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Ferguson, Charlotte (?-?)

***Jim Wilson's Resolve and What Came of It:
A Lancashire Temperance Tale (1865)***

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There are many pretty villages on which Pendle Hill looks frowningly down, whose inhabitants still retain the simplicity of life and habits which characterized them fifty years ago, and in whose dwellings may even yet be heard the click-clack of the shuttle and loom, and the whirr of the spinning-wheel.

In a little village called Clifton, not far from the cotton manufacturing town of Darley, my story begins. Two men were leaning over the wooden palings dividing their

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cottage gardens; and one, whom we will call Jim Wilson, a widower with two children, was bitterly lamenting the unprofitableness of hand-loom weaving, now that machinery was so much used. His neighbour, Tom Watson, an old bachelor, living alone, excepting for several cats and birds who followed him wherever he went in the village, was listening with a deprecating air to Jim, who spoke as follows:—

‘Weyving’s good to nowt, an’ aw’m baan to sell eawr two cottages, an’ try what aw con do wi’ keepin’ a public-heawse. Ther’s eawr ned con help wi’ brewin’, un eawr Peggy con sarve it eawt, for hoo’s a cleyn-lookin’, bonny-fatur’d lass, an’ folk loike to hev a bonny wench to wait on ‘em, so aw’m gooin’ into Darley to-day to look abeawt me, an’ if aw see owt likely, aw’s soon get eawr cottages swapped for brass; an’ see if aw cannot do as weel as Dick Knowles hes done ut th’ Rompin’ Kittlin.’ (Rampant lion was the sign, but thus was it rendered by the villagers of Clifton.)

‘Dunnot thee be sich a foo, Jim; theaw’rt so badly off as mony a poor body; thi childer’s a comfort to thee now; but if they do as Dick Knowles’s hes, they’ll noan be mich comfort to thee aafter tha gets i’ th’ public loine. It’s true he has med a bit o’ brass, but what’s th’ use o’ that? It cannot bring back his poor deod woife; why, hoo just fret hursel into th’ grave becose that lad o’ theirs were transported fur hittin’ a fella wi’ a poker, un lamed him sooaan’ he deed. O’ through drink, mon; as two o’th’ lasses wod drunken nowts, un sooner they’re put to bed wi’ a spade, an’ sooner they’ll hae peos; for they’n noan now, though one on’ em is th’ maister ov hur chap, an’ he darn’t lick hur; but, bless us! whear’s th’ comfort i’ that sort ov a loife? How would ta loike to see yo’re Peggy coom to sich a endin’? Bide thee wheere ta art, lad, an’ keep thi fingers frae money gettin’ i’ sich a way; tha owes nowt to nub’dy; tha hes two cows, a pig, an’ a score o’ ducks, an’ aw dunno heaw mony hens; tha con look at foak beawt shamin’ neaw, but tha’ll ha to do mony a meon trick if tha gooas into th’ alehouse, mon! Bless thee, lad! ne’er do that.’

‘A mon con be honest i’ ony sort ov a trade (said Jim); an’ as to eawr Ned or Peggy comin’ to owt loike Dick Knowles’s childer, they’n mooar sense un decency abeawt ‘em nur that; an’ I’s tak care wot they do, an’ noan leov ‘em to to poike up wi’ ony sort o’ raff: doan’t thee be fear’d, mon, we’s do weel enuff, I know; — but I wur a nobby to

say owt to thee, Tom, for theaw'rt a teetotaler, as they oo' 'em, an' hes only one thowt on th' subject, so good mornin' to thee, for I'm baan to just tak mi cut eawt o'th' loon, an' then I'm off to Darley, an' we'se see.'

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'Eh, Jim! theaw'rt gooin' to mek a foo o' thisel, I'm fear'd. I wish tha may tek another thowt abeawt it, an' hev nowt to do wi' drink; we'se ne'er do ony good wi' foak whoile they letten 'em sell stuff as addles foaks' heods, an' make 'em wos than th' beasts oth' field. If tha's set thi mind on mekkin' a bit mooar brass, lad, mak it some way as'll noan mek thi hate th' neet on't when tha hes getten it, an' not sich as meks poor little childer hev to goo clammin' to bed whoile ther dad's spendin' wot should hae bowt ther suppers.'

'Na, theaw'rt gooin' eawt o' reoson, Tom, an' aw mun goo un get mi cut eawt. Aw'se just hae addled ten shillin' this wick, an' does to think aw con keep heawse decently eawt o' that, mon? Aw've warked soon an' late or I shouldn't hev hed as mich as that; thar a rare, gradely mon, Tom, but thee un me teks different thowts abeawt things; aw'se ne'er let foak tae mich hort frae th' drink as aw'se sell 'em. Aw've setten my moind o' gettin' into some way as aw con put a bit o' brass by ogen; aw'm too owd to wark ony mooar; I coon't eawt o' hond-loom weyvin', as tha knows, Tom, vara weel.' So saying, he cut short the conversation by hurrying into his cottage, where Peggy, a buxom girl of seventeen, was 'cleynin' up,' as she termed it.

