

THE DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN.

BY JOHN MACDONALD

For there was not a house where there was not one dead! —Ex. xli, 30.

A CRY is heard in Egypt,
A sore and bitter cry,
'Tis not for brave men fallen,
As brave men long to die:
The sounds are those of wailing
And deepest agony.

'Tis not for country taken
By some relentless foe;
'Tis not for honour tarnished
The nation mourneth so:
A wail so full of wildness,
The hopeless only know.

Sore plagues had swept o'er Egypt,
Thunder and fire and hail,
The land was seared and darkened
By locusts' blighted trail;
Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened,
Nor did these plagues avail.

The fearful plague of darkness
They failed to understand,
Though dark were Egypt's dwellings,
And bright all Goshen's land,
They would not own these warnings
As wonders of God's hand.

To Pharaoh and to Egypt
But one more plague remains,
To monarch and to people
Sadder than former pains,
That stroke that slays their firstborn
Will break off Israel's chains.

The Lord went forth at midnight,
All Egypt's firstborn fell,
From Pharaoh's royal dwelling
To captive's dreary cell:
The land was filled with wailing
For lost ones loved so well.

No pining sickness wasted
Their forms from day to day,
No friendly watchers waited
To see them pass away:
One moment strength and beauty—
The next but lifeless clay.

It was the Lord who smote them,
Even Egypt's hope that night,
The infant in its sweetness,
The strong man in his might;
The Lord whom they rejected,
Who ever doth right.

And now from the oppressor
Hope's faintest rays are fled,
He hears his people's wailings,
He sees the tears they shed,
And knows that Egypt has no home
Which does not mourn its dead.

Despot and people humbled,
Boasting and pride brought low,
Warnings despised, unheeded,
Judgment at length they know,
And hasten, though at midnight,
To let God's people go.

O mighty God of Jacob!
What God is like to Thee?
Who leddest thine own people
Through Egypt's parted sea,
And brought them safe to Canaan
With songs of jubilee.

And still, O Lord, Thy people
Secure in Thee abide;
No arm upraised can harm them,
Or snatch them from Thy side,
And safely leaning on their Lord
They'll pass through Jordan's tide.

OAKLANDS, TORONTO.

THE SWEARER'S PRAYER,

(Republished by request.)

WHAT! a swearer pray! Yes,
swearer, whether thou
thinkest so or not, each of
thine oaths is a prayer—
an appeal to the holy and Almighty
God.

And what is it, thinkest thou,
swearer, that thou dost call for, when
the awful imprecations, Damn and
Damnation, roll so frequently from thy
profane tongue? Tremble, swearer,
while I tell thee. Thy prayer contains
two parts: Thou prayest, first, that
thou mayest be deprived of eternal

happiness! Secondly, that thou mayest
be plunged into eternal misery!

When thou callest for damnation,
dost thou not, in effect, say as follows?
"O God! Thou hast power to punish
me in hell forever; therefore, let not
one of my sins be forgiven! Let every
oath that I have sworn, and all the
sins that I have committed, rise up in
judgment against me, and eternally
condemn me! Let me never partake
of Thy salvation; and let me never
enter into the kingdom of Heaven!"

This is the first part of thy prayer.
—let us hear the second.

"O God! let me not only be shut
out of Heaven, but also shut up in hell!
May all the members of my body be
tortured with inconceivable agony, and
all the powers of my soul tormented
with horror and despair, inexpressible
and eternal! Pour down Thy hottest
anger; execute all Thy wrath and curse
upon me; arm and send forth all Thy
terrors against me; and let Thy fierce,
Thy fiery, Thy fearful indignation rest
upon me, and torment me in hell for-
ever, and ever, and ever!!!"

Swearer, this is thy prayer!!! Oh,
dreadful imprecation! Oh, horrible,
most horrible! Dost thou like thy
petition? Art thou desirous of eternal
torment? If so, swear on—swear hard.
The more oaths, the more misery; and,
perhaps, the sooner thou mayest be in
hell.

Swearer, be thankful, oh! be ex-
ceedingly thankful, that God has not
answered thy tremendous prayer!
Never let Him hear another oath from
thy unhallowed tongue, lest it should
be thy last expression upon earth, and
thy swearing prayer should be answered
in hell. Oh! let thine oaths be turned
into supplications! Repent, and turn
to Jesus, who died for swearers, as well
as for His murderers. And then, oh!
then (though thou mayest have sworn
as many oaths as there are "stars in
the heavens, and sands upon the sea-
shore innumerable"), then thou shalt
find, to thy eternal joy, that there is
love in His heart, and merit in His
blood, sufficient to pardon thy sins, and
save thy soul forever.—Swearer! canst
thou ever again blaspheme such a God
and Saviour as this? Does not thy
conscience cry, God forbid? Even so,
Amen.

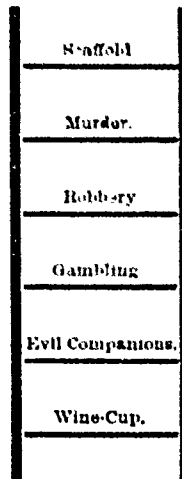
IF YOU PLEASE.

