

# ALEXANDER McBAIN, B.A.

## I

### WHAT IS MAN?

**H**E was young and slender, almost gentlemanly-looking, as he reeled through our village streets, bumping against our tall, queenly maples, and occasionally falling prone among the grasses and weeds that skirted the narrow plank sidewalk. He had become a familiar sight to most of us, and we had stopped passing remarks, and simply looked at the swaying young figure with a lowering of the brows, or perhaps a feeling of depression about the heart, but to strangers the painful story of his life had to be told over and over again.

To the question often carelessly asked, "Who is that young fellow making a snake fence across the sidewalk?" we would reply in an abashed voice, although, as any of the villagers would have told you, we were not "temperance," and would have considered anyone who advanced "teetotal" ideas fanatical in the extreme.