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OUR SOCIAL CUSTOMS.

Time was, when it was considered anything but a violation of the rules of good society, for both the entertainer and the entertained to linger at the convivial board until utterly oblivious of all terrestrial things. Happily, these *good old times* have passed away, and society has, to some extent, more regard than it had for the proprieties of life. For a season the hopes of the philanthropist, even, led him to believe that a better and brighter era had dawned upon our poor fallen humanity, and that sobriety had taken the place of drunkenness; moderation—if not total abstinence from intoxicating drinks—the place of excess. To a certain extent his hopes have been realized, but how far short these realizations have fallen of what he did, and had a right to, expect.

We do not propose to occupy the pages of this journal with a *temperance* essay, as such; but simply to direct the attention of the industrial classes to this great social and moral evil of intemperance, as it affects themselves and their families, and society generally. How much, we would ask, of the weekly earnings of the working man, is spent for that which benefits him not, individually, but rather keeps him poor in health and circumstances, and drags him *down, down*, in the social scale? Nightly we pass the saloons or drinking places in this city, and notice that, even during the excessively warm evenings of July and August, they are filled, or partially so, with working men, who are thus spending their time and their money in worse than frivolity; and, in too many cases, robbing their families of the common necessaries, not to mention any of the luxurious comforts, of life.

We can scarcely take up one of the city daily papers, but we read of murders, accidental deaths and injuries, fires, fightings, police court cases, prisons and penitentiaries as resulting from or connected with the use of intoxicating drinks. Misery, wretchedness and want, lunacy and madness, the bloated countenance, the haggard features, the palsied hand, and the broken-down constitution; the idiotic sot, the silly driveller, and the shameless reprobates of both sexes, daily meet us

and cross our path—the victims of *strong drinks*; and who, or how few, put forth a hand or make an effort to stay the curse? We thank God there are a noble few that do; but Oh! in view of the coming political elections and strife, the cupidity and moral corruption of too many of the candidates and their agents, and the evil influence that arch-enemy *Alcohol* is known to exercise over the votes of the *free and independent*, who will be able to stay the tide of drunkenness and its attendant demoralisation? Who? echo answers—*Who?*

When writing the heading of this article, we did not intend our pen to take so wide a range as it has done. We had in view, especially, some facts bearing upon the fearful extent of this social evil, as manifested in connection with almost all such occasions as general public holidays, dinners and suppers, balls, pic-nics, excursions; the inaugurating or opening of railways or other public works, municipal and other entertainments. So far as our experience goes, during the past few years, these have been occasions of stumbling to many, and of sadness on the part of a few at having their enjoyments marred, and in witnessing the moral degradation of a large portion of those in whose company they have been induced to associate.

We have, on several such occasions, seen the bottle deified by the majority present. We have, both on the railroad and steamboat, seen the brandy bottle and glass continuously passed round from man to man, so long as they were able to drink it or there remained any for them to drink. We have, on a recent occasion, when the lives and safety of some 200 excursionists were involved, not only seen a large portion of those intoxicated, but the locomotive engineer of the train which they were on *have* in his possession a bottle of raw brandy, stolen by him from their supplies; and the fireman of the steamboat on which they continued their journey homewards, on a dark night, so drunk that he could not put the necessary wood into the fire, and would fall in front of his furnace door in his attempts to do so; while a drunken deck-hand was fighting on the deck of the steamer with an equally drunken excursionist; and a drunken Municipal Magistrate with *attempted* dignity paraded his official authority to secure the peace. We have on a similar occasion, seen two Representatives of different Municipalities, who were, until maddened by strong drink, the best of friends, only kept from personal conflict on the deck of a steamer, by the interposition of the more sober of their associates.

All these things, and a great many more such have we seen in this the enlightened 19th century.