

THE HEARTHSTONE.

A Department for Home and Fireside, Edited by Mrs. S. C. O. Upton.

"The corner stone of the republic is the hearthstone."

YOU NEVER TOLD US OF THE EVIL OF STRONG DRINK.

He stood in the door of the Sunday-school room, waiting to finish a conversation with a lady who held a boy by the hand.

"Don't you think it would be as well to let the scholars take part in some exercise on the subject of temperance, Mr. Johnson?" asked the lady.

"You are the superintendent, and if you should assign the scholars any texts or verses about the subject, I know they would be glad to get them. You would, Eddie, wouldn't you?"

"What! Say something, say a verse?" asked the boy, one of the kind whose eyes are forever snapping, hands forever moving, head forever turning, and to whom all occupation is a delight because a constitutional necessity.

"Temperance, did you say?" inquired Mr. Johnson, so coldly that Mrs. Atwood felt a shiver at once.

"Yes, sir."

"Alas!—it is not judicious, I think, to speak on controverted subjects in the Sunday-school, and where a difference of opinion exists. I feel it better for people to think about temperance as they please. But it is time for me to call the school together," and the speaker moved along the entry like an iceberg drifting out of sight.

"What did he say mother?" asked Eddie. "That people had better think about temperance as they pleased?"

Mrs. Atwood was so absorbed in her painful thoughts that she did not pay any attention to the question.

Days, weeks, months, years, elapsed by. A "hard winter" visited the city of N—. There was hardness in every direction. The severe cold that prevailed so long seemed to freeze up everything. It reached the money bags in the vaults and the tills in the counters and the purses in the pockets of the capitalists, ice forming everywhere and stopping the flow of money. At least, God knows a very scanty stream of the article dribbled into one poor home in a tall, gaunt tenement house. A mother was there watching by the bed of a consumptive son, a young man.

"A cold night," he said, "mother?"

"Yes, it is."

"What makes me think it is snowing? Seems as if it were getting into bed," he said, in a hoarse whisper.

"It is snowing."

She went to the window and looked down into the street. A rough wind was driving the flakes in clouds through the streets, threatening to smother the lamp posts and the very houses.

"I can't seem to see anyone coming," she muttered. "It's so cold here."

"I can't tell whether it is the snow or the serpents," said the son, in a loud whisper.

"He is wandering again," said the mother, bending over the bed. "It will be warm soon, I think."

"Yes, soon—soon—soon—ha-ha!"

His laugh was that of a mind breaking like a ship from all moorings and drifting out into a dark sea.

That evening a note had been left at the door of a gentleman in the neighborhood, and it read thus:

"There is a sick man, a consumptive, living in the district at 183 Putnam St. They are pretty desolate, and if you could get them some wood and coal to-night, I know it would be acceptable."

"A note from our minister," said Mr. Berry. "He has been calling there to-day probably. I will take some wood and coal with me and go at once. I wonder if my quest would like to come with me? He will have some idea of our poor districts."

The gentleman visiting Mr. Berry said he would like to go, and the two started off, a basket of coal and wood hanging on Mr. Berry's arm. Through the snow they trudged, and then they climbed a dark flight of stairs leading up somewhere from the black hole labeled "183."

"Whew! how cold! We'll have a fire at once," said Mr. Berry, as he stooped over the stove in the consumptive's room, quickly changing the mute, rusty piece of iron into a creature that laughed and sang and chuckled and roared, flashing out into the room a cheery warmth. The companion of Mr. Berry had gone to the sick young man's bed.

"I am sorry you are sick," said the visitor.

"Thank you, but the snakes are bad."

"He is wandering, sir," exclaimed the mother.

"But you wait a moment. His mind will come back again."

The young man had fastened his dark sunken eyes on the stranger, and seemed to be making an effort to recognize him. It was a painful effort. It was hard to bring back the ship that had broken from its moorings, drifted off into the wildness and blackness of the sea.

"Don't, don't I know you?" He asked. "Perhaps so."

"Did you keep—Sunday-school once?"

"Yes."

A TALE OF THE PRAIRIES.

Light and Shadow of a Sunday Scene in Dakota.

