

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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NOT MY BUSINESS.

CHAPTER I.

"Well, Mrs Roy, I can't help thinking that you are just a bit of a fanatic," and Eric Ford smiled at the stately lady.

"Dear me, you flatterer!"

"Call it flattery, do you?"

"Certainly, to be a fanatic means that one has enough belief in something to suffer for it. And that is a rare possession in these days of easy tolerance."

"I'm not a drinker, as you know; but really, this 'touch not, taste not, handle not' attitude is beyond me. What harm would it do to have a little wine at the wedding to drink our healths in?"

"In the first place, Em. and I belong to the W.C.T.U., and we promise not only to abstain from strong drink, but to do all in our power to discourage its use by others. If I provide wine for my guests I am encouraging the use of it. In the second place, no young person shall ever say they got the first taste of wine in my home."

"Why are you a personal abstainer, Eric?" and she smiled. "Every man should be able to give a reason for his opinions."

"My reason is Emily."

"But surely she never asked you to abstain."

"No, she did not," he replied. "But," and he gave a whimsical grin, "she made it very evident that her husband would have to abstain. Now, I have no liking for alcohol, I have a deep love for Emily, and so I gave up the thing I didn't want to get what I greatly desired."

"Do you know why Em. and I are such earnest Prohibitionists?"

"No, Mrs Roy. I do not."

"It is a tragic story. We never speak of it; but I think you ought to know. It caused us to leave our Southern home and come North, where we are not known. My husband was coming home one evening. When just about to cross the road to our gate, he saw a young man lurching just in front of a fast travelling motor car. He sprang forward hurled the young man backward, but tripped, and was run over by the car. It was Bob, our only son, who was returning from a wedding party. He had drunk the healths in wine. It was the first time he was ever under the influence of liquor, and was crossing the street for home. Sobered by the accident, he went to the help of his rescuer. When he saw the dead body of his father, he rushed away, maddened by the horror of it. Next morning his body was found in the park. "Dead by his own hand."

Calmly she told her story, but the sadness of it touched the heart of the stalwart young man. He bent and kissed her cheek.

"How you must have suffered. I can understand now your horror of wine at weddings, and," he added reverently, "I can share it."

CHAPTER II.

Emily Roy was hastening home as fast as an express train could take her. She had been called to the bedside of a sick friend, and had remained until her convalescence. Her wedding day was only a week ahead, and much was to be done. She leaned out of the win-

dow talking to her friends as the express waited at the station.

"Look at that," she exclaimed. A man was just crossing from the hotel opposite and handed a glass of liquor to the engine-driver.

"That's no good," said her friend. But the train was off and good-byes waved.

"That should not be allowed," said Emily to her neighbour.

"It's not allowed, young lady." He smiled grimly. "I pity our driver if one of his 'Heads' is on this train."

The afternoon wore on, and soon they came to the last stop before the home station.

Emily glanced along at the engine. A man was leaning out and gesticulating wildly.

"I'm not going on until I get a drink," he said.

He was quickly pulled into the cab; the bell tingled, guard whistled, and off they went. And truly they went. Faster and faster they tore along, carriages rocked ominously. Down the long incline, with ever-increasing speed they rushed. Could the engine take the sharp curve ahead? She could not. She overleapt the rails, and piled herself and leading carriages in one red ruin.

Emily felt a crushing blow on her spine, and knew no more.

Hours later she opened her eyes. Mother and lover stood beside her bed. A gleam of consciousness had returned, her lips moved. Faintly she spoke, for strength was going. Eric laid his ear to her lips.

"Take care of mum. Goodbye, my love!" she murmured softly.