

Who Slew Douglas?

WILLIAM JAMISON DOUGLAS is known to the readers of the Democrat under the title of the Scottish Proseman. Educated at the Glasgow University and possessing remarkable natural power, both physical and mental, he became a leader amongst his fellows. Those of his friends who were best acquainted with his abilities formed great expectations of his usefulness. With remarkable unselfishness he devoted his powers to exposing injustice and expressing his heartfelt sympathy with suffering humanity. His style of writing enabled him to obtain engagements on some of the first literary publications of the day, but he gave most of his time to publications which he held to be useful rather than profitable. He sought the interest of the people rather than personal profit.

At the commencement of the present year he came to London, in order to follow the profession of literature under more favorable circumstances than in his native town. Here he was soon surrounded with a host of personal friends, for literary Londoners are quick to appreciate genius, and keenly enjoyed the warm-hearted good nature with which, in this instance, it was accompanied.

He had not, however, been many weeks in the metropolis before he was struck down by a sudden attack of erysipelas of such a severe type that he had to be removed at once to St. Thomas's Hospital, there to undergo a severe struggle for life.

For some days the issue was uncertain, and for many weeks he remained in a critical and painful condition, but still in the enjoyment of mental faculties of fascinating power. He always had a remarkable capacity for exciting sympathy, and both in and out of the hospital he found friends who devoted themselves throughout his illness to providing every possible alleviation. For about ten weeks he remained in the William Ward as a paying patient, preferring, as he said, the company of other patients to the comparative seclusion to which he would have been subjected if he had removed to the ward where paying patients are usually received. After about ten weeks he left the hospital with his arm still in a sling, and often very painful, and attempted to resume his literary engagements.

He had undertaken to write for the Democrat a series of pamphlets on subjects of popular interest and importance, and this engagement, which his illness interrupted, he was anxious to complete. It soon, however, became apparent that he had lost the power of self-control. His friends were obliged to warn him of the danger of his condition, and to urge him to take such steps as were obviously necessary to save himself from destruction. He did not resent the warning, but, on the contrary, admitted the necessity for it, and not only expressed his willingness but his desire to give up those habits, which were leading him to ruin.

It was not difficult in his case to name inducements to self-control. With wealth and ability at his command, what might not life have been to him! He recognized this, he earnestly desired to live, and to live a life worthy of a man. He knew and felt not only what he might become, but he realized also the horror of the abyss into which he had fallen. He said, it will be easy for me to reform, for I am so disgusted with what I have suffered that drink and dissipation have lost their fascination; their power over me is gone, and you need have no apprehension for the future. I warned him not to underestimate the power of his foe. Thousands had been ruined after experiencing the horror which he had expressed and felt as he felt an earnest desire to reform. He wished me to take from him a written promise that he would never again touch alcoholic liquors, and this promise, I believe, he kept for some weeks. During the few days that followed he regained in a wonderful degree a fresh and youthful appearance, but within a fortnight the haggard look returned, and when I called attention to his condition he declared that he had kept his pledge of total abstinence, which, he said, nothing would induce him to break after the sufferings he had undergone. But he got worse instead of better, and yet there was no smell of alcohol about him, and he still declared himself a total abstainer therefrom. After a while he told me that the demon which held him in chains at that moment was not alcohol but opium, and explained that he commenced the habit of taking this drug about three years previously at the instigation of a very friendly friend who had great influence over him, and whom he even now greatly respected.

Of course, he promised that this indulgence should be stopped, and I engaged every consideration I could engage to strengthen his declared resolve. Instead of giving up opium, he again took to drink, and on my meeting him

one day in a state of semi-intoxication, he said that his arm was so painful that it was to be amputated forthwith and arrangements had been made for the purpose of the operation. I saw that he was so far gone that it would be absolutely necessary for some one to be with him from this time. He replied, "I will do anything to reform myself and submit to any restriction which can be imposed."

Knowing that he had many devoted friends in London, I asked him who could undertake his care, and he replied that Father Hicks, of St. George's, would probably allow one of the brothers to take charge of him. I then determined not to leave him until he was in the safest keeping that could be provided, and therefore, after getting some dinner together, we saw Father Hicks, and in the presence of Douglas I explained the case, and that it was his own desire to have a companion to assist him to resist the temptation to take drugs and stimulants. Father Hicks expressed his great regret that he could not meet his wishes, as all the brothers at St. George's were fully occupied, and not one could be spared from his pressing duties. At the suggestion of Douglas, we then went to St. Thomas's Hospital, hoping that he might again be received into that institution, or that the services of a doctor might be obtained for his assistance. It was then 8 p.m., and at that hour no one was found at the hospital who had power to act in such a case. I then proposed that we should go to Mr. Metcalfe's hydropathic establishment at Paddington, and, to my surprise, Douglas readily assented to this. Mr. Metcalfe kindly undertook the case on condition that Douglas would not leave the house. This promise he made and kept for some days, during which he greatly improved, and Mr. Metcalfe seemed to be hopeful of final success, although he said not one-half of such cases are ultimately saved.

