

**DRINK AND ☞
DRUDGERY.**

TWO SOCIAL SINS.

PROCESSIONAL.

THE LAST SONATA.

THE BARGAIN COUNTER.

RECESSIONAL.

BY FREDERICK L. H. SIMS.

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY, 1900.

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Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand nine hundred, by FREDERICK L. H. SIMS, in the office of the Minister of Agriculture.

“Vexilla regis prodeunt, fulget crucis mysterium.”

PROCESSIONAL.

Here a band of pilgrims lowly, glad we turn our willing feet
To the heavenly Canaan holy, there our glorious King to greet;
 On the Cross for us once bleeding,
 On the Throne now, interceding,
While against our ancient Foe forth The Royal Banners go.

Strikes the hour of grievous trial, Satan's hordes are gathering round,
Soon shall spill the final vial, soon the last dread trump shall sound;
 Midnight shades still darker growing
 Herald dawn with glory glowing,
While against our ancient Foe forth The Royal Banners go.

Though against the Rock of Ages waves of doubt fierce-beating roll,
But in vain Hell's tempest rages, each true heart shall win the goal;
 Waiting, we see Jesus seated
 Till the triumph be completed,
While against our ancient Foe forth The Royal Banners go.

So in faith triumphant singing, onward moves the Christian host,
God Triune its homage bringing, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;
 See, on high the Cross it raises,
 Chanting loud the Victim's praises,
While against our ancient Foe forth The Royal Banners go!

AMEN!

THE LAST SONATA.

THE LAST SONATA.

ARGUMENT.

This poem is founded on fact. A middle-aged, intoxicated man wandered into a city mission, and seating himself at the organ, astonished the audience by his wonderful performance on the instrument. To the horror of all, the music suddenly ceased, the stranger falling from the bench—dead!

In the introduction it is hinted that the drunkard's wife committed suicide after murdering her babe; and the terrible effects of the drink habit, once having the ascendancy, are brought out in the simile of the serpents that slew Laocoon and his sons. The thread of the narrative being resumed, the Sonata form is adopted in the changes of the metrification when the story of the drunkard's life is reached. Modulations and cadences are suggested by breaks in the metre.

It only remains to add that the *scherzo* movement was suggested by a personal experience with a very hard drinker, who, in a fit of delirium tremens, became very violent while laboring under the hallucination that the fiend was counting the money he had spent in drink, using his little daughter's coffin as a cash-box.



Where is he going, that wreck of a man?—Page 9.

THE LAST SONATA.

Staggering on up the dreary street,
Where is he going, that wreck of a man?
 Now in the gutter, and now to the wall,
 Covered with mud from a drunken fall,
Staggering on through the driving sleet!
 Where is he going? Ah! who can say
 Till the Books shall speak in the Judgment Day;
 Till the angels shall bring those mighty tomes
 And read out the record of blasted homes,
 Saddle each still
 With its work of ill,
 Tally the spoils
 Of those snakey coils,
Tell how the fires glowed, lurid and red,
As the work of the demons merrily sped,
While the bruised mother, with aching head
 And bursting heart, heard her children cry
For just a crust—one crust of bread,
 As the weary hours dragged slowly by:
No fire,—for the Fiend has stolen the coal
 To feed the flame of his greedy still:
No clothes, no food—for body or soul—
 Gone, gone—its hungry maw to fill
 The angry gale
 Drowns the infant wail,
And an echo comes on its frozen wings
Of the Song of Death that the suicide sings
 When light is gone,
 The heart a stone,
And hope is lost in the great Unknown.

Who is that? Gruesome and pale and chill,
Standing there at the window-sill?

 Standing there
 With that icy stare!

Why are the mother and babe so still?

And the fires—the flames in that murky den,
Where the fiends forge chains for the souls of men,

 Their sullen roar
 Will it ne'er give o'er

If mother and babe should wake no more?

 Nay, the glowering red of each copper snake

Doth ever a changing semblance take,
Coiling up through the mist of their fœtid breath
That ever distils in the Sweat of Death,
Grow they more fierce and cruel and strong,
Writhing and hissing with fiery tongue,
 Till they seem as the twain
 That parted the main
From Tenedos, noted in olden song,
Whose dreadful coils caught sons and sire^[A]
In the hopeless grasp of a horrid fate,
Rending their flesh with their fangs of fire,
Crushing their bones with a devilish hate,
Bursting their hearts with their sinewy weight,
Leaving them mangled beyond the ken
Of those they had known when they walked as men!

Where is he going? He hardly knows;
With his empty stomach and ragged clothes
He slouches on till the cheerful light
That shines through the Mission's windows bright,
Catches his eye, and he leaves the storm
For a seat in the corner, snug and warm.

