

A Page for Young Folks at Home.

The Glass Railroad.

The 'Milford bard,' like too many of his brethren, was subject to severe fits of *mania a potu*. During one of these he narrated a dream.

The dream was as follows:—

It seemed to me as though I had been suddenly aroused from my slumbers. I looked around, and found myself in the centre of a gay crowd. The first sensation I experienced was that of being borne along with a peculiar gentle motion. I looked around, and found that I was in a long train of cars which were gliding over a railway, and seemed to be many miles in length. It was composed of many cars. Every car opened at the top, and was filled with men and women, all gaily dressed, all happy, all laughing, talking, and singing. The peculiarly gentle motion of the cars interested me. There was no grating, such as we have on a railroad. They moved on without the least jar or sound. This, I say, interested me. I looked over the side, and to my astonishment found the railroad and cars made of glass. The glass wheels moved over the glass rails without the least noise or oscillation. The soft motion produced a feeling of exquisite happiness. I was happy! It seemed as if everything was at rest within. I was full of peace. While I was wondering over this circumstance a new sight attracted my gaze.—All along the road, on either side, within a foot of the track, were laid long lines of coffins, and every one contained a corpse, dressed for burial, with its cold white face turned upwards to the light. The sight filled me with horror. I yelled in agony; but yet could make no sound. The gay throng who were around me only redoubled their singing and laughter at the sight of my agony; and we swept on, gliding with glass wheels over the glass railroad, every moment coming near to the bend in the road, which formed an angle with the road, far, far in the distance.

'Who are these?' I cried at last, pointing to the dead in their coffins.

'These are the persons who made the trip before us,' was the reply of one of the gayest persons near me.

'What trip?' I asked.

'Why, the trip we are now making. The trip over this glass railroad,' was the answer.

'Why do they lie along the road, each one in his coffin?' I was answered with a whisper and a half laugh that froze my blood:

'They were dashed to death at the end of the railroad,' said the person whom I addressed.

'You know the railroad terminates at an abyss which is without bottom or measure. It is lined with pointed rocks. As each car arrives at the end, it precipitates its passengers into the abyss. They are dashed to pieces against the rocks, and their bodies are brought there and placed in the coffins as a warning to other passengers; but no one minds it, we are so happy on the glass railroad.'

I can never describe the horror with which these words inspired me.

'What is the name of the glass railroad?' I asked.

The person whom I asked replied in the same strain:

'It is very easy to get into the cars, but very hard to get

out. For, once in these cars, everybody is delighted with the soft, gliding motion. The cars move so gently. Yes, this is a railroad of habit, and with glass wheels we are whirled over a glass railroad towards a fathomless abyss.—In a few moments we'll be there, and they'll bring our bodies and put them in the coffins as a warning to others; but nobody will mind it, will they?'

I was choked with horror. I struggled to breathe, made frantic efforts to leap from the cars, and in the struggle awoke. I knew it was only a dream, and yet whenever I think of it, I can see that long train of cars move gently over the glass railroad; I can see cars far a-head as they are turning the bend of the road; I can see the dead in their coffins, clear and distinct, on either side of the road; while the laughing and singing of the gay and happy passengers resound in my ears, I only see those cold faces of the dead, with their glassy eyes uplifted, and their frozen hands upon their shrouds.

It was a horrible dream. And the bard's hanging features and brightening eyes attested the emotion which had been aroused by the very memory of the dream.

It was indeed a horrible dream. A long train of glass cars, gliding over a glass railway freighted with youth, beauty, and music, while on either hand are stretched the victims of yesterday—gliding over the railway of habit towards the fathomless abyss.

Dear reader, the bard's dream finds its stern reality in the history of myriads of our race. They have started in the glass cars of pleasure on the glass railway of sinful habit, and are gliding on in foolish mirth and dreamy ease to the awful abyss of eternal destruction.

Some things in the bard's dream claim special notice:—

'It is very easy to get into the cars, but very hard to get out.' How strikingly and sternly true is this of habit! How easy it is to form a sinful habit, but to throw it off again may be more difficult than to break fetters of triple steel.

'The soft motion produces a feeling of exquisite happiness.' It is even so with sinful habit. A man glides on from one illicit joy to another; he pauses not to think; he talks and laughs, and sings, and for a time he tries to fancy that he is filled with the perfection of human joy.

'Long lines of coffins, every one containing a corpse, dressed for burial, with its cold white face turned upwards towards the light,' skirted the glass railway. The pathway of the man of pleasure is strewn with the dead. Here lies one; he died a drunkard. There another; he died a libertine. And there! and there! and yonder! as far as the eye can reach, lie thousands and tens of thousands of ghastly corpses, not with the serene countenances of the good (for even in death they smile) but with blackened, loathe-ome, horrible countenances, such as depravity alone can produce.

'No one minds it, we are so happy on the glass railroad.' Minds what? The coffins! The warning! Oh no!—Pleasure blinds a man to danger, it blunts and stupifies his sensibilities, and on he glides amid the groans of living wretches, and through the ranks of the ghastly dead, until he heeds it not. He shuts his eyes and laughs at the laugh of frantic merriment, and rushes on.

Verily, all this is but too true of evil habits. They are easily acquired. A man glides into them. They throw around him the spell of enchantment. They bind him with