



A Fight Against Odds

(Kate Anderson, in the 'Union Signal.')

(Synopsis of preceding chapters.)

[The Kilgour family are engaged in a desperate struggle to save the idolized youngest son, Claude, from the curse of cigarette smoking. After various drastic measures and sickening failures Claude is locked in his room. His brother Willie, who lies at the point of death, after living through a dangerous attack of typhoid fever, has been thrown into a relapse through the weakness of a schoolmate watcher, who, after taking a drink of brandy, gives to him the remnants of Claude's supper.]

CHAPTER VI.

When Alf. was summoned the truth was learned. The young man's utter misery and distress were touching when he realized his fatal mistake. He stammered and stumbled for a possible explanation, but finally broke down and confessed the true one. 'So help me, God, I have taken my last drop of the accursed stuff.'

To Ralph and Alice the verdict was tenderly and pitifully given by the sorrowing physician.

'O Ralph, Ralph, how can we tell mamma?' moaned the devoted and heart-broken sister.

'Alice, dear Alice; don't give way like this. You have been the bravest of us all,' begged Ralph, as he supported the half-fainting and grief-crazed girl to a couch.

Mrs. Kilgour herself, pale and dry-eyed, entered the room at that moment.

'I know all, my dear children,' she said clamly. 'Ralph, dear, go and tell Claude.' She went to the couch and took the slight, trembling form of her daughter to her heart.

'My child, my little girl; would that mother could comfort you now as you have tried to comfort her all these months. Hush, hush, child! There, lay your head down.'

'Mother, mother, can you know? Have they told you?'

A strange light burned in the mother's eye. 'Thank God!' she exclaimed without a tremor. 'One child safe, safe, safe! One dear child safe forever from the snares and sorrows of this wretched earth! Yes, my boy is safe—"safe in the arms of Jesus." Would that every child's future were as safe as our Willie's to-day.'

Her mother's unnatural calm and strange words quickly distracted Alice from her own abandonment to grief.

'Mamma, darling mamma, you are ill; let me call the doctor.'

'No, dear, I am perfectly myself; but you cannot as yet understand the depth of a mother's love and a mother's woe until (though God forbid it!) you shall yourself be brought, some anguished hour, to the point of cheerfully, resignedly preferring to part with a child, knowing that he is in the Heavenly Father's arms rather than to see him live on, to face the fatal temptations of this life. There are worse sorrows than this of losing our darling Willie who is so ready and ripe for heaven that God is taking him to himself, where I shall never be parted from him through all eternity. But Claude—Claude—'

At last came a flood of agonizing tears, not for the dying, but for the living.

And so Willie Kilgour died, and went to heaven, and thus was prematurely cut off the earthly course of one of the most winsome souls, ere nineteen years had been counted over his head.

One more innocent victim of the fell destroyer—drink! Was it some strange pre-

monition of his own fate which had, less than two years before, instilled that vague horror of the accursed thing into Willie's soul, even before that soul had become awakened to God's truth?

Claude's two-weeks' confinement before his brother's death, during which he had been absolutely and relentlessly cut off from even the slightest whiff of the narcotic which had become to him a crying physical necessity, had been days of unspeakable physical and mental misery. Though he had entered willingly and resignedly into his imprisonment, the first day had scarcely passed before he would have moved heaven and earth, had it been in his power, to gain his liberty, if only long enough to secure one smoke. With all the cunning of a fox he watched for a chance to escape. He was convinced that ere long, by patience and ingenuity, he would attain his ends, as he had never, sooner or later, failed to do. But Ralph had been aroused to the utmost precaution and determination. It was his theory that could Claude be kept, if only by force, from indulging for a few short weeks, until the first acute stage had passed, he would then be sufficiently strengthened to help in the cure by an effort of his own will.

The family had been obliged to take Miss Roberts, the nurse, into their confidence, and in that determined and strong-minded young woman they had found an invaluable ally. Not once did Claude succeed even so much as in gaining the hallway, or in surreptitiously sending a note to one of his choice friends, though the ingenious and various methods he tried were innumerable. At times, his narcotic-wasted and evil passions being roused to a pitch of defiance and hatred, he would not have hesitated to set fire to the house, or, like his favorite character, 'Bold Ben, the Dauntless Darer,' to have fought his way out with knives and pistols, but by his utmost wiles he could not even secure a match. On second thought Ralph had changed his mind about allowing him the tool chest, and had securely nailed the diamond-paned window, allowing only a slit at the top for air. Ralph slept with him at night, and a lamp was never brought into the room. These precautions were all observed, although Claude was shrewd enough never to betray by word or look aught but humble resignation to his lot, and the most apparently sincere wish on his own part to aid in curing himself of the habit which his family were endeavoring to break by the use of such extreme measures.

At the end of ten days, Claude was reasonably chastened and had passed through the first agonies of total abstinence. Better thoughts were straying on the surface of his perverted nature, and as much as possible he was touched by the love, prayers and unflinching kindness of his devoted mother, sister and brothers. He made up his mind that he now would really give up the use of cigarettes. He was getting along very well without them, and he would not miss them at all in another week. He was glad Willie was getting better. He was so sorry for the grief he had caused his dear mother. Never mind, he would make it all up doubly to her, and everything would be happy again.

Willie's unexpected death stirred to the depths what remained of Claude's originally tender and noble nature. It intensified his somewhat shallow remorse and also sincerely strengthened his good resolutions.

(To be Continued.)

Just What it Meant.

In one of the cities of Massachusetts no drink license had been granted for two years, but at a recent election the restriction was withdrawn. The effects were disastrous. Take the following:—A little boy, when in a store, said—

'Well, the saloons are open again.'

'Yes,' answered the merchant; 'and does it make any difference to you, my little man?'

'Well,' said the boy hesitatingly, 'we

don't have so much to eat at our house when the saloons are open.'

The Drink and the Bite.

'The free lunch,' it is sometimes said, 'is the redeeming feature of the saloon.' Hear what Mrs. Chauncey Depew says about it: 'The free lunch is largely responsible for the enslavement of young men to drink. As sure as a man eats a free lunch, just so sure will he be a drinking man, unless he is possessed of rare self-control. A man takes a drink and a bite. The bite makes him thirsty and the drink makes him hungry, and many a man who would leave a saloon after having imbibed one drink, will stick all day as long as the free lunch is there. It isn't the drink that keeps him, but the ingenious make-up of the free lunch, and that's why I say it's a blotch on civilization and should be wiped out.' We don't believe in the free lunch business, either, but we would wipe it out by wiping out the saloon business. It is the drink, not the bite, that is a blotch upon civilization, and the same power that can enforce the prohibition of the one can enforce the prohibition of the other.—'Union Signal.'

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