

with the seriousness which the subject itself and she herself deserve.

Many of the clubs of the city and state have left off the study of literature and history and turned their attention to the city improvement work. This work is directly in line with the recommendations of the Nebraska federation of womens' club, clause 1, of which reads: That each club appoint a committee to be called the public school art committee, whose duties shall be to visit the schools and encourage the removal of all decorative rubbish, such as advertisement cards and crude and meaningless pictures. II. Town and village improvement works, in the cleanliness and sanitary condition of our streets, cases of inhumanity to animals, children and the poor. III. The fostering of public libraries, etc. Toward the improvement of school grounds the village improvement society of Lincoln has made considerable progress in two ways and by far the most important and lasting can not be seen by the casual passer-by. The grounds surrounding several schools of the city, notably the capital and park have been sodded and planted with flowers. But the second result preserves and makes of consequence the first; the children have been taught that the grounds are theirs and that they are responsible for their neatness and beauty. They have learned the civic responsibility of each citizen to the community of which each one is a unit. The children look upon a boy who throws hand bills in the streets as a law breaker and disturber of public order. When the Capitol school children of today are grown up they will be willing, when they are councilmen, to enforce the ordinances against tobacco spitlers and street and walk nuisances of all kinds. When a child who is petted a little and snubbed much, realizes his importance as a part of society, able to injure it by his own misconduct or advance and beautify it by a self denying neatness and watchfulness, he is outside of the jurisdiction of the switch forever. He is thereafter to be reasoned with, not punished, except by the inevitable consequence of wrong doing. The juvenile heads of committees who have reported to the society have unconsciously shown that they have learned the lesson that they are a valuable part of the community and as such willing to perform the duties of citizens. Fully half the citizens never learn the lesson and Lincoln will be a better place to live in for everybody as soon as these youngsters begin to be heard from. When they get into the university their citizenship will not suffer them to daub red paint in public places as an expression of private joy. The city is their's and they are the city's, and the partnership is full of dignity and self-respect. They will resent vandalism and help to punish it as the students themselves have expelled from Harvard the men who painted red the statue of John Harvard. Then the name of the university student will not be a name of reproach and suspicion among the merchants, for the students will have accepted their birthright as citizens of the state.

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## STORIES IN PASSING.

The little mother sat in her pew at church, somewhat tired from the length of the service. The light stealing through the stained windows overhead dropped in blue and red patches on her gown, but she did not notice this. She was lost in the thought of her two boys away at college. She was thinking of them as they were ten years ago, when they sat at her side in this very pew, restless and wide-awake enough at the beginning of the service, but dropping off to sleep during the sermon, each with a curly head against her shoulder and a chubby hand grasping her's as if they feared to lose her.

In the midst of these thoughts she was conscious of some one leaning over from behind and placing a newspaper clipping in her lap. She took it up and glanced over the contents with dreamy mind. Then as she read she grew horrified.

The clipping, a paragraph from an Omaha paper, was not a long one. But it was in regard to foot-ball—to the make-up of the university team for the coming year. James, her son, had played the game for two years but she never could be reconciled to it. The clipping spoke of a new rule to be followed in choosing members that spring for the coming season. The rule—she scarcely comprehended it for a moment—was "that every candidate to show his grit was to drink a gallon of whiskey at one sitting before he would be allowed to play." Then the full significance of it all came upon her. Oh, the shame, the horror of it! And she a member of the W. C. T. U. and teaching a Sunday School class in this very church! How could she ever hold up her head again?

And as she read further, her cheek blanched with horror. The paragraph went on to state that James, her great, strong-hearted boy, who had been always so fortunate in playing had tried for a place again, and had died in the drinking of the liquor. The thought of it crazed her. But though stunned by the shock she arose, and regardless of sermon or audience, fled out the door and on toward her home. His father—she must find his father—and they must send for the body—the body of her boy. But father—where was he? She ran into the house and through all the rooms but he was not there. She fled out and around the house, but she could not find him or anyone to help her. She felt as if she must drop to the ground overcome by exhaustion and grief.

