

**Mother's Apron Strings.**

BY RUFUS G. LANDON.

Come, smoke a cigarette, old boy!"  
"No, thank you, Tom," said Fred.  
"For just before I left the house  
Dear mother spoke and said—"  
"No matter what she said," sneered Tom  
"Why mind such trifling things?  
Now be a man, and just untie  
Your mother's apron strings!"  
"No, no, I'll not untie them, Tom;  
Indeed I hope they're strong,  
And tied secure, that I may be  
Held back from doing wrong."  
Tom hung his head and walked away  
"Fred's right, I know," said he;  
"If I had cared for mother more,  
I might to-day be free."  
"Alas, I cut the cords of love  
That held me to the right,  
And now the chains of habit bind  
Me in their coils so tight."  
Dear boys, 'twere better to be tied  
To mother's apron strings  
Than feel the bondage and the shame  
That sinful license brings.

**Slaying the Dragon.**

BY MRS. D. O. CLARK.

CHAPTER III.  
THROWING STONES.

Erastus Dow is dead, and yonder is the little funeral procession led by the Rev. Phineas Felton, carrying the body of the drunkard to its last resting-place. A small company of fishermen and their wives walk to the grave, partly because they mourn the loss of one who when sober was a kind and genial neighbour, and partly because they sympathize with the widow in her double affliction.  
After Mr. Felton's visit to the Cove, Erastus Dow had grown sullen and morose. All his good resolutions seemed to have left him, and returning strength found him once more seeking his cups. A second attack of delirium tremens cut short his earthly career. He was called before the judgment bar of God, to answer for the deeds done in the body.  
That night the company at the Maypole was less hilarious than usual. The solemn events of the day had made somewhat of an impression upon these rough men, and unconsciously the impulse to adopt a new and better life was awakened in more than one heart. The conversation very naturally turned upon their deceased comrade.  
"Poor Rast," said Tyler Matthews. "He want old enough ter be picked off. He oughter lived thirty years longer. I tell ye, boys, there's more'n one ter blame fur his death," and Matthews dropped his head on his hands and appeared lost in the attempt to solve this problem.  
"Who d'yer expect's ter blame?" snapped Landlord Merton, eyeing his customer with suspicion. "You'd better make your meanin' a leetle plainer, Ty. It don't reflect well on some on us."  
"The coat fits, don't it, Merton?" laughed Tom Barton. "Wall, I guess you are es much ter blame es any one. Rast didn't know when ter stop drinkin', and you kept him at it till his money was gone. No offence ter you, boss. We're talkin' fac's ter-night."  
"You'd better git out o' here ef you're goin' ter talk that way," blustered Merton.  
"Come, now, don't git huffy," said Matthews. "We don't mean nothin'. Rast was a good cove, kind and obligin', an' it's nat'ral that we should want ter talk of him an' excuse his faults. I say agin that there's more'n one ter blame fur Rast Dow's funeral."  
"I guess Parson Felton hed es much share in the business es I did," said Merton. "They say thet Dow offered ter sign the pledge of the parson would put his name down, too, but Felton wouldn't, an' Rast flung the whole business up. Now, boys, you needn't look at me es 'no' I was Rast Dow's murderer. I tell you the parson is more ter blame then I be. He might hev helped Dow on to his feet again, an' he wouldn't do it because he didn't want ter give up his glass of wine. He don't care anythin' about poor folks. Their souls ain't worth savin'." Ef Dow hed asked me ter help him by signing the pledge, I don't know, boys—'twould hav put me inter a purty tight place—but I don't know, I say, but what I should hev done it."