After two or three weeks Mr. Douglas left the establishment much better than he entered it, and we were not without hope; but day after day he promised to send copy that he had arranged for, and day after day it did not come. One morning I had a telegram from Biggleswade:—"You shall have copy tomorrow."

Still the copy did not come. On the last day of July I received a letter from Douglas addressed to me at Hull, and which had been forwarded from thence unopened. It was as follows:

[copy.] "My dear Mr. Saunders,—This letter is purposely sent to you in a roundabout way when you get it there will be no such person as he who signs it. "I find that I have only one escape from alcohol—in my grave. Better hell than the public house. "I know that I may ask you to do for me what little business I have left undone. "I do not dare write to my wife. May God help her and forgive me. It is better that she should break her heart now and at once than live to be the wife of a drunkard. When I married her I thought I could reform, but I cannot. Drink holds me in iron chains. "Since I was a boy all my life has been a battle between myself and the demon alcohol. Alcohol has won. Therefore, for the last time I write myself, faithfully yours, "W. J. DOUGLAS."

"WHY I DIE." "I find that I must die. It is only right to say why and how. What kills me? Drink is my murderer. I might have been something—I might have done something—but for drink. I have married a woman who in every thought and action is an angel of God's own angels. I am related and indebted to other women who live only to help the helpless. In justice to them I must die. They must not be connected with a drunkard. "There are some who have in many matters allowed me to lead them. Let me ask them one last favor. Drink has slain me; let them take vengeance on the drink traffic—let them help to drive that destroyer of soul and body from this land. "I can say no more, and wonder I have said so much. Drink has only done me one good turn in all my life, it has at this last and awful moment enabled me to tell the truth about drink. "W. J. DOUGLAS."

On receiving this letter I communicated with the doctor at St. Thomas's Hospital, and with the police at Scotland yard. Neither could suggest any further action.

Two days later a messenger came to my house with a note from Douglas, which was as follows:

"14 Upper Marsh. "Dear Mr. Saunders,—I am yet alive, and, please God, I will try to live. I have been wandering up and down the country, eating nothing and sleeping in the open air. Three times I tried to do the deed, and three times failed. The hand of Providence seemed to be against me. "At last as I lay under a tunnel with my head in agony, a great feeling came upon me of how weak, how cowardly, was what I was doing. I rose, and giving away my last shilling to a beggar in case I might be tempted to spend it in drink, I set out for London, walking all the way from St. Albans. Of the horrors of that tramp I cannot speak. "Now, all this has done one thing. It has cured me of the taste and passion for drink. Drink is water with the Devil's soul in it. "I am giving myself a last chance. Can and will you help me? If hard work and faithful service can make up for what is past, these shall be yours. If you cannot—I do

expect you can—well, fate is fate. Do not come to me, but write. For a day or two I cannot endure to look on human faces.—I am yours, "W. J. DOUGLAS."

The next day I went to Upper Marsh, and found him in a desponding condition, but yet expressing a determination to pull through.

Then for the first time I learned the particulars of his marriage. His wife was a nurse, who had been trained at the Midway Institute, and had been more than six years at the hospital, from which, after her marriage, she discharged herself. The marriage took place during her holidays, and with the approval of her friends, whom Douglas went to visit when he sent me a telegram about a supply of copy.

There were still some grounds for hope. Douglas had ceased to feel that spirit of self-confidence which is always fatal in such cases, and it was possible that the influence of his wife might assist him to recover.

Those, however, who had more experience than myself in such matters said without hesitation, "It is a hopeless case; Douglas can no more reform himself than a prisoner can escape from Newgate."

On taking up the Pall Mall Gazette of August 25, I saw the following paragraph—

"SUPPOSED TO HAVE POISONED HIMSELF.—Last night Mrs. Butler, the landlady of 44, Upper Marsh, Lambeth, attended at the Kennington-road Police-station and informed the authorities there that she had not seen or heard anything of her lodger (whose bedroom door was locked) since early the previous morning, and she feared that something was wrong. Inspector Garland and another police constable proceeded to the house in question, and upon forcing the door open found the man, whose name is believed to be William Douglas, lying on his bed dead. A half-pint bottle labelled "Laudanum" was found by the deceased's bedside."

Here then was the end. At the inquest held on his remains the jury returned a verdict of "Death from misadventure through an overdose of laudanum."

The facts of this dreadful story are told in fulfilment of the commission which Douglas imposed upon me.

His case is only one of thousands which occur where young men enter upon a life full of promise and fall victims to the temptations by which they are surrounded. Surely a slave, "butchered to make a Roman holiday,"

is not a more shameful and distressing spectacle than a free-born Briton tempted to his ruin for the profit and amusement of his fellows.

Douglas came into the world without a taste for alcohol. Nature with all her severity is not so unkind as to supply that. The taste was possibly imparted to him with his mother's milk. The temptation was sold to him in order to profit by a few shillings those who are loath to supply it.

