

TEMPERANCE COMLU.

THE POWER OF HABIT.

A Temperance Discourse, by Rev W. H. H. Murray.

"Think on these things."—Phil. iv, 8. [CONTINUED.]

I presume that we should all stand agreed in this, that among all the evil habits that man can form, there is not one so destructive of every thing that man should prize and for which he can be prized by others, as the habit of drinking intoxicating liquors. It affects him on all sides of his nature, and it affects him only for evil. There is not one redeeming or alleviating influence in it. It is destructive of every interest which man should hold dear. There is no danger that a statement can be framed so broad as to be chargeable with exaggeration, which sets forth the evil influence of drinking habits on the man or on the community.

You may take a man in business life, an able man, even a gifted man; one who is ripe with the matured experience of a long commercial career; one who stands in the prime of life, universally respected, whose word is as good as his bond, a master in the great craft of trade. Now you would think that a man so rounded, so sustained, could not be overthrown. You would say:—'There is a man whose position is secure; his power is high, but there is so much base to it that, like the pyramids, nothing can overturn it. What a future he has before him!'

Well, now, you watch that man. He begins to drink. Occasionally at first, in a gentlemanly sort of way. He is all right, people say. 'If he loves a glass of wine occasionally, has it he a right to take it?' Undoubtedly. But observe: He begins to love his wine. He begins to long for it. A thirst for it is being born in him. Without any alarm in his mind he yields to it. In a year or so, he is no longer an occasional, he is a habitual drinker. From wine, as his appetite has grown by what it fed on, he passes over and on to the use of stronger stimulants. These begin to affect him. They interrupt the digestive organs in the fulfilment of their functions. They vitiate his blood, the great nurse of vigorous thought. They cloud his mind. They parade their evidence in his face. They weaken his memory and he becomes forgetful. He makes promises and doesn't keep them. They sap the foundations of his veracity. He begins to lie to excuse his mistakes and cover his blunders. Whispers begin to float in the air. He begins to lose money. His companions with fast men. The bills of his folly multiply against his bank account. The thing goes on awhile; goes on as time goes on, before the earthquake's shock. Men feel that it is coming and wait for it. At last the crash comes. The great strong, evenly-balanced business man—a prince among princes,—is dashed from his eminence down to the level of common men. Aye, down to the level of the pauper and sot.

You know, merchants and profes-

sional men, that this is not a fancy sketch in that it cannot be duplicated in real life; for you know that it can be duplicated. It is not a picture at all, so much as a frame prepared for a picture; and out of your own knowledge of men, out of your memory of business associates, you can recall face after face which you can put into this frame, and write a real name underneath it.

It were well if the disastrous results of drinking habits were only seen in such connection as we have suggested—business connection. It were well if they cost a man nothing but his property, and brought no disaster to society but financial disaster. But this is not the case. It affects more than the man's business. It destroys more than his property; it affects and destroys himself. And this is the solemn thing touching the matter. Property can be lost and regained. Tempests might sweep every ship from the seas and in 12 months those seas would be as white as ever with sails. Fires can consume your store houses, melt your iron blocks, and granulate, by their excessive heat, your structures of stone; and yet out of the ashes shall rise new walls; the melted iron be replaced; the crumbling granite be restored; and commerce rejoice with more adequate equipment for her necessities, than before the destruction came. But when a man is wrecked; when the pillars of his virtue are cast down and broken into fragments; when the torch of inflammable appetite has kindled flames within his bosom which feed on the strength and integrity of his soul; when this is done, a ruin has been wrought in this city, greater than the winds make when they pile up wrecks, greater than fire makes when it reduces warehouses to ashes.

To bring against drinking habits the charge, that they destroy not only property but men is to send for him into the air a warning against the formation, solemn enough to make even idiots look grave. A ruined man! A man who has been great, has been wealthy, has been good, has held and administered large trusts; a man with an immortal soul, with possibilities in his nature which only eternity could realize;—such a man, ruined, an estate in mind, in soul! Bring him to me, with or without his coffin, and I will take the wreck and remnant of what was once a glorious being out to the centre of that common and I will call that city together; I will call to the governor of the state; I will call to all who love Boston and the commonwealth, high and low, and say: Come gather round me here and let us mourn a loss greater than if our property had all been swept into the centre of the sea; the loss of a man.' Yea, and with you all gathered around me there, thousands of us, so that the enclosure would not hold another human form, it would be allowable for me, voicing your sense of loss, to call on all the angels, and the mercy of the great God, to mourn with us over the loss of what earth cannot give, nor Heaven with all its powers of ministration restore; the loss of a soul. For never is the sky

so blue, never is the sun so bright, never are the clouds so dense above me that I cannot see, written in gigantic letters, reaching from pole to pole the dreadful sentence: 'No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.'

[To be continued]

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