Great is the land of the Dakotas, lying between sundown and the laughing waters of Minnesota, but greater are its wondrous ways. Five or six years ago while wandering through that prairie realm a Washington Star man passed a quiet Sunday at an inland town. The day was one of those on which all nature seems to say this is the Sabbath.

The sun shone with a sacred light, the dewy landscape sparkled with a divine radiance, the birds joined in the chorus of the spheres, while the lowing of the herds and bleating of the flocks seemed mellowed, as if even the brutes were touched by the hallowed influence of the day.

It was a time peculiarly fitted for the spirits of the dead to be borne buoyantly away to the land of the redeemed; and accordingly the spirit of a young man had taken its flight, but the body was left for human disposal. The morning was yet fresh when the country procession was seen, like a caravan of the desert, moving slowly along the prairie road, ignorant of metes and bounds, toward the drowsy village. The friends of the deceased, eager to pay him a parting courtesy, had drafted into service such vehicles as they possessed, and the gathering was none the less earnest and sincere if cars instead of cushioned carriages bore them to the village church and again took up the journey to the new-made grave.

Some of the mourners—and none but mourners gathered there—were drawn by horned and cloven-footed steeds, and one conveyance was a wagon mounted with a hay-rick, on which a score of serious people sat cushioned by a few forkfuls of satured prairie grass. But the most noticeable and painful feature of the procession was the lumber wagon, hauled containing the plain pine coffin, astride of which the driver sat, unmoved and immovable, as if undecided that whatever became of the departed spirit its deserted abode should be held in the rural churchyard for rent to lesser worms than man.

He clung eagerly to the earthly spoils, unmindful of the fact that he was out of keeping with his surroundings, and at last stolidly beheld the tenacious handiwork of God consigned to the dust from which it came. There was no professional weeping and no set programme for the mourners. They sobbed in solos or broke forth in a symphony of emotion as, under changing feeling, the heart leaped forth and recoiled.

The deceased had come from his paternal roof near the Baltic Sea only a few years before, but so quick is the transformation here that he seemed altogether an American. I was told. He had taken a homestead under the Stars and Stripes, and his sister, a pretty Danish girl, had recently joined him. Her loneliness and subdued sorrow made her more than usually interesting and attractive. As the only relative of her brother she succeeded to his estate and kept open the little prairie home. In six months she knew enough English to conjugate the verb "to love," and within a year she was married to a young school teacher, who, becoming enamored of her beauty, succeeded in winning her affections. Sorrow for the dead was transformed into love for the living—crises gave way to flowers and clouds to sunshine. The young husband was the next year elected to the Legislature, in which he has since taken an active and prominent part, and stands now in the line of political promotion. It is more than likely that ere many years pass by he will come to Congress as the representative of his people, and then the pretty Danish girl, who wept her lonely weep at her brother's grave in a foreign land and would not be comforted, will become a bright particular star in the social firmament of that Nation's Capital. Yes, great are the Dakotas, but greater still the inspiration and possibilities of our country.

Social Laws for Girls.

You think the laws of society are severe. You do not believe that conventionalities is a great sword held up, not to strike you, but to protect you, and you shrug your pretty shoulders and say, "I knew I was doing nothing wrong, and I don't care what people say."

Now, my dear, you must care what people say; the world is a great judgment court, and usually the innocent and the ignorant are protected by it, though occasionally, some one falling into the mire of scandal and gossip, is brought into the court all begrimed and disgraced, and the judge, not being able to see the virtue that is underneath, decides against the victim, and all because she did not care what the world said. I wish you would think even of the most innocent things.

Sometimes I fear you think I am a little bit severe, but I have known so many girls who were so thoughtless, yet so good, and who only found protection in the sword of conventionalities. It may hang over your head, as did that of Damocles, but it is as a warning. It will protect you from evil-speaking, from the making of injudicious friends, and it will insure you much more pleasure than if all the world ran helter-skelter and became like a wild Irish fair day.

Conventionalities protects you, as does the best mother, frowning at and forbidding not only that which is, but also that which looks wrong.—Ruth Ashmore, in Ladies' Home Journal.

Very Absent-Minded.