WHEN the Duke of Well-
ington was sick, the last thing
he took was a little tea. On
his servant's handing it to him in a
sauce, and asking him if he would
have it, the Duke replied, "Yes, if
you please." These words were his
last words. How much kindness and
courtesy are expressed by them! He
who had commanded the greatest
armies in Europe, and had long used
the throne of authority, did not despise
or overlook the small courtesies of
life. Ah, how many boys do! What
a rude tone of command they often
use to their little brothers and sisters,
and sometimes to their mothers! This
is ill-bred and unchristian, and shows
a coarse nature and a hard heart. In
all your home talk remember "If you
please." Among your playmates don't
forget "If you please." To all who
wait upon you and serve you, believe
that "If you please" will make you
better served than all the cross or
ordering words in the whole diction-
ary. Don't forget three little words
—"If you please."

SIX STEPS IN THE LADDER OF
CRIME.

BY A. NEWELL.

THIS subject may be treated as a
blackboard lesson, thus.



I was one day walking through a
street in one of our large cities, when
my eye caught a window-bill announc-
ing the performance of a dialogue en-
titled "Six Steps in the Ladder of
Crime." I felt somewhat interested
in the title, especially as the steps were
mentioned; and it might be interest-
ing could we connect them in a short
story, and thus narrate the history of
many unfortunate beings.

Let us picture a young man just
entering the world upon his own respon-
sibility. His happy boyhood days
have been spent in his father's home,
and now he goes forth to face the
world with all its temptations and
allurements. He is very careful to
avoid things which might lead him
astray, but, alas! he regards the de-
ceptive

WINE CUP

as a friend, forgetting the warning of
the wise man, "At the last it biteth
like a serpent and stingeth like an
adder."

Time passes on, and his association
with the wine-cup naturally brings
him in contact with other young men
who prove themselves to be

EVIL COMPANIONS,

leading him on the downward track to
ruin. Wrong is placed before him,
gaudily dressed, alluring him on to
destruction. Cards and dice are no
longer strangers to him; the

GAMBLING

table becomes his favourite resort, and
night after night is spent in debauchery.
All his possessions are lost; debt stares
him in the face. Money! money!!
MONEY!!! is his only cry till at last,
to satisfy his craving, he is compelled
to commit a

ROBBERY.

Lower and lower he sinks in degra-
dation and crime; robberies are of
frequent occurrence, till at last, to
meet his ends,

MURDER

is added to his list of crimes. For the
sake of money, the life of a fellow-
creature is taken away. He is
arrested and condemned to die. Dis-
graced and ruined, he is led to the

SCAFFOLD,

and is hurried into the presence of an
angry God. With his last breath he
exclaims:

BEWARE OF THE FIRST STEP—THE
WINE-CUP.

PLEASANTRIES.

FRENCH under difficulties: The fol-
lowing dialogue was overheard the
other day. Ho: "Arantou, p
Calore." She: "Shut it yourself."

ELDERLY agriculturist (to season
ticket holder in the train): "You have
no ticket!" Ticket-holder: "No, I
travel on my good looks." Agricul-
turist (after looking him over): "Then
probably you ain't gonn' very far"
General smile

WHEN a lady living in Chelsea sent
to London for a doctor, she apologized
for asking him to come such a distance.
"Don't speak of it," answered the
M.D. "I happen to have another
patient in the neighbourhood, and can
thus kill two birds with one stone."

THE *Illustrated London News* has a
picture of Mr. Gladstone "falling a
tree." "The attitude of the venerable
statesman," says a Canadian journal,
"and the shape of the cut, throw a
flood of light on what has hitherto
been a mystery, namely, how it was
that he did not long ago run out of
trees."

A LADY taking tea at a small com-
pany, being very fond of her hot rolls,
was asked to have another. "Really,
I cannot," she modestly replied. "I
don't know how many I have eaten
already." "I do," unexpectedly cried
a juvenile upstart, whose mother had
allowed him a seat at the table.
"You've eaten 8! I've been countin'."

By some strange descent as appal-
ling as that from the sublime to the
ridiculous, the house in which the poet
Moore was born is now a whiskey-
shop, Burns' native cottage is a public
house, Shelley's house in Great Marlow
is a beer-shop. The spot where
Walter Scott was born is occupied by
a similar building; and Coleridge's
residence at Nether Stokely, the very
house where he composed the "Ode to
a Nightingale," is an ordinary beer-
house.

The following is told of one of the
Rothschilds—he of Frankfort:—Came
the Baron Von G. into the office of
the great banker. "Take a chair, sir,"
said he, not even raising his head from
his writing. "Sir," said G., "why,
sir, I am like yourself, a baron of the
empire, and I think should be ad-
dressed as such." "A thousand pardons,"
replied Rothschild; "a baron of
the empire. Then take two chairs
until I can attend to you."

A CERTAIN nobleman wished to en-
gage a coachman, and there were
several applicants. To A. he said,
"How near can you drive to a precipice
without falling in?" "Within a
yard" was the answer. To the same
question B. replied, "Within six
inches." But C. made answer, "I do
not like precipices, your lordship, and
if I can help it, never drive near them."
"Ah!" said the nobleman, "you are
the coachman for me." Moral. Keep
away from dangerous places.

When the late Bishop of Oxford was
travelling eastward to attend the church
congress at Norwich, a lady sitting
opposite to him commented in dawning
terms on the eloquence and ability of
the great Anglican divine, quite un-
conscious that she was addressing him.
"But why, sir," she added, "do people
call him Soapy Sam?" "Well, madam,"
replied the Bishop, "I suppose it is
because he has always been a good deal
in hot water, and always manages to
come out with clean hands."