

TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE,

DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE & NEWS.

PLEDGE.—We, the undersigned, do agree, that we will not use intoxicating Liquors as a Beverage, nor Traffic in them; that we will not provide them as an article of Entertainment, nor for persons in our Employment; and that in all suitable ways we will discontinue their use throughout the Community.

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The Bottle.—Chapter IV.

The officers of the law departed, and they were left alone, comforting themselves with the bottle; and so repeatedly were draughts of comfort taken, that, in the end, entire forgetfulness came, and in the arms of oblivion they sunk upon the floor, unconscious that around them were gathered their hungry, weeping children. Night came; the fire went out in the un replenished grate, and, in darkness and sorrow, the little ones gathered about their sister, and sobbed themselves to sleep.

After undressing James and Lotty, and putting them to bed, Agnes tried, but in vain, to arouse her father and mother from their drunken slumber. Their draughts from the bottle had been too deep; they still remained upon the floor, as insensible as logs.

For hours the child sat, grieving and weeping in the darkness of that cold room, the silence of which was only broken by the heavy breathing of her sleeping parents.—Darker than even the room was her heart! and its chillness more than the air of the fireless apartment, caused a shudder to creep through her limbs.

At last it must have been near midnight, the father aroused up, and "ent groping about the room, swearing and asking for a light. He did not stumble over the table, nor strike himself against the drawers. The landlord's execution had saved him from such disasters. Agnes, over wearied with watching, had fallen into a doze. She started up and spoke.

"Where's the light? Why don't you get a light, you good for nothing little huzzy?" said Latimer, adding to the sentence a bitter oath.

"There is no candle," replied Agnes, trembling.

"Why isn't there a candle? Didn't you know the candles were out? Where's your mother?"

"She's asleep on the floor, sir."

"Asleep on the floor, indeed! Where?"

The loud voice of her angry husband reached Mrs. Latimer, the stupefying spirit imbibed from the bottle having, by this time, nearly exhaled itself away through the lungs and the pores of her body.

"Where's the light?" she said, also, finding herself in total darkness.

"Yes: where is the light, sure enough?" responded the gruff voice of her husband.

"There is no candle," said Agnes, again venturing to speak.

"Why did you let the fire go out, you idle creature, you!" replied the mother angrily.

"There is no coal," sobbed Agnes.

This, the mother remembered, was too true. And she also began to remember other things that she had forgotten in her drunken oblivion. No wonder that she became silent. The miserable father's memory also began to be more lucid; and he too ceased his angry unreasoning demands.

"Where's James and Lotty?" the mother at length asked.

"They're in bed," replied Agnes.

"Very well. It's time you were in bed too."

Agnes needed no second injunction. She went silently from the room, the darkness concealing her tears.

Before retiring to the hard pallet upon the floor, which was now their sleeping place, Latimer and his wife, by a kind of common consent, groped about for the bottle, and before seeking repose, drained its contents to the last drop.

There was a cold and gloomy reality about everything in that wretched house on the next morning. No fire in the grate; no food in the house; no comfort in the bottle. All, alike, felt wretched.

Agnes was sent out to a store near by to get trust for some coals and a little food; but she came home in tears. The keeper of the store had denied her with harsh words.

"We must have fire, and something for the children to eat, Polly," said Latimer, shivering, and glancing involuntarily at the empty bottle which stood upon the mantelpiece. "Is there nothing in the house to sell or pawn?"

Mrs. Latimer went to the closet, and after looking through it for some time, selected an armful of dishes, the coffee-mill and caster. These Agnes was directed to carry to old Moses, and placed in pawn for whatever he would advance on them. The child got a dollar for them. Enough coals for the day were procured, some food bought, and the bottle again replenished. With a shilling in his pocket, Latimer went, after breakfast, to look for something to do; but he forgot his errand, staid all day in a cheap drinking house, and came home at night drunk and quarrelsome.

On the next morning, when he was sober enough to hear it, Latimer was informed by his wife that the landlord had been there, and left orders for them to vacate the house immediately, or he would have them put out into the street.

A few more of the few things that remained to them were disposed of in the way they had already parted with so many articles, and coals, food and spirits supplied for another day. Latimer then went out to look for a new home. He found a room in the third story of an old tottering house. The rent was three dollars a month, and he engaged it without waiting to consult his wife. When he mentioned where it was, she had many objections to make, but he angrily over-ruled them. Drink had made a brute of the once tender and considerate husband and father.

Into this comfortless place the family of Latimer moved; with the miserable remnant of their household goods. One room held without difficulty what had been the furniture of three.

Hopeless of getting work at any of the shops, the degraded man, in order to obtain money to buy liquor, the thirst for which was daily on the increase, was now willing to do any little jobs he could pick up in the streets; such as throwing in and piling up wood, putting away coal, carry-