

REVIEW:

THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL,
A POEM: Descriptive and Moral. By G—
of Pleasant River. E. WARD, Halifax.—
Pages 24—price 3d.

We intended to have noticed this pretty little Poem some time ago, when some dozens of them were sent us by the Author, for sale, had the pressure of other business permitted us. We are perfectly aware that in the estimation of many, the title of the work before us, coupled with a desire on their part to accuse the Author of aspiring at fame, by placing himself on the pinnacle of popular excitement, will be deemed sufficient grounds of condemnation. Unluckily for this hasty conclusion, the extreme modesty of the Author's pretensions, as expressed in his short prefatory remarks, together with his pious invocation at the opening of the Poem, puts an extinguisher on this would-be chivalrous mode of criticism.

We really feel pleased, to see the native muse of Nova Scotia come forward in such powerful strains, to the aid of a reformation, than which, nothing that we could name is so emphatically worthy of her lays. No species of prostration is so complete and degrading as that of the drunkard, and hence, no species of benevolence is so God-like as that which would save the whole man from such debasement and endless ruin.

The Poem itself is so respectable, that, without further comment, we shall place some extracts before our readers.

After introducing the subject, he gives an introductory case of one Riley—a case, but too often exemplified in real life. Having completed his education, and entered on the busy scenes of life amidst the most brilliant prospects:

"As year's roll'd on, 'impell'd by beauty's pow'r,
He led a rosy bride to Hymen's bower,
And tasted all the heav'n-appointed bliss
Of woman's love and woman's loveliness.
In time a blushing girl and bright-eyed boy,
Became new springs to his domestic joy.

"Amidst the dazzling brilliancy of fame,
While he possess'd all that his hopes could claim;
While feign'd or real friends with ardour strove,
To manifest their friendship and their love;
While thousands would their echoing voices raise,
To testify his worth and speak his praise:
Yes—while he was carous'd—nay half ador'd,
He oft with others throng'd the festal board,
Where pious eyes and golden goblets shone,
And merry hearts grow merrier still with wine.
Too frequently was thoughtless Riley found,
Where flashing wit and sparkling cups went round:
Ah! little thought he on those festive nights
Of revelry and wine-inspir'd delights,
That sorrow, blight, disgrace, and death were nigh,
To crush his hopes and seal his destiny.

"He soon, by gay festivity beguil'd,
Became the wretched victim, and the child
Of fell Intemperance; 'till ruin came,
And her'd him down the precipice of shame!
No more could he his appetites controul—
A dark eclipse hung o'er his palsied soul;
Nor could his prattling babes and weeping wife,
His character and all his hopes in life,
Recall his erring, wand'ring footsteps back
From walking down the drunkard's fatal track.
His friends forsok him, and his foes revild—
The poor o'er him wept, the victim smild:
He seem'd a sacrifice, by fate fore doom'd,
In flames of liquid fire to be consum'd.

"In folly's deadly path he still rush'd on,
'Till reputation, friends, and wealth, were gone;
'Till wife and children in their humbled pride,
Ate only that which charity supplied.

"Poor, wretched Riley! in a frenzied hour,
Controul'd by Alcohol's demonic power,
A fellow-drunkard in a fray withstood,
And madly bathed his hands in human blood.

"Once more restor'd to sober thought, he saw
Himself the guilty victim of the Law.
His mental agonies what tongue can tell?
Remorse, like the undying worm of hell,
Seiz'd on his soul, and with its scorpion fangs,
Inducted there unutterable pangs,
While grim despair its strongest efforts tried

The gallows to defraud by suicide;
But by the hangman, Riley met his doom;
The Drunkard's prize was won—A MURDER-
ER'S TOMB!"

The scene then shifts to one of those licenced pests, a grog shop, and among the numerous visitors that resort thither, he particularly notices a Magistrate, a Physician, a Clergyman and a Schoolmaster.

"The first that comes his thirst to satiate,
Is a Church-warden and a Magistrate,
Nor do those sacred offices impart
The sanctity of virtue to his heart;
For daily there he sees how crimes increase,
In violation of the public peace;
Nor interposes his official rod,
To vindicate the laws of man and God,
His foul example sanctions Drunkenness,
In spite of vice and family distress:
The oaths of office, totally forgot,
From filthy scenes like these restrain him not;
But mungling with the vilest of the race
Of boisterous tipplers, who frequent the place,
He shares with them their liquor and disgrace."

