

## WILD OATS.

The most magnificent specimen of young manhood that I have ever known, was a young fellow student named Henry Haines. As an athlete on the campus, as a scholar in the arena of debate, he was facile princeps, everywhere and always. We were not so much envious of him as proud of him, and we fondly fancied that there could be no height of fame or fortune too difficult for his adventurous feet to climb, and that the time would come when he would fill the world with the echo of his fame, and it would be a proud thing for any of us to declare that we had known him. A little tendency to dissipation was by some of us observed—a little dash of daredevilry—but this was only the wild oats sowing which was natural to youth and genius, and which we did not doubt that after years would chasten and correct.

But the years came and the years went, and the young collegians were scattered through the world, and ever and anon would some of us wonder what had become of Henry Haines. We looked in vain for his rising star, and listened long for his coming feet. Some time ago, for a single Sabbath, I was preaching in New York. My theme in the morning had been, "The Ghost of Buried Opportunity." On my way to my hotel I discovered that I was shadowed by a desperate looking wretch, whose garb, whose gait, whose battered, bloated look all unmistakably betokened the spawn of slums. What could the villain want with me? I paused at my door, and faced about to confront him. He paused, advanced, and then huskily whispered:

"Henson, do you know me?"

I assured him I did not, whereupon he continued:

"Do you remember Henry Haines?"

"Aye, aye, well enough; but surely you are not Henry Haines?"

"I am what is left of him—I am the ghost of him."

I shuddered as I reached for his hands, and gazing intently into his face, discovered still some traces of my long-lost friend, still doubly lost though found again. I put my arms about him in brotherly embrace, and drew him to my room, and drew from his lips the story of his shattered life. I begged him by the old loves and unforgotten memories of better days to go back with me to my Philadelphia home, and under new auspices and with new surroundings to strike out for a noble destiny which I hoped might still be possible. But, striking his clenched fist on my table, he said:

"Henson, it's no use to talk to me. I'm a dead beat, and am dead broke. I'm a burnt out volcano, and there's nothing left of me but cinders now. I have come to New York to bury myself out of sight of all that ever loved me. I know the ropes here, and shall stay here till I rot. I live in a muskrat hole near the wharf. I shall die as I have lived, and I have lived like a dog."

In vain were my earnest protests and brotherly pleading. He tore himself from me and went shambling off to his den by the wharf.

He had sown the wind and was reaping the whirlwind. He had sown to the flesh, and was reaping corruption. He had sown "wild oats," and the oats were now yielding a dread harvest of woe.—P. S. Henson.

## THE SERGEANT'S VOW.

## A TEMPERANCE STORY TOLD IN CAMP.

BY CLARK D. KNAPP.

It was the evening after one of the greatest battles of the Rebellion. The surviving soldiers of the battle were fatigued, and glad to drop down almost anywhere to rest. Those who had been on the reverse were caring for the dead and wounded, and in the hospital tent those who wore the blue, and those who wore the gray, were groaning with the wounds received in battle and were being treated by the Union physicians.

Near the hospital, about a dozen Union men were sitting upon the ground, around a fire of sticks and limbs, trying to "cook coffee." They had been at the front all day; victory had been won. They were now upon the ground that had been occupied by the enemy in the morning. It was a victory; but such a victory, and at such a cost of human life! On the right and on the left, in front of them and in the rear, could be seen the dead bodies, dressed in the uniform of the friend and of the foe.

They were just taking the coffee from the fire when a soldier came up, and discovering that the dozen men were of his company, said:

"How is it, boys, are you dry?"

"Trying to cook our coffee, Ned," said one of the soldiers, "but I guess that it will be Virginia mud and water mixed together."

"I've got something good," said the first speaker, producing the canteen, which hung across his shoulders.

"What is it?" asked one.

"Whisky," replied Ned.

"You're a trump."

"That's jolly."

"That is just the stuff."

"That will revive us!"

And other expressions of satisfaction and pleasure were made by the men.

"Here, Sergeant," said Ned, reaching the canteen toward a tall, noble looking fellow who had been silent, "throw aside your temperance principles for once and take a drink."