Better days—as some would say—
That tumble-down building has known in its time,
Once 'twas a church (of stone and lime,
Made with hands, and hence its decay!)
After its fillip of fashion and show,
Under the tap of the auctioneer
It goes, with its trappings so quaint and drear,
And thus it came that the mission was blessed
With the old pipe-organ, thrown in with the rest.

The crowd in the pews that winter night
Would have put old Comus and crew to shame,
Wretched and withered and blind and lame,—
Heart of love! 'twas a saddening sight!
Bodies all tortured and warped by sin,
Misery vermin and rags and dirt,
A babe wrapped up in a worn-out skirt!
All brought in for the warmth and light
Out of the ache of the winter night.

Many a heart in that motley throng
Sorrows to-night with the Missioner,
Weeping the loss of Cecilia fair,
Joining now in the angels' song

coming now in the angel's song.

“Friends, is there any will take her place?”

The father asks in a trembling tone,

While the young folks sigh, and the old folks groan,—

His loss is theirs, for her music sweet

Was the one bright spot in that sin-cursed street.

Why does he rise, with those piercing eyes,

The “drunk” that we left in the corner, there?

Running his hands through his long grey hair,

What is that passion that rends his breast,

Working his face like a fiend, possessed?

Is he mad? Has the Drink-Demon crazed his brain?

“Wait, friends—see, now he is calm again.”

And the mission-leader and people gaze

As slowly he walks past the faded baize,

That serves as a screen to the organ-loft,

Speaking first to the father, in whisper soft—

“You may trust me, sir,—will you let me play?

“Oh, I must, once more, e’er I pass away!”

Steady! he’s seated, some stops are drawn,

Long bony fingers caress the keys,

Then, like the sigh of the evening breeze,

Murmuring, whispering, far away,

Crooning the close of a summer day,

’Neath the wizard touch of a genius bold

Rare melody floats from the organ old

Silent the listeners and eager all,

Courses the blood with a warmer glow,

Louder and bolder the measures flow,

Lengthy years crumble and totter and fall

At the elfin call

That is sounding clear,

Now there,—*now there*,

Now here,—*now here*,

From some wonder-horn in the rosy dawn—

Tan-ta-ra!

Tan-ta-ra!

Waked by the echoes of *Used-To-Be*,

Smiling, the friends of our childhood we see

Young once more,

As of yore

Yearning in hope over bright days in store.

Now the streaming song is telling of a youth with promise bright,
Of a tender mother's teaching to guard honor and the right,
Of a heritage of genius that may soar to loftiest height,
 Of a happy boyhood's prime;
Now he's stepping o'er the threshold into manhood's golden realm,
Will he choose a trusty pilot, put discretion at the helm?
For life's dangers soon will threaten, and fierce storms may overwhelm
 E'er he cross the sea of time!



Rosy lips pronounce the challenge, "Drink it, drink it, if you dare?"—Page 15.

Firm at first, he's steering wisely, mark the rhythm's steady beat,
He is winning fame and fortune by his art of music sweet,
Rung by rung he mounts the ladder, with ambition's tireless feet,
Till the goal is almost won;
Fashion woos him in her salons,—'mid the dancing and the glare
He forgets that mother's warnings, he forgets that mother's prayer,
Rosy lips pronounce the challenge, "Drink it, drink it, if you dare?"

rosy lips pronounce the challenge, Drink it, drink it, if you dare:

And the deed of hell is done!

Hark! 'Tis creeping, curling, crawling, curdling upward from below,
Where the groaning bass is struggling like a soul in mortal woe;
Kill it! Choke it! Stamp its life out e'er it strike its venom blow!

Bravely done, 'tis surely slain!

And the glorious song continues, bright success is coming fast,
But again the light is fading, and the sky is overcast,
Hark the pealing of the thunder, hear the raging of the blast,
See the flashing lightning's chain!

Will the gallant craft go under? Will that slimy serpent-thing
That again is creeping upward, choke the song of youth and spring?
Aye, 'twill never loose its victim till it strike its deadly sting

Deep within his broken heart,

List, 'tis hissing through the music like the serpent's cruel brood,
Friends and home and name have perished, he is lacking daily food,
He's an outcast and a wand'rer, by that very set eschewed

Who first sped the fiery dart.

Yes, the pleasant song is ended, mark the working of the spell
That has changed the march of triumph to a very dirge of hell,—

He is sinking to his doom;

And the broken measure halteth,—rises—falls,—a dying knell!

There is stillness in the room.

