

The Bee's Home Magazine Page

When Santa Claus Forgets!

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Drawn for The Bee by Windsor McKay

Power of Will to Subdue Alcoholism

Many Men Who Have Redeemed Themselves Have Proved that Practically Every Victim Can Escape from Curse.

By DR. CHARLES H. PARKHURST

To any readers of this page of The Bee who may chance to be victims of the alcoholic habit I want to address half a dozen paragraphs in regard to the will and in regard to the will power considered as means of changing one's life and its habits. The will is a faculty that no one can exactly describe, except that it is tremendously effective if we will let it work. If a man is a drunkard and does not want to give up drinking then he won't. But if he is a drunkard and does want to give up drinking then he can.

There is much said about alcoholism being a disease, and there is truth in that way of putting the matter. But because it works disease in the body it does not follow that it crushes the power of the will, and it is the will that is going to settle the matter, or that can settle the matter if we will let it.

There are too many cases that we all know or have read of where will has successfully crushed the drinking habit to leave room for supporting that it has not the power to do so. The trouble is not with the will, but with the failure to use it.

I was talking a few days ago with a man whom I had been observing with some interest, and he told me his story. He seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary, and yet had the appearance of being a straight sort of fellow and abounding in health and good spirits. It seems that from the age of about 15 until he was over 30 he drank hard and pretty steadily. He reduced himself to extreme poverty and was refused a cup of coffee because he could not pay for it.

That experience gave him a sudden sense of degradation and he said to himself abruptly: "I am done with drink." And he was. When he told me his story he must have been 45. In the meantime he told me he had not tasted a drop. His face and general bearing indicated as much. He was telling the truth. All those twelve years of whisky he had had as well as good as anybody's, but had not used it.

Another case that I was once very familiar with was that of a younger man who during most of the time for thirty years was soaked with liquor. His debauches were fearful, sometimes continuing for days. He considered his own condition hopeless. It was recognized by his friends that his will was conquered and that he was sunk into a condition of slavery from which there was no emancipation.

And yet his case had this peculiar feature. He was accustomed each year to spend four or five months in the country. The people of the country town had no knowledge of his habits. When there lived the life of a total abstainer. He declared eloquently against the drink habit; was active in closing saloons. The pride he took in being held in good repute helped to keep him up. But immediately he returned to his winter home, where he was known as a drunkard, he collapsed and celebrated his return with a debauch.

There was nothing the matter with his will. He could have controlled himself if he had wanted to. These people should not be babbled and pitied because they are helpless. They are not helpless. They had rather drink than exercise the power, the will-power, that God gave them and which it is wicked to misuse.

If many of those that have been the worst inmates had not shown that they could stand erect and get the best of the habit, when they choose to, we might not speak so confidently. But as it is, such cases disprove the whole theory of helplessness.

For the purpose of illustrating what a tremendous thing the will is, and what it can accomplish against the most adverse circumstances I want to relate a story which may be some encouragement to whiskey victims, although it has nothing to do with whiskey, by the late William C. Prime, entitled, "Among the Northern Hills." Mr. Prime was a great lover of New England and, as a man fond of the line and the fly, he had made himself a name in the trout fishing brooks of the region and with the householder that lived along their borders.

In this way he picked up no end of incidents, some of them funny, some of them pathetic, but all exceedingly readable. Among others was one that had to do with an old lady and her son. She not only lived in New England, but was full of the New England spirit, and that spirit included, among other things, a will that was solid as adamant and as forceful as a catapult. It should be premised that as to her son, she was not fond of him, the reason for which the story does not explain.

She lived upon a large farm and was in control of its affairs and supposed that the farm was her own. She had been mistress of it for so long a time that a misunderstanding in regard to actual legal ownership could easily have arisen. The time came, however, for the old lady to die; at least her condition pointed very manifestly in that direction. The change came upon her suddenly. The doctor came post haste and the lawyer followed in his wake, having been summoned for testamentary purposes.

