

and will be, made intelligible to all men. The truth asks no more than a fair field, but most of the defenses that men raise round it act as barriers to make it inaccessible. It is really like beauty, when unadorned, adorned the most, when undefended, inviolable. One of the gravest dangers the church has to encounter is that of creating a prejudice against the truth by her very anxiety to safeguard it. Men who believe that in Jesus Christ God has come into the world, calling men once for all to judgment and mercy, have enough to unite them through all conceivable disagreements about minor things. And every lover of the American churches will pray that they may be kept in this unity, and brought out through all the controversies that await them into a large room.

WILD MAG.

IV.

BY KATHERINE PEARSON WOODS.

Aye, she had to repent.

Margaret Minton, washed, clothed, ransomed from the law, became a prey to that insurrection of an ill-used, nervous system, familiarly known as "the horrors," which to her were a thousand-fold more horrible than if she had never known aught beyond and above the slums. All the scenes and faces of her pure childhood came about her, veiled in a bloody mist, distorted and hideous; fingers pointed at the woman who had outraged womanhood, mocking voices recounted to one another her offenses.

Ruth scarcely left her day or night, though there were plenty from the workers at the mission to share her vigils, but her voice, her hand had a power to quiet the sufferer possessed by none other. Ruth said it was the power of love and professed to have received it from God in answer to prayer, "because it had once been so hard for her to love such poor souls!"

Forgive her, reader, she was only a fanatic.

Prayer seemed to soothe the patient, but for herself she would not pray; yet, aided by medicine and a constitution originally excellent, she grew steadily better and afterwards learned to give thanks. When once more in her right mind, that is, in her normal condition, she professed a penitence which, if not real, certainly deceived herself, coupled with a determination to live a better life, of which she gave immediate and excellent fruits.

The Ferns had been able, through unsolicited donations from without, to rent the whole of one tenement house and to fit up some of the rooms as dormitories for such strays as Margaret had been, in which work she now became a sort of lay assistant, cooking, washing and nursing with untiring zeal and, as it seemed, all at the same time. Yet the Ferns were not quite satisfied about her. There was a troubled look in her eyes, a sense of strain and effort in all that she did—natural enough, if she felt her penitence a compulsion and were holding down the appetite within her in her own strength.

There had been at the mission a series of meetings of exceptional fervor, no noisy demonstrations, but a great outpouring of the Spirit, whereby many were saved. For the first time Margaret Minton had been a worker in this line also; her own heart had thrilled with the enthusiasm around her, and she had gone from one to another of those who had been gathered in, sinful,

ragged and desperate, commanding, exhorting and entreating them to repent. She was very tired when it was all over, for such scenes make large drafts upon the reserve forces both of soul and body. Alas! therefore, for those who engage in them and whose daily life is not such as to accumulate a larger supply of spiritual energy than they are nightly called upon to expend. The Ferns were still surrounded by weeping penitents when Margaret, suddenly remembering a duty at their home which needed attention, slipped unobserved from the hall and took her way homeward alone. As she passed one of the numerous saloons which abounded in that neighborhood the door swung open, and there fronted her, red-faced, drunkenly hilarious, Lemuel Dunn.

"Well, if it ain't Mag!" he cried, with an oath. "Mag, as pretty and as much a lady as ever, by —! Give us a kiss, old girl!"

Margaret was silent; a great cold came upon her. You see, she had loved this man, not tamely or decorously, but with the mad, fierce passion of a savage. She did not speak, she scarcely breathed, there was no strength in her for resistance as he drew her within the reeking hell whence he himself had just come forth. *He had gone down hill fast since they parted; the vices he had mocked in her had taken fast hold upon him and, added to his own, had made him a very devil.*

"Come, Mag," he said, "I know you're tired of that canting, pious lot you've struck up with; send them to —, and let's have a glass for old acquaintance sake."

The fumes of the liquor struck up into her brain, the old, mad thirst revived; she drained the glass at a gulp and held it out to be refilled. The old garish lights, the old gaudy decorations, the old evil faces were around her, and the old evil words came trippingly to her tongue.

