

**HOLMDALE RECTORY: ITS  
EXPERIENCES,  
INFLUENCES, AND  
SURROUNDINGS**

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Holmdale Rectory: Its Experiences, Influences, and Surroundings by M. A. R.

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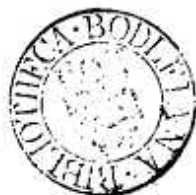
# HOLMDALE RECTORY:

ITS EXPERIENCES,

INFLUENCES, AND SURROUNDINGS.

BY

M. A. R.



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"Men love us, or they need our love;  
Freely they own, or heedless prove  
The curse of lawless hearts, the joy of self-control."  
EXAL.

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1865.

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# HOLMDALE RECTORY.

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## CHAPTER I.

A HAPPY and loving family were the inmates of Holmdale Rectory.

They consisted of the rector and his wife, one son, and three amiable good-tempered daughters. The rector himself was an honest upright man, one who acted up to his convictions, and feared no one when in the path of duty. He was well to do, for his living was a tolerably good one, and he had some private means to boot; and he was respected and loved by his parishioners, for if not very eloquent as a preacher, yet he spoke from the heart, and, as a natural consequence, reached the hearts of his hearers.

His wife was quiet and sensible, and behaved on all occasions as the rector's wife should do; foremost in good parish works, in which she was assisted gladly and intelligently by her children.

They were all assembled round the dining-table. There were snow and frost without, but in the room all was warm and comfortable; yet a gloom, which was not usually seen there, was upon the brow of the rector.

He was this evening more silent than was his wont. He had no tales to tell of whom he had seen or where he had been that morning; the lively conversation of his girls with their brother seemed to pass him un-

heeded; he ate as if he did not know that he was eating, and probably neither did he know that he uttered not a word. At length Margaret, his eldest daughter, observed,—

“Papa, you have had no wine to-day: let me pour it out for you.”

“No, Margaret; thank you, my child, but I want no wine.”

“Oh, but you always drink it; surely you are not ill, dear papa?” expostulated Margaret, while all the others waited in seeming anxiety for his answer.

“I shall drink no wine to-day, Margaret, and it is much in my mind never to touch a drop of wine again.”

An exclamation of astonishment, in a tone rather of remonstrance, escaped from Mrs. Oakley. But he went on, “You saw that horrid scene last night; you saw an intelligent, gentlemanly, amiable man brought into a condition from which brutes would shrink, all through wine.”

“But, my dear,” cried his wife, “what can you mean by comparing yourself with Captain Archer? You never drink one drop too much; your principles are much too good for that. Never, in all the years that I have known you, have I once seen you drink otherwise than *most* moderately. Pray do not compare yourself with that wretched man.”

“I do not compare myself with him, Eleanor; thank God, I have never felt even *tempted* to the sin of drunkenness; but shall I tell you what is in my heart? If I go to Captain Archer and remonstrate with him, as it is my bounden duty to do, on the sin of which he has been guilty, and which I have reason to fear is becoming a habit with him, will it not tend greatly to strengthen my arguments if I can assure him that neither wine nor any other intoxicating drink is henceforth ever to enter my own lips?”

“Perhaps so,” replied Mrs. Oakley; “yet it seems hard that you are to be punished for another man’s wickedness.”

"Nay, it is not much of a punishment. My health is good. I am as strong, I rather fancy *stronger*, than that boy," looking towards his son; "and I should be just as well without wine for the rest of my life."

Now, all his hearers knew that Mr. Oakley never spoke without deliberation; they felt that his determined resolution was for the future to abstain from the very moderate allowance of wine to which he had been accustomed; yet it seemed so strange a thing, that they could not quite give up a few more words of remonstrance.

"But, papa," began his youngest daughter, "will not people say that you turn teetotaller because you are afraid of getting drunk?"

"Well," and here the rector could not restrain a laugh, "if people are so very foolish and uncharitable, I fear I must e'en bear it; but, my pretty Lucy, did you ever know me to shrink from doing my duty for fear of what 'people' might say?"

"No, indeed, dear papa, and I never shall," exclaimed Lucy; "but I don't like people to say wicked things of you."

"Neither do I, my dear; it does more harm to them than it does to me; but whenever you hear them you can set them right, you know."

"Oh, papa, they are not likely to speak evil of you before me!" cried Lucy. "I only wish they would," she added, brightening with excitement: "I think they would never venture it again."

They all laughed—a kind affectionate laugh, in which there was nothing of ridicule; but the subject was not to drop just yet.

"Papa," said Agnes, Mr. Oakley's second daughter, "don't you consider Miss Hooper a very excellent person?"