Jim Wilson was a hard-working, steady man, and had saved sufficient to buy two cottages, two cows, a pig, and some poultry; and Peggy had enough do to look after the small dairy and the wants of the live stock. Her mother had died when Peggy was but a child; people said she and her husband had pinched themselves of necessary food and clothing, in order to put by a little money every week; and she being but a delicate woman, had sunk under the self-imposed semi-starvation and scanty clothing or, as the villagers said, 'hoo'd clammed and starved hersel to deoth.' To get money was Jim Wilson's ruling passion, and now he had fully determined to see about a public-house,

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for in that way he saw much money was gained quickly. He took out his cut, and was soon on his way to Darley with it.

On giving in his work at the factory, the overlooker told him he must bate him for several bad places in one piece, so he had only a little over nine shillings to receive, which put him sadly out of temper and made him declare 'he'd see if wouldn't do summat afore long.' So after receiving materials for the next week's work, he took up his bag and walked out into the town, going through street after street, looking eagerly for some eligible public-house, or even a 'Jerry Shop,' he did not mind. As ill luck (good luck he called it) would have it, on passing down a street near an iron foundry, he saw a bill on the walls of a small public-house, setting forth that on a certain day all the furniture, fixtures, brewing utensils, goodwill, &c., were to be sold. He thought it would be just the place for him, near a foundry too! mechanics are a thirsty lot, and he should have plenty of custom. He inquired of a man who was standing at the door of one of the houses near, how it was the public-house was to let, and received the information that the former landlord had gone into the wholesale brewery line, having made a good deal of money in the public-house. Jim thought he had found exactly what he wanted, and looking again at the bill of sale, saw the words, 'by public auction or private treaty,' with the person's name of whom inquiries could be made.

He hurried home with his work; and telling Peggy of his good luck in finding a place just to his mind, dressed himself in his best, and returned to Darley to call upon the man appointed to treat with applicants for the public-house.

The man was in his office, ready and willing to be questioned concerning that 'well-accustomed (more's the pity!) public-house, known by the name of the "Black Swan."' Jim found that a high figure was asked for the furniture, good-will, &c., but still it was within his power to give it, for he had a customer ready for his cottages, and he knew he could soon sell the live stock to the same man; besides, he had a little money in the savings' bank. A few days were all he had to decide in, but he had pretty well settled already, and went home quite elated with his prospects, calling on his way at the house of the man who wanted the cottages to say he could have them at the price he had offered, and asking if he couldn't take his cows and poultry. After considerable haggling

as to price, it was finally nettled that he should take the whole stock off Jim Wilson's hands, and the money was to be paid over to him

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on the following Monday—it was then Saturday—and with a feeling of pride at having done so good a day's work he passed on his way.

Arrived at home he told Peggy and Ned, who had returned from helping a neighbouring farmer with haymaking, what he had done, and both expressed unbounded delight. Ned declared, 'I'd liefer brew than goo haymakin'; it meks mi had wartch.' Visions of handsome dresses and gay bonnets floated before Peggy's mental gaze. Her talent for fine dressing had been effectually curbed by her father, who said, 'Owt as wur cleyn an' dacent wod do for Clifton looans;' and her smartest dress was only a brown merino. Her best bonnet had but one piece of dark-blue ribbon over it, 'an' nather bow nor ends,' as Peggy ruefully remarked, when her father brought it home from the village modists; 'an sick a shape! welly enough to mek 'osses tek boggart when they see it,' as she further remarked.

'Well, feyther, yoa'll happen let me hev a new blue gown deawn to th' greawnd, waint yoa?' asked Peggy. 'Why, lass, aw dunnot know as aw con let thee hev owt new just yet; it'll tek o' mi brass fur to buy things as we'se want; but bide a bit, an' tha'st hev a blue geawn, an' two or three moar clooas as weel, if tha'll do thi best to help me in wer new wark.'

'Why, feyther, aw'se be shamed i' mi owd brown frock, it's so shoart an' skimpin; foaks ull laugh at me.'

'Not they! laugh at thee! if tha'll moind thi own business, they'll ha summat else to think on nur lookin whether tha'rt i' lung frocks or shoart uns. Hows'ever, tha con hev nowt new neaw, for aw've nowt to pay for it wi.'

