

COBWEB CHAINS.

"What is all this about?" asked Mr. Patterson, stopping his march up and down the deck of the excursion steamer, and looking with grim face at the paper which his little grand-daughter held out to him. "A temperance pledge, eh? Upon my word, you are beginning early. And you want me to sign it? For what, pray?"



"I DO WISH YOU WOULD."

"Why, Grandfather, if you would Clyne says he would; he says a boy cannot be expected to sign what his Grandfather doesn't."

The corners of Grandfather Patterson's mouth drew down as though he was rather amused than otherwise with this statement, but he did not choose to let Elise see his smile.

"Good for Clyne!" he said grimly. "Why should you particularly want to get his name to this document? Do you consider him in special danger of being a drunkard?"

"Why, no, Grandfather; only of course everybody is in danger who drinks the least little bit."

"Indeed! there is just where I don't agree with you; and there is just where I object to your father's and mother's fanaticism. If they would confine their efforts to drunkards, and let respectable people who know how to behave themselves alone, I would not have a word to say."

"But, Grandfather," said little Elise shrewdly, "you do not think there would be any drunkards, do you, if everybody signed the pledge not to drink a drop?"

Grandfather Patterson laughed in spite of himself this time, and looked kindly down on the little girl. "You are a chip of the old block," he said; "take after your Grandmother. But I don't believe you will get Clyne to sign your straight-laced pledge; he is too fond of cider."

Elise looked very grave. "That is just the trouble," she said, in a low tone; "he says perhaps he might sign if it wasn't for that; he says he doesn't care about the cider so very much, only the boys would make such fun of him for not drinking it when he goes to Uncle Markham's. That was when he said he would sign the pledge if you would; he said he should like to see anybody make fun of you, and if he could say, 'Grandfather and I don't drink cider any more,' he would just as soon do it as not."

"Quite a compliment!" said Grandfather Patterson, stroking his bearded chin as he spoke. "I am inclined to think I would make the effort, tremendous as it is, if I saw an occasion; but since I have no special fears of Clyne's becoming a drunkard through the use of sweet cider, I must decline to lead off, even for the sake of such a loyal following. Run away now, and don't bother the gentlemen on board with your paper; they will be laughing at you the next thing, and you know you do not like to be laughed at any better than Clyne does."

Elise turned away with a sorrowful face; she had felt so hopeful of success, for as a rule her Grandfather did not like to deny her anything. Clyne's father was dead, and he and his mother lived with Grandfather Patterson; and Clyne had very different teaching from Elise, whose father was a temperance fanatic, Grandfather Patterson said, and had made another of his wife. Elise was a fanatic, too, if being very earnest and alert with her temperance pledge was a sign; but try as she would,

she could make no progress with Clyne. She tried it frequently during the years which followed, once very earnestly. It was after they had been separated for nearly two years, and had passed, Elise her thirteenth and Clyne his fifteenth birthday. Clyne was fond of his cousin; he thought her very pretty, and smarter than any of the girls in their set. "If she weren't such a dreadful little fanatic," he said to Grandfather Patterson; "she talks her temperance pledge yet, don't you think, as hard as ever! Carries her pledge book in her pocket, and makes herself a laughing stock by coaxing everybody to sign." She coaxed Clyne in vain.

"I do wish you would," she said, staying her pretty white fan, and looking earnestly into his merry blue eyes: "I know of two or three boys who I think would sign if you did; you are a leader in that set, and you ought to be careful."

"I am," said Clyne; "I never coax them to steal, or lie, or anything of that sort."

"Oh, Clyne! I do wish you would talk seriously about it; it seems so strange that a sensible boy like you cannot see the danger there is in playing with such an enemy! I am going to tell you just what I think; I believe you are a victim to your liking for the stuff! You used to be bound, when you were a little fellow, by the fear that the boys would laugh at you, and now you are bound because you like the taste of hard cider and home-made wines."



"WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT?"

Clyne laughed lightly. "Cobweb chains, my dear, croaking cousin; I could break them like that; if I choose," and he snapped an imaginary thread with his finger. "I remember how much afraid of a laugh I used to be when I was a little fellow, but I have gotten over that. I do like cider and wine; I see no reason to deny the taste. Grandfather has always had home-made wines, you know, and I have drunk them; why shouldn't I like them? Not that I am extravagantly fond of such things; I do not doubt but that I could break off the use of them if I chose; I should miss them, of course, so would you miss your cup of chocolate; but because a fellow is fond of a thing is no sign that he is in danger of making a beast of himself. There is where you blunder, Elise; you did when you were a little chicken; you don't give a person credit for common-sense and self-control."

"All people have not common-sense and self-control," said Elise earnestly. She foresaw that her handsome cousin had much too high an opinion of himself to make it worth her while to try to convince him that he did not know his own weaknesses, so she determined to try to win him for the sake of others. "You cannot deny that some boys go wrong, even from what you call small beginnings, and therefore you, if you are stronger, ought to throw your influence as a shield around those who are not."

"O, bother! I'm tired of all that kind of talk, Elise. I think it is weakening; I do, honestly. Let every fellow look out for himself, I say; learn to understand that he must stand on his own responsi-

lity, and not be whining around in search of some one to influence him."

What was the use in talking to Clyne? His Grandfather upheld him, and his mother smiled at his bright replies, and told Elise she would have to sharpen up her wits if she was going to talk the temperance pledge into Clyne.

