

don't I? It's queer, now, but I can't tell why I don't. Gracie made me think she was a goosie for not deciding. I suppose I'm a goosie. I wonder what mother thinks! She must have had this question to decide ever so long ago. Maybe she is at it yet."

"A feeling came over the boy that he wouldn't like to be so long settling the matter as his mother had been, supposing she was still thinking about it. Then why didn't he kneel down then and there and ask Jesus Christ to take him? He didn't know what kept him from that, but Satan knew very well, and laughed in triumph when the boy went to sleep without praying at all."

"In the middle of the night Reuben opened his eyes, looked about him in the darkness, and wondered what noise that was that he heard. He raised himself on one elbow and listened. There were certainly people talking. It couldn't be that the family were just getting still for the night, for Reuben knew by the darkness that the moon was gone, and he knew it did not set until after eleven o'clock. It must be about midnight. But the talking was growing more distinct:

"Where can that confounded key be, anyhow?"

"He always bangs it by the sink. I've seen him do it fifty times when I've been here with milk."

"Well, he didn't do it the fifty-first time, anyhow, for it ain't here. I've felt all around."

"You better not talk so loud. First you know somebody will hear us."

"Somebody can't. That's Rupert's room over the kitchen, and I told you before we started that he was five miles away, out in the country. Shut that door! I'm going to risk a match."

All this Reuben heard as plainly as though he was in the kitchen. It took him much less time to hear it than it has taken to tell it, and all the time he was thinking fast.

This was the way it looked to him: Somebody was in the kitchen hunting for the key to the barn. They either meant to steal Samson altogether, or run away with him for a stolen hide that night. Another thing he knew, that he was the last one who had the barn key, and he hung it across the room from the sink, over behind the closet door. He had come to the sink to hang it up, and Hannah had said: "You can't get here now; put the key on the hook behind the door; Rupert does sometimes."

How did those fellows get into the kitchen? The door was open for he had heard the order to shut it. He knew something about that, too. He could see himself sitting by the kitchen window, and Hannah asking him if he wasn't going to bed to-night, and saying she was going to look up now. Then he had said with a sudden start:

"O, Hannah, the kitchen key is up-stairs in my room! You gave it to me this morning, you know, to unlock the wash-room door, and I carried it up there. I'll run and get it."

And Hannah had answered: "No, you needn't. I'll slip the bolt. It's better than the key, anyhow."

But she must have forgotten to slip the bolt.

Now, how did he come to be in the room over the kitchen, hearing all this? Why, Mrs. Barrows had said just before he went up to bed:

"It's bitterly cold to-night. Reuben, I think I will send you to Rupert's room to sleep. That little north room where I put you is pretty cold, and it is nice and warm in the kitchen chamber. Rupert won't be back until to-morrow night."

So Reuben, though he said that he did not mind the cold, and the little north room was splendid, went off well pleased to the hired man's comfortable quarters, and rejoiced that Rupert had been given a holiday, and had gone into the country to see his mother.

That was the way he came to be the last at the barn, and to know about the key.

Don't you know how fast people can think? All this flashed through Reuben's mind with the speed of lightning. And he took time to think how strange it was that all these little things that seemed to have nothing to do with it at all, should have happened, one after another, so that he knew the whole story. More than that, he knew what he meant to try to do. To go down the front stairs and knock at Mr. Barrows'

door, and carry on a conversation with him, would be very likely to warn the thieves, if they were thieves, and they acted like it. Then they would slip away with whatever they chose to carry, and no one would be the wiser. The family might think he dreamed out the whole story. And perhaps the thieves would come the next night and carry out their plans. He would do no such thing as that.

He slipped out of bed and pushed up his little window. Below him was the roof of the outer kitchen, or shed; easy enough for a sure-footed boy like Reuben to let himself down to that, and swing off to the coal-box below, and from there to the ground. What then? Why, then he had the kitchen key in his hand, and the visitors had shut the door. What was to hinder him from slipping around and making them prisoners, by turning the key in the lock? The windows he knew were secured by strong shutters, the fastenings of which had a trick of not opening save for those who knew how to touch just the right spring. Gracie had amused herself for fifteen minutes on Saturday, by watching him try to find the secret of that spring. Reuben thought of that as another little thing that had been planned to fit this night's work. He was out of the window like a cat, not even waiting for clothes; waiting only to get the key from the little table where he had brought it and laid it when he went to the north room for his jacket. Why he brought the key back with him he did not know. He was down now on the frozen ground. It was bitterly cold, and his little shirt was none of the warmest. He wished he had wrapped himself in a quilt, but that would have hindered his quick, light steps perhaps. His bare feet made no sound on the snow, and in a minute more he stood before the kitchen door, key in hand.