"Undoubtedly, my dear," replied her father, with a smile; "but what have you to tell me of Miss Hooper?"

"Only this, papa: it seemed to me rather to the point, or I should not have mentioned it."



"Well?"

"Why, Miss Hooper herself told me the other day that she had signed the temperance pledge. She said it was on account of the children in the Sunday-school that she had done it; she felt she could talk to them of temperance with greater effect if she could tell them she had herself signed the pledge."

"And she spoke justly, Agnes, child; but you are arguing *for* me, when I expected you to join the others in opposing me."

"No, indeed, papa, I do not a bit intend to take your side of the question, for I cannot bear that you should deprive yourself of your wine; but the end of my story is this—that after Miss Hooper had informed me of it, she added that she always drank a tumblerful of pale ale every day at dinner, because it was necessary for her *health*, and that she should continue to do this after she had signed the pledge."

"Ah," said the rector, musingly, "that is the way in which many persons deceive themselves; they think to do good. But I cannot agree with them; if ever any of our school children should discover from the servants that Miss Hooper drinks pale ale, they will look on her as a hypocrite and deceiver, and her example will be worse than useless. No," he added, "I shall not sign any pledge—at least I have no present intention of doing so; but, God being my helper, I will never touch wine again: spirits, as you all know, I never do touch at any time. So now put away the decanters if you have had enough, and go and make yourselves happy in the drawing-room."

The worthy rector did not perceive, for his thoughts were painfully preoccupied, that, for this day at least, the wine had been untouched by any member of his family; even by his son Frederick, a young Oxonian.

There was something in the rector's manner which impressed them gloomily, and with one accord, though without concert, they all on this day abstained from their usual beverage.

The following morning, soon after breakfast, Mrs. Oakley found her husband in the hall, buttoning his great-coat. "Going out so early, my dear?"

"I have a painful duty before me, my love, and I wish to get it over," he replied.

She looked at him inquiringly, and he continued, "I am going to make a bitter enemy, I fear, instead of doing good, but I *must* speak to Captain Archer. I must not let him go on as he is now doing, without one strong effort to draw him out of the pit into which he has fallen. I must warn him plainly of the misery here and hereafter which he is working for himself."

"Dear Edward, you are always right, and always good," cried his wife, affectionately. "I think you *must* impress him by your kind and disinterested anxiety on his behalf."

"God grant it may be so," solemnly returned the rector. "So now good bye, my love; don't forget to send one of the girls to old Mrs. Goodby, and above all remember that some one inquires for Miss Dalrymple." So saying, and with the kindly kiss with which, after more than twenty years of marriage life, he still generally parted from his wife, the good rector set out on his benevolent journey.

The Captain Archer of whom he spoke was a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who had until lately borne an unblemished reputation; but on the occasion of a party in his own house, he had so far forgotten himself as to partake too freely of the champagne which he had provided for his guests, and his conduct in the evening had been such as to scandalize and distress all those who witnessed it. Mrs. Oakley and her family had been amongst these; and it was their report of what had taken place which had determined the rector to endeavour by friendly expostulation to awaken him to a sense of the evil he was doing.

Captain Archer was at home. Always polite and respectful to his clergyman, he received Mr. Oakley

with kind courtesy, and went through those pleasant preliminaries about the weather, in which persons of the most opposite characters and sentiments are generally happily agreed: but ere long he found that his visitor had come on other business than to talk about the frost.

His manner became alternately stern and flippant, as the pastor faithfully, yet in a voice of the utmost kindness, spoke to him of the sin of which he had shown himself guilty. Mr. Oakley was not one to "prophesy deceits," though he clothed his remonstrance in words of Christian kindness; but Captain Archer, on his part, was not one to listen patiently to what he knew too well to be true. What was the use of making such a fuss just because a man had happened to make himself a little too merry while showing hospitality to his friends? It was all very well for a parson to talk, because it was his business, but really he could not see what good could come of it. "You know very well," he added at last, "that you always drink wine yourself, and you would not think it very good-natured of me, if I were to grumble any day that I saw you taking a little more than usual."

"Nay, my good friend, thank God, you never saw that in your life: it is a sin to which I have never felt any temptation, but——"

"That is," rudely interrupted Captain Archer, "as you don't yourself know the exhilaration and comfort of a little pleasant drink, you are hard upon those who do."

"Pardon me, Captain Archer," replied the other gravely, "I have almost said my say, but I wish to answer your assertion that I always drink wine myself. That has been hitherto the case, but I have drunk the last drop I shall ever taste. Never will I drink wine again, that a weak brother may say he is encouraged by my example."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the captain. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Oakley, but really, for the future, you