

SPOTS AND BLOTS

Behind the veil.

It's a spot—a blot—a social knot—that it would puzzle anybody to wipe off, scratch out, or disentangle. I feel quite sick and disheartened sometimes with what I see and hear, for my practice is amongst some of the poorer classes in a not too salubrious part of London.

If you ask me what I would do, and how I would stop it, I confess at once that I am obliged to say I don't know. It is beyond me altogether.

I don't think people, as a rule, know much about a doctor's life. I mean that of a general practitioner. He is a man with whom they have as little to do as they can, never taking their human pot to be mended until they have tried to tinker it themselves, and made it worse—a man to whom they fly at the last extremity to save them, and, if he is able to do so, to whom they talk with the most exaggerated expressions of gratitude and then too often neglect to pay his bill till they are absolutely obliged—that is, if they pay it at all.

But to go back to what I was saying. I am not a teetotaler; on the contrary, I look upon wine, beer, and spirits as valuable things in their way—blessings, if you like to make them so; curses, if you use them wrongly—but, seeing what I see day by day, and knowing what I know, I am ready to forgive any extravagance on the part of the most red-hot temperance advocate, and to forswear anything in the shape of intoxicating drink to the end of my days.

But the next minute reason seems to say there are a score of things one might forswear because people carry their use to excess, and so one gets into the way of looking upon this evil as a problem.

As I said before, I don't think people know much, as a rule, about a doctor's life, nor, save when it is brought home to them, about disease. When they do give the latter a thought at some sickly time, they think it very terrible that human beings should be so afflicted, and say what a blessing health is; but they never think, perhaps because they do not know, that nearly every ailment with which the doctor has to deal is not an infliction, but directly or indirectly self-produced. I mean that nearly all sufferings are brought on by man himself, and cannot be laid at Nature's door.

For instance, it is rarely that you can blame Nature for our accidents. A great many of our complaints are due to carelessness and ignorance. Many more are due to recklessness; but above all, what will you say when I tell you that it is proved by careful observation that, setting aside excess and its consequences, the numbers who suffer from its ills, and who drag on weary unhealthy lives, at least 120,000 persons die every year from too much drink.

These are figures that can be proved, we know this. How many more die from this horrible excess, directly and indirectly, Heaven only knows.

Now pray do not run away with the idea that I am writing you a teetotal lecture. Nothing of the kind. I am trying to give you a plain matter-of-fact glance at one of the most glaring spots in our social system—a state of affairs with which a medical man is only too familiar, and with which he is helpless to deal. Drunkenness in a man is bad enough, in all conscience, and one often wonders how a sentient human being can so degrade himself, be so selfish, and, what is worse, inflict such sufferings on those by whom he is surrounded, in the shape of misery and disease, and whether he will ever awaken to the fact that he, by his example, is answerable for that far more degraded form of drunkenness in our midst—that amongst women.

It is of no use to blink the fact—that this horrible form of drunkenness exists amongst us to an extent that is absolutely appalling;

whilst its consequences in misery, violent disease, and death are almost incalculable.

Ask any medical man who practises in a densely-populated part of London what he thinks of Sunday as a day of rest, and he will shrug his shoulders, laugh, and tell you it is his hardest day, for most likely his work will begin about one o'clock in the morning, and if he is called up then, he knows the reason why. It is generally some accident or seizure due to drink.

Taking my own case. One day I was fetched out of bed by a pretty neat-looking little woman, evidently one who had been a better-class servant, married to some young workman. She was wild-eyed and excited, and implored me to make haste or it would be too late. Her poor husband had come home about an hour before.

"Well, and what's the matter?"

"He has fallen down in a fit, sir, and can hardly get his breath. Pray, pray come!"

"I'll be with you in a minute," I said, and I went down to where she was waiting for me, and I had hard work to keep up with the poor thing till we reached their neat lodgings, where I found a sturdy young fellow of about eight-and-twenty breathing stertorously on the floor.

It was only what I expected, but the poor girl had been deceived by the appearances. He was in a fit, certainly; and the young wife was in agony, and looked indignantly at me when, rather crossly, I told her to take off his neckerchief and unbutton his shirt collar, and then let him sleep himself sober.

Poor thing! she came to a more worldly pitch of knowledge later.

"But he's in a fit, sir—I'm sure he's in a fit," she said, angrily.

"Tush! my good woman; do you think I don't know? There, feel in his pockets, and see how much of his week's wages has been spent."

She was down upon her knees by my side, and her eyes flashed at me in retort for my—I will confess—rather brutal speech, but please recollect it is not nice to be fetched out of your warm bed on a wintry night to attend a dying man, and then to find him only wallowing in his drunkenness, like a pig in his sty.

She was about to thrust her hand into his pocket to prove that I was wrong; but she snatched her hand back proudly, as if she would not stoop to do such a mean act, gazed down at her husband, and then, a peculiar change coming over her pale face, she looked up piteously at me, and then her head went down in her hands, and she crouched there sobbing as if her young heart would break.

One gets rather hardened as a medical man, seeing so many troubles as we do, but I felt moved by her grief, and, instead of going away directly, I put her husband in an easier position before I turned to go.

"Come, come," I said, "you must not fret about it. Try and bring him a little more to his senses when he wakes, and you must wean him from such habits. You never saw him drunk before?"

"Oh, no, sir; never," she cried. I've seen tipsy men reeling in the streets, but I never saw anyone before like this. I'm very, very sorry, sir."

"Oh, never mind," I said, for the irritation had gone off, and I was interested in the poor girl. "Anyone might make such a mistake. The police do often, and, worse still, they think some people who really are in fits are drunk. There, you must coax him home, and keep him from ever doing this again. A good home is the best rival to a public-house."