"Not any, Ned, thanks," replied the one addressed as Sergeant.

"Come, now! you have fought like a tiger all day. You do not know but what you may have to rally in five minutes."

"True, Ned, but excuse me."

"Not a drop?"

"Not a drop!"

"Say, Sergeant," said Ned, "if it is agreeable to the boys, we will adjourn the drink for five minutes, and you tell us how you come to be such a mighty advocate of temperance."

"I second the motion," said another soldier.

"And so do I!"

"And I, too!"

"Well, boys," said the Sergeant, "I will tell you. It is a short story, and therefore soon told. When I was nineteen I had to leave school, owing to the death of my father. I came home to help my mother, who needed me. My father had been a prosperous farmer; he had that frugality and sturdy industry characteristic of the Vermont farmers. My mother I always considered the most handsome woman on earth, at least she appeared so to me; and as a mother there never was a better.

"After my father had been dead about a year, somehow I acquired a passion for hunting, fishing and especially cooning. There was nothing that delighted me so much as it did to take my dog and go out with some of the neighboring boys and bring home a number of coons. One night three of our neighbors came to our house after me. They thought they had found a new place, a corn field, where there was plenty of game. I needed no urging. I kissed my mother good-by, told her that I would not be late, called my dog and away we went.

"One of the boys had a bottle of whisky in his pocket. Just how it came about I do not know, I had drank a little whisky before, but that night I drank too much, and became beastly drunk. The boys led me home and left me at our gate, I staggered through and staggered around the yard a little in a vain attempt to find the steps to the house. I stumbled over something, fell down and was unable to get up. After a while I went to sleep—a regular drunken sleep.

"It seems that in the night, sometime, my mother became anxious because I did not come home. She had not been to bed, but had fallen into a slumber upon the couch. She awoke, as I said before, some time in the night, and fearing that harm had befallen me arose from the couch, put her shawl over her head, and started out to find me. And she found me in a condition most deplorable, indeed. At first she thought I was dead, or that I had been brutally treated by a highwayman. But when she stooped down to look at me and saw, by the moonlight, my face, she knew that her only child was drunk. She tried to waken me; she tried to get me into the house, but she had not the strength. She went to the house and got a pillow, and placed it under my head. She covered me with blankets; she protected my face from the dew by placing an open umbrella over me. She drew her shawl tightly around her shoulders and sat down by my side. In the morning I awoke just as the sun was rising, I found her there. Great tears were chasing each other down her cheeks. I saw at once that my mother had cared for me all night. She had faithfully kept her lonely vigil, watching her drunken son, weeping and praying.

"I am awful thirsty," I said. My voice sounded strange, weak and unnatural. I got up; my mother rose, went to the well and brought me a cup of water. As she handed the cup to me she bowed her head that I might not see her grief; but I saw a tear come down her pale cheek and drop into that cup. I took the cup from her hand and drank its contents, tear and all. Yes, boys, I drank my mother's tear, and I made a solemn vow that I never again would cause her tears.

"I led my mother into the house; I led her to the arm chair; and as soon as she was seated I got down upon my knees.

"Mother," said I, "This is the first. It shall be the last."

"Charles," said she, running her fingers through my hair, "I hope so. God bless you!"

"I looked up, and my mother had fainted. I took her in my arms, as one might take a child, and placed her upon a bed. It was the beginning of what came near being her death. Days, and nights, and weeks I was by that sick bed. I heard her, as her mind wandered, praying for me and pleading for my reformation. And at times she would imagine that she was talking to my father. She would tell him of the plans which she had for her son, and that she hoped he would be a sober man. Every word she said was like a knife-cutting me, and many a time I wished that I had died before I ever tasted liquor. But, thank God, my mother got well. It was a long time before she was able to leave her room. I was her constant companion. Somehow, it seemed to me, that her life depended upon my care.

"When the war broke out, I made up my mind that I ought to enlist. I told my mother about it, and asked her advice.

"Charlie," she said, "I am afraid to let you go."