

TEMPERANCE JOURNAL.

OUR MOTTO—NATIONAL PROHIBITION.

FREDERICTON, N. B., THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1886.

Vol. II., No. 10.
\$1.00 per Annum.

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Editor and Proprietor.

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LITERATURE.

THE FORSAKEN FARMHOUSE.

Against the wooded hills it stands
Ghost of a dead home, staring through
Its broken lights on wasted lands
Where old-time harvests grow.

Unplowed, unsown, by scythe unshorn,
The poor forsaken farm fields lie,
Once rich and rife with golden corn
And pale green breadths of rye.

Of healthful herb and flower bereft;
The garden plot no housewife keeps;
Through weeds and tangle only left
The snake, its tenant, creeps.

A lilac spray, once blossom clad,
Sways bare before the empty rooms;
Beside the roofless porch a sad
Pathetic red rose blossoms.

His track, in mold and dust of drouth,
On floor and hearth the squirrel leaves,
And in the fireless chimney's mouth
His web the spider weaves.

The leaning barn about to fall
Resounds no more on husking eves;
No cattle low in yard or stall,
No thrasher beats his sheaves.

So sad, so dear! it seems almost
Some haunting presence makes its sign
That down your shadowy lane some ghost
Might drive his spectral kine!

(JOHN GREENLEAF WHEATIER.)

RUTHS STEPFATHER.

AN ENGLISH STORY.

A curious trade to take, but then it has grown to be profitable. Things were at low ebb with me when I took it up, while now—

There, I won't boast, only say I'm thankful for it. Poverty comes in at the door, and love flies out at the window, so your poor people will be always miserable, while to my experience your poor man is often more light-headed than the man with thousands.

I was at my wits end for something to do, and sat nibbling my nails one day, grumbling horribly.

'Don't go on like that Tom,' says my wife; 'things might be worse.'

'How?' I said.

'Why, we might have Luke at home, and he is doing well.'

Luke's our boy, you know, and we have got him into a merchant's office, whence he seems likely to stay; but I was in a grumbling fit then, and there was a clinkety click noise going on in the next room that fidgeted me terribly.

'Things can't be worse,' I said, angrily; and I was going to prove myself in the wrong by making my wife cry, when there was a knock at the door.

'Come in,' I said, and a fellow lodger put in his head.

'Are you good at work, Mr. Smith?' he said.

'What work?' I said; 'fireworks—gasworks?'

'Oh, no; I mean works of things as goes with wheels and springs.'

'Middling,' I said, for I was fond of pulling clocks to pieces and trying to invent.

'I wish you'd come and look at this sewing machine of mine, for I can't get it to go.'

Sewing machines were newish in those days, and I got up to look at it, and after about an hour's fiddling about it I began to see a bit of the reason why—the purpose, you know, of all the screws and cranks and wheels; I found out, too, why our neighbor's wife—she was a dressmaker, and had just started one—could not get it to go; and before night, and by thinking and putting this and that together, had got her in the way of working it pretty steadily, though with my clumsy fingers I couldn't have done it myself.

I had my bit of dinner and tea with these people, and they forced half a crown upon me as well, and I went back feeling like a new man, so refreshing had been that bit of work.

'There,' said my wife, 'I told you that something would come.'

'Well, so you did,' said I, 'but the something is rather small.'

But the very next day—as we were living in the midst of the people who were fast taking to sewing machines—if the folks from the next house didn't want me to look at theirs; and then the news spreading, as news will spread, that there was somebody who could cobble and tinker machinery, without putting people to the expense that makers would, if the jobs didn't come in so fast, so that I was obliged to get files and drills and a vice—regular set of tools by degrees; and at last I was busy as a bee from morn till night, whistling over my work as happy as a king.

Of course every now and then I got a breakage, but I could generally get over that by buying a new wheel or spindle or what not. Next we got to supplying shuttles and needles, and machine cotton. Soon after I bought a machine of a man who was tired of it. Next week I sold it at a good profit; bought another and another, and sold them; then got to taking them and money in exchange for new ones; and one way or the other became a regular big dealer as you see.

Hundred? Why, new, second handed, and with those being repaired up stairs by the men, I've got at least 300 on the premises, while if anybody had told me 15 years ago that I should be doing this I should have laughed at him.

