

Tuesday, July 7.—Thorough work. Josh. xl., 15.  
 Wednesday, July 8.—Doing anything. John ii., 5.  
 Thursday, July 9.—Earnest work. II Tim. ii., 15.  
 Friday, July 10.—United work. Matt. xviii., 19.  
 Saturday, July 11.—In Jesus' name. Col. iii., 17.  
 Sunday, July 12.—Topic—Lessons from the ant. Prov. vi., 6-8; xxx., 25.



## A Fight Against Odds

(Kate Anderson, in the 'Union Signal.')

### Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

The Kilgour family, who have been bereft of husband and father by a railway wreck caused by the blunder of a drunken engineer, are engaged in a desperate struggle to save the idolized youngest son from the curse of cigarette smoking. The boy succeeds in completely deceiving them for a time, but is finally discovered to be a frequenter of the lowest dive in the tough city. At first he denies this, then brazenly admits that he was lying. His eldest brother Ralph gives him a horsewhipping. Ralph resigns his position in the hotel. Willie, the second brother, is stricken with typhoid fever. Claude is taken from school.

### CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

A few days later six dollars was missing from a bureau drawer. It was money which Allie held, as treasurer of Trinity Girls' Mission Guild. The loss caused much anxiety and unhappiness. All shrank from thinking that Miss Roberts, the nurse, could have touched it, yet the disappearance seemed otherwise unaccountable. In less than a week Mrs. Kilgour found a half-used package of cigarettes stuck in a crevice of an unused woodhouse wall. She called Claude, who, coming in, brought with him a strong smell of tobacco, mingled with perfume, cloves and cough medicine. She locked him in his room until Ralph's return from work. Claude tearfully and earnestly denied having used tobacco in any form for three weeks, and vowed that the package had been hidden a year before and then forgotten.

'Did you take Alice's money?' asked Ralph, calmly. Claude acted so utterly taken back and heart-broken at the very shadow of such a suspicion that Ralph almost melted.

'I swear I never touched a cent not belonging to me,' the boy declared in a ringing tone of sincerity.

'Well, at any rate, you are lying about the smoking and you can't deceive me,' replied Ralph. 'I'm sorry to do it, but march down quietly with me, so as not to disturb Willie.'

The boy shrieked with terror. Alas, in the days gone by, Claude had been no coward!

'Oh, don't whip me and I will tell the truth. I was smoking, Victor Dumouchelle gave me a package through the fence, while I was sawing wood.'

'Where is the rest of the money you stole?' asked Ralph, as if he had never heard this explanation.

'I never stole it. Oh! oh! I shan't go downstairs. We'll at least call mamma first. I want to speak to her for just a minute.'

'No, mother has enough to bear, without this scene.'

'I won't make a scene. Oh, please, please let me see her. Let me see her! Let me

see her!' His voice rose to a shrill scream, which brought his mother to the room.

'Let Claude speak. What is it, my poor erring boy?'

'He says I stole Allie's money,' cried Claude hysterically, 'and he is going to kill me.'

'Nonsense, Claude, Ralph never whipped you cruelly, and alas, I have come at last to see this is the only way of appealing to your senses. I will not interfere. Ralph,' turning to her eldest son, with a look of infallible trust and confidence, 'what is this about Allie's money?'

'Never mind his ravings, mother; he had no right to mention a subject before you which I had drawn him aside to speak about alone,' and Ralph collared the shrieking boy.

'Claude,' his mother stood very straight, with whitening lips, 'you did take that money. Something tells me I am not mistaken.' She swayed and would have fallen but for Ralph's quick support.

'Oh, don't whip me and I will tell you. Let go of me and I will tell you all,' sobbed Claude.

'Let him go, Ralph. No, I am quite able to stay and hear. Speak, Claude.'

'Well, I did take it.'

'And was it you who have been stealing from the household purse for more than a year? I never seemed to be able to make ends meet. Accounts were short at the end of every month. Claude, you have so often seen me in such perplexity and trouble over this.'

'O mother, indeed, indeed I didn't do that! Surely you can't think that of me!'

A movement from Ralph.

'Oh, oh, yes, it was I. But I never took twenty-five cents altogether.'

'Stop so much unnecessary lying,' growled Ralph, 'or I'll make you smart for it.'

'And it was you, Claude,' who stole the purse containing all my egg money which I had been gathering to build that new hen-house, together with twelve dollars Allie had saved from working overtime and given me, and which I supposed I had lost on the ferry, and spent so much in advertising for.'

'Speak, sir,' thundered Ralph.

'Oh, don't touch me. Yes it was me. Oh, mamma,' and for once his voice rose in sincerity of anguish—'Mamma, I have killed you.'

'Stand aside,' spoke Ralph, and he lifted his mother's unconscious form from the floor and strode across the hall.

### CHAPTER V.

When Ralph returned in twenty minutes, Claude was gone. A quick and thorough search of the entire premises revealed no trace of the wretched boy. Returning to the room where Alice sat with her mother, he beckoned her out and despatched her for Clara Meredith, while he took her place by the bedside where the stricken mother lay motionless, save for an occasional anguished moan. Half an hour later, leaving Miss Meredith in charge of their mother, the brother and sister left the house to search for Claude.

'Hurry straight to Mr. Haverson's' (the Methodist minister), admonished Ralph. 'He is discreet and is a good friend. Ask him to visit the railway stations, while I will try the ferry docks; then come right home and keep a sharp lookout, for it is just possible that Claude is hiding in some hole waiting for a good opportunity to escape.'

Ralph proved, after all, correct in this latter conjecture, for when he and Mr. Haverson returned, about nine o'clock, they found that Allie had unearthed Claude in an old unused coal bin down cellar. He had attempted to dash past her, but she was too quick for him, and had him securely locked down by both doors. Hastily returning to the parlor, after seeing Alice, Ralph briefly explained to the minister that Claude had not left the house, after all. Mr. Haverson at once withdrew, waving aside all Ralph's broken attempts at thanks and assuring him that the unhappy circumstances would not be mentioned. Then he went down cellar, where Claude was rushing round like a wild animal, in

an endeavor to work his way out. Ralph paid no attention to him but picked up a small bundle which Claude had evidently packed with haste. It contained some filthy pictures, two packages of cigarettes, a suit of underclothing, two trashy novels, low, paper-covered novels, a ferocious-looking second-hand revolver, and about four dollars in money, besides some valuable Kruger coins which Ralph had brought back from South Africa.

Then ensued a stormy scene, at least on Claude's part. The misguided boy broke forth in the vernacular of the literature upon which he had been feeding, threatening to shoot the whole family, to burn down the house, and like desperate measures. He tried to seize, from Ralph's hand, the already loaded revolver, and he bit his brother severely. Claude was, indeed, at that time, quite capable of putting his fearful threats into execution, and Ralph, whose strength, fortunately, was that of a young Hercules, carried him struggling up to his own bedroom and locked him in the closet, while he cleared the room of matches, razor, keys, and every article by which the crazed boy could either commit injury or effect an escape. He forced Claude to undress and get into bed. Then he carried away his clothes, with all of his own which were in the room, and went away, locking the door after him.

(To be Continued.)

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