Ned too was ready with a request: 'Aw say, feyther, we'st noan hev egg an' bacon poy to Sunday's dinner when we'n getten to Darley, shall we? Yoa'll let us have a dumplin', waint yoa?'

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'Howd thi din, lad, wod con ta hev better t'an eggs an' bacon? Awm noan gooin' to let thee mek thisel' badly wi' eitin', aw con tell thee; but yo'd best go to bed; aw'se happen let thee hev a blegberry dumplin' to-morn, if tha'll ger up toime enough to gether 'em:

'Oh, aye, awm sure aw shall; so, good neet, Peggy, an' moind tha meks us a good fatty crust.'

'Ger owt, tha greedy thing, tha cares abeawt nowt but eitin,' was Peggy's reply; 'good neet to thee,' she added, 'an' good neet, feyther,' to Jim, as he went up-stairs.

When Peggy got to her own little room she pondered over the coming change in their life, and there were only two subjects of regret in her heart: one that she couldn't have new clothes, and the other a certainty that Tom Sparlin would not like her serving in a public-house; for the said Tom had what the villagers called a 'sneakin' kindness' towards Peggy, and she rather liked him; but he was a teetotaler, and she knew he would disapprove of her father's plans altogether.

'Bod what need I care for Tom Sparlin?' she solilloquized. 'Aw'se get plenty o' chaps i' Darley. Here its different, wheer one never sees a dacent lad free year end to year end. He mud do weel enuff; bod aw'se tak no faut findin' fra him, I know. I can pike among 'em when I get to Darley. I'm noan so feaw'—looking at herself in her small glass. 'An' when I get a blue gown, an' a collar, an' a red bow, I'se look better than i' this thing,' flinging her old brown frock on the bed.

Peggy was a pretty country girl; an abundance of wavy brown hair, large, bright, dark eyes, fair skin, and rosy round cheeks, made up for the disadvantages of a nose that was not purely Grecian in its outline, and a mouth whose curves were not exactly like Cupid's bow.

She was tired, however, and her cogitations were neither long nor profound.

Ere the sun had fairly risen, Ned was up and off on his blackberry hunt. Old Tom Watson was out, too, enjoying the sweet fresh morning air, and encountered Ned in one of the pretty lanes that led from Clifton. 'Ned! what are ta for, lad?' said Tom, as he saw Ned clambering over a ditch.

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'Gerrin blackberries for a dumplin', said Ned. 'Wot a Sunday moarnin?' said Tom. 'Ay, aw reckon a body mun eit a Sunday as weel as ony other day,' said Ned. 'Ay, but couldn't tha o' gotten thi blackberries yesterday?' 'Noa, I wur hay-mekkin' an' hed no time.' 'I think tha'r i'th' wrang, Ned; but heaw's thi feyther settled abeawt th' public-heawse? I heard tell he wur after one when he geet to Darley yusterday.' 'Oh, he's baan to tek one to morn; he's sowl th' cottages, so tha'll hev a new landlord.'

'I'm gradely sorry, Ned, I am lad. I thowt he'd ne'er goo into th' public loine;

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an' o' to mak a bit o' brass! for o' he hes mooar than monny a poor lad neaw. An' thee, Ned, tha'll noan be able to walk i'th' bonny looans ov a moarnin an' sniff at the sweet air, or hear th' layrocks singin'. Whoy, hear thee at that'n' (pointing to a small speck which was all that could be seen of a lark fluttering upwards to 'heaven's gate'); 'does ta think as th' songs o' drunken chaps ull be owt loike that?' 'Now, I dar say not,' said Ned; 'but we're happen hev a donce, an then aw's't hear fiddles, an' happen a foife un a drum, an' aw's't loike it a good deol better. An' aw'se not hev to goo hay-mekkin ony mooar; an' i'ts no use thee tokin, Tom, fur its o' settled, an' wer baan next wick. Awm gooin' i'th' 'tother field, so good moarnin' to thee, Tom; tha'll come an' see us, waint to?' 'Now, Ned, I cannot goo into a public-heawse, but to con come an' see me whene'er ta loikes.'

And so they parted, Ned to his blackberry gathering, and Tom to view the 'gracious prodigality of nature.'

Peggy, and her father, too, were up betimes and actively bestirring themselves attending to the cows, pigs, and poultry. After all was done, breakfast over, and the blackberry 'dumplin'' set on to boil, they all set off to church, for Jim Wilson was strict in the performance of his religious duties, and insisted on the punctual observance of them by his children.

In returning from church, Jim Wilson was questioned on his bargain—for news of his undertaking had read through the village—and most of his neighbours congratulated

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him on his good luck, and this put him on the best of terms with himself and his prospects.

