



Temperance Department.

WHAT A "LITTLE RED-RIBBON" DID.

BY ERNEST GILMORE.

"Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save."

It was a Red-Ribbon meeting, and as this familiar hymn rolled out touchingly and powerfully upon the evening breeze little Meg Thomson moved slowly, painfully into the warm well-lighted hall—slowly because of the surging crowd, painfully because her little lame limb was not equal to the pressure upon it. Her little cheeks were wofully thin and touchingly pale; her white teeth appeared through the half-closed lips, that were drawn and wasted, and her eyes had not the remotest shadow of childhood's care free sunniness, but instead were full of wonder—wonder at the great crowd of people, wonder at the great brilliant room, wonder whether she would be put out, and she looked down at her rags, and pulled the old shawl closer about her; wonder also at what the beautiful song meant.

"Where are the lower lights?" thought Meg; "I only see upper lights, great dancing chandeliers. If there were any how could they send their gleam across the wave, for the ocean is 'way over t'other side of the city. 'You may rescue, you may save,'—what did it mean? I wish I could save somebody, oh! I do."

But the sweet hymn ceased and a speaker arose, an old man. The spectators were hushed into silence, and all eyes fastened upon the white-haired man. His face was furrowed with deep seams, his eyes gray, restless, piercing yet tender. His thin lips were compressed, and his withered cheeks flushed painfully as he essayed to word his thoughts. He looked steadily over the audience and began in a low voice, which gradually arose until a depth of thrilling sweetness and pathos was gained which held the hearers spell-bound. The melting tenderness of his tremulous tones riveted every heart, and when his aged form leaned forward and the thin hands clasped and the kindling eyes looked heavenward, and the voice broke forth in solemn invocation, the climax was reached.

He continued his prayer for a few moments and then the singularly sweet and powerful voice broke forth with irresistible appeals to the audience to sign the pledge and choose the narrow path. There was a magnetism in his inspired eloquence which caused stony hearts to melt and tremble, and when he finished there was a rush for the platform. Ladies richly clad side by side with poverty plainness, men in glossy broadcloths and old toppers in rags, all hurried up the aisles together.

Meg wondered what was the matter; finally, singling out a poorly-dressed, weeping woman, she ventured to enquire of her.

"Why, child, they're signing the pledge."

"For what, ma'am?"

"That they'll never drink again, never be drunkards." And the woman shuddered.

"But ma'am, those beautiful ladies an't drunkards?"

"No, child; but they help to save others by promising never to touch the vile stuff."

"I wish I could sign; I'd like to save others."

"You can, child; go up and write your name."

Meg hesitated; she did not see another person like herself, no one else with ragged dress and toothless shoes.

"Have you a father, child?"

"Yes, ma'am," with a long-drawn sigh.

The poor woman understood, and added:

"Go up, child, and maybe you can save him."

Meg went, edged along slowly with the crowd. The patriarchal man still stood beside the pledge, looking with an expression of mingled sadness and smiles into the face of every signer. As Meg advanced and wrote her name tremblingly he laid his hand (as if conscious that she was a drunkard's child) upon the bowed head and whispered: "God bless you, child, and may you save some poor seaman."

Meg passed on with a fresh red ribbon decorating her button-hole, or rather her faded shawl, for her button-holes were all torn out. Poor child! she understood now what the hymn meant. "Oh! if she only could save her father."

The enthusiastic assembly dispersed. Many rolled off in their carriages to luxurious homes; others, warily clad, walked briskly through the broad thoroughfares, unheeding the cold blast which swept past them but could not

wound them; but little Meg shivered as she turned from the bright street, and went as swiftly as her little lame limb would allow down deserted avenues, until she reached one whose lamp-lights gleamed pale and sickly, and at last limped down an alley where impenetrable darkness rested like death's pall.