Could he find the key-hole? Would the key slip in easily without noise? What if the fellows inside should hear him? He should rush to the door and open it, and seize him, and choke him before he could cry out!

(To be Continued.)

THE TEMPERANCE CARD.

BY J. K. BLOOMFIELD.

Many beautiful Christmas and New Year's cards, with various devices suited to the holiday season, had been sent forth on their mission of love or friendly remembrance; and Clara Mowitt thought herself especially favored with a choice variety. One, however, she carelessly tossed into a box apart from the others. It was very delicately tinted, with rose-buds and sprays of forget-me-nots encircling a white card, upon which were printed the words: "Drink not wine nor strong drink."

"I wonder if it was not Will Morris who sent it to me? He's so peculiar." And with an indignant toss of her proud, beautiful head, she threw the card down. More gently, though, she again took it up and reread the words: "Drink not wine nor strong drink," then placed it in a separate box.

Anything from Mr. Morris had to Clara a peculiar charm of its own, and she could not, even now when so indignant, quite destroy the temperance card. Still she mentally added: "If Sue Granger, or Hugh Vaughan should find this card among my more elegant ones, what sport they'd make of Will Morris. They already call him Mr. Prim and Mr. Over-Particular, and would get up some new name by which to ridicule him. I must admit, though, he is a little peculiar and strait upon religious matters, and upon the subject of temperance half cracked. I wonder if he meant it as a hint? And can he really suppose, because I now and then take a glass of wine or champagne at dinner or at a party, that I am at all likely to need this warning from him? Ridiculous!"

And Clara Mowitt gave a scornful laugh. Evidently, she had been and was still deeply nettled over receiving such a silent reminder or warning against the danger of her indulging in the wine cup. As the weeks passed by, however, the event was forgotten. With the hidden card lay buried the earnest admonition.

Gayest among the gay was Clara for the remainder of the winter. She attended party after party, and ball after ball, opera and theatre, too. Late hours and late suppers were freely indulged in by this gay

butterfly of fashion. Twice had she, with a subtle magnetism, when raising a glass of wine to her lips at a party, involuntarily turned to encounter a pair of dark eyes from the opposite side of the supper table resting upon her with a look of grieved sadness. And once, after such an entreating look there came warning words from Mr. Morris and an angry retort from Clara, then a coolness that grew apace until the once true friends became wholly alienated from one another.

"Miss Mowitt, are you to attend the charity ball next week?" asked Mr. Hugh Vaughan one evening when he, with some other friends, met at the Mowitts', to discuss the last party, and plan for fresh excitement.

"Oh! certainly, we must all, 'for sweet charity's sake,' deck ourselves in calico and attend this ball."

"I should really like to know how much money is expended to get up a ball of this kind, dress, carriage hire and all, and what the real profits are," said an elderly lady, seated a little apart from the merry group discussing the charity ball.

"Why, Aunt Maria, we don't count the individual cost in attending the ball; only the general expenses for ball room, heating, lighting, etc., and the profits out of these expenses. Last year they were considerable. We would probably go somewhere or do something that would cost us more than our cambric dresses for the occasion."

Aunt Maria gravely shook her head. She was not used to city ways, or helping the poor by getting up a charity ball; and Clara, she was pained to see, had become too self-willed and independent to patiently listen to what she considered downright old-fashioned, foggy notions as to right and wrong, so she quietly went on with her soft crochet work, which was to add to the warmth and comfort of a poor invalid friend.

Evening engagements were now pressing so rapidly upon Clara Mowitt that even her gay, volatile spirits became overwrought, and she was conscious of feeling somewhat jaded on the night of the charity ball. Going to her father's side-board, she poured out a full glass of sherry wine and drank it down as one accustomed to such indulgences. Again, an hour or two later, while impatiently waiting for the carriage and her escort, she took something a little stronger, with the half-apologetic words to herself:

"I declare, I'm tired out, and yet must look my very best this evening, for Hugh Vaughan, I'm sure, is upon the point of proposing to me, and father has given some pretty strong hints of late of having hard times to meet his notes, and of my going through the woods and picking up a crooked stick after all. What a fuss, to be sure, he did make over this cambric dress, or rather the bill sent in by the dressmaker—a paltry sum he would hardly have given a second thought to a while ago. If he is really on the verge of ruin, as he says he is, I had better prepare to leave the sinking ship."

