

TEMPERANCE.

MY LAST FALL—TEMPTATION FROM A THOUGHTLESS ONE.

WRITTEN BY A REFORMED MAN.

I am afraid of these little temptations. They are the little leaks that sink the ship. They have seared and shattered the noblest fabrics of human character that ever towered. They are the little threads gleaming and playful as the sunbeams, but slowly cutting their way through granite even, and flooding the holiest heritages of virtue and truth with the black desolations of vice and crime. Trifles they seem at first, are overlooked or extenuated, they insidiously weave their gossamer folds around the victim, until the strongest is crushed in the deadly embrace.

These little temptations meet us at every corner, drop from almost every lip. Do people—many of them claiming to be governed by Gospel rule—even dream that a word, or a sentiment sometimes, is the half ounce which sends up a noble purpose and a soul to the bottom? Thousands to-day who would suffer martyrdom rather than deal rum in the grog-shop, are at their own heart's alters insidiously doing the same devilish work.

"Take a drink of it, man, it is just from the press 'twouldn't hurt a babe!"

We heard this twenty years ago. With life and purpose fortified by long years of undeviating devotion to a sacred pledge, and I trust, the grace of God, I cannot recall this sentence and the attendant circumstances without a shudder. After so long a time it has the sharp, startling serpent's hiss, burning into the very blood, and sending sickness to the very soul.

By the then universal custom of society I was made a drunkard before I was twenty-one. I was outlawed by the same society which ruined me, and recklessly plunged deeper into dissipation. My young wife died and I rushed to the bottle to drown trouble. But a thousand hopes and dreams would rise like the dead and float on the stream. When all other friends deserted, and my own father drove me from his door, the mother was a mother still.

Under the influence of the Washingtonian movement I was picked up. Sober, hopeful, and resolute to stand firm, I went again to my father's home, drank his cider and fell. I was again an outcast, and again picked up.

Here let me rebuke the cold-blooded Phariseism which clasps the sainted hands and scorns the "weak ones," as it terms them. The strongest intellect from the hand of God is powerless in the fiercest clutch of the appetites for liquor. Once firmly seated. Warmer, larger-hearted, nobler men than the mass of those cold-blooded, passionless precise men have been as babes in its power. Many of them do not drink now, but they can rob the poor of the state, and cheat God, they seem to think by dispensing alms with a trumpet.

The last time I reformed and fell was late one Autumn. I had been sober three months, had earned some money, got decently dressed, and felt like a man. I had learned one thing to my sorrow; not to haunt the grog-shop or associate with those who did. I married again and entered anew upon the battle of life.

In late Autumn I engaged in a saw-mill, at high wages, for I was stout and heavy, and my employer's work was buoyant.

Late one Sabbath morning, after sleeping part of the night at the mill, I was going home, when I met a friend coming from his cider mill on the way, having in his hand a pail of new cider just from the press. He was a deacon in his church, an exemplary professor, and a worthy citizen. He loved me but came near killing me. He offered me a drink from his pail, I excused myself, for my mouth watered, as I have had it before when asked to drink at the bar. He was surprised.

"Why, Joel," he said, "not drink sweet cider! I wouldn't drink rum for the world, or offer it to you, but this is as harmless as water—nothing but apple-juice. Take a drink of it, man, it is just from the press; 'twouldn't hurt a babe!"

I was ashamed of my scruples; I was thirsty, but felt the shadow of some great danger. The old demon of appetite was pleading without; I eagerly reached for the pail, as he held it towards me, and drank—drank deeply.

Now, some will sneer at the idea of intoxication in that cider. A barrel of it might not have a drop of alcohol, but this I do know, the taste—the act—the associations—as combined, and as I took my lips from the pail the old devil was unchained as effectually as though I had drunk brandy instead of sweet cider. I was transformed in a twinkling; was wildly exultingly mad. I shouted in my joy, danced around the deacon, and slapped him familiarly on the shoulder.

He was shocked at my irreverence for the Sabbath, and shot through the gates as if grieved.

"I am sorry, Joel, but you have been drunk again."

True, but not what he supposed. I had drunk his sweet cider merely, 'twouldn't hurt a babe!