As Meg advanced she came to a low saloon where a feeble light issued through a filthy pane. She went closer and peered into the window, which was broken and stuffed with dirty rags and ragged hats. She opened the door and glided stealthily in with lips apart and colorless as white marble, for Meg had never been inside the den before. Red and watery eyes stared at the trembling child as she limped across the room and stood behind the rickety chair of Dick Thomson. His face was grossly red and his black hair long and matted, while pushed upon the back of his head was a hat with torn crown and distorted brim. His cheeks were swollen and his long hands grimy, while his fagged-out pants were a fit accompaniment to his looks.

"Father, come home, please." And the little cold hands touched his hot ones.

"Home (hic)—home, where is 'em?"

"Come, father," plead the little voice.

"Well, well, Meg, father'll come (hic). He's out 'o stamps, Meg; he (hic) better go home."

Meg led him to the door and held him tight as he reeled along in the darkness. Narrower grew the foul alley, the miasma of pestilent fumes flaunting its polluting breath over drunkard and drunkard's child, until it dwindled down to space scarce wide enough to admit them. Here they enter the crazy structure which Meg calls home. How it shook as the gusty winds blew fiercely! The shattered outside door stood open, and they entered the desolate hall and stumbled along until they came to their own shelter at the back of the ghastly tenement.

Oh! the desolation brooding over this abode of drunkenness; not a coal in the broken stove, not a single article of furniture save an old three-legged table, no light save the pitying moonbeam peeping through the one dingy pane. Meg leads her father to the heap of rags she dignifies with the name of bed and helps him down, where he soon falls into the inebriate's heavy sleep.

Hark! a sound from another corner; upon the musty straw a boy of six is sitting. He speaks in a husky whisper:

"Meg, dear Meg, give me something to eat—only one mouthful."

"Hush, Dickie, poor Dickie," said Meg, hastening to the starving child; "I've got something for you, but don't make a noise or you'll wake him."

And here I must record a deed which may bring a blush to many who think they are making great sacrifices. Little Meg had not had one mouthful that day, and yet from her pocket she drew forth a sandwich which she had picked up in the street, thrown there probably by some well-fed school-child, for the lean had been nearly eaten away and only the fat was left between layers of dirt-sprinkled bread. But oh! how good it tasted to the boy, upon whose baby features hunger had written with his gaunt fingers enough to pierce the heart of the hardest looker-on.

Meg took off her old shawl and tucked it all about Dickie, and then lay down beside him, and soon, in spite of hunger, cold and sorrow, fell asleep.

Early morning found her awake and thoughtfully looking at her red ribbon and at her sleeping brother.

"What can I do?" she thought. "I could make coffee, but I have no money to buy it with, or fire to cook it."

But poor forsaken Meg knew the Friend above all others; her broken-hearted Christian mother had taught her how to pray, and her last words had been: "Meet me in heaven, Maggie darling, and bring father and little Dick." And now from the pinched lips issued forth: "O God! help a poor child save her father." Even in that curtainless and carpetless room God heard and answered the sorrowful little petition.

"Meg!" called Dick Thomson; "here, girl, take this jug and get some liquor."

"I have no money, father."

"Get trusted, Meg, there's a good girl."

"I'll get something, father; just wait a few minutes." And Meg's face brightened as she ran out.

God had answered by putting a bright thought into the child's brain. Yesterday she had seen Biddy, Mrs. McCain's servant, leaving her house with a big bundle. She concluded Mrs. McCain must be without a maid-of-all-work. Meg's plans were laid. Mrs. McCain kept boarders. This morning she had told her husband that "she felt ready to fly, without a soul to take a step," and as she hurriedly prepared breakfast with lowering brow a low tap at the door summoned her.

"Meg Thomson, what do you want?"

"Mrs. McCain, I saw you have on a red ribbon last night and here's mine (uncovering her shawl,) and I want to save my father. He's

awake and calling for liquor, but, Mrs. McCain, will you please give me some coffee? I don't beg it, ma'am; I'll come in an hour's time and work to pay for it."