When they got home, dinner was soon made ready by Peggy, Ned walking after her to am the 'dumplin' safe out of the pan. Alas! for the uncertainty of human happiness. To his great annoyance the 'dumplin' had burst, and, while the water it had been boiled in had gained in flavour, it was decidedly weak.

'It's olez th' way,' said Ned, 'this con never mek a crust good to owt; tha'rt a gradely foo at cookin' owt, Peggy.'

'Aw cannot mek moor o'th' cat than th' akin, tha greyt mopus!' was her angry reply. 'Aw hedn't flour to mek th' crust tick enough; tha's try thi hond next time, an' see wet tha con do wi' a hondful o' flour an' a bit o' bacon fat.'

'Howd yer dins, booath on yoa! interrupted the father, 'yoan too much to eit, an' it meks yoa prodigal.'

Dinner was eaten in silence, Ned occasionally casting angry looks at Peggy, and she flashing back scornful glances in return. After all was cleared away, and Jim had smoked his pipe, it was time to go to afternoon service, and Peggy grew a little nervous as to the result of her interview with Tom Sparlin, which was sure to take place after leaving church. They all went to the little village church again, and Peggy's eyes wandered in search of Tom Sparlin, but he was not in his usual place. I fear her mind was more occupied conjecturing the probable cause of his absence than with the service. In going out of church, Tom's sister whispered to Peggy, 'Ar Tom's badly, vara badly he is. I think he's gotten a faver; will ta come an' see him, Peggy? He'll be gradely fain if ta will.' 'Noa,' said Peggy, 'my feyther ull be mad if I do; but tha con tell him as I'm vast sorry as he's badly, an' tell him as we're baan fro Clifton next week.'

After this the day passed wearily with poor Peggy, who cared more than she would admit even to herself for Tom's welfare.

She went to talk to Tom Watson after 'milking time,' and many were the sage counsels he fortified her with, and her parting words to him showed he had made some impression. 'Tha's welly med me hate thowts o' gooin' into th' public-heawse, Tom. I ne'er thowt uv o'th' misery ther wur at whoam wol chaps wur singin' songs an' drinkin'

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ther gills. I'm noan loike to fill 'em for 'em; but good neet to thee, Tom. I'se come and si thee sometoimes ov a Sunday afternoons.' 'That's reet, Peggy, lass; thee come ony toime; tha'll ne'er come wrang. Good neet, an' God bless thee, lass, and keep thee fro harm! Just thee think whene'er to sees chaps flingin' ther brass abeawt, as th' little brids awhoam are happen beawt owt to pick at. Good neet agen, Peggy, ma bonny lass.'

Her father and Ned were watching over the dying fire, and she said good night to them, and went to her own little room. She felt more charitably towards the brown merino dress and the frightful bonnet this night, and even put them away with care and gentleness.

'Thoose hannot been bowt eawt o' wot poor childer should ha hed,' was her murmured

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murmured soliloquy; 'after o, ther's nowt loike feelin' as one's arnin' a livin' beawt hurtin' onybody. Wot shall I do at partin wi Cherry (her favourite cow)? I ne'er thowt o' that. Poor Cherry! Ther ull be nub'dy so kind to it as I've been. Next foak ull happen lick it, for it's vast stupid road as it teks.'

This picture brought the tears to her bright eyes. 'Poor Cherry!' sighed Peggy, and she leaned out of the open window to ponder over Cherry's probable 'licking' for obstinacy, and her fancy wandered to Tom Sparlin in his sickness. 'Poor Tom! Bod he's a stout lad, an' he'll soon be wool agen, I'se warrant.'

Peggy was but a simple country girl, with no romantic tendencies; feeling so strong herself, she could but dimly grasp the notion of any one else's weakness, or she might have indulged in that 'luxury of woe,' which sensation novelists portray their heroines as indulging in at the slightest ache developed in the frame of their adorers. Or she might have found aids to sentimentality in the pretty, stragglin' village, with its whitewashed cottages, here and there climbing June roses twining over their porches; or in the last notes of our northern nightingale, the thrush, trilling out its sweet liquid notes to the moon, as it rose to mingle with the twilight; or in the tower of the old church, as it

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reared itself—sadly rounded from its original squareness by the ivy—between her and the western horizon. She apostrophized none of these, but looked with loving, regretful eyes on all; never had they seemed so beautiful before. When the thrush had sung his last song and all was silent, she said:

'It's a bonny place, it's a varra bonny place. I'se ne'er loike onywhээр as weel. God bless us o' and mek us better!' She closed the window, and was soon in the land of dreams, where she saw troops of famishing children pass before her with hungry eyes, and Tom Sparlin drinkin in their own public-house, a degrade-looking sot, instead of the fine, healthy, stout, young fellow she knew him last. Waking with a start, she muttered a 'bless us,' and fell into a sound, dreamless slumber.

