

### A Brave Woman.

BY MRS. C. M. LIVINGSTON.

The Rev. Dr. Carter was tired. He had done a hard day's work; had put the finishing touches to his Sabbath evening sermon, had officiated at two weddings and one funeral, presided at a meeting of associated charities and visited the orphan asylum, the inebriate asylum and the old ladies' home. The doctor was popular. If he had not divided himself up with nice system, there would scarcely have been enough of him to go round, so many were the demands upon his time and strength. He had his days for calling upon the members of his congregation, days for the sick, days for the poor and days for public institutions. It was with a comfortable sense of duty done and rest earned that, at the close of this day, he seated himself by an open fire in the library. His slippers and dressing gown were on and he had just leaned back in his easy chair and breathed a sigh of relief, when there came a ring at the door bell and a servant appeared to say that a woman was waiting in the parlor to see him.

"It is too bad," said Mrs. Carter, who had lighted the gas and was about to read from a fresh magazine. "You never have one minute to yourself. Do let me go and excuse you, George, and ask her to come some other time."

"Oh, no," the doctor said, as he drew himself up wearily. "I might as well see her now as any time."

A plainly dressed grey haired woman rose to meet him as he entered the room. At first thought he supposed her to be one of his country parishioners who had called to beg him to accept a box of clover honey, or a pair of fine ducks. Another and more searching look convinced him of his mistake. The lines about the mouth and the intense, almost fierce expression of the deep set grey eyes betokened no such kindly intent. She fumbled in her pocket a minute and produced a bit cut from a newspaper.

"Did you write that?" she asked, handing the paper to Dr. Carter.

He glanced over it. It was an extract from one of his own articles defending his position on the total abstinence question, wherein he claimed that every man must be a law unto himself, that even the scriptures did not forbid the use of wine in moderation, that men who set up a standard of total abstinence denouncing all who did not come up to it were bigots and fanatics, besides being "wise above what was written." He declared that a man must be weak indeed who required a pledge to keep him within the bounds of common decency; that the Creator gave to man all the good things of this life, the fruit of the vine included. He was to use them, not abuse them, and to exercise Christian self-control in all things without which he would be no better than the brutes.

"Yes, madam, I believe I wrote it," Dr. Carter said rather stiffly, handing the paper back to her. "Why do you wish to know?"

Fixing her keen eyes upon him, the woman went on without heeding his question.

"Twenty years ago my sister died. She gave her baby to me. She said, 'Bring him up for God.' I was poor and had to work hard, but I did my best for the little fellow. He was all I lived for, except to serve my Master, and I loved him for his mother and myself too. I worked night and day, tugged and slaved and went without things—and was glad to do it—to keep him in school till he got a common education. He was a good boy, bright too, and I was proud of him. He was always saying, 'Wait till I begin to make money. You shan't work any more, Aunt Polly.'"

"When he was eighteen he got a good place in a store in this city. He was bookkeeper and Mr. Ferris said he would trust him with everything and anything. Oh, I thought my cup was full when he came home the first time to stay over Sunday. He looked so tall and handsome in his new clothes and he left some money for me and always sent me some every month. He said he went to church and Sunday school and kept good company and I needn't worry about him. Everybody spoke well of him and it all went right for two years, and then, one day, I got a telegram to come quick, that Tom was sick. I went as fast as I could go. The poor boy was raving, didn't know me at all. I thought he had caught a fever and set to work to nurse him. When the doctor came he told me it was of no use, that Tom could not live, that he had brain disease caused by drinking liquor! I was angry. I told the doctor he didn't know what he was saying. My boy drink—the best and purest boy that ever walked the earth! I wouldn't believe it, not a word of it. But after the doctor had gone I found a letter in Tom's drawer that he had begun to write to me. He wrote the first part of it three months ago, then he thought he wouldn't send it. But just before he was taken sick he finished it and it

was lying there all ready to go to the post office, and this piece that he cut from the newspaper was in it. I've got to read it to you, for there is the whole story."

