

Temperance Column.

TEMPERANCE TALKS

II. The Effectual Remedy.

By the Rev. CHARLES BULLOCK, B.D., author of "The Temperance Witness Box," &c.

"And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee.—St. Matthew v. 30.

Sharp language this from the lips of love Incarnate. Yet gracious as any words that ever proceeded from the tender and sympathising Saviour. It is no kindness to trifle with men's sins. It is no kindness to call sin "a frailty," and vice in young men a "sowing of wild oats." Sin wears a painted mask—all sin; sin against ourselves, and sin against our brother; but especially sin as it is committed against God. If Satan can assume the form of an "angel of light," sin can disguise itself beneath a garment of light. But let the Divine Convincer of sin turn upon it the light of truth, the lamp of the Bible, and language will fail to describe the revolting spectre, the hideous evil.

Sin is a debt, a burden, a thief, a sickness, a leprosy, a plague, a poison, a serpent, a sting. Beneath its crushing, intolerable pressure, the whole creation groaneth. All sufferings spring from this root, all crime lies at this door. "Sin is the hoary sexton that digs man his grave. Sin is the murderess that destroys his life. Sin is the temptress that steals his virtue. Sin, with icy breath, blights the sweet blossoms of youth, breaks the hearts of parents, and brings grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." Sin makes man in his heart and habits baser than a beast, and him who was once but little lower than an angel but little better than a devil—a spiritual madman. "Man," says James Montgomery—

"Man in the image of his Maker formed,
Man to the image of his tempter fallen!
I saw him sunk in loathsome degradation,
Companion to the brute—himself more brutal."

Can we marvel that God hates sin? Nay, let us rather marvel that God loves the sinner: that redemption has been wrought by the precious blood of Christ: and that now by the power of the Divine Spirit the spiritually lost may be found, and the spiritually dead brought to life again. And if as redeemed ones, taught by the Spirit, we have acquired ourselves an aversion towards sin—towards *our own easily-besetting sin*—let us marvel that the hatred is not more intense; let us marvel that we are so slowly "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord"—so prone to forget a Christian's duty, to abstain for, our own sake and for the sake of others, from even "the appearance of evil."

I have been asked to consider with

you this morning the subject of Intemperance. The very word speaks sadly of human degradation. And yet I think we seldom realise the extent of the drunkard's degradation. There are those who will even smile at the drunkard—they forget his home, or what should be his home, and the broken hearts there! There are those who draw the line at the measure of their own indulgence, lawful it may be: and are not, as they would tell us, *severe* in judging a fellow-creature who has taken "one glass too many."

Brethren, Jesus Christ was "severe:" tenderly, lovingly severe. He was the Good and Wise Physician; and amputation is better than the life endangered by the virulent poison that has entered the hand and is ready to course through the blood to the heart. "If thy right hand," the reader and the dearer of the two, "offend thee," be a "trap-spring," or as it means here "an occasion of stumbling" to thee, "cut it off, and cast it from thee." Be indignantly prompt in dealing with the foe of thy peace, the destroyer of thy communion with God, the peril to thy soul. Act at once, heedless of whatever cost to feeling the act may involve. Strike at the root of the indulgence which threatens to lead thee captive, or has already done so: as well as cut off the occasions which tend to stimulate the indulgence. He who despises the warning to "cast from" him with indignant promptitude an offending member, will find his "whole body" speedily in subjection: "cast," with a retributive promptitude of indignation—the indignation of Divine holiness, perfectly consistent with the intensity of Divine love—into the chains of bondage which are as "hell" to the enslaved and willing victim.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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