"Now a Precceptor, just releas'd from school,
Who plays the tyrant there, and here the fool;
Comes in to drive, by tipping, care away,
And with disgusting pedantry, display
The wondrous mass of knowledge that his brains,
Like overloaded vehicles, contains.
No wonder that incessantly he tells
How fine he writes, and how correct he spells;
How very few can read as well as he;
How he can cypher to the Rule of three;
Without a book the whole Lord's prayer repeat,
And measure miles by paces with his feet;
For if he did not give his learning vent,
Like heated gas within a bottle pent,
It might explode and burst his skull—alas!
His knowledge then would be like vanish'd gas.

"This pedagogue's employ'd to tutor youth,
To store their minds with scientific truth;
And like a sage, morality impart,
To fortify the virtues of the heart;
But oh! is such a drunken pedant fit,
As destitute of learning as of wit,
By precept or example to preside
Within a School and there correctly guide
The youthful intellect through learning's maze,
And pupils lead in virtue's sacred ways?

"Hither, at close of day, a crowd repairs—
The beardless lad and man of hoary hairs—
The farmer, labourer, men of different trades;
Or learned professors, and of various grades;
Some veteran drinkers—others, just begun
The filthy race of drunkenness to run:
Yes—here each night a motley crowd resorts,
To call for glasses, gills, half-pints, and quarts,
To quench their thirst and drink their cares away,
To yield to Alcohol's debasing sway,
And spend at night all that they earn by day."

This scene closes, as is usual in such cases, in a general affray; in which Bacchanalian oaths, blue eyes, and bloody noses become the order of the day, (or rather night).

After describing the legal consequences of such doings, he introduces the reader to a "fashionable dinner party;" the plate, the viands, the wine, and the fruit, are as rich as luxury itself could desire. The ladies, to whom he gives the credit of restraining for a time the beastly indulgence of their lords, having retired—the bard proceeds:

"By woman's presence now no longer bound,
More frequently wanderers pass around,
'Till every eye with brighter lustre glows,
And conversation more licentious grows:
None from obscenity restrains his tongue,
And many a song lascivious is sung.
The talented, like ordinary folks,
Laugh loud at threadbare puns and hacknied jokes;
And as more deeply they in drink indulge,
Their neighbours' secrets and their own divulge—
Boast of intrigues and other deeds of sin,
Exposing to the world how vile they've been.
Their voices with increasing loudness rise;
Their heads grow dizzy, and more dim their eyes,
'Till many lose the pow'r of self control,
And helplessly beneath the table roll:
Thus from some lofty mountain's icy crown,
The fearful avalanche comes tumbling down.
Unpillow'd, they upon the carpet lie,
Resembling poison'd rats about to die,
Unconscious of the hours that pass along,
And deaf to many a Bacchanalian song,

Until they all are led or borne away
By jeering servants half as drunk as they."

Passing over many parts of the Poem equally worthy of notice, we conclude our remarks by quoting a passage in reference to the loss of an Emigrant ship, this fancied case we fear, is but too true a picture of many a sad reality:

"'Tis night—and o'er the wave the ship careers,
While at the helm an awkward sailor steers.
The Captain and the mates are drunk below,
Reckless of waves that roll and winds that blow:
Most of the crew within their hammocks sleep,
Unmindful of the dangers of the deep;
And like their officers are overcome
By potent draughts of stupefying Rum.
The passengers upon their beds repose,
And some, in visions bright, forget their woes.
Perchance they dream their troubles to be o'er,
And with their wives and babes at home once more,
Sit by the hearth where they in happier days,
With hearts as warm as was its genial blaze,
The ev'ning hours in harmless mirth employ'd,

"But while they yield to sleep's refreshing away,
And sweetly dream their waking cares away,
They are aroused by a tremendous shock—
For all the ship has run upon a rock:
Five hundred startling voices shriek aloud,
Men—women—children—intermingled, crowd
With agitated bosoms, to the dock,
To be convinc'd of ruin and of wreck;
While in his berth the wretched Captain lies,
And even now too deeply drunk to rise.
Down sinks the ship beneath the stifling wave;
And all uncollid, find a wat'ry grave!"

The Poem concludes by showing the deplorable consequences to the wealth, morals, and civil and religious interests of Nova Scotia, in allowing the produce of its soil to be converted into, or expended for alcohol.

We can safely recommend this little Work to our readers generally, and can say without hesitation, that when they read the Poem, they will not grudge the price.

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