

## Theo's Reception.

(Alice May Douglas, in 'Presbyterian Banner'.)

'Promise me again, Theo.'

'Yes, mother, I will, and this time with a kiss.' So saying Theo Laurie pressed his lips to his mother's cheek and pretended not to notice the tears in her eyes.

'I know I can trust you, Theo, but a boarding-school is full of temptations, and there are so many ways in which a boy learns to drink.'

'But I won't break a promise,' said Theo, stoutly. 'I believe that everything is packed now.'

'Yes, dear, and here is father with the team.' Then the last good-byes were said, and Theo jumped into the waggon.

The little country station was a long way from the Laurie farm, and as Theo and his father drove along the forest road neither spoke. Theo was looking forward with pleasure to the new life opening to him, and his father was sad at the thought of being separated from his only child.

Just before the station was reached Mr. Laurie said, in a husky voice: 'There is one thing I want to ask of you, my boy, and that is that you will never take a single drop of what is intoxicating—no matter if it is the lightest beer that ever was made—the lightest will give one a heavy enough heart in time. It is the first glass that does the mischief, lad, the first glass always. So I want you to promise me never to take the first glass.'

'I will promise, father.'

'Thank you, Theo; you always were a truthful boy, and I hope that you always will be. You will never know what a burden your promise has taken off my mind.'

It did not take Theo long to make himself at home among his new surroundings. He liked his teachers and studies, and wrote home that he was sure that he had the best room-mate in the whole world. His name was Stevie Loud.

'This is my second year in the school,' said Stevie one day, 'so I am going to give you a reception in our room to-morrow night. I will ask my six chums and they must bring their chums, too.'

'All right,' said Theo, 'the teachers won't mind, will they?'

'Oh, no, not if we behave; and, of course, we will. I am going to make everything a surprise to you, so you mustn't be around to-morrow afternoon. Each of the fellows is to bring part of the treat, and my part will be the greatest surprise of all.'

The next evening found the six guests gathered in the 'corner room,' which was occupied by Stevie and Theo. Stevie introduced each in rather an original manner. 'We were a baker's half dozen last year—just seven of us,' he said, 'but we are all ready to make you one of us, Theo. Now, boys, all tell him your names and save me some trouble.'

The boys laughed and proceeded to do so, giving their school names.

The boys seated themselves just where they were. Some upon the bed, others upon the floor, while chairs were out of the question.

The reception opened with an impromptu talk about baseball, tennis and other kindred subjects. Then every new article in the room—most of which were Theo's—was examined and commented upon. A few quiet games were next played, after which Will Poyser brought out his camera and took a flashlight picture of the group.

'Now we are ready for our treat,' said Stevie, 'and I tell you what it is a fine one. Come, waiters, attend to your duties, please.'

At these words Bert, Carl and Dan began to remove the newspapers from the study table. It was set with a few dishes which Stevie and Theo had brought from home, and was well laden with dainties. Theo scarcely noticed this, however. The one thing that attracted his attention was the tall beer bottle that stood in the centre.

The others noticed it, too, and began to exclaim, 'Where did you get that, Stevie? How could you have smuggled it in here?'

'Oh, I can do anything for such a jolly room-mate as I have. But what is the matter, Theo? You are pale as you can be.'

Before Theo had time to answer, Edwin Sparks, the ringleader of the group, poured a glass of beer, and said, 'I will be the first to drink to the health of our new chum.'

'Don't be too smart,' cried Stevie, angrily; 'don't you know it is polite to give Theo the first glass himself? Here, Theo, just see if you don't think this is fine.'

Theo did not take the glass his friend held out, so Stevie placed it near him on the table.

All were now waiting with filled glasses for Theo to lift his to his lips. Theo grew paler than ever.

'Why don't you drink it?' cried Edwin's brother Arnold. 'We don't like to wait so long!'

'I don't care for it,' stammered Theo.

'Ho, that is what all the fellows say first,' laughed Will, 'but we'll soon get you broken in. One, two, three, now drink.'

'But I can't taste it,' said Theo, 'I really can't.'

'I should think you might,' cried Dan; 'this party was gotten up just for you, so what is the use to spoil it all.'