Mrs. McCain said not a word; instead, her eyes filled with tears. "To see that poor starved child wanting to save her father!" she told her husband.

"Here, Meg," she said, "is a small pail; I will fill it with hot coffee; and here, child, is a tin of baked potatoes and a bowl of ham gravy. Run along now, and be sure to be here to help me."

"O father! here's something good for you," said Meg, entering the squalid room.

"Why didn't you take the jug for the rum, Meg?"

"But, dear father, it isn't rum; it's good hot coffee with milk in it." And Meg poured some out into the cracked cup and passed it to the haggard man.

He raised his hand to push it off, but the aroma had reached his nostrils, and he growled: "Well, give it here, Meg." And he swallowed it as if suffering from thirst.

"It is good, Meg, real good; give me some more."

Meg poured out another cup, and still another, until her father gently said: "Take some yourself, Meg; you are a good girl—a good girl."

It was worth a good deal to see Dick's face and hear his voice when Meg kissed his pale face and whispered: "Dickie, darlin', wake up and have some hot baked potatoes and ham gravy and coffee."

"Oh Meg! dear Meg, hot baked potatoes and gravy. Oh! my; are we in heaven, Meg?"

Only a few minutes and the dishes were as clean "as if a cat had licked 'em"; so said Dick with a smile, the first smile on the poor little face for many days.

"Meg, girl, I'll go out a while and take the air," said her father, rising with difficulty and speaking with a strange, husky voice.

"But, father—please, father, be back to dinner."

"Dinner, Meg? Where's your dinner?"

"I'll have some, father. Will you come?"

And the round eyes filled with tears, which she bravely kept from falling.

"Yes, Meg, poor Meg, father'll be back."

Meg went to Mrs. McCain's, washed the dishes, and, under directions, washed the floor, swept the walks, &c., and her work so pleased the woman that she not only gave her a shining dime, but a pail of cold coffee and a tin of good beef-soup, and, best of all, engaged her to come daily and help her.

Happy little Meg, in spite of lameness and poverty, for would she not "save father!"

She hurried home, deposited her things on the broken stove, and, leaving Dick in charge, hurried to a neighboring coal-house and bought a little charcoal to heat her soup and coffee. She then built a fire, and with Dick's help pulled out the forlorn table and spread a newspaper over it for a table-cloth. I think, little reader, your appetite would have failed you could you have seen that table, but it was so new and delightful to Meg to have something to eat and a fire that she clapped her hands, and Dick followed her example.

"Now Dickie, darlin', I'll sing you the hymn they sang last night. I can't remember all, but this was the chorus:

"Let the lower lights be burning—"

The door softly opened, and old Dick stepped in and stood quite still. The red ribbon on Meg's shoulder caught his eye, the steaming soup and bubbling coffee; he understood it all.

"Meg," he stammered, "God bless you, child; you've sent a beam across the wave, sure enough; you've saved father, your old miserable father, Meg."

"Oh father!" But the poor child broke down and sobbed aloud.

Shall we go on and tell the rest—how the day star arose and all grew bright, how Richard Thompson labored for and rejoiced in his plump-grown Dickie and his brave, blessed little Red Ribbon girl?—*Temperance Advocate.*

USE OF OPIUM IN MAINE.

Dr. M. L. Holbrook—Dear Sir:—I have just received your note of the 26th ult., enclosing the following sentiment:

"Prohibitionists may learn something about a new phase of the laws which they promote by the announcement that the practice of opium-eating has increased enormously in Maine, and that more morphine is sold in that State than in any other in the Union in proportion to its population. This is owing to the enforcement of the Liquor law."

You ask me what the facts are. This story is an old one, and has been going the rounds of the anti-temperance press for several years. There is not a word of truth in it; it is a lie made entirely out of whole cloth, as the slang phrase is.