* * * *

Frenzied-wild from the organ then
A peal of fiendish laughter breaks
And forms a ghastly scherzo takes,—

Groans, wails and shrieks

Blended by art in a gruesome whole,
A demon's dance o'er a murdered soul,
While the people listen with fear-blanch'd cheeks,
As clearer and clearer the measures tell
Of a soul fast-chained in a drunkard's hell;
Above, below, from every side,
Crests of the seething spirit-tide,
Writhing and hissing the serpents start,
Fastening their fangs in his bleeding heart.

Clink, clink,—

'Tis the Demon—Drink,

Telling his gains in his victim's sight
After he's snared him and chained him tight;

“Clink, clink,
“Only think
“The bread that those blood-stained coins had bought
“If father had spent them as he ought!
“Clink, clink,—
“Oh, ’tis music rare——”
“Help! Take it from him—that cash box there!
“’Tis the coffin of poor little Golden-Hair!
“Let go! I will tear him limb from limb
“That trembling devil! I will, I swear——”
(So it goes, so it goes,
Till the heart is sick and the senses swim;
And mothers and children are hurried along
Battered and bruised by this drink-cursed throng,
What is a wife or a child
In a dance so wild?
Great Judge and Avenger, how long? how long?)

* * * *

Hush! tread softly, see—there she lies
White and still, on that bundle of straw;
Soon she will hunger and thirst no more,
Nor haunt the room with her famished eyes.

Poor little Toddler,—poor Golden-Hair!
Those faded violets she *tried* to sell
Match with her wasted form so well,
Clasp them—so—in her hand so fair.

One last kiss on her forehead white,
Crowned by those ringlets whose golden flow
Covers the mark of that drunken blow
From all but the Record-Angel’s sight.

“Tell Papa—I’m going to—Mamma—and Roy,
“Jesus won’t let me—get—lost,—I know;
“Kiss me for Papa,—before I go,—
“Mamma! and Baby,—oh joy, oh joy!”

(Mother and Baby and Golden-Hair
Passed through the fire to that Moloch grim!
What shall you say when you meet with Him,
You who have helped to place them there?)

* * * *

Flash! See the light!
Did the Sword of Vengeance smite?
Hark the thunders of the dreadful Judgment roll!
Now the mighty Trump is calling and the riven rocks are falling,
Is there refuge for that sin-cursed soul?

The old mother-love is blending like a mem'ry of the past
With the flashing of the lightning and the howling of the blast,
And the feet of little Golden-Hair
Seem to patter through the music, like an angel's gentle tread
And to soothe the tumult there.

But the curling, crawling, creeping, cursed serpents hissing still,
Seize the mother-love and child-heart, working out their hellish will,
And the little gleam of hope is sped,
And the spirit-imps keep wreathing round that soul their fiendish spell,
While the judgment lowers o'erhead.

Crash! What a chord!
'Twas the falling of the sword!
Bear him gently to his resting place away;
"Poor old drunk"—"Twas sudden too!" God will deal with him, and you
Who aid the fiend that made his soul a prey!

[\[A\]](#)

Laocoon and his sons. *Ænid*, Lib. a, Virgil.

THE BARGAIN COUNTER.

ARGUMENT.

This poem was written in connection with the suicide of one Alexander Reder, who, filling his pockets with stones, drowned himself in Toronto Bay, in the summer of 1899.

An inquest held, resulted in the following verdict:—

“That Alexander Reder, who died on the 14th of July, deliberately committed suicide, by jumping into the Bay. The cause of the act was despondency, the result of being brought to Toronto under false pretences by Sigmand Lebeliski, acting for the T. Eaton Company.”

In the action of the poem one of the employees of a large firm is supposed to recount to another the hallucinations of a female operative, who is dying of brain-fever, brought on by worry and overwork, and aggravated by the illusion that she had met Reder's ghost in a tunnel under the street supposed to separate two branches of a great establishment. In her delirium the poor girl broods at first over the mental agony of Reder before his rash act, and then suddenly supposes that his ghost appears and upbraids her for yielding her honor for gold, when he yielded his life rather than break his union pledges. Her pleadings with the ghost for a merciful judgment on her offence, bring out her story, and its climax in the death of those she sinned to save; the final apostrophe being on the iniquity of the bargain system.



“Had I turned e’er I crept down the stairway.”—*Page 29.*

THE BARGAIN COUNTER.

Fainted? Yes, in the tunnel, Jack found her lying alone,
Chill and white as the marble of her father's cold grave-stone:
Eh! But this world's a muddle, I'm often tried to say,
Though I know that the good God ruleth, and look for a Judgment Day
When wrong shall be wrong wide-published, by angel-trumpets clear,
And Justice shall pluck the robber from the spoil he holds so dear,
When Mercy shall weigh the motive, and pity shall stay the Sword,—
But my heart grows faint with yearning,—How long, how long, good Lord?