Dr. Carter was on the point of telling her that he was too busy a man to listen to such long stories, but there was a certain sad dignity about her that kept him silent.

"August 10—Dear Aunt Polly" the letter began, "Did you ever hear of Dr. Carter? I've begun to attend his church lately. He's considered the best preacher in the city. I like him very much. He preaches splendid sermons and is a jolly man besides; none of your long-faced cranks. He doesn't think a man is going straight to perdition if he takes a glass of beer. He says one must not take too much beer or wine, any more than he must not drink too much coffee; and that, as long as one controls himself and keeps within certain limits, it is all right and sometimes necessary to health to take some stimulant. Now that sounds like good common sense. We boys think what Dr. Carter says is all law and gospel—ten of us hire two seats in his church—and we have a sort of club, meet somewhere almost every evening, so we thought we would try his doctrine on. We work hard and our board isn't very good and we thought that if a glass of beer would tone us up and make us worth more it might be a good thing. We each took a pledge that we would drink but one glass a day—no more. It's only a week since we began, but I feel better already. That beer just hits the spot every time. I expect to weigh ten pounds more before I see you again. You see I am keeping my promise, telling you everything. Of course it can't be wrong, or a good man like Dr. Carter wouldn't uphold it. I'll cut this piece out and send it to you; then you can see for yourself. There's another argument for drinking it, too. I like the beer very much, but I am firm and take but one glass. You see that gets me in the habit of controlling myself. It strengthens character every time one resists a temptation. See?"

"November 10—Dear Aunt Polly: I wrote this other letter long ago, but I'll send it to you; then you'll understand. I'm afraid I'm going to die! My head feels queer. I'm lost! I didn't control myself. I'm a brute! I drank everything I could get. I couldn't help it. I tried to stop. Oh, I meant it all to be so different! If I could only begin again; but it's too late! Why did I ever hear that accursed talk? O, I'm lost, lost, for drunkards cannot go to heaven, and I'm a drunkard! Your Tom! Make up my bed in the little attic. Come and get me quick—quick! My head is on fire. If I am gone when you come, kiss me just once more and forgive me, Tom."

The woman read the letter through. Then, fixing her eyes on the doctor, she said in a low voice, terrible for its forced calmness: "Dr. Carter, you ministers like to hear whether your work brings forth fruit. It was Tom you buried to-day. Wasn't he a handsome boy? Did you notice his curls? You couldn't see his eyes, but they were as blue as the sky. It was quick work. The doctor said his brain was too fine to stand much of the stuff; just a little set it on fire. Dr. Carter—and her voice dropped to a fearful whisper—"it was your work. You killed my boy! He was all I had, and my old heart would break if God didn't keep me. But I didn't come to call down vengeance on you. I felt like it at first. I came to warn you. There are nine other boys in that club, and nine times nine, some of them in your church, stumbling into hell over the very words that ruined my poor boy. You've got to meet them all and your words in the great day of account. Save them or you will lose your own soul. May the lord open your eyes before it is forever too late."

Before Dr. Carter could speak a word or recover from his astonishment his visitor had vanished. And then a bell tinkled through the house. There was a fragrance of tea and toast, the patter of children's feet, the rustle of his wife's dress, and the minister went like one dazed to the tea-table. During the meal he was pale and abstracted, neither talking nor eating much.

"It is just as I feared," Mrs. Carter said; you have overworked to-day, and that lugubrious looking woman was the last straw. I just had a glimpse of her as she went out. You had better retire early and get a long rest."

Dr. Carter took his wife's advice, partly because he felt disturbed and wished to be alone. Sleep was out of the question, though. He continued to torture himself by going over the sad story that has been told him, recalling the face of his visitor, stamped as it was with the lines of care and grief, and then bringing before himself the other cofined face. Yes, he had noticed the blonde curls on the broad white brow, and remarked at the time on the singular beauty of the young man. And that was Tom! Then his fancy pictured the old house where

"Aunt Polly" had lived all these years with her boy. To-night she sat there alone. She need never look for any more letters from Tom or listen for his coming footsteps. Tom was gone from the earth, and the words, "You've killed him," rang in his ears again. She had said some other dreadful words, too, about his having to give account for others whom he had influenced for evil. Half unconsciously he went over his congregation as they appeared before him on Sabbath. There were many families among them who had suffered, because some of their members had fallen victims to an uncontrolled appetite. Was it true that he was at all responsible for their misery? Had he, whose mission it was to comfort and guide into peace and purity, been engaged in making drunkards?