"Here's luck to you, boys," she cried, with such words as the angels hear but we need not read. In one moment she had fallen back into her old self; she had lost the fruits of many months of hard won victories; she was again "the terror."

"Hurrah for Mag!" cried the bar-tender, an evil-faced wretch, whose only joy seemed to be to aid in the ruin of immortal souls. "Hurrah for Mag! I knew she'd never stick to cold water and religion. Boys, here's Wild Mag come back to us again!"

"Yes!" she screamed, "Wild Mag I am and Wild Mag I'll be even in hell! Hurrah for freedom!"

Al, God—freedom! And yet, had not the life of those months indeed been slavery?

Three days later Ruth found her, plunged in depths lower even than this—depths which we need not describe. She shrieked and trembled at sight of the radiant, holy face.

"Maggie, dear child, are you tired of this? Will you come home?"

The woman could only moan. After a while she said: "Little Humpback, go away. Go away before the devil in me breaks loose and tears you to pieces. No; I'm not coming with you. The drink has got me again, and I know too well what leaving off means to try that game any more. I fought hard against it, but it is too strong for me. Let me alone. Hell ain't such a bad place until you try to get out of it."

"Will God let you alone?" asked Ruth.

"But I see how it is! You thought you had to conquer that wild beast craving! You—poor, weak child that you are. No wonder you failed! Why, Maggie, it is conquered, conquered long ago! Christ has conquered it for you, nailing it to His cross; you have only to accept His victory!"

The bright, glad eyes, the thrill of triumph in the voice, the sweet, radiant face—these pen and paper cannot reproduce; the spirit behind them carried home the words to Margaret Minton's heart. She sprang to her feet; for a moment she looked into Ruth's up-lifted eyes half-incredulously, then, flinging upward both wild arms in a rapture of exultant freedom, as though veritable shackles had fallen from her wrists, she burst into a passion of tears, and falling upon her knees upon the floor, foul as it was with unnameable filth, she laid her glad yet sorrowful face upon the faithful heart of Little Humpback.

It was a year later that Lemuel Dunn was picked up by the Rescue Wagon. He had sunk so low as to be an easy convert, for when such as he have lost all on earth they will often turn to heaven. When he had been restored to himself, to a respectable way of life and to good wages, he sought out Margaret Minton and asked her to marry him. "For I know I ain't done right by you, Maggie," he said, "but if you'll overlook it for once, I'll try to make you a real good husband."

"I don't doubt it, Lem," she said gently. He looked at her wistfully. "But you ain't fond of me no more?" he said.

"Fond of you?" she answered. "Yes, I think I am, Lem; I think I shall be always. But you don't understand. I died that day that Little Humpback found me again, died to the old life and all I had known in it. Ask me something else, something very hard indeed, but don't ask me to marry you, dear, for I cannot."

"No," he said, "I see that; I see it, Maggie."

He took her hand in his, half timidly. "You're far too good for me, that's it," he said. "Maybe you always was, and that's why I despised you for being below me. Sometimes it happens thataway. Well! there's one thing about God—He's just. Every hard word I said to you has been said of me, all I made you suffer has come back on me, the wrong I taught you I done myself, and now when I see what I've lost you won't marry me."

Margaret could not find an answer and after a moment he said, "Good-by, Maggie, I guess you're right."

"Good-by, Lem, God bless you," she answered. She watched him out of sight with a gentle smile upon her lips, and then with a quiet heart went back to her work at the side of Little Humpback.

The melancholy of old age has a divine tenderness in it, which only the sad experiences of life can lend a human soul. But there is a lower level—that of tranquil contentment and easy acquiescence in the conditions in which we find ourselves; a lower level, in which old age trudges patiently when it is not using its wings.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

There is more than one kind of benevolence. There are some men who never put their hands in their pockets, who yet give away a great deal in their faces and manners.—*Lowell's Letters.*