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The Reformed Rum-seller.

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(From *Wild Dick, or the Rum-seller's Victim.*)

"Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Wine's red to apple shines afar;
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the blight of that malignant star,
And waged with virtue an eternal war?"

"I have been in the business," said a reformed rum-seller, "in the best, but never in the worst places, and I know what it is, and to what it tends, notwithstanding the eloquent pleadings of its apologists. I know what it is in the capitals of the largest States in the Union, and in the capital of the nation."

"Well, what do you think of it?" said a less than half-persuaded philanthropist, who found it impossible to satisfy himself that rum was not among the necessities of life. "I think, sir," said he, "that it is degrading to him who engages in it, and that of all other employments, it is the most injurious to the community in which it is carried on."

"Do you think," inquired the hesitating philanthropist, "that there is any probability of doing away with it?"

"Oh yes, sir; of this I have no doubt."

"In what way do you propose to do it?"

"By wise legislation, sir; and this is the only way in which it can be done."

"Well, well, sir, but hasn't our legislation been wise heretofore?"

"I think not, sir. The true, effective course, would be to give it no quarter, to strike it from existence at once and forever."

"But can this be legally done?"

"I think so, clearly. We certainly have a right to suppress any traffic, any business, the *only* tendency of which is to injure community; and as the selling of rum, to be drunk, has this effect and no other, the right of the people to protect themselves from its effects, is, I think, beyond reasonable question. The stale cry of *illegality, unconstitutionality, &c.*, has lost its force, and is no longer in the way of proper legal restrictions."

"Do you seriously think that legislation will risk the venture?—that they will be willing to go for so stringent a law as you propose, and run the hazards of losing the votes of all those who are opposed to the measure? If you do, you have greater confidence in their uprightness and courage than I have. The law you propose strikes at a business in which capital is now employed, both in the manufacture and sale of alcoholic drinks. Hundreds of thousands depend upon it for support. The great interest of agriculture furnishes the raw material,

and annually draws from it a large amount of its receipts. And this you propose at once to annihilate—a work, sir, which I think you will find easier to talk about, than practically to execute."

"The time was, when these objections influenced legislation, and were so controlling that the laws enacted were a nullity. That time has now passed. Three-fourths of the electors, in a large section of the Union, are decidedly in favor of the measure. They are also determined that those to whom they give their suffrages shall, on this question at least, no longer misrepresent them. They know their rights, and they also know their powers. They have deliberately, yet decidedly, concluded to assert the one, and to exercise the other; and mere demagogues and time-servers will be driven into merited retirement, while their places will be supplied by men with whom principle will be paramount to policy. A few years since, in a certain State, when the school question was before the Legislature, there was quite an excitement. There were men whose constituents had spelled their tickets "*kno skool!*" and every body knew how they would go. It was said that they would echo the *kno-skool* of their constituency; and so they did. But one of the most intelligent and prosperous districts in the State had sent to the Legislature a man who was utterly unlike themselves. At length the school law was taken up, and the fidelity of their representation was of course to be tested. At this time, one of the constituents, a very intelligent friend of the school law, happened to be on a visit to the capital, and his curiosity led him to the Legislature. He was just in time to hear one of the most eloquent speeches of the session, and was of course delighted with it. But when the vote was taken, he was much disappointed to find the representative from his own district vote "*kno skool.*" In answer to the question, how so intelligent a district as his happened to be represented by so stupid a blockhead as had just voted, he said that he was a rum-representative, sent up there to protect that interest; and, that he should vote against popular instructions, was not, after all, so surprising. He said he was comparatively little known to the electors—had, by agreement with his rum supporters, pledged himself to the friends of temperance, and received their votes—and was elected by this ruse by a large majority. This method of deceiving the electors, cannot now be successfully practised. The trick is understood, and is guarded against."

"But how can you guard against this—pledges, you say, are not regarded?"

"There are men whose past lives and conduct furnish a certain guarantee that they will *act* as they *talk*. It is these that we should elect."