Elise went away again, and the years went on. Clyne was eighteen when she saw him next, and his poor mother knew, what Elise did not, that more than once during the holiday season he came in late with bloodshot eyes and stammering tongue; and once, O, that dreadful once, lay upon the floor, unable to move, unable to speak, and sank into a drunken sleep before her frightened eyes. Neither was that the last time, though Clyne meant it should be, and promised that it should be. "I can't help it, mother," he said, turning bleared eyes upon her, one dreadful morning when they talked it over. "I never meant to touch the stuff again, but I did. Elise was right; I am bound, and the chains are not made of cobweb, either. Grandfather need not talk about disinheriting me, it is his fault; I would have signed Elise's pledge when I was nine if he would have done so."

Elise is still trying; she talks to Clyne about One mighty to save him from himself, able to break the strongest chains and set him free; but he has gotten no farther than to say, "Elise, I would promise you now if I could keep my promise, but I am afraid I can't."—Pansy.

record many trips of exploration that were cut short on the Dark Continent by the tremendous natural difficulties. It is remarkable that in the last ten years more crossings have been made than in the preceding eighty, and that while long ago ten years were required for the undertaking, one year or even six months may now be sufficient.

THE SMALL AND THE GREAT.

One night a man took a little taper out of a drawer and lighted it, and began to ascend a long, winding stair.

"Where are you going?" said the little taper.

"Away high up," said the man, "higher than the top of the house where we sleep."

"And what are you going to do there?" said the little taper.

"I am going to show the ships out at sea where the harbor is," said the man. "For we stand here at the entrance to the harbor, and some ship far out on the stormy sea may be looking out for our light even now."

"Alas! no ship could ever see my light," said the little taper. "It is so very small."

"If your light is small," said the man, "keep it burning bright and leave the rest to me."

Well, when the man got up to the top of the lighthouse, for this was the lighthouse they were in, he took the little taper and with it lighted the great lamps that stood ready there with their polished reflectors behind them. And soon they were burning steady and clear, throwing a great, strong beam of light across the sea. By this time the lighthouse man had blown out the little taper and laid it aside. But it had done its work. Though its own light had been so small, it had been the means of kindling the light in the top of the lighthouse, and these were now shining brightly over the sea, so that ships far out knew by it where they were, and were guided safely into the harbor.

A SECRET WORTH KNOWING.

On a recent journey, I met in a railway coach a gentleman well-known in the church as a devout and liberal layman of the best type. Having a long distance to ride together, we fell into an interesting and somewhat confidential conversation concerning our personal experience in the Christian life. I became deeply interested in my friend's views and feelings as he modestly related them to me. At length, he took from his pocket a small book, and pointed to a record which some years previously he had made in the book. It was in substance as follows: "From this time forward, I solemnly purpose to serve God as a calling, and to do business to pay expenses." That record revealed the secret of my friend's rich religious experience, and of his exceptionally large contributions to Christ's church. He is still a comparatively young man, with a growing family; he is not wealthy, as rich men estimate wealth, but possesses a competency, as do thousands of others whose contributions are pitifully small. But he has learned the true philosophy of life, and so richly does it freight his life with blessing that no persuasion could induce him to abandon it. He does not intend ever to hold in his possession for personal uses any more wealth than he now has; henceforth his life is consecrated to the high service of the master, and all the proceeds of that consecrated life, save his current expenses, which are very moderate, are to be sacredly devoted to the Redeemer's kingdom.—C. H. Paney, D. D.; LL. D., in Western.

SIXTEEN EXPLORERS HAVE
CROSSED THE DARK
CONTINENT.

Africa has been crossed by explorers sixteen times. The first journey was made in 1802-1811 by Honorato da Costa, a Portuguese. Francesco F. Coimbra went from Mozambique to Benguela in 1833-48, and Silva Porta from Benguela to the mouth of the Rovumay in 1853-56. Livingstone left San Paulo de Loando in 1854 and reached Quilmane in 1856. The fifth crossing was accomplished by Gerhard Rolf, who in 1865 and 1866 travelled from Tripoli to the Gulf of Guinea, near the mouth of the Niger. Lieut. Cameron, twenty years after Livingstone, did the sixth trip, between Bagamoyo and Benguela. Then came Stanley (1874-77), from Bagamoyo to the mouth of the Congo; Serpa Pinto (1877-79), from Bagamoyo to Port Natal; the Italians, Matteucci and Massari (1880-82), from Suakim to the mouth of the Niger. Between 1882 and 1884 Wissmann went from San Paulo de Loanda to Sadaani, on the Zanzibar coast, and Arnot, a Scotch missionary, went from Port Natal to Benguela. The twelfth crossing was made in 1884-85 by Capello and Ivans, Portuguese; the thirteenth in 1885-86 by the Swedish Lieutenant, Glerup, who passed but six months in reaching Bagamoyo from Stanley Falls, on the Lower Congo. The Austrian, Oscar Lenz, went from the mouth of the Congo to Quilmane in 1885-87. The fifteenth crossing was Stanley's last one. The sixteenth was done by the French Captain Trivier, who took two years to go from Angola to Mozambique. Besides these sixteen successful crossings, there are on



SANK INTO A DRUNKEN SLEEP.