Over in that darkened corner of the church sat a sad faced young widow, her delicate profile outlined against the folds of her crepe veil, as she sat each Sabbath, looking up at him with heavy eyes and tear-stained face. Her husband, a brilliant young man of high position, had just died of delirium tremens! And there was one of his elders whose form was bent and locks whitened, not so much by age as by sorrow because his only son had become a sot. Just beyond him sat a family of young people whose father blew his brains out in a fit of intoxication. In the corner pew at the left were two old grand parents with three little children. Their beautiful daughter married a moderate drinker. He soon became a common drunkard, squandered his property and finally lost his life in an affray at the club. His wife had soon after died broken-hearted. And there on the other side sat a stern-faced man and a sad woman. Their one darling child, a lovely, gifted girl, was in an inebriate asylum, a victim to the wine-drinking habits of the fashionable circle in which she moved. All over the church it was the same. Almost every family carried secret sorrows from the same cause. They all passed in review before the pastor as he fell asleep.

Sleep brought no relief, however. It was filled with horrid phantasies. He dreamed that he had died and went swiftly through the air up to the heavenly city and stood at the gates. But none came to bid him welcome. He knocked and called but there was no answer. Helpless and alone he waited. He saw the light of the city and heard sweet music. As he cried out in deep distress, the gate slowly opened and there appeared to him a glorious being who looked at him sadly, saying:

"You cannot enter here. You led souls astray. There are your accusers—look!"

He looked through a door. Yes, they were there—the tall, grey-haired woman who had paid him the strange visit, the young widow, the old father, the orphan children, and a long line of other widows and orphans, weary fathers and broken hearted mothers.

"Oh, let me go back and undo it all," cried the wretched man. "I did not know what I was doing."

"Poor, blind one," said the angel pityingly, "you cannot undo it; the silly souls who heard and believed your wicked words are in the land of despair, for it is written, 'Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.' And the angel left him and he felt himself sinking down, down into the blackness of darkness, and then—he awoke with a groan, his pulses throbbing wildly.

He tried to calm himself and sleep again, but sleep had vanished. His brain never felt clearer and for the next two hours all his mental powers were awake and alert, as though they had been suddenly summoned to the court where Dr. George Carter was being tried by himself. Memory with great fidelity brought before him all he had ever said or written on the liquor question. Conscience, unsparing and stern, asked, "Have you all these years been true to your inmost convictions, or are you a temporizing coward? You know that one of your chief supporters in your church is a brewer, another a wine merchant and that many are moderate drinkers. Did not this weigh with you in taking the position you have? And may there not be a deeper reason, that none but God and you know, something that you never indulged in until recently? Do you not take a small quantity of wine yourself each day, 'just to tone you up?' Then judgement took the stand, and sneered and scoffed at weak logic and flimsy sophistries, bringing him to bay at every turn. She pointed her fingers and laughed until he grew hot with shame. Then she changed her mien. She set the truth before his cleared vision and pleaded with him to be brave enough to follow the convictions of an awakened conscience.

And Christ the Lord spoke to him, face to face, as it were. He came not with the thunder of Sinai, but drew near in love, saying in tender tones: "Son, why hast thou leagued with Satan to persecute me these many years?" The strong man's heart was melted now. Like the other misguided

servant who had been in the same position of humility, "Lord, have mercy on me to do?"

He needed not to go to any city to be shown there in the darkness it was him, swiftly, as by a vision. He arose and dressed himself, went into his study and shut and locked the door. There he knelt before God, confessed his guilt, and consecrated himself for service in this new work. After that he seated himself at his desk and wrote out in bold characters a solemn renunciation of his former views on the liquor traffic, ending with: "I will never taste another drop of anything intoxicating. I will try to induce all over whom I have influence to take the same pledge and I will do all in my power to prevent the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits—so help me God."