'I am sorry that Stevie thought I would like to have beer,' said Theo; 'I wish he had asked me first.'

'Oh, well, one glass won't knock you over,' laughed Carl. 'So take it, just to keep us company.'

Theo began to falter. He knew that his friends would make sport of him if he continued his refusal. He began to ask himself if one glass really would do any harm, and if his father and mother were not too strict in making him promise never to touch any drink that contained alcohol. It was a hard struggle that was going on in his mind, but he conquered. He had promised his two best earthly friends to leave beer alone, and he must keep his word, so he said, 'No, boys, I have promised both my mother and my father the last thing before I came from home that I would never take my first glass, and I will stick to my promise.'

He spoke in such a manly fashion that the others now felt ashamed. 'Theo shall do just as he wants to,' said Stevie, 'and since he doesn't care to drink his beer, I won't drink mine.'

'Neither will I,' cried Arnold, Bert and Will; but the rest would not deny themselves, but among them consumed the entire contents of the bottle.

After the guests had gone to their rooms, Theo said, 'Stevie, it was kind of you to give up your beer for me, but perhaps by so doing you did yourself a greater favor than you did me. I am so glad I didn't break my promise to father and mother; but I fear I shall be tempted to do so if you keep on bringing beer to our room, so I wish you'd never do so again.'

'I never will,' said Stevie. 'I never will. Pa would make me come home next week if he knew what I had been doing.'

'I believe you will keep your promise,' said Theo; 'but if I thought you wouldn't, I would get another room-mate at once.'

'I will never give you a chance to do so,' laughed Stevie.

True to his word, Stevie gave up his beer, and, although some of the other boys continued to slyly bring this dangerous beverage to their parties, they never asked Theo to these gatherings.

Several years have passed since Theo's reception. He and Stevie are now active members of a western church and prosperous business men. Two of the boys who continued the practice of beer drinking died as the result of dissipation, while a third is unable to earn his own living, so strong is his attachment for the intoxicating cup.

## How Jean Found Time.

(Mary B. Tyrrell, in 'Forward'.)

'I haven't time.' That was the current phrase of the Arnold family, and when Cousin Ned Seward, their new minister, as well as their new relative, came to board with them he smiled a little at first over the often-repeated excuse. Then he grew vexed, as, daily, his requests or suggestions for help in his church work were met by, 'I haven't time.' His aunt said it fretfully, Jean with a pretty air of regret, Rob carelessly, and Kitty in parrot fashion, without any idea as to what she was saying.

One bright Saturday morning they all sat round the breakfast table talking over the day's plans.

'Rob,' said his mother, 'I want you to go up town for me to-day.'

'I can't, ma,' he mumbled; 'I haven't time. Kit can go.'

'No, I can't,' she retorted; 'I haven't time, either.'

Cousin Ned looked at them in mild surprise. 'Why, my dears, what have you on hand to-day?'

Rob was rushing out of the room, and did not hear the question, so Kitty, shamefaced, but truthfully answered—'Nothing.' Ten minutes later she was curled up on the sofa reading 'Little Women,' and the minister smiled to himself. 'I believe I will take them at their word to-day.'

It was a glorious winter morning, and the children ran past to the pond with their skates swung over their shoulders. Half an hour after breakfast a group of little girls came to the door. The minister was passing through the hall and answered the bell.

'No,' he replied to their request; 'Kitty can't go skating this morning. She hasn't time.'

Kitty, in the next room, heard him, and ran to the hall to call after her playmates, but they were gone.

'Kitty,' called her mother from the kitchen, 'come seed these raisins.'

'I haven't—' then she checked herself, and went to the kitchen.

Three times that morning she heard herself inquired for, and always the same answer from Cousin Ned, who seemed especially willing to 'tend door' that day. At last she half sobbed:

'I think he is horrid. He knows I have time to go skating.'

'You said you hadn't time to go up town,' said Rob, mischievously.

'You did, too, Rob Arnold, and you have been off all morning. Cousin Ned knows we don't mean anything when we say it. It's just like saying "not at home," when folks ask for Jean or mother.'

Jean glanced sharply at her little sister, but her conscience pricked her. The child's words might be true; indeed, she knew they were. Only yesterday she had promised to join the new Current Literature Club, and