The next day passed with little to mark it. Jim Wilson to Darle, and in the evening the purchaser of the cottages came to look at his property. Peggy admitted him sulkily, saying next to nothing whilst he stayed, and muttering, 'I'm fain yo're gooin',' when he went.'

When her father returned, he informed Peggy that all was settled, and Ned was loud in his expressions of delight; but Peggy, who had again been talking with Tom Watson, said nothing. Her father looked keenly at her, but made no verbal remark. Ned said, 'Ar Peggy's frettin' becose Tom Sparlin's badly i'th' favor,' for which observation he received a slap on the face with Peggy's porridge spoon by way of punishment. 'Na, 'gree, will yo',' said the father. 'Aw suppose Tom Sparlin's noan so badly bud wot he can mend, an' we'd best goo to bed, or else we're be hevin' to leet a candle soon.'

And so the next two days passed rapidly in busy preparation for removing; and now the last has come, and after everything had been put on the cart, that was taking their scanty supply of furniture to Darley, Peggy was standing with her arm over Cherry's neck at the field-gate opposite, crying in utter abandonment of sorrow at parting with her favourite. Ned was clumsily attempting to comfort her, and almost crying himself. 'Ne'er heed, Peggy, tha con room an' see it, tha knows, an' we'se hev mooar fun by hofe i' Darley: fiddles, an' foifes, an' drums, an' dancin', an' a beef-steak dumplin' next Sunday; bless thee, lass, doant cry, tha make me soft.' 'Coom, Peggy, let's hev no moor

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o' thi silliness,' called her father; so she ran across into Tom Wilson's cottage, got hold of his band, and, after a hard, crashing grip, rushed out again.

'Come an' see me, Peggy, lass, as soon as thi feyther ull let thee,' he called after her; she nodded, and went after the cart, for Jim Wilson had found out that Tom had been talking to Peggy; he said he 'thowt it vast meon on him to set th' lass ogeon her feyther,' and he would speak to him no more, and had all but forbidden Peggy and Ned to do so. After a dreary, toilsome walk, each burdened with some piece of furniture they were afraid to trust in the jolting cart, Jim Wilson, Peggy, and Ned arrived in Darley, and at 'The Black Swan.' Peggy was thoroughly disheartened with the dirty, dingy appearance of the house, and remarked aside to Ned, 'I ne'er seed rich a place i' o' mi loife, I'se be welly killed afoar I get th' flures anpthin' loike.' The neighbours turned out to see the now arrivals, and

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and many were the sneering comments they made to each other about the furniture as it was lifted from the cart.

'Ther's a good monny o' them things bin med awhoam,' said one. 'Ger eawt, it's owd fashunt furniture, mon, wuth a dent mooar ten ony o' yer new-fangled rubbidge,' said another. 'I should loike to know who med that lass's frock, an' wheer hoo geet her bonnet fro,' was remark that brought an angry flush to Peggy's face; but the woman who had been looking after the house now made her appearance, looking as if she 'wur dazed loike,' as Peggy observed to Ned, and began to help them in with the furniture. It was soon got in, and the horse and cart were driven off by the man who had come with them.

Peggy set about her cleaning at once, and before nightfall had succeeded in making things look more comfortable. Only one day, and they were to open to the public; and so she had little time to think during the day, and was too tired to lie awake at night. A few wandering thoughts were given to Tom Sparlin, who, she had heard, was a 'bit better.'

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And now the eventful day had come, and Peggy had been practising, under her father's eye, how 'to fill gills beawt spillin' ony.' Ned had been kept at work in the brewhouse, getting initiated into its mysteries, and helping his father to put things to rights in the house; but to-day he was dressed in his best to help Peggy, and fill jugs for her; they expected to be busy, as it was pay day at the foundry.

At noon many called for gills, and Peggy had to run the gauntlet of their compliments or banter, sometimes feeling, as she afterwards told Ned, as if she could 'loike to fotch 'em a slap o'th' face for their forratness;' but on the whole getting through her first attempt with more steadiness than might have been expected from a raw country girl. Some remained drinking, as work was over at two on Saturdays. Some of their wives came looking for them, and Peggy thought of Tom Watson, when a little child, so wan and dirty, came and asked, 'Is my feyther here?' 'I don't know thi feyther,' said Peggy; 'come an' see,' opening the parlour door, where about a dozen men were sitting smoking and drinking. 'Ay, that's him,' said the child, pointing to one at the end of the room, and making his way to him, he said, 'Come, feyther, we'n had nowt to wer dinners yet, un aw'm welly clammin', soa is 'tother childer, an' my mother oon't ger up, hoo's so badly.'