"I'll try, sir," she said, with her lip quivering, as she lighted me down stairs, and after looking back at her handsome young troubled face, I went home wondering who would be the conqueror—

the wife or the bad habit. The chances were in favour of the latter, for it had managed to get the start.

My next visit to the Lester's lodgings was about a year afterwards. Both John Lester and his wife had come to my surgery at times for advice over little ailments, but now the man was seriously ill, and the wife fetched me, telling me that her husband was on his club and had the club doctor, but she was not satisfied. I, however, saw what was the matter, and that the medical man in attendance was doing the best under the circumstances, and declined to interfere.

It was a self-inflicted disease, brought on by drink, and a glance round the place told me that the first fits of drunkenness must have been followed by a great deal more, for the room had lost its neatness, so had the wife, and the soft, innocent, girlish look was no longer in her face.

They changed their lodgings pretty often, and sometimes the husband's work took him to a distant part of the town, but they always came back to the same district, and somehow that first visit seemed to have given Mrs. Lester confidence in me, for whenever anything was wrong in their family she always came to me.

Five years had wrought great changes in both the young people, as well as in their home. They had four children now, and, in place of the nice, neat-looking parlour-maid sort of a body, Mrs. Lester had developed into one of those unpleasant-looking London women who dress fashionably in a slatternly way, have high-pitched voices, and upon whose cheeks an unnatural flush appears.

Calls upon me for advice were pretty frequent, and the poor woman used to bewail her lot that her children were such unhealthy little things. The wonder to me was that, with such squalid surroundings, and with such parents, the poor little things existed at all, and not that they were thin, pale, and unnaturally sharp and always ailing.

For it was plain enough to see: force of example, temptation, and the constant desire for something that would counteract the miserable depression brought on by overcrowding and dwelling in vitiated air, had produced the customary effects—the wife followed the husband's lead and drank.

This is no ideal picture; but, unfortunately, one of too many standing out in repulsive colours.

As time went on I attended Lester twice for the mania brought on by drink, but neither these serious illnesses, nor the fact that he must have been able to read plainly in his own face each time he went to the glass, seemed to have the slightest effect, for once a man gets upon the downward road, he seems to lose all energy and the strength of will to check himself, but goes on gliding downward to the precipice at the bottom, lost to all his better feelings, and dreaming of nothing but the miserable gratification of the hour.

(To be continued.)

A CONSECRATED PURSE.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

There is a familiar and somewhat threadbare story about a man who was received into the church by immersion, and it was afterwards said that he "did not get far enough into the water to baptize his purse." This must be the difficulty with a vast number of members in our churches. They have not gone deep enough into self-surrender to their Master to surrender to Him their purse. They give their names to a church-roll; they give a certain countenance to Christianity; we hope that they have given their heart-trust to Him for salvation; but when the claims of Christ are laid

upon their pockets, they all with one consent begin to make excuse. What a set of crimson faces there would be if these stingy professors were obliged to stand up and make their excuses before the whole congregation! Especially among those who rode to church in their carriages, or with those who had given a "swell" party during the week, or those whose wives and daughters blaze out with diamonds?

Let us face the facts. With all the increasing flood tide of financial prosperity, there is no increase in the contribution of the Christian people in this land to directly Christian objects! The managers of our great benevolent institutions will confirm this statement. While the consumption of luxuries is advancing at a rapid pace, there is no growth in the spirit of benevolence. The average annual contribution of all the the evangelical church members to the cause of foreign missions is about *ten cents apiece!* To home missions it is still less. Some of the noblest enterprises of charity are well-nigh starved out. A large number of local institutions and enterprises are only kept afloat by a resort to the pitiful devices of fairs and bazaars, and "pound parties," and divers other dickerings. I am constantly beset to go and lecture for the benefit of this, that, or the other religious "movement," which, having got into the mire of debt, is not able to move at all. Every pastor can give his humiliating testimony in the same direction.

Now there are certain things that I have noted; and probably my brother ministers have made similar observations. One thing I have observed is that the largest proportionate gifts to the Lord's treasury are made by the poor, or by those in very moderate circumstances. I once had a skilful seamstress in my church who gave \$100 a year to the cause of missions. This modest Dorcas did not even attach her name to her generous gifts, and we only found her out by accident. But her Master saw the precious investment which her hard-toiling love was laying up in the "government securities" of heaven. I had another modest member who gave about \$500 annually to our church collection, and yet he lived in the *half* of a small house! One day he said to me that he was "thinking of treating his daughter to a piano." Yet he had just given \$1,500 to a mission chapel. My friend has lately removed to New York and purchased a splendid up-town residence. For it is a fact that the conscientious givers to the Lord are usually prospered in business. The consecrated purse is seldom diminished.

But my friend is now encountering a fresh danger. For the second thing that I have observed is, that when the income increases rapidly, self-indulgence is very apt to increase with it. A growing income brings with it strong temptations to launch out into fine houses, showy equipage, extended business, and the pomps and vanities. Up in the rarified atmosphere of prosperity the spirit of consecration is apt to wither away. It has been a sad, sad day for many Christians when they grew rich. Mammon crowded Christ out, and they began to secrete their "wedge of gold" under the tent of selfishness. It requires no small grace to "get up in the world," and yet rise in heart-holiness at the same time. For as long as the heart beats strong and warm for Jesus, the purse will flow freely in gifts of charity. One of the fruits of a genuine revival is an increase in Christly benevolence. The present low condition of the Lord's treasuries is one of the most unerring evidences of the low condition of piety in the churches.

The most bountiful givers are the systematic givers—like Ripley Cobb, of Boston, and Arthur Tappan, of New York, who were the pioneers in the di-