

Temperance

A Fight Against Odds

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

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Mr. Kilgour, a railway conductor, is killed in the wreck of his train caused by the blunder of a drunken engineer. His son Ralph takes a position as clerk in a hotel and the second son, Willie, is offered the place of assistant, but refuses from a nameless fear of having anything to do with the 'Thing' that caused his father's death. Allie, the only daughter, has a position as stenographer. Claude, the youngest, a fine boy of twelve, handsome and gifted, generous and loving, is in school. Willie's action in refusing a position connected with the sale of liquor comes to the notice of the W.C.T.U. women and the ministers of the city, who make much of him socially, while a Methodist 'pillar' gives him a good position, and he makes new friendships among the best class of people. He soon becomes a Christian. Claude fails in his examinations, acts moody and sour and is discovered smoking a cigarette. He promises to reform, but continues the practice in secret.

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Again a consultation was held with Ralph. Ere midnight, by diligent detective work, the two young men had unearthed the facts that Claude did drink beer, and that he mingled with the lowest company to be found in that tough little city; that he had never ceased the use of cigarettes, that he sneaked away with other depraved youths to devour the vilest, most pernicious, most unspeakably filthy literature that could be procured by lawful or unlawful means; that, young as he was, he had entered into low vice to hear of which made even Ralph's bronzed cheek blush.

It was useless taxing Claude. He denied everything, and when proofs of his guilt were shown him, he indifferently admitted that he had been lying.

'And where has all the money been coming from?' asked Ralph, who had been himself drawing Claude's pay for him and seeing that no money was handled by him.

Claude half smiled at the simplicity of this question. 'Oh, pshaw,' he replied derisively. 'Do you suppose any fellow with half an ounce of brains can't pick up an odd tip or earn a dime in a town like this, to say nothing of swaps?'

'But,' said Willie, 'you promised to give every cent you got to mother to take care of, so you could not be tempted.'

'Rats!' replied the boy.

Ralph said not a word, but he picked the young reprobate up by the coat collar, and carrying him to the far woodshed, administered such a complete and thorough horsewhipping that Claude never forgot. Claude howled for mercy like a young Comanche, and when the punishment ceased he was a thoroughly subdued and frightened boy.

'Now,' said Ralph, 'that's the dose you get every time we hear of your smoking a single cigarette, or in any particular disobeying any command given you by one in this house. You never get any unreasonable ones.'

This last outbreak it was decided to keep from the little mother, who happened to be out visiting a friend in the country when these latest discoveries took place.

'Willie,' said Ralph, as the brothers disrobed that night, 'I've quit the hostelry—had a row with Cruickshank.'

'How's that?' asked Willie, deeming it prudent not to allow face and voice to reveal his joy at this intelligence.

'Well you see, Cruickshank owns that cigar store on Sandwich avenue, run for

him by that sneak of a Lafferty, where the boys get supplied with all the cigarettes they can pay for in spite of the law. I spoke to him about it, and to my surprise he—well, he wasn't nice. The truth is, Cruickshank is identified heart and soul with all the tobacco and liquor interests in the county. Last night he was elected president of the South-western Tobacco Growers' Union. I tell you what it is, Billy, I'm turning prohibitionist. Of course, I never did have any personal use for either liquor or tobacco, and as a question of common sense, could never see how the country benefited in the long run by the traffic. But I never concerned myself about the question till lately. It stands to reason, though, that if no beer or liquor were to be had, Claude could not get off on these tears, and the same with cigarettes. Say, it beats me all to pieces how it comes that cigarettes are permitted to be made and sold. Even liquor has a limited sphere of usefulness as a preservative or drug, while it would be hard to convince some that tobacco is anything more than a harmless, useless, expensive and filthy luxury, though it's precious few confirmed or enslaved tobacco users I know who amount to a row of pins compared with what is in them to be, if they'd leave the narcotic alone. But I don't know that I ever heard anyone even attempt to say a good word for cigarettes, no more among the most confirmed tobacco sots, than among temperance cranks. All agree in admitting them to be the most devilish poison to brain, body and soul known to exist. You can set to work and reform a drunkard if he himself really wants to reform, but there seems no material to begin on in a cigarette fiend. Get a drunkard sobered up and he is full of vim and energy to reform, as far as the will goes, but there is no will, no enthusiasm, no anything that is not dried up and dead in a cigarette fiend.'

'But do you suppose,' asked Willie, anxious to draw out his elder brother, 'that a prohibition law could ever be enforced?'

'Certainly not, at least in this county, at present,' was the quick reply. 'But conditions are much more healthy back of us, and my theory is that it is a most idiotic policy to legalize and control anything which is wrong in itself. So long as evil works forth under the cover of law and respectability, there will ten men fall where there would otherwise be but one. There will always be a percentage of people who will steal and murder and burn barns and use foul language, in spite of the most stringent laws and penalties, but these geatry are not favorites in good society, and are obliged to resort to all kinds of unpopular and unpleasant devices to gain their ends. Take divorce in Michigan, for instance. Lots of men would think twice before clearing out with their neighbor's wife, but under the cover of an easy divorce law, which insures the legality and respectability of their action, many will secure a divorce and marry the "lady next door." Plenty of swell fellows who think a lot of themselves, but don't hesitate to enter a high-toned licensed saloon or bar-room to learn to be drunkards, would never stoop for an instant to understand or low devices to obtain a drink. I tell you, a town containing a low hole where rowdies resort to drink on the sly, though it speaks badly for its power to enforce the law, is morally better off than a town containing a so-called "respectable" and high-toned licensed drinking place which makes drinking popular among the better class, while also affording an open opportunity for the lowest class to indulge their desires without the stigma of being law-breakers.'

'Great Scott!' mentally ejaculated Willie, 'isn't Ralph great? Sound as a bell and solid as a rock when he gets started on a tack. That fellow will make a mark if he sets out after it.'

In Willie's prayers that night arose a special petition for this brother who, he felt, was very near the kingdom.

Another change took place in Claude from the date of his somewhat severe, though not cruel punishment. Evidently

the thrashing had made an impression on him which all the prayers, entreaties, kindness, helpfulness and forbearance on the part of the entire family had failed to accomplish. This in itself was a heart-breaking evidence of the change which had taken place in Claude's noble, high-strung nature. Formerly, a tear in his mother's eye, a sisterly tenderness from Alice, an undeserved kindness from Ralph, was enough to melt Calude's frank, affectionate nature to instant repentance and atonement for any boyish fault. Now only the measures that might be applied to a brute beast could arouse any sensation in his frame. As soon as his mother arrived home, she was told that Claude had been smoking again, and her aid invoked in placing a doubly vigilant guard on his movements.

(To be Continued.)

Dr. Hutchinson, physician of the Kansas reformatory for boys, produces figures in his annual report showing that cigarettes are the cause of the downfall of more inmates in that institution than all other vicious habits combined. Of the 350 inmates in the reformatory last year, 236 claimed that the cigarettes had driven them to crime.

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