That pretty girl showing and explaining a machine to a customer? That's Ruth, that is. No, not my daughter—yet, put she soon will be. Poor girl, I always think of her and of bread thrown upon the waters at the same time.

Curious idea, that you will say, but I will tell you why.

In our trade we have strange people to deal with. Most of 'em are poor, and can't buy a machine right off, but are ready and willing to pay so much a week. That suits them, and it suits me if they'll only keep the payment up to the end.

You don't believe me, perhaps, but some of them don't do that. Some of them leave their lodging, and I never see them again; and the most curious part is that the sewing machine disappears with them, and I never see that again. Many a one, too, that has disappeared like that, I do see again—perhaps have them brought here by some one to be repaired or exchanged for a bigger, or for one by a different maker; for if you look around here you'll see I've got all kinds—new and old, little domestics, and big traders—there, you name any maker, and see if I don't bring you out one of his works.

Well, whenever I ask these people where they got the machine—for I always know them by the number—it turns out that they've bought it through an advertisement or at a salesroom or maybe out of a pawnbroker's shop.

But I've had plenty of honest people to deal with too—they as have come straight forward and asked me to take their machine back, when I'd allow them as much as I thought fair and 'twould be an end of a pleasant transaction.

The way I have been bitten, though, by some folks has made me that case-hardened that sometimes I've wondered whether I've got any heart left, and the wife had to interfere, telling me I've been spoiled with prosperity and grown unfeeling.

It was she made me give way about Ruth; for one day, after having my bristles all set up, by finding out that three good sound machines, by best makers, had gone nobody knew where, who should come into the shop but a lady-like looking woman in a very shabby

widow's weed. She wanted a machine for herself and daughter to learn, and money by installments. Now, just half an hour before, by our shop clock, I had made a vow that I'd give up all that part of the trade, and I was very rough with her—just as I am when I'm cross—and said 'No.'

'But you will if the lady gives security?' said my wife hastily.

The poor woman gave such a woe-begone look at us that it made me more out of temper than ever, for I could feel that if I stopped I should have to let her have one at her own terms. And so it was; for there, if I didn't let her have a first-class machine, as good as new; she only paid 7½ down, and undertaking to pay half a crown a week, and no more security then nothing!

To make it worse, too, if I didn't send the thing home without charge!—Luke, going with it, for he was back at home, now, keeping my books, being grown into a fine young fellow of 25; and I sat and growled the whole of the rest of the day, calling myself all the weak-minded idiots under the sun, and telling the wife that business was going to the dogs, and I should be ruined.

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself Tom,' she said.

'So I am,' says I. 'I didn't think I could be such a fool.'

'Such a fool as to do a kind action to one who was evidently a lady born, and come down in the world.'

'Yes,' I says, 'to be living in Bennet's place, where I've sunk no less than 10 machines in five years.'

'Yes,' says the wife, 'and cleared hundreds of pounds. Tom, I'm ashamed of you—you a man with 10 working-men busy up stairs, a couple of thousand pounds worth of stocks in the bank, a "Hold your tongue, will you?" I said roughly, and went out into the shop to try and work it off.'

Luke came back soon after looking very strange, and I was at him directly.

'Where's the seven an' six?' I says angrily.

He didn't answer, but put three half crowns down on the desk, took out his book, made his entries—date of delivery, first payment, when the other's due, and all the rest of it—and was then going into the house.

'Mind,' I said sharply, 'those payments are to be kept to the day; and tomorrow you go down to the Rollys who live nearly opposite to 'em, and tell 'em to keep an eye on the window, or we shall lose another machine.'

'You needn't be afraid, father,' he said coldly; 'they're honest enough only poor.'

I was just in that humor that I wanted to quarrel with somebody and that I did.

'When I ask you for your opinion, young man, you give it me; and when I tell you to do a thing, you do it,' I said in as savage a way as I ever spoke to the lad. 'You go over tomorrow and tell the Rollys to keep a strict lookout on those people; do you hear?'

'Father,' he says, looking me full in the face, 'I couldn't insult them by doing such a thing; when without another word he walked quietly out of the room, leaving me worse than ever.'

For that boy had never spoken to me like that before, and I should have gone after him feeling like mad, only some people came in and I didn't see him again until evening, and a good thing, too, for I'm sure I should have said all sorts of things to the boy that I should have been sorry for after. And there I was, fuming about, savage with everybody, giving short answers, snapping at the wife, and feeling as a man does feel when he knows that he has been in the wrong, and hasn't the heart to go and own it.

