

'He Put it into my Hand.'

(Light in the Heaven.)

I am so glad to hear you have become a teetotaler, James,' I remarked to a man whose drunken habits had long been the talk of the neighborhood. I had been absent from home, and it was the first time I had seen him since receiving the welcome tidings that he had been induced by Christian friends to take the temperance pledge.

'Be you, miss?' the man answered moodily, and with the expression upon his face which I could not understand at all, until his wife explained it by exclaiming—

'But haven't you heard as he've broke the pledge?'

'No, indeed!' I replied. 'I hope that is not true; if so, I am very sorry, and so will Mr. V—— be'—mentioning the minister who had induced him to sign.

'Oh, he do know it already,' again spoke the wife; but though I turned to James with a question on my lips, he made no answer, but smoked on sullenly, whilst his companion explained that he had been tempted to return to his old habits, and that she greatly regretted it. Alas! poor woman, no doubt she did; she had reason enough, for her home was a wretched one; her life made miserable by his brutality, and by the poverty consequent upon his extravagant and wicked ways.

'How did it happen, James? How came you to break your word after keeping it more than a month?'

'I did not know what I was at: I drank without thinking about it. He put it into my hand,' was the answer.

'Who put it into your hand?'

'One of the men over there'—indicating his former companions at the ale-house. 'It seems there was a bet, or something of that kind, that I should not keep the pledge long; but I did keep it for some time, longer than they thought. Well, one of them put the cup into my hand whilst we was a-talking, and it came so natural like that I drank it without thinking. I wouldn't have broke else.'

'Then you will try again, will you not? You will not give up what is right because of one failure. Do let me persuade you to try again, and to seek God's blessing to help you to keep it.'

'Not if I know it!' answered the man doggedly. 'I don't intend to take too much any more, but I'm not a-going to bind myself again.'

And nothing I could say made, apparently, the least impression upon him; his mind was made up. He had failed once; he was free now, and would use his liberty, avoiding excess as he thought. That one draught had revived his old craving for stimulants; the longing for drink had returned, and he was enslaved by the passion which the temperance pledge had kept in check.

For a time he was more moderate; but soon I heard, as I had feared I should do, that he was as drunken as ever; and that only a few weeks after I saw him he had returned home so intoxicated and angry that he knocked his wife down upon the floor, and beat her so cruelly that her life was in danger; indeed, he swore that he would kill her, and probably would have done so, had no help been near. And yet the only provocation she had given was to ask him for money to provide food.

'Tis the beer that does it,' she remarked to me, when describing the brutal attack, the marks of which still remained on bruised limbs and wounded mouth and eyes—'tis the beer that does it. When James was sober he was as good and kind a husband as ever wore shoe-leather, but when he gets too much drink he is like a madman. If he don't alter, I believe he will kill me one of these days. Indeed, the doctor says he is killing himself by drinking, and that if he is a-going, he will soon be a dead man. But that don't stop him, though he knows it is true.'

Seldom do I think of that wretched home without recalling the poor man's own words: 'He put it into my hand.' Awful indeed is the thought of that man's responsibility. True, James might have fallen without that particular temptation; but there is an alternative, full of meaning.

I do not hesitate to say that I had rather break stones on the roadside than have been the one to hold that fatal cup to the weak but struggling man, James.

'It was a devilish act,' said one lady, who knew the circumstances of the case. I

started at the words from the lips of a refined and educated woman, but I thought afterwards that she was correct. It was an act such as the devil himself would rejoice in. Perhaps the boon companion rejoiced in his success; rejoiced in the broken vow which, unbroken, had been a reproach to him; rejoiced in the ruin of his fellow-creature. If so, he rejoiced with a devilish joy. The words are not too strong. It is an unutterably awful thing to seek to ensnare a human soul, to stifle a human conscience, or even to embitter a human life. Alas! are there not too many Cains of whom God will one day demand, 'Where is thy brother?'

Correspondence

Bear Island, N.B.

Dear Editor,—I live 25 miles above the city of Fredericton, on the Saint John River. I have taken the 'Northern Messenger' for four years. I like it very much; it is not for the looks of the paper, but for the very nice stories in it. It pleases me very much to read them. I would not be without such a lovely paper in our home. I secured eleven subscribers for the following year. It affords me much pleasure to work for such a good paper.

PERCY VAN WART. (aged 11.)

Nobleton, Ont.

Dear Editor,—I like to read the little letters very much. I have four brothers. I am the baby of the family. I am eight years old. Pa was to Manitoba this summer. He likes the country very much.

EVA MAY McC.

Rosser, Man.

Dear Editor,—I live in Rosser, a little village 16 miles west of Winnipeg. I am living on a big farm, with about 15 buildings on it. I have noticed with pleasure your intention of increasing the circulation of the 'Messenger,' and will do all I can for you.

ALBERT E. CORBETT (aged 11.)
(The Editor thanks Albert and other kind friends for their sympathetic words and efforts.)

Arthur.

