

always be the centres where good and evil are manifested in their intensest and most active forms. Like the fabled dragons of old, demanding a daily tribute of human lives, the pitiless vices of the city—its intemperance, its profligacy, and its crime—destroy their hecatombs of victims every year. The cunning Circe, Sin, weaves her web of sophistry and sings her siren song, and flaunts her subtle blandishments; and Pleasure, that Delilah of men's souls, beguiles the conscience into fatal slumber, robs the spirit of its strength, and betrays its victim into the hands of the Philistines. The homeless youth in the solitude of a great city pines for the enjoyment of society. The sort to which he can most readily obtain access is frequently that of the theatre, the billiard parlour, the drinking saloon, the concert hall, or the haunts of still viler resort, whose steps go down to death. After exhausting mental or physical labour he seeks relaxation amid the multiplied seductions on every hand, which have all the charm of novelty, and some of them the additional fascination of being forbidden fruit. He is tempted to procure excitement for his jaded nerves and overtaxed brain in sensual indulgence in the narcotic weed, the wine cup, or the more subtle, enervating, and destructive vices which despoil both soul and body of their purity and strength.

It was for the spiritual and temporal advantage of this class of young men—to shield them from temptation, to rescue them from the toils of evil, to raise them up when fallen, to furnish Christian society, innocent recreation and intellectual stimulus, and for religious fellowship and evangelistic effort—that these associations were formed. They began, like many another important enterprise, in a very quiet, unostentatious manner. The rivers that water the valleys have their springs far off among the mountains, or in some secluded glen; so this stream of hallowed influence had its humble origin in one of the obscure by-ways of life. Some two and thirty years ago, in a drapery house in the heart of the city of London, a few young men assembled in a prayer-meeting for the promotion of personal piety. They heard of a similar meeting in another commercial house, and invited its members to unite with them. A meeting of young men from both houses was, therefore, held at No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard,