

THE DEMON OF INTEMPERANCE.

As earnestly and sincerely as we revere our noble and honorable art, and esteem and respect its votaries, do we deplore the plain, too true and terrible fact, that the best, most talented, warmest and noblest hearted, those who are more than usually endowed with the qualities which, when cultivated aright, would make a bright and honorable record, the very brightest and best of our profession, are too much addicted to habits of intoxication, and far too often votaries of the flowing bowl; and feeling a deep personal interest, as we do, not only in our chosen profession or art, but in all its brotherhood, we most earnestly hope our brother printers, who have been and are unfortunate in this particular, will listen to an appeal which comes from our inmost heart, and which at least is sincere; and if it but sets one among our many friends to thinking, and checks him on a downward career, we shall have our reward.

It has long been a mystery to us, and deep almost as our regret, that this demon of intemperance should prevail to so great an extent among printers and, we must add, too often the best of them. To them, more than any other class, the changing kaleidoscope of the times—the mirror of passing events—is ever held up, and all the insane infatuation, the ghastliness, sorrow, misery and horrible deaths (that follow excess as certainly as the shadow does the sun) are hourly pictured. If they would, they could not but see the terrible record—could not shut their eyes to passing events, and the dread cause. It is in almost every history of crime they reproduce, in almost every piece of "copy," in almost every stickful of type they compose, in almost every "proof" they correct, and so it is and must be a wonder to every thinking man that no good "impression" is left by its constant recurrence, no deep warning given that they dare not but heed.

Printers, from the very necessity of their occupation, know more of daily events than any others. Crime is ever presented to them in its most revolting and startling forms, in its most loathsome and hideous repugnance; and why, in the name of high heaven, they should continue to squander wages, health and souls, in the manner they do, at the bestial shrine of RUM, is more than the most erudite scholar can fathom. Verily it would seem true in their case, as the old writer has it,

"Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad."

It would seem at this late day, when the map of this continent is everywhere stained by human blood—blood shed by men while under the baneful influence of intoxicating drinks—as if it would be unnecessary to call the attention of the very men who aid in spreading the painful and horrid news, to the fact that, alas! they, too, might soon become the actors in some counterpart to the terrible tragedy. The prisons groan, the courts are crowded, and the gallows rope is ever swinging into eternity some wretched victim, like poor Williams at Toronto, who said, while gazing on it, "It was whiskey that brought me here!" Alas, was he not, are we not all hastening fast enough to solve the problem of the future, which lies beyond that bourne from whence no traveller e'er returns? and have we not the natural ills of life enough to bear this side, but we must "put an enemy in our mouths to steal away our brains!"

The death of a drunkard is often—sad that we should have to say so!—a blessing. It is his life, his example, more than his sudden "taking off" which is a curse to his fellows, to his suffering wife and children, and a reproach to them who love him best, and the good and virtuous everywhere. Grim, gaunt starvation sits by his fireless hearthstone, ignorance brutally broods there, disease laughs while it clutches its shuddering victims, misery in every form, and shame personified, hides among the rags, and the seeds of crime sown in his perverted soul

spring up to blast and destroy the angel instincts of his nature and lead him on to crime, disgrace and punishment here and hereafter, to sell his body and soul—the hopes of the present and the yearning aspirations of the future—yes, his very last money, which should buy bread for himself, wife or starving offspring.

But the home of the drunkard has been pictured far too often, and by more skillful pencils, to need drawing again in all its hideous and heaven-forsaken surroundings. And who is to blame for the never-to-be-enumerated misery and sin and sorrow? Is it society? Granted that the social element has very much to answer for. Yet with the individual man only and alone rests the curse and the cure, outside of help from high heaven. You can not safely lay the blame, or any of it, on society, bad as it is. That is beyond the ken of public opinion, and curse the cause as you may, with all the thunders of eloquence, no justice can ever be found in that regard. The drunkard alone is the culprit who will be tried, and upon whose undefended head the punishment will be meted. And more, that same society behind which he would shield himself will be the first to condemn, and the vendors of the "liquid damnation" be the quickest to kick him out of doors when his purse becomes empty, and the most remorseless in their hatred and oppression, even though they have made of him a beggar, and his wife and children starving paupers.

But, to return for a moment to the starting point, it is beyond human (and even, if possible, divine) comprehension how those whose hourly business it is to put into type all the deep damnation and heart-sickening details caused by drinking—before whose eyes it is ever foully blazoned—whose clicking type warn the world as with the tongues of angels—should madly follow in the same footsteps? If ignorance was any—even the most trivial—excuse, they, of all the world, would have the least to plead.