This done he wrote a letter to his publisher bidding him not to get out another edition of his tract on "Tyranny and Total Abstinence." And then another to Tom's Aunt Polly. The truly noble nature of the man—or rather the Christian—so humble that he was willing to accept rebuke from the lowliest, shone out in this letter. It was remorseful, tender and reverent, expressing gratitude that she had been brave enough to come to him with the truth, and sorrow that his influence had ought to do with the grief that shadowed her life. The next duty before him was to write notes to nine young men inviting them to meet at his house the next evening, "to confer upon a matter of importance to themselves and him." While his brain was thus clear and his heart uplifted, what better time to write something on this subject which had taken complete possession of him, for his Sabbath morning sermon. His sermon was already prepared, but to preach it now was out of the question. So he wrote hour after hour like one inspired, feeling in his rapt mood neither fatigue nor drowsiness. The dawn was breaking when he finished, and, casting himself on the lounge, he slept peacefully until awakened by the breakfast bell.

"I don't know what you will say to what I have to tell you," Dr. Carter said to his wife two hours afterward. "It is none of my creating. If I had been told last week that I should entertain my present views upon a certain question I could not have believed it. I have passed through a strange experience, my dear."

He then told her the story, keeping nothing back, adding at the close: "Mary, you know, of course, that the declaration of my changed views will render me unpopular with some of our church people. I may be asked to resign in consequence. I may not receive a call to another church immediately. Are you prepared to face the possible results of such a step—to relinquish this elegant house and generous salary for a plain home with less money, for conscience sake? As for me, I must go forward whether my wife bids me Godspeed or not. 'Woe is me if I preach not this gospel!'"

Mrs. Carter had not been rated as a brave woman heretofore, and she had been educated in a family who held radical views upon nothing, therefore her husband was surprised when she rose to this occasion. She came over to him where he sat and said with kindling eyes:

"George, I'm almost afraid that I should be sure you were right on any question, whatever your opinions were. I never thought I was made of the stuff that martyrs are made of, and yet I am ready to follow where you lead. I am proud of you dear to come out in this way and act up to your convictions. I think I know how to admire a hero, even if he is my own husband."

She put both arms around his neck and laid her cheek to his as she said softly, "We're reformers now, aren't we?" And her husband thanked God and took courage.

There was almost an audible murmur of surprise in the church the next Sabbath morning when the pastor, contrary to his usual custom, stepped aside from the desk and began to speak to his people without notes. Ears were fairly strained to catch every syllable and make sure they heard aright, as he proceeded to state in clear, strong terms the decision to which he had come. Something of the inspiration which filled him on that memorable night took possession of him. They had always thought their pastor an eloquent man, but never had they heard anything from him like these impassioned words flowing like a torrent that would not be stayed. Burning truths, keen arguments and strong logic held them spell-bound. The effect was electrical. Even those who differed from him could but admire. Many who were halting between duty and inclination were that day convinced. Others who were treading on the brink of a precipice were snatched away and saved by this unlooked for avowal. Never had there been a temperance address of equal power in that city.

Good men and women, who had deplored their pastor's former views on this subject, who had come almost to the point of asking letters of dismissal from their beloved church, sang hallelujahs in their souls at this astounding change in their pastor. They wept and smiled by turns, and had their education not been of the most conservative type might have shouted and cried "Amen!"

Dr. Carter was not asked to resign. 'Tis true, the rich brewer and the wine merchant left the church, and several others who "hated fanatics" went out to more congenial quarters; but their places were more than filled by men of influence and property who naturally belonged in that church and would have been there long before but for the pastor's position on

In Court.—A case noticed that the judge fell asleep. "But since there is no one to hear me," he went on, raising his voice—"Pardon," replied the judge, waking up with a start. "It is precisely because I was listening to you that I fell asleep."

Witness, M. H. McLAUGHLIN.  
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