

THE EFFICACY OF THE PLEDGE.

While admitting that hitherto my experience of Pledge taking, keeping, or breaking, has not been very wide, and that neither duty nor circumstances have brought me much into contact with the various phases of Temperance work, or those sought to be benefited ; yet the subject is one on which every one, if they think at all, must form certain definite opinions.

Recognizing therefore the fact that those who would be asked to sign the pledge are mainly, though not exclusively, of two classes—those who have given way more or less to intemperate habits, and those who are in danger of becoming intemperate—and that it is chiefly the former with which we are concerned, it seems to me that there are at least three essential conditions to success in signing the pledge, and would say in the first place, that the pledge would appear to be an agent for real and lasting good, only when it is taken with the intelligent and hearty consent of the individual. What I mean by this is that the persons signing, shall do so willingly, and with the desire of securing their own freedom from intemperance in any degree. Now we know quite well, that the pledge may be taken for many reasons, and with different objects. The request of a friend,—the desire to secure some personal advantage otherwise unattainable,—the wish to stand well in some one's opinion,—the hope of escaping easily from the friendly solicitations of companions to “join them in a glass,”—all these may and do exercise an influence in determining many to pledge themselves ; and it appears to me that a promise made in this way cannot prove effectual, and will very likely be as easily broken as it made.

And this leads me to remark, in the second place, that I do not see how the pledge can be successfully kept, if, after signing it, there is any relaxation of watchfulness and effort on the part of those signing. Most of us have a tendency to rely too much on the restraining influence of artificial barriers, and having set them up, to cease to be on our guard ; and this perhaps is more particularly the case with Temperance pledges, which to many are such sure guarantees of permanent reformation, that they succeed in instilling this idea into the minds of those who sign with the result, that the action is invested with a power it does not possess, and is expected to accomplish what only continued, earnest, watchful effort, unremitting and untiring, can hope to achieve. The magic phrase, “I’ve signed the pledge,” is too often regarded as a talisman against temptation or relapse ; whereas, I should say that however careful and guarded a man may have been before pledging himself, he should be doubly so afterwards.