Dear Editor,—One Friday we had a spelling match, the girls against the boys, and the girls beat; but I was the last one that stayed up on our side, the boys went down as fast as anything. But the boys can beat the girls in arithmetic.

LOYDE P. (aged 10.)

Pearsonville, N.B.

Dear Editor,—This is the first time I have ever written to you. I am learning the Bible verse for this week.

P. E. L.

Prince, Wm.

Dear Editor,—I have four pets, two cats named Ladysmith and Kimberly, a dog named Lowen, and a pig named Dreyfus. My father is a storekeeper. I am his only boy. My brother died last winter. I have two sisters. I go to school.

KENNETH R. F. (aged 12.)

Owen Sound.

Dear Editor,—My brother is in the Boy's Brigade, and he gets the 'Messenger' every Sunday. Five men from our town have gone to fight in South Africa. I have four brothers and two sisters. Our town will soon be a city.

RALPH T. (aged 8.)

Dear Editor,—I have four brothers and sisters. I go to school. My teacher's name is Miss Gage. As my name is Rosie E. T. I would like to hear from Rosie H. M. again. I live next door to the church. It is the Methodist. I go to it. I will give you a riddle. Why is a scythe like doing one's duty?

ROSE E. T.

Springhill, N.J.

Dear Editor,—I live on a farm two miles from town, one mile from church, and a quarter of a mile from school. I have never attended school yet, but I expect to go next summer. My mamma teaches me at home. I am very fond of horses. We have four, named Doll, Minnie, Jim and Joe. We have thirty hens, two cats, and a dog named Bright. As I have no little brothers or sisters to play with, I make pets of the dog and cats.

JESSIE L. H. (aged 8.)

Lake View.

Dear Editor,—We live about five miles from the old limestone city of Kingston. Papa runs a milk dairy to the city. We have twenty-five cows, and about fifteen young cattle, and about ten pigs. We have eight horses. I go to school every day. I have one brother and a sister.

GEORGE M. M. (aged 11.)

Holden.

Dear Editor,—I am so sorry for that poor little girl whose mother, father and brother died. I like the story of 'Black Rock' very much.

GRACE A. B. (aged 9.)

Dryden, Ont.

Dear Editor,—I go to Sunday-school every Sunday. I love to go to Sunday-school very much. Our week day school teacher's name is Miss Kennedy. She is a lovely teacher. I have five little sisters. One of them is four years older than myself, and she is going to school in Walkerton. My mother keeps the post office in this place.

LOIS S. (aged 10.)

Lake View.

Dear Editor,—We live in a pretty place beside Lake Ontario, about five miles from the city of Kingston. My papa is a farmer. We have a dog, and his name is Rover, and I like him very much. I go to school and like to study very much, and go to Sunday-school in the summer, as our school is not open in the winter. I am a little girl seven years old, and my brothers are nine and eleven years.

GERTRUDE A. M.

Abernethy.

Dear Editor,—I have a cat, and my sister has a dog. Papa has twelve horses five cows and three calves. I have a game of Halma. My grandma sends the 'Messenger' to me, and I like it very much.

R. T. M. (aged 9.)

Barnston, P.Q.

Dear Editor,—I live on a farm. We have seventeen cows, and four horses and four large steers. I have for a pet a dear little sister one year old. Her name is Hazel. I belong to the Band of Hope.

HAROLD G. (aged 9.)

Barnston, P.Q.

Dear Editor,—I have a brother nine years old named Harold, and a sister one year old. Her name is Hazel Marguerite. I go to a district school, one mile distant. I go to the Methodist Sunday-school. Our minister's name is Mr. Pergan. I belong to the Band of Hope.

IDA C. (aged 11.)

Point Wolfe, Albert Co., N.B.

Dear Editor,—I am a little girl nine years old next Monday. I go to school, but it is holidays now. This is the first time I have written. There are three of us going to school. I have five brothers and four sisters. We have a new teacher coming this term. The old teacher was teaching two years.

EMMA H.

Point Wolfe, Albert Co., N.B.

Dear Editor,—I live on a farm, and I go to school. We are having a new teacher to teach our school. In summer we go to the shore, and have lots of fun. We had a teacher about seven years.

D. H.

Tiverton.

Dear Editor,—I have one sister and three brothers, older than myself. I am in the senior second class, and I like my teacher very much. I have a large wax doll that I keep in the parlor. I call it Rose. I have a cat by the name of Katie. I have three dogs. My pet one I call Spot.

NORMA. (aged 9.)

Leskard.

Dear Editor,—I herewith enclose 30 cents for the renewal of the 'Northern Messenger.' I think it is a very good paper for young folks. I can hardly wait for it, from one week to another. There are four of us taking the 'Messenger' in this village, and all of us like it very much.

WILLIE S.

Knowlesville, N.Y.

Dear Editor,—I have two brothers. My little brother is six years old. He and I go to school. We have a mile and a half to walk. I have a little sister. She is three years old. I like the 'Messenger' very much.

ROYCE H. HILL (aged 8.)