One of the most amusing cases of absent-mindedness on record is that told on a certain famous professor of one of the northern colleges. He was one day in a book store, deeply absorbed in finding a work to prove some question in dispute. The store was well filled with customers, and as the professor started to leave he stopped to shake hands with a few friends. Last of all he extended his hand to a sweet-faced lady near the counter, saying: "Good morning, madame. Your face looks very familiar, but I am unable to recall your name."

Absorbed in thought he passed out without availing the lady's reply. She was his wife.—Drake's Magazine.

A FRIEND OF LINCOLN'S.

HE FELL ON THE FIELD OF CHICAMAUGA.

A Young Kentuckian Who Threw Honor and Glory Away from Him—A Bond of Affection Between Lincoln and the Young Man.

The story of President Lincoln's confederate brother-in-law is one of the most interesting and pathetic in all our war history, says the Louisville Courier Journal. It is full of the pathos of friendships broken and divided lives. The two were devotedly attached to one another; their friendship was like that of David and Jonathan. The story is worth telling now.

Ben Hardin Helm was born in 1831. His father, Hon. John L. Helm, was a prominent lawyer and politician, once governor of the state. His son, named for his maternal grandfather, was sent to West Point. He graduated in 1851, and was assigned to the Second dragoons. He only remained in the service a year, and then resigned to enter upon the practice of law. Young Helm was known as a rising young lawyer all over the state. He was elected to the legislature and made a creditable member. He married Miss Todd, and a year thereafter made a visit to Illinois, where he first met his brother-in-law, Abraham Lincoln.

They formed then and there a friendship which was more like the affection of brothers than an ordinary liking between men. Helm fully appreciated the kindly nature, the quaint wit and force of expression of Abraham Lincoln, while the other formed a deep attachment for the thoughtful, scholarly, handsome, and polished grandson of old Ben Hardin, whose son had been the contemporary and friend of Lincoln years before.

When Mr. Lincoln became president, one of his first thoughts was, "What can I do for Ben Helm?" It must have been about the middle of April, 1861, when, in response to a cordial personal letter of invitation, Helm came to Washington to visit his brother-in-law. He was a strong southern rights Democrat, and a personal friend and follower of John C. Breckinridge. He did not doubt the good intentions of his brother-in-law, Mr. Lincoln, or his desire for peace, but he read the signs of the time aright, and felt that events and destiny would be too strong for any man. Helm fully appreciated the magnitude of the task before Mr. Lincoln. While here he saw a good deal of his old army comrades, and they were nearly all going south. Mr. Lincoln called Helm into his private office, and, handing him a sealed envelope, said: "Ben, here is something for you. Think it over by yourself, and let me know what you will do." Going to his room, Helm opened the envelope. It contained his nomination to be pay-master in the United States army, with the rank of Major! Nothing in his life ever touched Helm like this. He knew the position was one of the most coveted in the service; that the rank of major at his age (thirty) was very exceptional in any army; that he could exchange into the line with all old major. In common with all graduates of the military academy, some time in their lives, Helm had a strong desire to get back into the military service. Here was his opportunity, a chance brighter than he had ever dreamed of! What should he do? He happened that very afternoon to meet Col. Robert E. Lee, just promoted to the command of the First cavalry, with whom he had some acquaintance.

"Are you not well, Col. Lee?" said Helm, seeing he was under strong emotion of some kind.

"Well in body, but not in mind," responded the stately Virginian. He looked the soldier and gentleman of the long lineage that he was. "I have just resigned my commission in the United States army," Lee continued. "In the prime of life, I quit a service wherein were all my expectations and hopes in this world!"

Helm handed the letter offering him the position of major and paymaster with rank from that date, to Col. Lee, who read it without a word.

"Did you know that Mr. Lincoln was my brother-in-law?" said Helm.

"No, I did not," said Col. Lee, but let me say one word. I have no doubt of his (Lincoln's) kindly intentions, but he can not control the elements. There must be a great war. I can not strike at my own people. So to-day I wrote my resignation, and have asked Gen. Scott as a favor for its immediate acceptance. My mind is too much disturbed to give you any advice. But do what your conscience and honor bids. Good-by."

And so they parted, never to meet again on earth.