Heartless words, as heartlessly uttered by one so wedded to gaiety and so demoralized by the effects of late hours and strong drink that she scarcely realized what she was saying of one whom she was in duty bound to love and reverence. Alas! Clara Mowitt, though possessing naturally a kind heart and pleasing disposition, had so long, as only daughter, been allowed to have her own way in all she thought likely to administer to her pleasure, that she had become more haughty and self-willed than she was at all aware of until she began to reap the fruits from the seeds of her own sowing.

Beautiful and attractive, she had somewhat coquetted with those who would have been true to her. And now, fancying that she had acted her part well in drawing the talented and wealthy Mr. Vaughan within her chains, she thought that all she had to do that evening was to appear in her most gracious mood for him to willingly surrender heart, hand and fortune to her. How her eyes sparkled, and how bright and witty she was! More than one remarked upon her brilliant appearance that evening. But why is it that Mr. Vaughan does not pay her more than ordinary polite attention? Clara is anxious, excited, and unconsciously at supper drinks glass after glass of champagne as it is handed to her by the various gentlemen in waiting.

The ball was drawing to a close; many had already left, and Clara was in the cloak-room, when her friend, Susie Granger, came up to her with flushed cheeks and whisper-

ed: Clara, dear, wish me joy. While in the conservatory awhile ago Mr. Vaughan claimed me as his own."

Clara uttered a few conventional words, while a reckless bitterness filled her heart such as words can but poorly express. The truth was that Mr. Vaughan, though greatly admiring Clara Mowitt, and for a time hesitating between the varied charms of the two intimate friends, was so forcibly struck this very evening with what he had casually observed before—Clara's too great love for wine, champagne, and even whiskey punch—that it roused grave doubts in his mind as to her proving a safe and prudent wife for him, and in settling the question against her, he turned to the less brilliant but more reliable Susie Granger.

Clara had a sort of premonition of this from some little event of the evening, but instead of its acting as a check upon her, that very night on reaching home—to drown grief and mortification—she again went to the side-board, where she was accustomed to turn for imaginary strength, and poured out for herself a glass of strong B. urbon. The craving for wine had taken hold of her unawares some time previous, and now nothing but the strongest whiskey, which she took in secret, could satisfy her.

With some remains of her former pride, Clara tried to hide this terrible falling from her friends, though they all noticed that some great change had come over the once brilliant and richly dressed young lady. A few of her most intimate friends who had observed her penchant for Hugh Vaughan, and his attentions to her, attributed her haggard looks and indifference to her personal appearance to disappointed love. Others, again, to the reports of her father's failure. Still, as their style of living was not altered much, this could hardly account for her peculiar looks, and strange, flighty acts.

Poor Clara! she had never given her heart to God, or learned to turn to and rely upon him for spiritual strength day by day; and now as the craving for drink becomes stronger and stronger, and she has difficulties in obtaining it, the restraint over herself before others is cast aside, and the terrible fact is revealed that Clara Mowitt is most of her time under the influence of liquor. Oh, how her friends grieve over her, and what misery and degradation she at times herself experiences!

One day when her heart was filled with remorse, and she was turning over her boxes in search of something, the temperance card, "Drink not wine nor strong drink," turned up in view.

"Oh, that I had minded your warning voice!" exclaimed Clara, as she caressed the once despised card and pressed it to her burning lips. "You were indeed my truest, best friend, Will Morris, in sending it to me. But how I scorned your gift and your gentle words of entreaty. Would that I had taken heed to them in time; but it is too late! too late now for me to be saved!"

Well might this emaciated wreck of her former self exclaim, "Too late! too late!" Clara, it was reported, was in a decline—dying of consumption, but those who knew the real facts of her rapidly failing health gave a shudder and took the warning to themselves that one must "touch not, taste not, handle not;" strong drink, if he would escape a like end; that it is the first too free indulgence in the social glass that gives an acquired taste for stimulants, and that, when once taking hold of the system, the battle to overcome the craving may be almost in vain, and the soul finally perish with the body, since we are assured "no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God."—Church and Home.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER thinks that "Christians ought not to meet in elegant places of worship, occupy comfortable seats, keep Sunday-schools for a select few, and virtually say, 'I thank God I am not as other men,' and leave the world around lying in wickedness, with little or no effort to save it. 'Who hath made thee differ from another, and what hast thou that thou hast not received?'"

THERE are just two sides to a prohibition question; a right side and a wrong side. It is hardly probable that the saloon keepers, gamblers and other criminals are on the right side. If you are with them, look well to your footing.—The Levee.