Roberts watched the waiter set down the glasses and turn away. Then they laughed, each at the other, but without gladness.

"Bobs," said Cowles, "you don't seem to yearn for your medicine."

"No, Charley," sneered Roberts, "and I don't observe an absorbent haste on your part. What do you suppose is the matter with us?"

"We're 'fraid, Bobs," said Cowles. "That's what's the matter with us. We're 'fraid. 'Fraid of starting in. You've seen the kids on that slide thing down at Luna park. They hunch themselves along toward the start and then hang there until somebody from behind pushes them off. That's the way I feel. I'm waiting for somebody to come along from behind and give me a start. Cause I know, just as those kids know, that I am going to get bumped, and scraped, and maybe, good and plenty before I reach bottom."

"Right!" said Roberts. "That's just the way I feel, too." He looked round the room critically. "And as yet nobody seems at all inclined to start us along on the descent. What's the matter with the old place, Charley? Here it is half past nine o'clock, Christmas eve, and there are less than twenty people here—and all of them cross. What are you looking at?"

"There's a bronze-haired, brzen-faced little person sitting right back of you, Bobs—don't turn; she's looking right at you. I've seen her before. I ought to know who she is. But I can't remember for the life of me."

"One of those 'Where-have-I-seen-that-face-before' situations?" Roberts cautiously looked obliquely into the mirror and studied the woman's face.

"I'll bet you know her, too," retorted Cowles. "She is probably the lady cashier who used to smile across her desk at us languishingly when she gave us our change for our beef and beans—before you got plutocratic and married and shook all your friends. By the way, how is the family? This is a lovely joint for a six-months' bridegroom to be in on Christmas eve. But I've been so long watching you young men, 'reformed by marriage'—beg your pardon, old man!"

He cried, as he looked away from the hauntingly reminiscent face of the woman opposite and caught the hurt look of his friend. "What's the matter? You're not having any trouble at home, are you? You haven't been scrapping with Rose?"

"Why do you think I'd ask you to meet me at a joint like this, tonight of all nights, if there wasn't trouble with Rose?" growled Roberts. "I'm

not fit to be married to a girl like Rose, or any girl, anyway, Charley, and I—"

his voice broke a little; he caught himself and went on. "Let's drop it, Charley!"

They both stared at the table, for a moment.

"Bobs," said Cowles, after awhile, speaking slowly and low, "you can kick me for being fresh, if you like. I know it's none of my business but I like you too much not to tell you that I hate to see you starting out on a tear because you've got a grouch on your wife. Now, I'm hopeless and my grouch isn't with anybody I care a hoot about, anyway. But you, Bobs—"

"Drop it, Charley! Drop it!" Roberts laughed bitterly. "Let us proceed with that stirring melodrama which I suppose you would call 'The Souze's Christmas Eve.'" He glanced again at the girl whose face he could see in the mirror. "I know who she is, Charley," he said. "The girl opposite you, I mean. Do you remember Sadie Cargill? The girl who sang 'Coralline' and 'If You Wouldn't—Then I Would,' at the Casino about five years ago? Don't you remember that everybody was crazy about her?"

Cowles looked up cautiously. "Sure!" he said. "That's who she is. But what in the world is she in this place for? Sadie Cargill in Big Jimmy's? Whew, what a come-down!"

"I seem to remember somebody was saying the other day that she had gone pretty well to pieces," said Roberts. "Didn't take care of herself. Whoever it was said he had seen her in the chorus of a fifty-night musical

game. It don't pay 'I'm going to cut loose now and take things as they come."

Miss Cargill studied the ugly blaze in his eye intently and shook her head. The hard lines in her face became more rigid.

Cowles reached for his glass. She stopped him. "No," she said, "let's all start even. I want to know your friend's troubles."

"Never mind about mine," said Roberts, looking away from them both. He was almost, but not quite, surly. Cowles shook his head at her surreptitiously.

"Don't be afraid," she murmured. "I won't make any breaks. And he needs help more than you do." She turned to Roberts again. "Married?" she asked him.

"How did you know that?" he asked, his face still turned away. "Oh, I knew," she said. "Well," he said.

"You've been having trouble at home?" Roberts nodded. "Tell me! What about?" She leaned across the table toward him, speaking very softly with misty eyes. Roberts did not raise his head.

"Christmas presents," he said. She drew back her head and laughed, just three or four peary notes and then became grave again—sincerely grave.

"Now, see here," Roberts blurted out, looking straight into the woman's pitying eyes. "I am going to tell you about it. I know it isn't decent. But I haven't told anybody and I know I'm right—anyway, more right than she is!—and you've been up against things a lot—and I want to tell you about it."