It is no wonder that Helm slept but little that night or the one following. Mr. Lincoln said not a word to him, and his wife did not know of Mr. Lincoln's offer to her husband. Helm was ambitious. He felt that with opportunity, to him might come a great reputation. He knew that Lincoln would need no urging to advance him whenever it was possible and proper to do so. Mrs. Helm was desirous of going abroad. She desired for her husband some diplomatic position that would give them an opportunity of seeing Europe, and living in good society. There is no doubt that Mr.

Lincoln would have given Helm almost anything in his gift to have kept him from going south.

Sumter had been fired on, and the first call for 75,000 men was made. "I will go home," said Helm, to the president, "and answer you from there. The position you offer me is beyond what I had expected in my most hopeful dream. It is the place above all others which suits me."

"Lincoln" said Helm, with a tremulous voice, "you have been kind and generous to me beyond anything I have known. I have no claim upon you, for I opposed your candidacy, and did what I could for the election of another, but with no unkind feeling toward you. I wish I could see my way. I will try to do what is right. Don't let this offer be made public yet. You shall have my answer in a very few days."

General Helm told a very dear friend all this, and added that he could have had the commission of a brigadier general of volunteers in the three months' service, retaining his rank in the regular army as major besides.

"I never had such a struggle," said Gen. Helm, long afterwards. "The ideal career was before me. The highest positions in the profession I was educated for, were opened to me in one day. I would not only be the youngest officer of my rank in the army, but could transfer at the earliest possible moment into one of the cavalry regiments. With the changes then occurring in them by resignation, I would certainly have been a full colonel within the year. Think what a career, what possibilities were opened to me! Then I could have been a general officer of volunteers besides. Such an opportunity rarely offers itself, and it almost killed me to decline."

One can readily understand it. Several years ago, while examining some papers in the war department, the writer came across a brief memorandum reading thus:

"Helm, Ben Hardin, nominated for Paymaster in the United States Army, April 27, 1861. Declined."

He soon joined his neighbors in the confederate cause, and promotion after promotion followed until he became a full-fledged brigadier general, and on Sept. 20, 1863, while leading his command against Thomas' corps, Helm was fatally wounded, and died on the morning of the 21st.

"I never saw Mr. Lincoln move," said Senator Davis of Kentucky, "than when he heard of the death of his young brother-in-law, Ben Hardin Helm, only thirty-two years old, at Chickamauga. I called to see him about 8 o'clock on the 22d of September, 1863. I found him in the greatest grief. 'Davis,' said he, 'I feel as David of old did when he was told of the death of Absalom. Would to God I had died for thee, oh, Absalom, my son!' I saw how grief-stricken he was," said Senator Davis, in a tone full of memories, "so I closed the door and left him alone."

Voices of the Night.

Do you ever lie awake at night And think—and think—and think Of a hundred thousand foolish things. Which "hang round" midnight brinkl And do you at the same time hear The hollow, gurgling—gurg— Of your stationary washstand. Like a bungling burglar's burg— While the latticed window shutters flap The sashes (full of pane); And the myriad voices of the night Talk nonsense to your brain! You don't! I do.

And the ghostly, gruesome groaning And the melancholy strain Of that measly mourning, moaning, Gurgling, gurgling water main, Wrap an eerie, iced, ickery, alliac, Pallacy sort of sound In the meshes of the midnight. Which entwine me round and round, My flesh creeps all in heaps, Finally sleeps.

While the melancholy moaning And the hungry, hollow groaning Of the stand Keep my slumberous soul a-soaring Up and down a raging, roaring Nightmare land.

Men with iron constitutions do not always last the longest. Wagons and carriages are nowadays made, many of them, with iron axles. They are much stronger, perhaps, at first than those with wooden axles.

Are they the best? It is not our purpose to pass judgment on this matter about which the best experts may disagree. Our object is to call attention to the fact that if there be a flaw in an iron axle, look out for a smash up when the first severe strain is experienced. It will not do to load too heavily, in the belief that the iron axle will bear up any burden.

Men with iron constitutions are apt to think they can stand anything. The world is full of illustrations of the great mistake such men make.

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"Lend me \$15, will you?" "Certainly. How much did you say?" "Fifty dollars."—Puck.

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