To say nothing of its moral importance or degradation, the merely animal portion of our nature revolts at drunkenness, and punishment follows swift and sure on the heels of indulgence. The hand becomes unsteady, the eye untruthful, and its angel-light dimmed forever, and the head unfitted to carry out the dictates of the Art, of which every printer should be proud—for it is no idle boast to say it is preserver and greatest of all. He who forgets himself to-night in the giddy, evanescent, pleasurable excitement of the hour, can not do his duty to-morrow; while oft-repeated potations bring with them the inevitable loss of confidence on the part of the employer—ends in loss of work or his "sit;" then follows loss of self-respect, crushed pride, and vain and futile regrets, shame, poverty, suffering, the prison, and the pauper's or the suicide's grave. Aesthetically speaking, this is the worst of curses to the printing office, for it mars the first law of the universe—order; detracts from the subtle shapes and realizations of beauty; makes chaos of correctness; mocks at time and punctuality; multiplies mistakes, accidents, and consequent cost; puts falsehoods in the lips of those who should ever be truthful; strikes at the very root of success, and weaves the flaunting flag of the sheriff, that will one day hang from the door.

And, remembering this: Nature never gave to any man so foul and poisoned a draught; never held any cup of intoxication to his lips. The drink she furnishes is as harmless as the air—

"Sparkling and bright in its liquid light."

Search ye among a thousand hills, and no such distillation can be found. No "maddening draughts of Hippocrene" are ever given by her for human infatuation, remorse and guilt. No "bowl" that has been cursed from its very inception, can ever bring to the parched lips of humanity the nectar that comes up rippling in diamond dew-drops from the

"Old Oaken Bucket that hung in the well."

But it is the invention of the Devil, and the fires that burn under its seething kettles are fed from the sulphurous flames of hell! Is this strong language? Would that we had the power to make every word

a thousandfold more so—that they could be made, literally, to burn into the very hearts of some whom we love and for whom we tremble—and others; but more especially of those whose fingers manipulate the type, and throw off sheets like snowflakes from the press. If we write strongly, we feel so, for we have not been exempt, in many and very painful ways, from the dire effects of the demon—red-throated as the wolf, and black-hearted as the Modoc! We have seen more than one noble soul, dear and good heart, and much-loved friend, the tendrils of whose friendship were wound around our heart-strings, succumb to this fell destroyer; and even as we write, we shudder in very soul when we think that now—even now—there are those who stand in the same danger, and who, in yielding to the blandishments of unthinking youth, or the seductive charms of "society" and "fashion," would inevitably follow the other dear ones down to the dark grave, in which they would also bury all our happiness as well, and which may a merciful father forefend! It is more than time that the Press should awaken to its dignity and philanthropy in this matter, and write upon all its door-plates: "He who enters here must leave intemperance behind."

There is one idea, we need scarcely say in passing, a foolish, senseless one, to touch upon. It is of that (so-called) independence, the right to drink or not, just as you please! and just as if you could do it, after once being caught in the toils of King Alcohol! This, we repeat, is not sense, but the most gross stupidity and nonsense. The drunkard has no independence—he parted with it long since, sold his birth-right for the accursed cup. Resistance to evil is the only true independence, letting the leas of disease and death severely alone, the only true manhood. The strongest will, the most gifted genius, the highest physical formation, the clearest reason, have alike fallen victims to the delusion (monomania) of independence! for the curse spares none. Independence in drinking means Total Abstinence, and nothing else! All the rest are the false figments of a brain warped and beclouded, of nerves unstrung, or conscience blunted, the wild and insane waving of hands that are digging their own graves.

Printers—Brothers! we beg—we implore—we pray you to crush, at once and forever, this monster, before you are enveloped in its folds. We beg you by the great names in our Art; we implore you for your own sake; we pray you for your wives and little ones; for the noble old sire, tottering down to the grave; for the white-haired mother, who cuddled you to her bosom; for the sweet sister, whose fair name you are staining with shame; for the younger brother, to whom you should be a guide and an example, break asunder the silken cord, or new golden chain, which will soon bind your free limbs in fetters stronger than steel; dash down the golden cup all gemmed with the sparkling wine, for in each drop it holds lurks the more than deadly poison, as it not only poisons the body but kills the soul—at once and forever! Be a man! Standing breast high among your fellows; and gaze without blanching in conscious guilt or unmanly fear, into the eyes which sparkle at your coming, and as steadfastly as does the eagle on the blazing sun; stand firm and fearless in your liberty and rectitude! Long enough—oh! how much too long already, has the stain rested upon the followers of the mighty spirits in whose brain flashed, as if from the central fire of heaven, the inspiration of PRINTING! Drag not that down, if indeed you are totally lost to self-honor. Its aims are too high, its teachings too pure, its banner too fairly blazoned to be trailed in the dust! Every principle of manhood revolts at such a degradation. Every one who has the good of the craft at heart will turn resolutely away from temptation.

Our space is limited, but our desire to do good in this respect, or in any other in which we may benefit our common calling, is endless. But have we not said enough? Is there any possible need for more words? Could we add to what the Press sends broadcast hourly over the land? De Quincey wrote upon "Murder as a Fine Art." Has not intoxication reduced it to something even more fine—more terribly subtle than ever he dreamed of?

But we forbear, hopefully trusting that the veil of