"That's right," she whispered as gently as though she had been petting a curly head at her knee. "Well," he recited in a monotone, "she asked me to meet her at Tiff-

any's today and I did. And she picked out a ring and I told her I couldn't come within five hundred dollars of paying for it unless—unless I broke my promise to increase my brother's college allowance. And she was hurt and then she was angry and she said things you don't know—but there was a man—a rich man—an old man—over in Brooklyn—and when she first met me she had almost made up her mind to marry him. Anyway—she said things and I said things and both of us were nasty—and bitter. This was all going uptown in a cab. And when we got to the door she said she wasn't going to get out—that she was going back to her own people in Brooklyn—and I said I didn't care. And I don't!" His voice broke, even on the defiant note. "But it hurts—and don't you think I was right?"

Cowles was staring at him somewhere between amazement and amusement. "And is that all?" he began, "that—"

"Stop!" Miss Cargill said to him sternly. "It's enough! Let me tell you two something. Now this isn't to print." She looked at Cowles. He nodded, that simple nod of the genuine American reporter which is worth all the gold bonds of Wall street. "It never got out why I left the Casino. But it was because I was married on the quiet." She looked up and saw the waiter standing near. She plucked a pencil from Cowles's waistcoat, tore the margin from a newspaper sticking out of his pocket and wrote a name on it.

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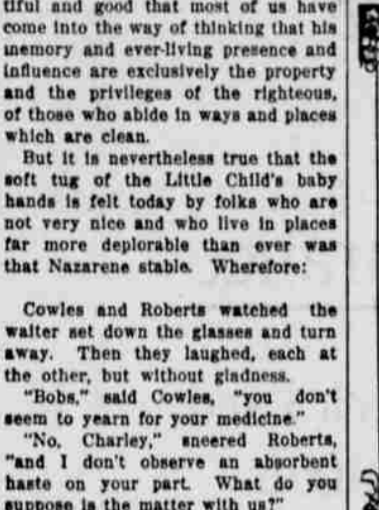
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Studied the Woman's Face.

comedy out Kansas City way and that she seemed to have hit bottom."

"Yes," said Cowles, studying the girl's face. "It is Sadie, all right. She seems to have kept all her good looks, too, except that her face has hardened terribly. Don't you remember what a soft-cheeked, innocent, merry little thing she always was?"

Roberts nodded and looked again into the mirror. He shook his head at what he saw. "Yes," he murmured, "she was. And now, before you recognized her, you called her 'bronzehaired and brzen-faced,' and she is."

"I hope," spoke up the young woman, with startlingly distinct voice and with unlimited acidity of intonation, "that the next time you see me, you'll remember me! Take a good look."

Both men sprang to their feet, snatching off their hats.

"I beg your pardon," said Roberts, earnestly, "but really I didn't realize that you could see from the mirror how I was staring at you. I'm awfully sorry and very much ashamed. Really I am—we both are."

Miss Cargill looked him over with approval and was obviously mollified.

"Oh, that's all right," she said, with a tired smile. "I'm sorry I barked at you that way. A woman is a good deal of a fool to make a kick when a man looks at her in Big Jimmy's. But I'm sore on the world tonight and kind of cranky. Come on over here, both of you. Perhaps you can talk me out of it."

Cowles and Roberts looked at each other and laughed. And because Sadie, despite the hardening, was undeniably charming with the old graciousness of the Casino days, they carried their glasses to her table. Cowles smiled as they set them down, still full, beside hers.

"We were afraid, too," he explained. "You in trouble, too?" She sighed. "Well, I'm used to it. Better tell your old snitzy your poor little sorrows. Maybe I really can do you some good." She turned to Roberts. "First off, what's biting you?"

Cowles interrupted precipitately. "Let me tell mine," he urged. "I'm the worst case. I've just lost my job. I'm a newspaper man and I've never been noted for my saving disposition."

Miss Cargill nodded with a smile which seemed reminiscent. Almost involuntarily she hitched her chair over a little closer to Cowles. The instinct of the stage lady to riddle up to the youth who may some time "get her name in the papers" is as imperishable as the instinct of self-preservation.

"Well," continued Cowles, "my rent comes due in a week. Also all the bills. Also it is the Merry Yule Tide when the young blood gets square with all the nice girls who have been especially nice to him. And I've been canned! Fired! Lost my job! And by the latest count I have on my person just thirteen dollars and forty cents good and lawful coin of the United States and nothing more coming to me. That's all!"

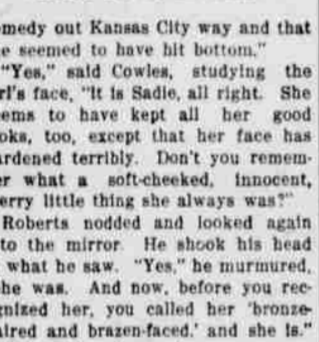
Roberts took up the story. "No, it isn't all, Miss Cargill—I beg your pardon," he cried as he saw her wince.