"Esquire," she said, "I am going to die and I want to make my will, disposing of this farm."

"Madame," he replied, "the farm is not yours. You have simply held it in trust under terms of a will that requires that on your decease it should pass into hands of your son."

"Esquire, do you mean that if I die this property is going to belong to my son?"

"Certainly," said the lawyer.

"Well, then," said she, "I am not going to die."

Whereupon she gathered herself up, strode across the room, got well up, and in fifteen years, surviving her son by four years. That is what the human will means when it is used and not discarded.



Santa Claus is not careless, but he is awfully busy and is likely to forget some folks who really should not be overlooked. It is on behalf of these The Bee is making its appeal for the deserving poor whose cases have been suggested by Mrs. Doane of the Associated Charities. But any contribution to a fund for the help of those who otherwise will have no Christmas is money well given, and The Bee is in favor of them all. It advocates the particular cases that it has mentioned to its readers because they are specific instances of where practical assistance is actually needed.

How a Jealous Wife Robbed Husband's Mother

By DOROTHY DIX

Do you remember that story of O. Henry's in which he tells of the man who dreamed that he died and went up before the Great Judge to receive his sentence? Just as he was about to be given a through ticket to Gehenna he observed that he was being sent down with a bunch of fat, prosperous-looking devils, and he inquired who they were.

"Why," replied the Recording Angel, "they are the men who hired working girls and paid them \$5 or \$6 a week to live on. Do you belong with them?"

"Not on your immortality," cried out the Lost Soul, "I'm only the fellow that set fire to an orphan asylum and murdered a blind man for his pennies!"

A good story, that. It gives you something to think about. There are crimes committed by perfectly respectable, smug, complacent people that make you feel that you would rather take your place with thugs and murderers on the judgment day than with them. For instance, listen to this little episode from real life, which I assure you is absolutely true, every word of it:

About thirty years ago a man died, leaving a very young wife and a little boy baby only 4 months old. He had paid for the little home in the small town in which they lived, but that was all that he left to his widow and his son. People wondered how they would get along. They said that she could sell the house for \$2,000 or \$3,000, and that would keep them for a while, but after that was gone heaven knew how they would live. But the little widow did not sell her home. She was a simple, domestic woman who had never been trained to any trade and had little education, but she had the inspiration that comes from a great love and an absorbing purpose, so she rolled up her sleeves and went to work.

She took in sewing—plain sewing, that pays a beggarly wage in rural communities. She baked cakes and sold them. She went out sick-nursing. She sold vegetables out of her garden. She stewed over a hot stove all summer putting up preserves for other people. She worked eighteen hours a day at anything and everything that would earn a penny. She denied herself everything except the bare sustenance that would keep soul and body together.

She kept her little home for her child. She kept her boy fat and well. She put him through the grammar school and high school and college by some miracle of financing, and she had her reward in seeing her son grow up into a splendid young man, who repaid her affection in kind, for the mother and son were chums and companions.

The young man went out into the world to seek his fortune. He got a position in a thriving manufactory, in which he made good, and after a bit he was given an opportunity to buy some stock in it. To enable him to do this the mother sold the little house that she had protected with her very heart's blood and gave him the money to invest in it. It was her all, the pittance that stood between her and the poorhouse, but she gave him her money as freely as she had given him her life.

Everything prospered. The investment proved a good one. The son was kind and attentive to his mother, and it seemed that she was going to be rewarded for all of her sacrifices. Then the inevitable woman came into the son's life.

Oh, no. She wasn't a bad woman with

a dark and lurid past. The son didn't fall into the toils of any siren. He became engaged to a perfectly respectable woman, in a perfectly respectable way, and they were married and had a beautiful church wedding. For the bride was a religious young person much given to social service work and convinced that she had a mission to uplift the world.

But she was jealous of the poor old mother. She resented her husband's affection for his mother and his consideration for her. She felt that every penny that he gave his mother was robbing her just that much. She made life a hell on earth for the unfortunate old woman, and at last forced her to leave her son's roof.