She's been bad, since that sheenie, Reder, with the stones that they gave for bread
Replenished his empty pockets to pay for a long night's bed;
Faith! She swears he has waked already, that his ghost doth stealthy roam
Through that evil-omened tunnel, and weep for his babes at home,
And rage o'er the lie that slew him,—for his starving widow pray,
And laugh with a fiendish echo, as it hisses "The Judgment Day!"

* * * *

"Yea! Hath God said?" lied the devil, with his bargain-counter grin,
As he offered his cheapened Godhood, and took his first victim in;
As it was in that bad beginning, is it evermore to be?
Must Eve be eternal longing for some bargain *braverie*?

Ah! Fools, fools, fools, will ye never, from God's changeless judgments, learn
That for good that ye get from another ye must yield a just return?
Like Eve, will ye barter beauty for some bleeding creature's hide,
And, shamed, end a life of folly, in death's dark, unfathomed tide?
Such was Eden's bargain-special, when shorn of the tempter's lie,
And such, to the last dread trumpet, all the bargains ye shall buy!

* * * *

Yes,—she swears that his ghost is there, lad, and in fever's fitful style
She keeps running the story over,—the cruelty, greed and guile;
How the crafty cats-paw fooled him, for his heart o'ermatched his head;
He was duped, but not dishonored by a traitor's stolen bread!

"He was sorely tried" she falters,—“He would hear each childish tone,
“As he measured the endless foot-ways,—he would hear his poor wife groan;
“Yet, alone in the stranger city, he was true to his labor-clan,
“And his brave heart bowed in pity o'er the babes of his brother man!”

“Alone in the stranger city, he disdained to yield,—but I,
“O God, in Thy mercy spare me!—Nay, I feared not, Lord, to die,—

“Aye,—the cold black Bay had been welcome as a Heaven-blest bridal bed,
“It had saved from that tempter’s proffers, from the path where his foul heart led!”

“Hist! See, ’tis the ghost of Reder, that I saw in the tunnel,—See!

“Though thy blazing eyes pierce through me, judge not till thou hear my plea;

“Ghost, I know that that spawn of Judas did not smirch thee with his guile,

“But with me ’twas my heart turned traitor, and caught at the tempter’s wile!”

“Ah! Ghost, there was mother ailing, since father was reft away,

“And Ted, with his limping footstep, growing sicklier, day by day;

“And only my work in the cloak-shop,—and the doctor said Ted would die

“If he didn’t have this and the other, which I hadn’t the money to buy.”

“I’m a first-rate hand, and I struggled, but the work was cut down so fine

“That I barely made board and lodging, while Ted needed medicine and wine;

“And that spit of your false Lubelski kept tempting me with his gold,

“While hope in the future was fading, and honor was growing cold.”

“I had rather died, I swear it! But, Ghost, there was mother, and Ted,

“Crippled Ted, with his eyes so patient,—what would happen if I were dead?

“Yet alive I was sure to falter, for I could not watch him go,—

“I must perish,—*or save my brother!* Pity, ghost—’twas my heart said so!”

“And I did it,—too late to save him! O God, what a devil’s game!

“What a bargain-counter glamour to cover up hell and shame:

“Had I turned e’er I crept down the stairway—I did, but my heart not my head

“Led me back toward the gold that should save them, and now,—Teddie and mother are dead!”

* * * *

See, blood—black blood on the bargains! Only loss shall ye gain from such;
Go, read in the Book of the *Bag with holes*,^[B] of the *Breath* that makes *little of much*,
Of the kept-back wage of the hireling, of the God that still hears his cry,
And then think on the Bargain-Counter, and the reckoning bye and bye.

[B] Haggai. Chap. 1.

AGAPE.

RECESSIONAL.

Unchanging God, our hearts we bow
 To Thee in adoration pure,
And know the grace that meets us now
 Unto all ages shall endure;
 That we change not vouchsafe us still
 The LOVE that loves to work Thy Will.

Unchanging God, our frames of dust
 Haste to that dust from whence they came,
Yet for Thy grace we firmly trust,
 Past, present, future, still the same;
 That we change not vouchsafe us still
 The LOVE that loves to work Thy Will.

Unchanging God, great Three in One,
 The Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
Grant us, our day of service done,
 Rich entrance to Thy Heavenly Host;
 That we change not vouchsafe us still
 The LOVE that loves to work Thy Will.

AMEN!

Transcriber's Notes

Obvious printing errors have been silently corrected.

Inconsistencies in hyphenation, spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

[The end of *Drink and Drudgery: Two Social Sins* by Frederick Lindley Hunt Sims]