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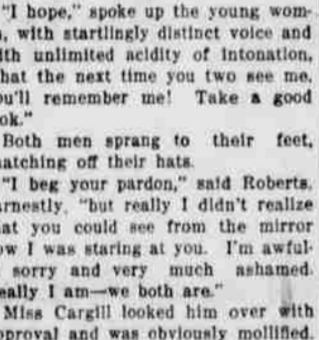
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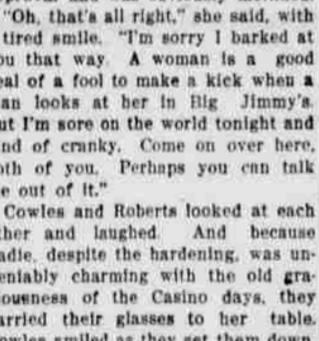
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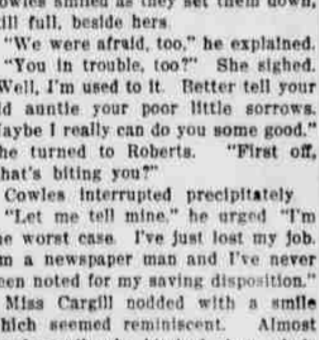
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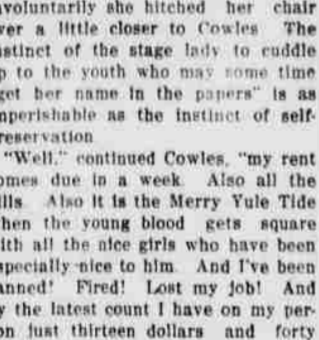
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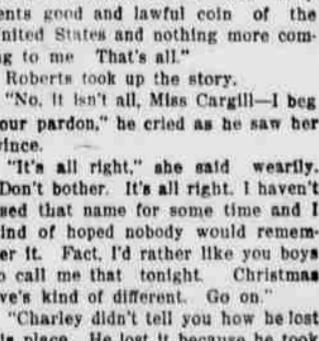
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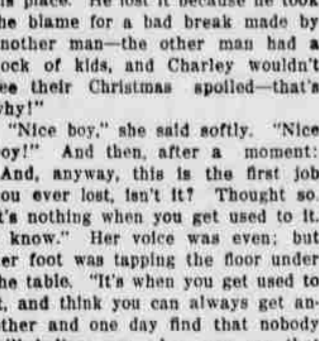
Cowles was staring at him somewhere between amazement and amusement. "And is that all?" he began, "that—"



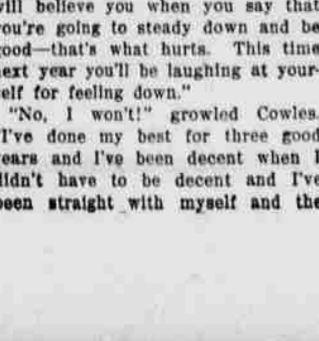
"Stop!" Miss Cargill said to him sternly. "It's enough! Let me tell you two something. Now this isn't to print." She looked at Cowles. He nodded, that simple nod of the genuine American reporter which is worth all the gold bonds of Wall street. "It never got out why I left the Casino. But it was because I was married on the quiet." She looked up and saw the waiter standing near. She plucked a pencil from Cowles's waistcoat, tore the margin from a newspaper sticking out of his pocket and wrote a name on it.



"Married to him," she said, showing the slip to Roberts and Cowles in turn. Cowles mistled in astonishment.



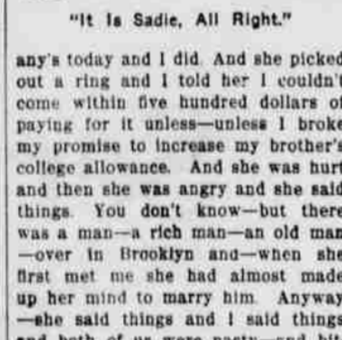
"It's all right," she said wearily. "Don't bother. It's all right. I haven't used that name for some time and I kind of hoped nobody would remember it. Fact, I'd rather like you boys to call me that tonight. Christmas eve's kind of different. Go on."



"Charley didn't tell you how he lost his place. He lost it because he took the blame for a bad break made by another man—the other man had a flock of kids, and Charley wouldn't see their Christmas spoiled—that's why!"



"She Picked Out a Ring."



anybody cry like that. I went out to the door and tried the handle—sneaked back to her door again, because I didn't dare leave her—you know—after the way she had been feeling and talking. She had cried herself to sleep with her arm out across that doll. So I turned the lights out and came away."