

# Canada Temperance Advocate.

*Temperance is the moderate use of things beneficial, and abstinence from things hurtful.*

No. 9.

MONTREAL, JANUARY, 1841.

VOL. VI.

## A TRUE PASSAGE FROM THE LIFE OF A DRUNKARD.

[ORIGINAL.]

It was Saturday night—the rain was falling in torrents—in a miserable dwelling, on an old broken chair, almost the only one the house contained, sat a tall yet bowed-down woman. She still retained enough of youth to show that she had once been beautiful, though now care-worn and emaciated. She was singing in a low, sweet, plaintive voice, to a sickly restless infant; another child, a little girl, sat on the floor, gazing wistfully up into her mother's face; and that patient, woe-worn mother smiled—smiled, to hide her tears as she stooped to smooth her cheek, and murmured, "My darling, he will soon be here; and then my little one shall have her supper." A few moments after, the latch was lifted. A slight (and in spite of his tattered garments) a genteel-looking boy entered. "They will not let me have any more, dear mother," said he, flinging down his ragged cap with an air of despondency: "they buy my father drinks, and there is little probability of their ever getting paid for what we have had;" and here the poor boy's voice faltered. The woman sat for some time in mute despair; at last she said, "Well, Edward, what is to be done? Tomorrow is Sunday, and we must certainly starve, unless you go again to—" she seemed almost afraid to say the word—"to your uncle's, and beg a few shillings: perhaps, if you tell him how absolute is our want, he will rel. he cannot refuse." As his mother spoke, the boy's white cheek became instantly suffused with burning crimson; his large, dark, yet sunken, eye flashed, as he exclaimed vehemently: "Never, mother, never! Oh! I would a thousand times sooner starve, beg, die! Oh, mother, do not ask me;" and he hid his face in the arm that rested on the table. A long silence ensued, which was at last broken by the little girl: "Mother, you said I should have some supper when Ned came back." A low suppressed sob was the only answer. The next instant the boy's head was raised, the cheek had settled to its ashy hue, the fiery light was quenched in his dark eye; and he stood at the woman's side, threw his arm round her neck, and, stooping to kiss her prematurely furrowed brow and whispered, "Forgive me, dear, dear mother; I knew not what I said. Oh! do not kill me by those tears, as if you had not misery enough without my increasing it. I will go this instant; and after all he cannot say more than he did the last time. Mother, look up; I will go." "Edward," said the agitated woman, pressing him to her bosom, "gladly, most gladly, would I lay down my own life to save my precious boy one pang, one moment's grief; but it is not for myself I ask you to do what I feel and know to be so humiliating, but for their sake (and she glanced at the sleeping infant); for their sake my boy will throw aside all selfish feeling: my Edward will, I know, do his duty." Another instant, and she stood, or rather knelt, alone. How long, how weary was the next hour to the bleeding heart of the anxious mother? How often did she rise, and, opening the door, peer into the darkness, or bend her ear in intense eagerness at every passing step? At last those loved feet approached: again the latch was raised, and again the boy appeared; but this time he brought food and gladness. He did not tell his mother how he had again and again been spurned: how he had been taunted; how he had been told that the hard-earned bread of industry was not to be given to the drunken father and his lazy son; how he had borne all this opprobrium for her sweet sake, and quelled his proud spirit, and on his knees sued again and again; and at last gained, by his impotency, that which was denied to his misery. But the bright hectic spot that shame had called into his pale cheek, and that still burned there, told to that observant

mother how great had been the mortification which the heroic boy had endured.

All was silent in the low dwelling. "Mother," said the dying boy, "raise my head and lay it once again on your bosom. Do you weep," he continued, after a short pause, and making a feeble effort to throw his arm round her neck, "do you weep, dearest mother, that today you have a son on earth—tomorrow, one in heaven? Do you weep that I am leaving a world so full of woe—a world that you yourself are so weary of, for that bright heaven, that happy home, which we have so often talked about? The thought of parting from you is the only sting that death has for me. Oh! if I could but take you, sweet mother, with me! But you will soon come: you cannot stay without me." Here his whisper became inaudible; his head pressed heavier on her bosom; a short gasp—a low sigh—and the unhappy woman clasped convulsively to her breast a lifeless corpse!

Many long hours had passed, yet that mother still hung motionless over her son; so still and immovable was she, you might have imagined that she, too, had bid farewell to earthly sorrow. Presently the door was pushed violently open, and a man staggered into the room. He stood for some time glaring round him, as if endeavouring to remember where he was. At last he recognized his wife; and reeling towards her, he seized her arm, and pulled her rudely up. As he did so, a low agonized groan showed that she was awakening to consciousness; but as her eyes rested upon his face, a long, loud, appalling laugh rang through the cold dark room: then suddenly stopping, and laying one hand on the shoulder of the now sobered man, and with the other pointing back the long black locks from the face of the dead child: "Do you see him, Charles?" she exclaimed, "do you see him? and do you know who has laid him in his early grave? Do you know who it was that clouded his young days with misery; that gave him for his portion here, poverty, and hardship, and shame; that filled his cup of life so full of bitterness, that at the first taste he turned with loathing from it, and pined and died? Need I tell you, man, murderer!" she shrieked, "that it was a DRUNKEN FATHER?—need I tell you, that you have laid the head of your child in the dust, and broken the heart of the wife you had sworn to cherish?" then looking slowly and shudderingly round the dismal apartment, she sank again upon the body of her son. "Oh! take me with you, my beautiful, my best: leave me not to this loneliness of heart—this living death. My boy, my Edward, take your wretched mother with you."

And what were the drunkard's feelings during this scene? Did not his soul smite him? It did, it did! Most keenly did he feel the pangs of remorse; yet he rushed from the house, and entered the first dram-shop! "Oh! thou invisible spirit of wine! if thou hast no other name to be known by, let us call thee, DEVIL!"

E. J. D.

## TEMPERANCE IN SCOTLAND.

*Extract of a Letter from Aberdeen.*

"Total abstinence has done much good both in Scotland and England; and, apart from conversion to God, appears the only remedy that can be adopted to prevent drunkenness. Scotland and England can now boast of seven thousand reformed drunkards, of whom not a few reside in this city! Many I now know, as kind husbands, affectionate parents, good neighbors, steady workmen; having comfortable homes, and providing all things needful for the comfort of their families; and who attend church regularly on the Sabbath, of whom, but twelve months ago, not one of those things