'Ger whoam, tha little monkey, or I'll knock tha deawn,' was the response, in a brutal voice. 'Nay,' said Peggy, 'yo mun goa an' give 'em summat to ger a bit o' meyt wi.' 'I think if yo mind yoar own bizness it'll be beat for yoa,' said the man. 'Well, but give 'em summat out o yer wages,' said Peggy, 'th' choild looks as iv it wur welly clammin'; but no, the man would not stir, but called for more drink, which Peggy refused to give him until her father came; who finding what the dispute was about, sent Peggy off at once, and when he got her out asked, 'Wot does ta meon be sich loike wark? Does ta want to ruin me? If th' fella doesn't ger it here he'll goo somewheers else, an' I may as weel hev his brass as onybody else.' 'Well, but, feyther, his childers hed nowt to eit, an' he's sittin' here spendin' th' brass as should buy 'em summat fur o'th' week; an' his woife's badly an' cannot ger up.' 'I tell thee, Peggy, if tha begins ta think abeawt eitin' for other foaks, tha may varra soon hev nowt fur thisel; but o' this comes o' lettin' thee goo to Tom Watson's so mich; if ever I hear o' thee gooin' near him ogen, I'll

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lick thee, big as to art. So, now, thee fill that mon his glass, an' let's hev no mooar o' thi nasty ways.' Peggy obeyed with tears in her eyes, for she had been proposing to go and see Tom Watson the day after, but now that was impossible. She slily took the child, who was still standing by its father, a large piece of bread, which it ate greedily. Many other poor wives and children came looking for husbands and fathers during the evening. A quarrel began between two men, and they turned out to fight; the police were called, and at length peace was restored. For the first time Peggy saw women sitting drinking, for some remained with their husbands; and when, at last, twelve o'clock came, and all had to be turned into the street, Peggy felt sickened and wearied. Ned was not so elated as at first with his new work; he had been attending to company in the rooms, whilst Peggy was in the bar. 'I tell thee wot, I'm gradely toirt gooin' up an' deawn stairs o' neet. Wot are ta baan to mek us fur dinner to-morn, Peggy?' 'I dunnot know, an' I dunnot care; ax feyther.' 'Yo'll hev nowt beawt yo manidge better ten yo'n

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yo'n done to-neet next Sunday; but to-morn yo mun hev a beef-steak dumplin', as I promised yo. I've gotten three-quarters ov a peawnd o' beef to mek it on.' 'That ull not be mich apiece,' said Ned. 'It'll be a quartern o' beef, tha yung gormandizing rascot, an' heaw mich moor wod to hev?' 'I'd hev a peawnd, an' little enuff when yo're hard warked. But I'm baan to bed fur I'se hev plenty to do i'th' mornin', lookin' after yon barrels ov ale. I don't like public-heawse hofe as weel as I thowt I should. I'se not get to th' church, yo see, nor I'se not get to see Tom Watson, an' I wanted to goo an' see him.' 'If I yer o' thee gooin' to see Tom Watson I'll punch thee when theaw comes back, I will.' 'Come, feyther, I'se noan stop' punchin', so yoa'd better not toke o' that way. But I'm gooin' to bed. Good nest to thee, Peggy.' 'Good neet, Ned.'

The next morning was passed b Peggy in cleaning away the receding night's debauch; and, as she bent over her pail, some angry tears fell into it. Ned, coming in, said, 'Wot are ta cryin' for, Peggy? Are ta badly?' 'Noa; but I thowt I med ha' gwon to Clifton to-day, fur I'm welly pisoned wi' th' smell o' drink an' smook; an' now mi feyther

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waint let me goo fur fear on me seein' Tom Watson. He's a gradely, good owd fella, he is! a foine seat better ten mony a one as co's him. An' if I'm to be teed to th' heawse i' this rooad, roe run away an' go back to my windin' and dairy wark; one had one day i' th' week, but if this hes to be th' way, we'se hev nowt.' 'Weel, Peggy, I'm i' th' same fettle misel'; tha sis I con't go nather; but thee get thee cleynin' done and I'll goo an' see Tom Sparlin, an' then I con tell thee heaw he's gerrin' on.' 'Bless, thee, Ned! it's not so mich that, but it's nobbut rest as ta should goo an' ax abeawt him, so aw'll get dinner ready, so as tha needn't be baulked o' th' eawt to Clifton, an' tha mun tell me heaw o' looks, and pull me a fleawr or two.' 'Ay, ay, Peggy, aw'se do it for thee, but get done.'

Peggy was true to her word, and dinner was soon ready, and though Ned grumbled about 'sich bits o' meyt,' as Peggy pretended she didn't want any, and gave him her share of the 'dumplin,' he was appeased. But Jim Wilson turned on Peggy, saying, 'Neaw, aw'm not baan to hey tbee peawtin' an' fo'in' eawt wi' thi meyt, Peggy; tha mon eit or I'se hev thee badly, an' I con noan afford to her onybody else to wark i' thi place, so lets' hev noan o' thi marlocks here.'