"Velly goot, velly goot, mine friend," said Carl Schmidt, dryly. "Vill you sign von pledge vit me, to-night?"  
The tavern echoed with laughter at the German's droll remark, and Landlord Merton turned to wait on a new customer, with a discomfited air.  
"Let's change the subject," growled Peter MacDuff. "Who wants ter hear about dead folks all the time? The parson's ter blame, of course, fur the poor cove's death. That's plain ter be seen. We all know he ain't no better'n the rest of us, only he wears finer clothes, an' don't hev ter work with his hands. Parsons are all alike. Leaky crafts, most on 'em."  
"The't'll do, boys," broke forth Tom Kinmon, who had remained silent during this brief conversation. "Those es lives in glass houses, shouldn't throw stones. Parson Felton made a mistake when he refused to sign the pledge with Rast. It was a dreadful mistake, an' helped ter harden Dow's heart, an' hasten his end. But, then, boys, you all know thet at heart Mr. Felton is a good man, an' means ter do what is right. He don't see the temperance question right, an' 'hinks he is doin' God service when he stands up fur mod'rate drinkin'. He'll live long enuff ter see his mistake, you see ef he don't. There's only one plank fur a minister ter stan' on, an' thet is the total abstinence plank. If he launches forth on any other raft, he'll go under. There's no help fur it. Landlord, I don't blame ye fur thinkin' the parson was consid'able out the way, but hadn't you better look round your own back loor, an' see if it's clear? You've got somethin' ter answer fur es well es the parson. You've made lots o' money out of Rast Dow. Can't you look over your gold an' pick out pieces thet's stained with the blood of our comrade? 'Tis thet the price of his soul!"  
The landlord shuddered at these words, and no one dared to speak. There was something, to-night, in the manner of the usually silent fisherman, which awed his listeners.  
"Yes," continued Tom, "the parson's ter blame, the landlord's ter blame, and, boys, we are ter blame, too. We hev helped Rast by our words, and still more by our example, ter go ter the dogs. He hes follered where we led. He was weaker then we, and his appetite fur drink was stronger. Did any of us try ter help him? No, we let him go ter destruction. Now, boys, d'yer think we've got any business ter be a-throwing stones? Let's own up thet we're ter blame es much es others, an' stop a-lookin' round ter find some person on whose back to pile the burden. What we orter do is ter profit by Rast's sad end. I fur one mean ter sign the pledge right away, an' I hev dranked my last glass of liquor. I mean ter look after my family now, an' visit the Maypole less."  
Profound astonishment was depicted on every face when the fisherman ceased speaking. Peter MacDuff was the first to rally.  
"Tom Kinmon's a teetotaler! Ha, ha! That sounds well, don't it?" The sneering words failed to produce any impression upon the crowd. The landlord began to taunt Kinmon with the change in his principles, when suddenly the laugh froze upon his lips, and his eyes started from their sockets. He put both hands out as if to ward off some unseen object.  
"What's the matter?" cried the men, springing to their feet and approaching the frightened Merton.  
"There's thet ghost of Rast Dow!" whispered the man, pointing to the wall, on which the flames from the open fire cast grotesque shadows, and with a yell and a bound he sprang to the door and ran out into the darkness.  
Whether the landlord had drunk too much liquor and the vision was the result of a disordered imagination, or whether, like Macbeth, an awakened conscience clothed the unreal with all the horrors of the real, we know not. Tom Kinmon affirmed the latter view to be the true one, while Tyler Matthews, who also had imbibed to some extent, swore that he saw a shadowy hand, which pointed directly to the landlord, and he knew it to be Rast Dow's hand because it lacked a little finger. Be this as it may, Erastus Dow's death was productive of good. Tom Kinmon reformed, the remainder of the fishermen were, for the time, sobered, and a rum-seller's heart was pierced by the arrow of remorse.  
(To be continued.)

The provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were confederated July 1st, 1867. In 1870 Manitoba was made a province, and its representatives took their seats in the Dominion Parliament at the session of 1872. British Columbia entered the union in 1871, and Prince Edward Island in 1873.

**DO ANTS TALK?**

A close observer of the little creatures of God's world tells us that he once saw a drove of small black ants moving, perhaps to more commodious quarters. The distance was over seven hundred feet, and nearly every ant was laden with a portion of household goods. Some carried their "eggs," the cocoon stage of the ant, some had food, "some had one thing and some another." I sat and watched them for over an hour," he continues, "and I noticed that every time two met in the way they would hold their heads close together as if greeting one another, and no matter how often the meeting took place this same thing occurred, as though a short chat was necessary. To prove more about it I killed one that was on his way. Others which were eye-witnesses to the murder went with speed, and with every ant they met this talking took place as before. But instead of a pleasant greeting, it was sad news they had to communicate. I know it was sad news, for every ant that these messengers hastily turned back and fled on another course. So the news spread, and it was true. How was it communicated if not by speech?"  
Many nature students have observed like facts. Yet we are almost as far from a solution of the problem of ant intercommunication to-day as ever. The Rev. Henry C. McCook, D.D., of Philadelphia, has done more than any other living student in America in this field of ant study. Young naturalists cannot take up a more fascinating study than that of ant habits; but murder, even of an ant, is not necessary in such studies, save to preserve a few specimens to assure one of the species under study. An ingenious and true lover of nature delights to devise ways for such study that do not require needless cruelty.