The old woman lives in a boarding house now, a forlorn old creature, with nothing to do and nowhere to go, because her life had been bound up in her son so long that she has no separate existence. Her son even visits her by stealth, so afraid is he of his wife, and she speaks of the "burden" that their mother-in-law is to them. They could

keep a car if John didn't have to support his mother.

She has even taught her little children to look with contempt upon their grandmother. And she justifies her conduct by saying that the old must give way to the young. It is the law of nature, she says, and the old mother accepts it without question, because she is mother to the last, and willing to efface herself if it will make things easier for her boy.

That is the story of a woman who has deliberately separated a mother from her son, robbed years of sacrifice of their just reward and broken an old woman's heart.

The old woman told me this story very simply, her sunken mouth working pitifully, and as I looked at her work-knotted hands and bent, old shoulders and thought of all that she had endured, I remembered O. Henry's story and I thought that at the judgment day I would rather cast in my lot with the outcasts than with those daughters-in-law who have turned their husbands' old mothers out of doors or come between a mother and her son.

Our Worth in the World

By BEATRICE FAIRFAX.

"So long as we love we serve; so long as we are loved by some one, I would almost say that we are indispensable, and no man is useless while he has a friend."—Robert Louis Stevenson.

"There isn't any place for me in life. Nobody wants me," a sad little girl I know sighs over and over. To her mere living is a desperate burden that she is hardly willing to carry. To her and all the other morbid souls who cannot find a place for themselves in the scheme of existence I want to talk today.

"So long as we love we serve," the beloved "R. L. S.," whose own handicap of desperate ill health did not prevent him from leaving the world books which are a veritable anthology of cheerfulness.

If there seems to be no place for you in life, isn't it because you are failing to give out to life any affection? The girl of whom I speak looks upon men as ravening wild beasts. Her attitude toward the whole scheme of existence is one of criticism. She sees nothing anywhere to like or admire or approve.

If she meets some one who is kind and unselfish she persists in regarding that person as a strange exception to the general rule. Within herself she has created a world that does not know kindness or love or unselfishness. And having created that world she lives in it without trying to give anything of help or faith.

She persists in regarding herself as an unhappy and lonely creature—and this in spite of the fact that she possesses one friend whom she knows she can trust, one friend who is loyal and kind, one friend for whom she feels affection and in whom she can place faith.

It never occurs to her morbid little soul that she owes something to that friendship, that because someone worth while has for her she has even at the moment of her greatest unhappiness a

place in life, and that she is of use to the world, in fact and in potentiality, because she has the friendship of a fine and admirable soul.

Every human being has a definite place in the scheme of things. It may be tiny for always, but at least it is a place; no one else can fill it, and the individual who is to put into it is a link in a chain. Just being alive carries with it a certain responsibility. How does any of us know that any other human being can do the work we find to hand? How does any of us know that anyone else can do the work we shirk in the mere fact that we fail to look for it?

None of us can look ahead so much as an hour; none of us knows what tomorrow will bring. It is possible that just by being at a given place at a certain time we may prove of inestimable value in the scheme of things—but more than this we all owe to life a state of "preparedness." To educate yourself so that you may be of service to the world in general and of value to those who care for you is a part of your duty.

Even though you feel friendless and unnecessary in the scheme of things you have no guarantee that the state of affairs is going to last in a world of change. How then dare you throw away your chance to make ready to be of value to life?

Being of service to the world is in itself valuable. It is the responsibility of life. No one has a right to sit around and think how miserable and lonely and unhappy and abused he or she is without recognizing the fact that there are plenty of people in like state. And if they are, any one who can think must figure out her responsibility to help other unhappy souls.

Life isn't a thing to run away from; it is a thing to meet with outstretched hands of service. Into those hands tasks shall be put and in the fulfilling of them lies more than mere usefulness to life—duty, to yourself and a chance to make a place for yourself in the world.

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