

THE CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE.

TEMPERANCE IS THE MODERATE USE OF THINGS BENEFICIAL, AND ABSTINENCE FROM THINGS HURTFUL.

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Selected Articles.

Fool's Pence.

In a town not many miles south of the border, there dwelt a man who was by trade a mechanic, and who was the father of seven children. For sixteen years he had never wanted employment (when he chose to work,) and his earnings averaged from thirty shillings to two pounds a week. But with a number of associates he was in the habit of attending, daily and nightly, what they termed their houses of call. In the morning, as he went to his labour, he could not pass it without having what he termed his "nipper," or what some of the good people of Scotland call their "morning," which, being interpreted, meant a glass of gin, rum, or whisky. At mid-day he had to give it another call, and to pass it on his return at night was out of the question. Sometimes and not unfrequently when he called for his "nipper" in the morning, he sat down—in a room which had two windows, looking east and west,—and forgot to rise until, after he had seen from the one window the sun rising, he beheld it set from the other. But it was the force of habit—it had grown in upon him, as he said, and what could the poor man do. He beheld his wife broken-hearted, going almost in rags, and their affection had changed into bickerings and reproaches. His children, too, were half-starved, ill-clad, and un-schooled; and for what education they got, he thought not of paying the schoolmaster—he felt nothing in hand for his money, and therefore could not see the force of the debt. But the poor man could not help it. It was true he earned about two pounds a week, but which way the money went he could not tell. He did not, as he thought, deserve the reproaches of his wife. His "morning" was only fourpence, his call at mid-day the same, and his evening pipe and glass a shilling or eighteen-pence—that, he thought was nothing for a man working so hard as he did—and when he did take a day now and then, he said that was not worth reckoning, for his clay could not keep together without moisture; and as for the glass or two which he took on a Sunday, why, they were not worth mentioning. Thus he could see no cause for the unhappiness of his wife, the

poverty of his house, and the half-nakedness of his family. He had to "do as other people did, or he might leave their society," and he attributed all to bad management somewhere, but not on his part. On Sunday morning he had lingered in their house of call rather longer than his companions, and he was sitting there when the churchwardens and parish-officers went their rounds, and came to the house. To conceal him from them there, and avoid the penalty, "Tom," said the landlady, "here be the wardens a comin'. If they find thee here, lad, or meet thee gon' out, thou wilt be fined and me too, and it may give my hoose a bad name. Coom up stairs, and I will show thee through the hoose, while they examine the tap and the parlour."

So saying, Tom, the mechanic, followed the hostess from room to room, wondering at what he saw, for the furniture, as he said to himself, was like a nobleman's, and he marvelled how such things could be; and while he did so, he contrasted the splendour he beheld around him with the poverty and wretchedness of his own garret. And after showing him through several rooms, she at last, with a look of importance, ushered him into what she called the *drawing-room*—but now-a-days, drawing-rooms have become as common as gooseberries, and every house with three rooms and a kitchen has one.—Poor Tom, the mechanic, was amazed as he beheld the richly coloured and fancy-figured carpet, he was afraid to tread on it,—and, indeed he was told to clean his feet well before he did so. But he was more astonished when he beheld a splendid mirror, with a brightly gilded and carved frame, which reached almost from the ceiling to the floor, and in which he beheld his person covered with his worn-out and un-holiday-like habiliments, from top to toe, though they were his only suit. Yet more was he amazed when the ostentatious mistress of the house opening what appeared to him a door in the wall, displayed to him rows of shining silver plate. He raised his eyes, he lifted his hands—"Lack! Ma'am!" says he, "how do you get all these mighty fine things?"

And the landlady laughing at his simplicity said, "Why, lad, by fools' pennies, to be sure."

But the words "fools' pennies" touched his heart as if a sharp instrument had pierced it, and he thought unto himself, "I am one of those fools," and he turned away and left the house with the words written upon his conscience; and, as he went, he made a vow unto himself, that until that day twelve months he would neither enter the house he had left, nor any other house of a similar description—but that on that day twelve months he would visit it again. When he went home, his wife was surprised at his home-coming, for it was seldom he returned during the day. He had two shillings left, and taking them from his pocket, he gave them to one of his daughters, desiring her to go out and purchase a quarter loaf, and a quantity of tea, coffee, sugar, and butter. His wife was silent with wonder. He took her hand, and said, "Why thou seemest to wonder at me, ould lass; but I tell thee what, I had a lesson this mornin' that I shan't forget, and when thou findest me throwing away even a penny again, I will give thee liberty to call me by any name thou likes."

His wife was astonished, and his family were astonished, and in the afternoon he took down the neglected and dust-covered bible, and read a chapter aloud; though certainly not from any correct religious feeling. But he had formed the resolution to reform, and he had learned enough to know that reading his bible was a necessary and excellent helper towards the accomplishment of his purpose. It was the happiest Sabbath his family had ever spent, and his wife said that even on her wedding Sunday she was not half so happy.

But, the day twelve months from that on which he had seen the splendid furniture, the rich carpet, the gorgeous mirror, and the costly plate, arrived. It was a summer morning, and he requested his wife and children to dress before seven o'clock. During the last twelve months his wife and his children had found it a pleasure to obey him, and they did so readily. He took the arm of his wife in his, and each of them led a younger child by the hand, while the elder walked hand in hand before them, and they went on until they came unto his former house of call, and standing opposite to it he said to his wife, "Now, ould woman, thou