

themselves, we find features in their case fitted to cause dismay, if not absolute despair. The appetite grows slowly, secretly; but ere the patient is well aware of his danger, he is reduced to a state of slavery. He cannot or, if you prefer another form of expression, he will not, resist. Be it physical or mental, or something made up of both, the result is the same—the victim is sucked down towards the gulf like a boat on the Rapids of Niagara. These victims are “drawn unto death” all around us, not in tens or hundreds, but in thousands and tens of thousands.

The condition of these diseased inebriates was graven on my heart as with a pen of iron, long ago, by one of the earliest experiences of my ministry. A rumour reached me regarding a gentleman of middle age, that he was suspected of a tendency to indulge in drink. He was a man of liberal education, vigorous intellect, ample means, and abundant charity. He was my friend and benefactor. I was afraid to speak to him on the subject, but I was more afraid to be silent. I feared man much; but in that case at least I feared God more. I went to his house; obtained an interview with him alone; proceeded to wind round the bush with many fetches to get the subject gently introduced. At last, observing my drift, he said, “I see what you are aiming at; but your tenderness is quite unnecessary; you may say plainly. I am a drunkard. I shall live a drunkard, and die a drunkard.” In the course of our subsequent conversation, he said, “If there are degrees of depth in the place of retribution, the worst will be mine, for I know the right and do the wrong.” I do not detail the horrid progress; but in the end he kept his word—he died a drunkard—died of drunkenness. I have known many, in all classes of society, similarly grasped and similarly drawn unto death. The cases are so numerous that, like many drops of water, they constitute a great overflowing stream, that courses over the land and down the generations—a river of death.

In presence of this destroyer, what should be the attitude of a Christian philanthropist? Am I my brother's keeper in the arrangements of our common Father, and do I keep my brother, in point of fact, as God commands me?

Various attitudes are assumed by various persons and classes in regard to the ravages of intemperance.

First of all, some busy themselves in pushing their neighbours into the stream, or at least cheer them on when they enter it of their own accord. In the passage in Proverbs xxiv. which has suggested this paper, there is no reproof addressed to this class of transgressors; “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that

keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall he not render unto every man according to his works?” The silence of the Scripture regarding their crime is a much more severe condemnation. Like the omission of parricide from the calendar of crimes to which punishments were attached in a celebrated system of jurisprudence, the deed which is not condemned is condemned the most. It is assumed as a thing unspeakable, inconceivable; the prescription of punishment begins with one that lies beneath it, on the assumption that the higher degree of guilt being so enormous, it may be expected that in a well-regulated commonwealth, a specimen of it will never emerge. In this verse of Scripture at least, those who should in malice or levity hold the cup to the lip of the drunkard, and press it upon his appetite, are not re-proved and condemned. Leaving these, if any such there should be, without even a warning, it sounds an alarm in the ears of another class, less hardened and less positive in their wickedness. It is addressed not to the Cains of the human family, who shed their brother's blood; but to those who are what Cain falsely represented himself to be, indifferent to the fate of a brother, when by other influences he is drawn unto death. The sin here re-proved is not the sin of taking another's life away, but the cognate sin of not doing your utmost to save another's life when you see it in danger. It is in this respect precisely parallel to the normal fact in the moral teaching of the Lord Jesus, that a man is condemned at God's judgment seat not merely for the positive evil that he may commit, but for even neglecting to employ the talents and opportunities which he enjoys.

What a multitude are these negative offenders! how deep is their guilt, how disastrous its consequences! The question, then, is not—Did you push the drunkard over the precipice into the pit in which he lies? The question is—Did you “forbear to deliver” them that are drawn unto death? It is this question that needs to be brought home to the consciences of Christians. For my own part I have long lived under the conviction that the disciples of Christ in our land, and in our day, sinfully and shamefully neglect their duty in this respect. Men are too cool on the subject. It is wrong to be calm and cool when our brother is perishing. There should be keenness, there should be passion here. We should do well to be angry in such a cause. If every man who hopes in Christ were adequately aroused, and wisely employed in this work, we might soon see a great change in the condition of society. There is as much soundness yet in the body as might suffice to heal all the unsound parts, if we were awake and astir. It is the dead indifference that ruins us. It is precisely this indifference that the Word of the Lord condemns. The men of Solomon's day were not accused of directly compassing the death