Ned went to Clifton, and Peggy sat at the window wondering if Tom Sparlin would send any message by him. Just before the time for opening the doors of 'The Black Swan' she saw him coming down the street, 'Weel, Ned, who did ta see, an' heaw's everybody i' Clifton?' 'Tom Sparlin's welly better, an' everybody else is varra weel, nobbut Tom Watson, an' he's badly, varra badly; th' doctor ses he'll noan live lung, beawt he taks a torn.' 'Whoy, tha never ses so; poor owd Tom! poor owd lad! an' nub'dy to do owt for him!' 'Yoi, but ther is, o' th' wimmin's fain to do summat for poor owd Tom; he's ne'er done owt but reet to folk, an' neaw they'n do ther best for him. Aw am sorry—an' Peggy but wheer's mi feyther?' 'Oh, goan to yon fella's deawn th' street; but wot are to baan to tell me?' 'Oh, I went to see owd Tom, for o' my feyther sed he'd punch me.' 'Bless thee, Ned, tha did rest, lad; an' wot did th' owd fella say?' 'Whoy, he could nobbut speyk varra low deawn, an' he says I'm fain to see thi, Ned, bod tha monnot stop here, lad; gie my love to Peggy, an' tell her to think o' wot I tow'd her; an' tell thi feyther aw'm sorry he's goan into th' public. Good bye to thee;—go whoam an'

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be a gradely, good lad, an' God bless thee.' This was told with many pauses and sniffs, for Ned's tears were falling fast, and Peggy sobbed aloud.

In the midst of their grief, Jim Wilson came in: 'Neaw, what's to do? wotever are ta thinkin' on, Peggy? i'ts toime to oppen th' dooar; wot are yo booath roorin' abeawt?' 'Oh, feyther, poor owd Tom Watson's deein' o'th' faver, an' he's sent word as he's sorry yo're gooan into th' public loins. Con I goo to see him, feyther? You known heaw good he wur to us when ony on us wer badly.' 'Goo to see him! naw tha connot; tha mun moind wot tha's gotten to do; Tom Watson's nooan ov a deein' sort; he'll get weel ogeon, I'm warrant: an' as to bein' sorry abeawt me, I'se do weel enuff if yo'll behave yersels; but get to th' wark, lass.' 'Eh, feyther, it's poor wark when th' wages is med owt o'th' badness o' folk; I'se ne'er tak to public-heawse keepin', an' to wark on a Sunday un o! I'm sick on it.' 'Oh dear a' me! wor ther

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ther ever onybody, so withered wi' bad childer as I am? Peggy, tha'll mek me lick thee soon; get to th' place this varra minnut, I tell thee! an' moind tha doesn't spill or give th' glasses too full; an' see of tha connot mek thi face a bit moor good tempered, fur tha'rt enuff to fretten folk.'

And now group after group of idlers dropped in: old men with tottering steps and grey hairs, that awoke no reverence; middle-aged men, and some times their wives, with children whose wasted limbs and wan faces told of want and neglect; young men, and young women who were beginning the downward course by sipping with the young men. It was a melancholy sight. The ribald jest and coarse long went round, and girls whose heads ought to have been abased in shame, laughed with the loudest. The minds that ought to have been an unsullied page were blackened and polluted with the influences drink carries in its train. Mothers seemed weary of their children, and shook them roughly when the poor little creatures wailed for fresh air. About eleven o'clock, when most had gone noisily home, and only three men were left, who were disputing on theological matters, and when the millennium was to come, the same little, starved-

