

TEMPERANCE COMLUN. THE POWER OF HABIT.

A Temperance Discourse, by Rev. W. H. H. Murray.

"Think on these things."—Phil. iv, 8.

[CONTINUED]

But great as such ruin is, it does not represent the full catastrophe when, by yielding to his drinking habits a man is ruined. And the reason is, because no man rises or falls alone. The elevation and declension of a man is not the elevation and declension of one, but of many. Man stands not isolate, but in the midst of many connections, and is vined all over with dependencies that cling to him, and are upheld by him, and so are made fruitful. I have seen a man stricken by death and felt that the shaft that centered in his heart had transfixed a dozen bosoms in reaching his I have stood over a coffin in which half a village as it were, lay stretched for burial. It is astonishing how much like a trellis a human life can be; how many hearts can twine round one; how many orbs can glow with light reflected from one central sun; how many weak things and lovely things can cling to it.

It is the law of life that men should mate and mingle, and be interwoven with many. Joys and pains are mutual. We cannot keep our own experiences to ourselves. They are not like solid substances, but like volatile elements. They pass their subtle influences into others, and thus they quicken people to a larger life or kill that life they have. You cannot hurt yourself alone, my friend. You cannot sin and take the penalty all to yourself. An innocent one shall divide the punishment with you; and so, in all evil doing, man is doubly cursed: first, in the injury done himself; and second and more yet, in the injury he has brought to some other one. How this may be reconciled with justice I knew not; but the fact I know.

Now, in no other evil course does a man so imperil others as in the formation of drinking habits. If he has a wife, or children, or parents or friends, he brings shame and disgrace to them all. Nor can they protect themselves. We cannot barricade our sensibilities against feeling. We cannot exclude suffering from our hearts when once it has thrust itself in. We are at the mercy of the social and spiritual condition of others, and might as well hope to keep fever from our nostrils when its taint is in the air, as sorrow from our hearts when those we love misbelieve.

Now I submit to all of you, as candid people, if these positions are not well taken; and furthermore I submit to all of you who have formed or are forming drinking habits, whether you have a right to go on imperiling the happiness of so many people as your downfall would destroy. It is not a question of your own condition, but of the condition of others as affected by yours. Your home is now peaceful. Keep it so. Your wife is now happy. Let not that happiness be interrupted. Your children are growing up with an

auspicious future. Let no act of yours darken the sunshine of their day. You are now a support to many. Stand as such until the high purpose of associate life as expressed in you is fulfilled, and you in the solemn course of nature are released from mortal responsibilities. Oh man, whenever you are about to lift the glass, think of those at home! Let the face of mother, of father of wife, of child, of loved one, come between your eyes and the rilling cup. I speak for those who dare not speak for themselves. I throw into my voice the pleading of those whose aching hearts are silent, through dread and grief and the fear of an untried expostulation. I warn you, I plead with you, I beg of you to drink no more, lest you form a habit which has in it the awful victory of death and the sting of the grave.

Do not arm your pride against the prophecy of my speech. Do not draw within yourself and say: 'O there is no danger that I shall ever become a drunkard. I drink to be sure, but I know when to stop.' My friend pardon my plainness, but you talk like a fool. Such talk does not deceive us. Nor does it deceive you. You know that there is danger. You have proof of the danger of your course, and more than once have been frightened at the evidence you have within yourself that you are in peril. Do not shut your eyes to facts, for the facts remain. If you are drinking at all, you are drinking too much, and you know it.

You know the force of an evil habit, for you have already felt the tightening of its folds about you. You stand where every poor drunkard has stood in his downward career. Your feet are already planted in the road which leads to ruin, as were his. He was warned, and laughed at the warning, as you do. He was entreated and was vexed at the entreaty, as you are. He went on. You—well what will you do; go on as he did, or stop short in your course? The significance of destiny is in your answer to that interrogation.

I have alluded to the drunkard. The word is more than a word; it is a picture; a ghastly picture at that; a picture, alas, with which our eyes are too familiar. Let us study the picture a moment. It can teach us lessons in cause and effect; lessons of duty and of love.

[To be continued.]

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