It was about 8 o'clock that I was sitting by the parlor fire, with the wife working and very quiet, when Luke came in from the workshop with a book under his arm, for he had been footing up the men's piecework, and what was due to them and the sight of him made me feel as if I wanted to quarrel.

He saw it, too, but said nothing, only put the accounts away and began to read.

The wife saw the storm brewing, and she knew how put out I was, for I had not lit my pipe, nor yet had my evening nap, which I always have after tea. She did what she so well knew how to do—filled my pipe, forced it into my hand, and just as I was going to dash it to pieces in the ashes, she gave me one of her old looks, kissed me on the forehead, as with one hand she pressed me back into the chair, and then with the other she lit a splint and held it to my tobacco.

I was done. She always gets over me like that; and after smoking in silence

for half an hour, I was lying back, with my eyes closed, dropped off to sleep, when the wife said (what had gone before I had not heard):

'Yes, he's asleep now.'

That woke me up, of course, and if I didn't lie there shamming, and heard all they said in a whisper.

'How came you to make him more vexed than he was, Luke?' said the wife, and he told her.

'I couldn't do it, mother,' he said excitedly. 'It was heart-breaking. She's living in a wretched room there with her daughter; and, mother, when I saw her, I felt as if—there I can't tell you.'

'Go on, Luke,' she said.

'They're half-starved, hesaid in a husky way. 'Oh, mother! its horrible. Such a sweet, beautiful girl, and the poor woman herself almost dying with some terrible disease.'

The wife sighed.

'They told me,' he went on, 'how hard they had tried to live by ordinary needlework, and failed, and that as a last resource they had tried to get a machine.'

'Poor things,' said the wife; but are you sure the mother was a lady?'

'A clergyman's widow,' says Luke hastily; 'there isn't a doubt about it. Poor girl! and they've got to learn to use it before it can be of any use.'

'Poor girl, Luke,' said the wife softly; and I saw through my eyelashes that she laid a hand upon his arm, and was looking curiously at him, when if he didn't cover his face with his hands, rest his elbows on the table, and give a low groan. Then the old woman got up, stood behind his chair and began playing with and caressing his hair like the foolish old mother would.

'Mother,' he said, suddenly, 'will you go and see them?'

She didn't answer for a minute, only stood looking at him, and then said softly: 'They paid you the first money?'

'No,' he said, hotly, 'I hadn't the heart to take it.'

'Then that money you paid was yours, Luke?'

'Yes, mother,' he says, simply; and those two stopped looking at the other, the wife bent down and kissed him, holding his head afterward, for a few moments, between her hands, for she always did worship that chap, our only one; and then I closed my eyes tight, and went on breathing heavy and thinking.

For something like a new revelation had come upon me. I knew that Luke was 25 and that I was 54, but he always seemed like a boy to me, and here I was waking up to the fact, that he was a grown man, and that he was thinking and feeling as I first thought and felt when I saw his mother, nigh upon twenty and eight years ago.

I lay back, thinking and telling myself I was very savage with him for deceiving me, and that I wouldn't have him and his mother plotting against me, and that I wouldn't stand by and see him make a fool of himself with the first pretty girl he set eyes on, when he might marry Maria Turner, the engineers daughter, and have a nice bit of money with her to put into the business, and then be my partner.

'No,' I says, 'if you plot together, I'll plot all alone; then I pretended to wake up, took no notice, and had my supper.'

I kept rather gruff the next morning, and made myself very busy about the place, and I daresay I spoke more sharply than usual, but the wife and Luke were as quiet as could be; and about 12 I went out, with a little oil can and two or three tools in my pocket.

It was not far from Bennet's place, and on getting to the house I asked for Mrs. Murray, and was directed to the second floor, where, as I reached the door, I could hear the clicking of my sewing machine, and whoever was there was so busy over it that she did not hear me knock; so I opened the door softly, and looked in upon as sad a scene as I shall ever, I daresay, see.

There, in the bare room, sat asleep in her chair the widow lady who came about the machine, and I could see that in her face which told plainly enough that the pain and suffering she must have been going through for years would soon be over; and situated as she was it gave me a kind of turn.

'It's no business of yours,' I said to myself roughly, and I turned then to see who it was that was bending over my machine.