**DURING THE BLIZZARD.**

BY HELEN SONNEVILLE.  
A True Incident.

It was during the blizzard of '99, and things were looking very dark for the Hennessys. The father had been out of work for weeks, and the mother had had to stay at home to take care of the two-months-old baby, and could not go out washing, as she used to do when "the cupboard was bare."  
Sixteen-year-old Mina earned a little at the factory, and Jack made an occasional dime at shovelling snow, but the combined efforts of these two could not pay the rent and get food enough to satisfy the hunger of this family of nine.  
Mrs. Hennessy was cross, and as the days went by and things grew from bad to worse, the frown on her brow came to stay, scoldings and reproaches became more frequent, and the children prudently kept at a distance, for fear of cuffs and slaps.  
Poor woman! Often she sighed, as she recalled the thoughtless days of her girlhood, when never a care rested on her young shoulders.  
"It was a sorry day for me, Matt, when I left my home for yours," she said to her husband, who sat gloomily in the corner, chewing a straw. Times were indeed hard for Matt Hennessy when he could not afford tobacco. "Why don't you go out and seek work like a man instead of sittin' round here, seein' the children starvin' before your eyes?"  
"I'm a-goin', Mary," he replied; "I was only thinkin' what is best to do. You know I'd be a-shovellin' snow if 'twasn't for the pain in my back." Then, without waiting for the angry reproaches which he anticipated, he walked to the door, and, turning back, said, hesitatingly, "Mary, for the sake of old times—those old days, you know—offer a prayer for your good-for-nothin' Matt, will you?"  
Not pausing for her reply, he went out into the bitter blast, while his wife wept angry tears over the puny baby on her knee. Harry and little Jeannette crept into the room, and, emboldened by the sight of their mother's tears, came closer.  
"Don't cry, ma," said Harry, earnestly. "Nettie and I have been upstairs prayin', and we asked God to send pa work. God will do it, so don't cry any more."  
"Work!" she echoed, drearly. "If he don't work soon, I'll go crazy."  
"Mamma," said little Nettie, a pretty child of five, with deep blue eyes, "naven't you told us that heaven is a beautiful home for good people that die?"  
"Yes, child," and the mother put the last lump of coal in the cracked stove.  
"And we'll not be hungry there?"  
"Hungry! No, indeed."  
"Nor thirsty?"  
"No, I suppose not."  
"And you say we'll never be cold?" continued the child, rubbing her blue fingers.  
"No, Nettie, you'll never suffer from

hunger or cold there," said Mrs. Hennessy, rocking the baby back and forth as a relief to her feelings.  
Nettie drew a long breath, then said, musingly: "Well, then, heaven must be just the sweetest place! I want to go there right away, ma! Why doesn't everybody get ready to go to heaven?"  
Tears—not angry ones this time—ran down the mother's face. "If help doesn't come soon, I expect you will go there shortly," she said, but not bitterly.  
"O God," she wailed, "send help to us soon! And make me a better mother to these innocent children!"  
An hour later Matt Hennessy came in with a basket of provisions. "I've got work, Mary!" he shouted. "It's in Holland's grocery, and he advanced me some of my wages when I told him we're starvin'." Cheer up!"  
"Ma, didn't I tell you so?" exclaimed Harry. "God sent the work, just as I asked him to."  
And as they satisfied their hunger Mrs. Hennessy bowed her head in gratitude, and into her mind came the little verse, "A little child shall lead them."

**BRIEF HINTS FOR BRIGHT GIRLS.**

Some one has suggested fifteen things that every girl can learn before she is fifteen. Not every one can learn to play or sing or paint well enough to give pleasure to her friends, but the following "accomplishments" are within everybody's reach, and go far towards making the true lady—one who casts brightness all around her:  
Shut the door, and shut it softly.  
Keep your own room in tasteful order.  
Have an hour for rising, and rise.  
Learn to make bread as well as cake.  
Never let a button stay off twenty-four hours.  
Always know where your things are.  
Never let a day pass without doing something to make somebody comfortable.  
Never come to breakfast without a collar.  
Never go about with your shoes unbuttoned.  
Speak clearly enough for everybody to understand.  
Never fidget or hum, so as to disturb others.  
Never fuss, or fret, or sidget.

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