

A Steer in the Kitchen.

"Who was that big boy with your crowd, Zack?" asked Mr. Clarkson, as his girls and boys gathered round his table for that coziest of meals, the family tea.

"Which one, father?" Zack asked, with a vague expression of uneasiness on his boyish face.

"The one with the loud voice," answered his father, "and the loud cravat, and the general air of swagger; you will have no trouble about answering the question, seeing that I know the rest of your companions."

"Oh-h!" said Zack, rather sheepishly, "oh, yes; that was Stiffy Morton."

"Stiffy?" cried the mother, behind the tea urn, "what sort of a name is Stiffy?"

"His real name is Ned, I believe, but the fellows call him stiffy."

"I would be sorry to think you are intimate enough with a boy who smells of cigarettes, and uses bad language, to call him by any such name, my son," said Mr. Clarkson, glancing across the table at Zack and looking displeased.

Zack was silent.

"I know enough of Ned Morton," continued Zack's father, "to insist upon your choosing some other direction than his, when you go off for a walk; in fact, I do not want you to have anything to do with him."

"I'm not having much to do with him, father," said Zack, in a grumbling tone; "but the fellows say you would better have Stiffy for a friend than an enemy."

"That's just where they are mistaken," said Mr. Clarkson, and it was easy to see that the tea table was in for a lecture, when the gentleman suddenly began to laugh.

"Mother," he said to the lady of the tea cups, "tell the children the story of your father's wild steer."

"Why, yes; it fits right in," said the children's mother, and her tea got cold in the cup, while she told this story, belonging to her girl life on a big farm:—

"Father had a very wild steer in his field one year, quite a fierce creature, so that he finally was roped up and sold to the butcher, because the men were afraid of it.

"But Pat McLean's wife, a big, kind-hearted Irish woman, proud of her courage, fed the creature at her cottage door with cabbage leaves, and such truck, until he hung round the house like a dog.

"'You'd better let that steer alone, Bridget,' said my father; 'he's no safe plaything.'

"'Shure, I'd raythur the crayther wad be me frind thin me inemy,' Bridget used to say, proudly.

"But one day when the men were working at a distance, Bridget came flying to the farmhouse in terror. 'Sure an' it's meself that's wrong the day. Misther Bell!' she cried; 'it's me inemy I'll take the crayther for now, once ye'll git him gone.'

"Pat's wife had stepped out of her tidy

cottage for a bucket of water, leaving the door open, and the steer, not finding anything to eat on the door step, had entered the kitchen and taken possession. Bridget found him stretched out on her floor, peacefully chewing his cud. That is, he looked very peaceful lying there, but the woman knew better than to stir him up.

"Well, we called the men, and went down to the cottage. Sure enough, there was the creature, lying cosily by the cooking stove. But the room was not at all cosy by the time the men succeeded in getting the animal out. The chair was broken to bits, the braided rug pawed and soiled, and the tea kettle and irons tipped off by the overturning of the stove.

"Poor Bridget! she wrung her hands and cried over the wreck he left behind him. The steer was killed next week by the butcher, but if he had lived a dozen years longer, Bridget would never have given him a cabbage leaf again, you may be sure. Her experience of his friendship was enough."

The children round the tea table laughed over the story, but Zack saw a sermon in his father's eye.

"There you are, Zack," said Mr. Clarkson, when the boys and girls had had their laugh out. "There you are exactly; there are some evil natures that you would much better have as enemies than friends, especially if they are bigger and stronger than you. They will come into your life much more easily than you can turn them out, and before long they will turn you out, that is, the best part of you, truth maybe, and honesty, and soberness and purity. I have no desire for you to pick a quarrel with Ned Morton, but if it is between his being your friend or your enemy—big, coarse, evil fellow that he is, I'll take him for an enemy every time."

As Mr. Clarkson turned in his gate the next evening he saw Zack's "crowd" coming up from the ball lot. "Stiffy" Morton was not among them, but he heard Zack quoting at the top of his voice, "It's me inemy I'll have the crayther th' day," and a peal of laughter followed.

"The mother's story came in well," said Zack's father to himself, smiling.—Sel.

Paralysis from Chewing Gum.

The peculiar case of a young woman of the West who is suffering from an affection due to chewing gum is given by the "Cincinnati Commercial."

The young woman, who is a bright student in the high school, was an inveterate chewer of gum, and a few days ago noticed that the left side of her mouth was drawing up toward the ear. The trouble grew worse and a physician pronounced it a case of paralysis of the muscles of the mouth due to the continual mastication.—Ex.