Suddenly something broke in on her misery and disturbed her. It was the congregation standing up for the last hymn. And mechanically she also arose. The sun streamed through the stained windows as before. The choir filled the church with song. And outside the birds in the trees took up the refrain. It was the old familiar, restful, worshipful scene again. And when she went out into the morning brightness, there was an

unusual tenderness and thankfulness in her heart.

A woman sits across the aisle and watches me constantly. I look aside but am drawn back irresistibly. For her eyes are serpent's eyes and fascinate. Their cold, steely glitter eats into one's brain and seems to read the inmost thoughts of the mind. They make me uneasy in my chair and cold along my spine, and a lump goes grating up and down my throat. Such eyes, I have seen once before—when, as a boy, I killed a "copperhead" that had just allured a swallow to its death. I killed the snake but its eyes haunted me in my sleep for nights. And now, how vividly this woman's eyes, though set in a mask of beauty, brings back that "copperhead" and very youthful nightmare.

It must have been the hot weather, for strange to say, the crowd sitting on the shady side of Perkin's grocery were telling stories of winter.

"Yes, sir-ee," remarked old Uncle Biram, "I remember that winter o' seventy-two. I was back in Michigan then and jest sich weather as Tim here 's been tellin' of. I 'member Christmas morning—'twas colder 'n Baffin's bay—mercury way down out o' sight in the tube. That morning I'd gone over to Hunker's Ford for a load o' wood with the bobs and ox team. Comin' home, I started down Kelly's hill on the trot-jest at the bridge by the holler, those oxen gave a lurch and pulled up sudden-like and I went a rootin' down in front o' the bobs, and the runners came right up on my legs and then that gol-fired ox team stopped dead still in their tracks. I hollered ter that team 'till I was hoarse as a fog-horn, but those durned old brutes nar, budged."

The old man stopped, stood up, stretched himself and walked over to the door of the store without another word. Just as his hand was on the knob, one of the group spoke up.

"Well, what'd you do, Uncle? You were in a mighty tight fix."

"You bet I was," replied Uncle Biram turning and surveying the group serenely. "I had a terrible time. Why, I had to go fifty rods fur a pole to pry that load of wood off my legs."

And winking faintly at the small boy astride the salt barrel, the old man slipped into the store.

Every old soldier remembers his first night of picket-duty. At least I do and, it stands out in my memory as vividly as thirty years ago. The guards were mounted at 2 o'clock one dark June night. I had just been pulled out of a sound sleep, and at first, scarcely awake, commanded several trees and the two pickets at the end of my beats to halt, which brought the laugh on me the next day. But that first timidity, or eagerness to perform my duty, or whatever you wish to call it, departed as the darkness gradually disappeared and the night

wore on. Then I first felt fully the beauty which attends the coming of a summer's day. The stars began to vanish one by one; the trees detached themselves separately from the wall of shadow on every side, and a faint, grey light grew in the east and paled the horizon. Then one little bird away off to the right awoke and began to ring its welcome to the approaching dawn. The little songster was answered by another at the far end of the woods; and then another and another followed until the trees on every hand were alive with the feathered singers, and the woods one grand invisible chorus of melody. The roosters of a farm house were crowing. Across the river came faintly the barking of a watch dog. Men's voices rose and fell from the same direction, but distant and irregular. The light had been steadily growing until the camp was nearly visible in the morning mists rolling off among the trees. Then they changed the pickets, and as one marched into camp, the full, round face of the sun mounted the tops of the eastern hills and awoke the sleeping camp to the early meal of the morning.

H. G. SHEDD.

## Fairy Tales.

1

I used to tell her fairy tales  
When I was ten and she was four;  
And never seemed she satisfied  
Until I told them o'er and o'er.

2

She'd watch me with her great blue eyes  
And I'd recount some goblin's flight;  
She'd clap her hands in childish glee  
At Cinderella's midnight flight.

3

Some twenty years have passed since then,  
And we've been married many a day;  
But I grow sad as I note how  
Time makes youth's idols turn to clay.

4

For now my fairy tales fall flat  
Though worded well and smooth of plot.  
She pulls the covers o'er her head  
And softly says: "Oh—I guess—not."  
—TOWN TOPICS.

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