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looking child, who came the day previous, came carrying a tiny, dirty-looking baby in his arms. 'Is my feyther here?' he asked. 'Ay,' said Peggy; 'heaws thi mother, an' is that yo're babby?' 'My mother's varra badly, and this is eawr little Jane; look at it! its only hed a sup o' milk o' day; will yo gi me a bit mooar tommy?' Peggy got up, and gave him a bit of bread without speaking, and then looked at the baby. 'Poor little thing! tha shouldn't hev it out; it should be i' bed now.' 'We hev no beds; ther o' gone to th' pop-shop,' said the child. 'Then wot is th' mother lyin' on?' asked Peggy. 'Up o' th' floor, an' nowt to cover her but an owd frock; but hoo's sent me for my feyther?' 'Well, he's in theer,' Peggy said, pointing to the door opposite her. The child went in almost staggering under the weight of its light burden. 'Come, feyther,' Peggy heard, 'my mother's sent me for yo to come whoam.' 'Ger away, tha little nowt, I'll larn thee to follow me up an' deawn.' Peggy got up, for she heard a scream and a heavy fall. On going in, she saw the man lying on the floor and the child and baby partly under him; he had fallen in bending forward to strike the child for begging him to come home. Peggy screamed for Ned and her father to come and lift the men up, for one man in trying to help his comrade had fallen partially over him. When they came and lifted him up, the oldest child was not much worse, but the baby was motionless. 'It's killed,' said Peggy. Ned ran for a doctor, whilst the three men stood staring idiotically at the poor little infant in Peggy's arms; the little lad stood with his face hidden in Peggy's gown crying loudly. The doctor came. It was too true! The life so lately given by the Giver of all Life had been crushed out of the baby by the weight of its brutal father. 'Is it dead?' sobbed the little brother; 'oh! what'll my mother say; oh, father! yo've killed it, yo hev!' and many such like expressions the poor frightened lad uttered. But who was to tell the sick mother? Peggy was forced to go with the little boy. When they got to the house there was no light. The drunken father and husband followed partly sobered, and drivelling and crying. 'Is that thee, Charlie?' asked a feeble voice. 'Ay,' said the lad. 'An' who hes ta getten wi thee?' But Peggy went forward a step or two in the dark. 'Au dunno heaw to tell yoa wat's to do as aw'm com'd, but the little babby's getten hort wi' its feyther tumblin' on it—an'—an'—.' 'Its deod, aw know! Oh! gie me my poor little babby, my poor little killed lamb—lay it deawn beside me, an' let me feel its little face.' Peggy put

it down beside her, sobbing loudly. 'Ay, cowl! cowl! my little chylt! Oh, this drink! this drink! Oh, heaw aw wish thi mother wur wheer thou art, my poor inicent little chylt, as never harmed nub'dy.' Another woman or two dropped in, for the news soon spread. The father had got away in the confusion. A light was brought, and Peggy saw it was just as the child had told her; the mother was lying on the floor, and an old dress over her; paralysis prevented her rising from the floor, and she was frightfully emaciated. Peggy left as soon as she could, for she could not tell what to do, and she was in terrible grief to see such misery.

There was little sleep for Peggy that night. In the morning a coroner's inquest was held upon the child. A verdict of 'Accidental death' was returned.

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The father was nowhere to be found; but many days after he was found crushed to death at the bottom of an old stone quarry, some distance from Darley, which he seemed to have fallen into, as he wandered in the dark on the night when another innocent was slaughtered by a more ruthless monster than Herod.

The poor bedridden mother and children were removed to the workhouse, where she lingered several months, then died. So was one more ruined home added to the swollen category.

A year soon passed away, and in that time great changes had come over the Wilsons. Peggy was no longer the rosy-cheeked damsel of old, but a pale, overworked woman. Ned was turning to bad company, and when he could not get money to lay bets on dog-fights or ratting matches, he sliely helped himself from the bar-till. Jim Wilson found that with all his striving he was not making money very fast; for twice he had been fined for being open at unlawful hours, and though the men from the foundry did drink hard, they ran up tremendous shots; and, as they often changed places, from drinking habits not being liked by their employers, he often got left in the lurch.

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Tom Sparlin remained true to Peggy, and she to him, and though he never came to see her at her father's house, yet they did manage to meet, and he fortified her in her determination to get away from the public-house keeping. If her father would not leave it Tom could marry her soon, and Peggy looked forward to the time as the beginning of happiness for her, and an escape from her father's tyrannical temper. Poor old Tom Wilson had died a few days after Ned's visit to him, and Peggy remembered his good counsels.

About this time her father got married to a woman he had known some time, and home grew so very uncomfortable for Peggy, that she walked out one morning and got married to Tom Sparlin, and went back to Clifton. She would have been quite happy in her little cottage but for one circumstance: Ned had got worse, and was found to be concerned in a robbery with violence on two lonely old women, who lived in an out-of-the-way place, and who were supposed to be possessed of a considerable sum of money. He was tried along with four others, found guilty, and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. Peggy went to see him in his prison cell, and found him cursing his ill luck, and blaming his father for keeping him so short of money. No remorse for the crime he had committed was expressed by him, and Peggy bade him farewell with an almost broken heart.

Jim Wilson's career after that was not a long one. His second wife proved to be a dissolute, drunken woman, who robbed him at every turn, and finally ruined him. On the day before the furniture, good-will, &c., of that well-accustomed public-house, the 'Black Swan,' were to be sold, he was found drowned in the River Darron, and so ended his miserable life.

Ned did not live to return, and Peggy might have lived happy but for the recollections of the horrors related in this story. They are facts, and I leave them to give their own warning.