Let oblivion rest mercifully, O God, over six months which followed that last fall. I only remember distinctly the scene at the deacon's gate. The rest is like a fearful nightmare, with here and there an angel face—the wife's and mother's—breaking in. But the long night ended at last; ended on Sabbath morning. All night I raved through streets, as I learned, the wife and mother vainly striving to watch and ward me. About daybreak, after a troubled rest on the ground, I awoke, but so weak and desolate at heart, I wept and prayed to die. I wanted to die, for I felt like a wreck on the strand. The sun was just rising in the east, and smiled sweetly down upon me. I shrank as if the eye of God was upon me. And then the birds sang, and then my dog—little Wag—licked my face gently and looked wistfully in my eye. I heard the river run by, and then came upon me such a thirst as I had never experienced before. I gasped for breath. I was choking for water. Every drop of blood seemed a drop of flame, while the water sang and rippled in mockery. I felt that I must drink or die, and at last managed to roll over and down the bank. By hard work I crawled to the water, and as I reached to drink, fearing the great boon would cheat me. It seemed there was not enough in the river to slake my thirst, and I ordered Wag away, as he began to lap by my side.

Bless God, the giver of water! That drink was a long, cooling draft of bliss to a burning body and soul. I drank again, and again, and wept, and thanked God. I bathed hands and face and got stronger.

I sat by the river's bank until the bells tolled. Had some kind friend then taken me by the hand, I would have given life for an hour at the altar, and the prayers of true Christians. But at the moment, the deacon who had given me the cider passed by, remarking:

"That's Joel—pity he hadn't drowned for his wife and mother's sake." Oh, God! how the cruel words stung me! I writhed in agony. Was there no home for me? No wife or mother? No heaven at last?

I dare not go home by daylight. In the evening I stole into town, and after walking an hour up and down before my house, ventured in. A candle was dimly burning, and my dear mother, worn out with anxiety was breathing heavily on the bed.

How sad—almost heart-broken—how weary and worn she looked. I knelt down beside the bed and ventured to take her hand. She smiled faintly, as if dreaming, and whispered my name.

"God I thank thee he has come back to me."

Poor betrayed, scourged, crucified, innocent. I never wept such tears as then, never felt so abashed; never saw so clearly what desolations I had visited upon others. Hot, and like rain, the tears fell upon her hand as I bowed over it, and called upon God to witness that I would drink no more. She awoke and throwing her arms around my neck, sobbed and prayed while she kissed my swollen cheek.

I drank no cider since then. I would as soon peril my soul's salvation in the glass of rum. I will not offer it to others, and I deem him or her an insidious enemy who offers it. It might not hurt a babe, but it is a dangerous devil to those who have one trodden the quicksands of appetite.—N. Y. Witness.

"THE BODY THE TEMPLE OF GOD."

This is the title of a sermon lately preached by the Rev. President Hopkins, of William College, U.S. He said:—"I would make every allowance for prejudices of education and difference of temperament. If there are exceptions, I would admit them. But I may express to you my conviction, that habitual narcotic stimulation of the brain is not compatible with the fullest consecration of the body as a temple of God. Good men may do this in ignorance, as have other things prevalent at times have been done, and do not offend their consciences; but I believe that greater earnestness, more self-scrutiny, fuller light, would reveal its incompatibility with full consecration, and sweep it entirely away. The present position on this point of the Christian Church as a whole, and largely of the Christian ministry, I regard as obstructive of the highest manhood and of the spread of spiritual religion. I know that strong men have, in this connection, been bound as in fetters of brass, and cast down from high places, and have found premature prostration and a premature grave, and that this process is going on now. Let me say, therefore, to those of you who expect to be ministers, that I believe that sermons, even those called great sermons, which are the product of alcoholic or narcotic stimulation, are a service of God by 'strange fire,' and that for men to be scrupulous about their attire as clerical, and yet to enter upon religious services with narcotised bodies and breath that smells to heaven of anything but incense, as an incongruity and an offence, a cropping out of the old Phariseism that made clean the outside of the cup and the platter." Not

that abstinence has merit, or secures consecration; it is only its best condition.



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JOYFUL NEWS FOR THE AFFLICTED.

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