

TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE.

DEVOTED TO

TEMPERANCE, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE, NEWS, &c.

Vol. XIII.

MONTREAL, JULY 16, 1847.

No. 14.

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THE TWO PLEDGES.

BY NAHUM FAITHFUL.

The home of Archie Gray was generally the scene of untroubled calmness and serenity. Archie was a reformed man; and since the happy day when he took the pledge, Mary and he had lived in the uninterrupted enjoyment of domestic peace. Was it to be wondered at, then, that a simple-minded and affectionate woman should have taken to the pledge as the temporal deliverer of Archie? Never slave in iron manacles was such an object being as at that time was he. But from the hour when he took the pledge the chains of his thralldom dropped off him, and he walked abroad with the air and the step of a freeman. He no longer deserted the domestic hearth. He no longer chose for his companions the dissolute and the vile. He no longer spent his evenings in making the walls of the Black Bull ring with his bacchanal songs, or his frantic mirth. He no longer treated with cruelty her whom he had vowed at the altar to love as his own life. No! in one important sense the word, Archie Gray, from the moment he took the pledge, was a changed man. He was more gentle, more careful, more affable, and more affectionate in his own house, and to his own family, than he had been before.

We have spoken of the quiet serenity that reigned around the hearth of this household. On an evening, however, in the fall of 1843, that serenity was disturbed. Murmurs of discontent were heard, and sometimes a loud and angry voice, in the dwelling of Archie Gray. Mr. Thompson, an intimate friend of the temperance movement, who took a deep interest in the reclaimed, had that night dropt in upon Archie to see how he was getting on. It so happened that a public dinner of the inhabitants of the village was to be held on the following day in commemoration of an ancient custom, and Archie had been entreated by his companions to attend the dinner party. He wished to go; his wife wished not to go; and this was the subject of the altercation ended to.

"Don't you think, Mr. Thompson," said Mrs. Gray, "that Archie would just be running into the very midst of temptation with his eyes open, if he were to go to that dinner?"

"I do indeed think," replied Mr. Thompson, "that he should not go. His position there will be one of great peril. Temptations will be thickly set before him and around him. The companions of his former follies will be there. He will be urged to taste. He will be gibed, laughed at, and made the butt of ridicule, if he persist in refusing. I think it is best to keep out of harm's way. I tremble for the consequences if he go."

"But," said Archie himself, "several abstainers have bought tickets to the dinner, and why may not I? I will be in their company. We will show our superior principles. We will testify against the drinking customs. We will be a check on those who take their toddy. In one word, we may do much good."

"Archie, I am much afraid you are deluding yourself," replied Mr. Thompson. "For you, who were lately the victim of intemperance, to go to that festive meeting, where mirth and song and wine are to abound, is as if the brand newly plucked from the burning were again to be brought near to the flame. What would be the consequence? It would kindle again in a moment, and burn more fiercely than before; and even those abstainers who have been sober all their days, do not, I think, display a wise policy in going to parties whose hilarity depends on the flowing wine-cup or the toddy bowl."

"What objections have you to their being present at such meetings?" enquired Archie.

"Objections at once numerous and strong," replied Mr. Thompson. "Their influence is thereby destroyed. The world is not careful to make nice discrimination in conduct, and will ever reason, that if abstainers can sit in a drinking company, they may just as well drink themselves. Their professions are laughed at. Men will say, if the evil be such a terrible thing as those fellows make it, how could they sit comfortably in its presence a whole night? Their reproofs go for nothing. To think of reproving men who are getting maddened with the excitement of strong drink, is, to say the least of it, preposterous foolery. Nobody will credit their motives. Who would give a man credit for his motives who sat at the gaming table that he might put down gambling, or in the chair of the scorer, in order that he might discountenance infidelity. All men will be amazed at their conduct. A temperance reformer sitting a live-long night in the midst of a drinking throng! Can opposites agree or extremes meet? They virtually violate the last clause of their pledge. They are pledged to discountenance the causes and practices of intemperance. What are these? What, but the drinking customs! the drinking of toasts and healths over the toddy bowl!—and how can they more effectually countenance them than by sitting in the drinking party of which these customs constitute the very heart and soul?"

"Thank you, Mr. Thompson; you reason wisely and well," said Mary Gray. "Oh, that Archie would but listen to you in time! It gives me inexpressible pain to see his