The drinkers of alcohol never resort to opium as a substitute. The habit of opium-eating is

usually the result of the medical prescription of that dangerous and pernicious drug. The friends of grog-shops resort to all sorts of falsehoods to make an impression unfavorable to prohibition. Here in Portland, it is often falsely said by such people that the Maine Law has driven a vast amount of business out of the State, never to return. And at other times the same persons will declare that the Maine Law is a complete failure; that there is as much liquor sold and drunk in Maine as ever there was. This latter falsehood is the most frequently repeated, and it is no more shameless than that which you send me in the slip about opium-eating in Maine. We used to have many distilleries and breweries in this State; now not one,—all are suppressed by the law. We used to have cargoes and cargoes of West India rum imported into the State, now not a single puncheon. Half a million dollars will cover the cost of all the liquor smuggled into the State and sold surreptitiously, while our share of the United States drink-bill would be \$13,000,000, and we used to consume our full share, and more.

In 1866, half Portland was burned down, destroying \$10,000,000, and notwithstanding that, our valuation has been constantly increasing—while the valuation of New York has run down \$12,500,000 the last year, and \$100,000,000 the last five years. The valuation of Boston ran down, also, more than \$8,000,000 the last year. Free rum in New York and in Boston; but the valuation of Portland, under prohibition to the grog-shops, increased \$480,000 the last year, and business here now is as good as at any time in the history of the town. Every year we save more than \$12,500,000, which would be wasted in rum but for the Maine Law. After the experience of the result of prohibition in Maine of more than 26 years, the Maine Law is now supported by both political parties and by an overwhelming public opinion. At the last session of our Legislature, January, 1877, an additional act of greater stringency than any which preceded it, was passed without a dissenting vote in either House, and is thoroughly supported by the popular voice. This would be impossible, were the results of prohibition other than favorable to the highest interests of the State and people.

Truly yours,
NEAL DOW.

Portland Maine, Nov. 27, 1877.

—Herald of Health.

SIXTY THOUSAND A YEAR.—Fortunately for their patients, says the *Western Morning News* (Dec. 22), doctors are awaking to another matter of great importance to the community—the mischief which the profession has long wrought by prescribing alcohol. The correspondence on this subject has been continued in the medical journals for many weeks, and there has been an overwhelming preponderance of arguments and advocates in favor of abstinence. Dr. Ridge has a most admirable letter in the last number of the *British Medical Journal*, in which he points out that "there is something in the nature of alcohol and something in the nature of man which render universal moderation impossible, unless one of these two factors be radically changed. Good houses, for all, well cooked food, universal refinement and education, high moral tone, &c., may be universally attained in the course of a few thousand years; but why are we to expect that even then drunkenness will be unknown when we see some who possess all these to an eminent degree, and sometimes deep religious feeling into the bargain, succumb to the insidious influence of alcohol?" I always think when I hear the advocates of free drunkenness bid us wait for the improving effect of education, that they are very ignorant not to know that some of the finest, and most cultured intellects have been ruined by alcohol, and very cruel not to think of all the bodies and souls that will be destroyed before this panacea of education will effect its supposed cure. Twenty years hence all England may be properly educated, but meanwhile what about the 60,000 victims whom drink claims every year? Is nothing to be done for them? The *Lancet* in its last number attempts to sum up the controversy in a leading article, and declares in favor of moderation rather than abstinence, yet in this very article it says, "The drinking habits of young men in the present day are appalling, and threaten physical as well as moral deterioration of our race." The *Lancet* calls upon the young man to be "moderate," which is like asking a fire not to burn.

—A few weeks ago a poor negro went to Princeton, a whiskey-selling town, and, as is reported and believed, purchased whiskey of a man who "belongs to the church," on which he got roaring drunk; and, after getting home in this sadly helpless plight, fell into the fire and burned to death. Who is responsible? Shall we answer? That man who prays to the Lord on the Sabbath day and then preys on the people during the week. May God have mercy on his poor soul!—*Star of Hope.*