I could see no face only a slight figure in rusty black; and a pair of busy white hands were trying hard to govern the thing and to learn to use it well.

'So that's the gal, is it?' I said to myself. 'Ah! Luke, my boy, you've got to the silly calf age, and I dare say—'

(Concluded on fourth page.)

Place of Meeting, Divisions, Numbers Night of Meeting, and name of Deputies.

St. Stephen; Howard, 1; Friday; S. Webber.
Milltown St. Stephen; Wilberforce, 3; Monday;
H. McAllister.

Market Building, St. John; Gurney, 5; Thursday;
John P. Bell.

Orange Hall, Portland; Portland, 7; Monday
A. Y. Paterson.

Market Building, St. John; Albion, 14; Wednesday;
J. S. B. DeVeber.

Gagetown; Queens, 21; Saturday; H. J. DeVeber.

Chatham; Northumberland, 37; Friday; G. Stohart.

St. John; Mariners and Mechanics, 38; Thursday;
Robt. Wills.

Hillsboro, Albert Co.; Albert, 39; Wednesday
J. J. Steeves.

Sackville, West Co.; Sackville, 40; Tuesday
J. C. Harper.

Richibucto, Kent Co.; Richibucto, 42; Wednesday;
A. Haines.

Kingston, Kent Co.; Kingston, 44; Tuesday
B. S. Bailey.

Newcastle; Newcastle, 45; Thursday; D. McGruar.

Point de Bute, West Co.; Westmorland, 50
Thursday; J. Amos Trueman.

Hopewell Hill, Albert Co.; Golden Rule, 51;
Tuesday; L. R. Moore.

Pennfield, Charlotte Co.; Safeguard, 58; Saturday;
W. N. Bucknam.

Cambridge, Queen's Co.; Johnston, 62; Saturday;
George S. Wilson.

Dalhousie; Dalhousie, 64; Monday; G. Haddow.
Baie Verte; Baie Verte, 65; Wednesday; R. Goodwin.

Dover, West Co.; Dover, 70; Saturday; W. Steeves.

Carleton, St. John; Granite Rock, 77; Tuesday;
Henry Finch.

Derby, North Co.; Nelson, 99; Monday; J. Betts.
Doughstown, North Co.; Caledonia, 126; Tuesday;
J. Henderson.

Collina Corner, Kings Co.; Collina, 129; Thursday;
Jacob L. Keirstead.

Upper Gagetown, Queens Co.; Oxford, 134
Saturday; James E. Coy.

Benton, Carleton Co.; Garibaldi, 151; A. Teed.
St. Martins, St. John Co.; St. Martins, 164
Tuesday; Cudlip Miller.

Moncton; Moncton, 183; Monday; E. McCarthy.
Salisbury, West Co.; Crystal Stream, 191
Saturday; C. A. Beck.

South Bay, St. John Co.; Lime Rock, 207
Monday; Wm. Roxborough.

Milford, St. John Co.; Everett, 238; Wednesday
John Waring.

Moncton; Intercolonial, 243; Friday; Wallace
Armour.

Victoria Mills, West Co.; Victoria, 245; Thursday;
A. J. Main.

Baillie, St. James, Char. Co.; Baillie, 248; Wednesday;
J. W. Mann.

Weldford, Kent Co.; Harcourt, 249; Saturday;
H. Wather.

Portland; Valley, 250; Tuesday; J. Fowler.
Batternut Ridge, King's Co.; Havelock, 251
Friday; E. Keith.

Petitodiac, West Co.; Petitodiac, 252; Tuesday;
D. Jonah.

Lewis Mountain, West Co.; Sunnyside, 253;
Saturday; R. Lewis.

Deer Island, Char. Co.; Moss Rose, 254; Saturday;
A. T. Lloyd.

Millstream, Kings Co.; Britannia, 255; Friday;
C. W. Weyman.

Little Ridge, Char. Co.; Spreading Oak, 256
Tuesday; A. F. Matheson.

Fredericton; Lansdowne, 257; Thursday; H. H. Pitts.

Kouchibouguac, Kent Co.; Union, 258; D. W. Grieson.

River Charles, Rest. Co.; Charles, 259; Thursday;
J. H. Galbraith.

Steeves Mountain, West Co.; Mountain Rose,
260; Saturday; R. Lutz, 5r.

Lawrence Station, Char. Co.; Lawrenceville,
261; Saturday; F. S. Richardson.