He was goaded to a continuance of the indulgence long after he saw his danger, and earnestly desired to reform himself, by companions whom he supposed to be friends.

The question returns, Who slew Douglas?

Was it his mother by mixing alcohol with his milk?

Was it the publican who tempted him for the profit of a few pence?

Was it the bar-maid who tittered when he was tipsy and did not refuse to hand him the fatal draught?

Was it the distiller who made the drink, and became a legislator on the enormous profits which he realized?

Was it the tutor and professor who first recommended the fatal fascination?

Was it his friend who drank with him and ridiculed his efforts to rescue himself?

One thing is certain, that a heavy responsibility rests with the doctors who ordered Douglas 4oz of brandy daily when he was brought to the hospital suffering from the effects of drink.

Douglas is gone beyond our praise and blame. But the causes of his degradation and death remain, and are doing the same work. Christian men and women continue to sanction laws and customs while they see the fatal consequences as plainly as they see the serpent's coil in the Laocoon. Not one intelligent person drinks because he is in the long run better or stronger for doing so. Science and experience alike demonstrate the contrary. We pray to be delivered from temptation, but do not endeavor to keep from it, and we continue to press it on others after we know that they see their own danger and are vainly endeavoring to save themselves.—William Saunders in the Temperance Record.

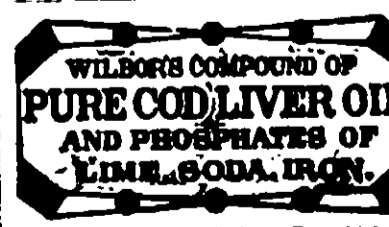
Q. What is the difference between voting to license a saloon and voting for a political party which favors the licensing of saloons? A. We do not know.—Lecser.

Sleeping Apartments.

SOME great writer has remarked: "It must not be forgotten that we spend a considerable portion of our lives in the bed chamber, and, therefore, its healthfulness cannot fail to have a very important bearing upon our physical well being." Everybody, indeed, who is actuated by a due regard for health and real comfort, will consider an equal degree of attention necessary in giving attention to the size, situation, temperature, and cleanliness of the apartment he occupies during the hours of repose as of the parlor, drawing-room, or any other apartment, and yet how very often do we find families crowded at night into obscure and confined chambers, of dimensions scarcely more ample than those of an old-fashioned closet, while, perhaps, in the majority of instances, the best rooms in the whole house are set apart for the sole purpose of ostentatious display. Now it is very important that the largest and most elevated room, or rooms, upon the second floor of the dwelling, be appropriated for the purpose of sleeping, and that the same be properly ventilated during all seasons of the year.

There are few houses, the rooms of which are so situated as to render good ventilation impossible, and the influence of this practice upon the health of inmates is too important to permit being neglected from any slight cause. A bed-chamber should be divested of all unnecessary furniture, and unless of considerable size, should never contain more than one bed. There cannot be a more pernicious custom than that pursued by some, indeed, by many, families of having their children sleep in small apartments, with two, and sometimes three, beds, and crowded into the same room. It is scarcely necessary to observe that cleanliness, in the most extensive signification of the term, is, if possible, even more necessary with reference to the bed-chamber than with almost any other apartment in the whole house. The practice of sleeping in a room which is occupied during the day-time is extremely unwise. Perfect cleanliness and sufficient free ventilation cannot, under such circumstances, be preserved, especially during cold weather; hence the atmosphere becomes constantly more vitiated, and altogether unfit for respiration. While too great a degree of caution cannot be observed to avoid sleeping in damp rooms, beds, or clothing, the temperature of the bed-chamber, if possible, should never be increased, under the ordinary circumstances of health, by artificial means. As this apartment is to be reserved solely for sleeping, a fire is never necessary, excepting, possibly, during extreme cold weather, and, even then, temperature ought not to exceed fifty degrees.

A sleeping apartment, in which a heavy fire has been kept for several hours prior to retiring, may to some persons at first thought, offer great comfort. But, right here, great danger is very liable to occur, since by heating the room to such an extent as has been referred to the system becomes greatly enervated, creating an increased susceptibility to the influence of the cold air, and thus the way is opened to the attack of some of the most serious diseases, especially of the throat and lungs. Happy, indeed, should those persons esteem themselves whose means forbid an indulgence in the form of luxury! A person accustomed to undress in a room without a fire, and to seek repose in a cold bed, will not experience the least inconvenience, even in the severest of winter weather. The natural heat of the body will very speedily render a person, under such circumstances, even more comfortable than he or she will be who sleeps in a heated apartment, as experience has amply verified. But this is not all. The constitution of the one accustomed to sleeping in a room which is not artificially heated will be rendered more robust and strong, and far less susceptible to the influence of atmospherical vicissitudes, than the person who is not so accustomed to sleep.—George Nevill Lovejoy in Good Home-keeping.



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