

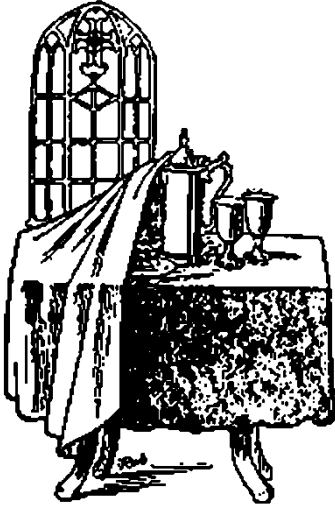
WOUNDED

In the House of Friends



CHARACTER BUILDING STORIES

Easy Reading



It was communion day at the largest church in the town of Jonesville. Many people were at the church. Mr. Barnes was there to preach and to help the pastor serve the bread and wine to the people.

The people at this church were mostly the rich people of the town. There were not really any very poor people there.

But there was one little woman sitting in the front seat with a little girl right next to her. The woman eyes looked sad and afraid as she looked at the communion table. Something was wrong.

The man who sat next to her was a good-looking, strong man. It was her husband. He was a good husband. But he had not always been a church member. Burton Holbrook had a strong love for alcohol. His father had been a drunkard and Burton couldn't remember when he first learned to drink and love the taste of alcohol. He was very young. He had tried for years not to give in to his tastes and be a drunkard like his father. But through the many years he had so often lost the battle that his little wife had almost given up hope. But now for the past few months there was hope again. Burton had become a Christian and had joined the church. For almost a year he had not drunk any alcohol.

"You will never win the battle in your own strength," Burton's wife had told him. How happy she was the day he became converted. And once the alcohol was gone it seemed everything got better. He had more friends and he was able to get a better job. And in that one year's time they had gone from living in a poor home to living in a small, nice house in a better area of town. They were happy and every night they had worship, praying and singing songs. They praised God and thanked Him for His goodness.



But this was the first Sabbath he was at church when they were having communion. And now his wife was worried and sad. At the beginning of the church service she remembered that it was communion. And there would be wine served. Not the pure, sweet, new wine or grape juice like what Jesus drank with His disciples. But they would serve the old, sour, wine. The wine that has alcohol in it and makes people drunk. And this poor woman knew very well the temptations her husband had with alcohol. It was like demons were constantly after him, trying to get him to drink, and that one drink--oh, no! She knew what that one drink would do. Last time it had had only taken one taste

of red wine to cause him to fall. And now was it to happen again? Was the church not even a safe place for her husband? Were the demons with their temptations also there in the church?

The woman felt so helpless as she looked at her husband. It was she who had told him to join the church. She had told him being part of the church would help him in his battle against the alcohol. And now this! Wine in the church. Didn't anyone care? Why did no one protest against serving alcohol in church? Didn't they know that that would be a stumblingblock to those who had habits of drinking? (**Romans 14:13**) But then she thought of the deaconess, Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones had told the pastor once the evils of having alcohol in the church. But the pastor only smiled and said that it would chase away the rich people to give them grape juice at communion when they were used to getting alcoholic wine. *'So,'* thought Mrs. Holbrook, *'it would be no use for me to protest. The pastor would just say my husband was a weak man.'*

But now they are uncovering the red wine. The blessing is given. This wine they say is supposed to represent the pure blood of Jesus, who died to save sinners. But what is its effect on a man who was so recently saved from his sin of drinking?

Burton Holbrook looks at the wine in alarm. His face becomes white. He starts breathing quickly and hard. They



are sitting at the front so already the smell of the wine has reached his nose. The pastor now offers the wine glass to Burton. His wife turns to look with a feeling of fear at her husband. His face looks sick. He looks with a quick look of helplessness at his wife and then at the pastor. Then over his face came a look of strong desire. His eyes grow dark and with a crazy look he grabs the wine glass.

Even the pastor looks alarmed as Burton takes the glass so eagerly. Quickly he drinks the entire glass. Then as the pastor looks away for a second, Burton jumps up and takes the entire pitcher of wine from off the table. Quickly he drinks all the wine that is in it as well.

Then he runs crazily down the long aisle, past all the church people who look on him in fear and horror. Out into the quiet streets of the town he runs.

Nearby at a bar, several former drinking friends of Burton Holbrook sat drinking and talking about their old friend

"Been almost a year, I think, since Holbrook last was here?" asked the bartender as he gave a glass of alcohol to a young man.

"Considers himself a mighty good person, I think," was the reply.

"I've done everything I could to get him to give up those high ideas of his," said another man.

"I'm glad I don't have to give up my freedom," said Jack Hartwell, "and I told Holbrook so the other day. But he had an answer ready, of course. A real, preacher, Burton has become since he's left us."

"That makes me think," said an old man from across the room, "Holbrook's gone and joined the church, so they say. He got clear off the devil's ground, I suppose he thinks, now,—but,—" and a hateful grin came across his face as he said more softly, "but we'll see—we'll see. He's not a bit better than the rest of us, that he should,—"

"No," interrupted the bartender. "Somebody's likely been preaching to him. But if he thinks he's safe, just because—"

But the bartender never finished what he was saying. Into the room rushed Burton Holbrook, out of breath and acting like a crazy man.

"Let me drink, man! let me drink!" he shouted. "I've sold my soul for it. The demons of hell have got me this

time! I have held my own against them for a year,—but they caught me,—caught me in the church,—and—and I will die, but I must have my drink!”

A month later Burton Holbrook was dead. The alcohol had finished its work. Delirium tremens, the cause of so many other drunkards' deaths, had also taken Burton's life.



But at least now there is one church in Jonesville that gives nothing at communion but plain, sweet grape juice. No alcoholic wine is ever served there anymore during communion. A sad lesson has been learned.

But still Burton Holbrook's sad, heartbroken wife says over and over again, "Woe unto him that gives his neighbor drink!" (see **Habakkuk 2:15**).



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