

Contributed Articles.

A TEMPERANCE EPIC.

(AN APPEAL FOR THE DRUNKARD)

BY G. O. F.

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."—Jesus

'Twas centuries ago—Paradise lost !
 Hope of regaining Eden long had fled.
 Another woe begins when man had reaped
 Full many a harvest of remorse and shame,
 Disease and death, a just law's penalty.
 Pride and despair had turned his eyes from Heaven,
 Whence comes all succor to the troubled soul.
 In dire extremity he cast about,
 If haply he might find on this wide earth
 Specific, antidote, or remedy,
 That would in some degree alleviate
 The sad results of sin, and lull the pangs
 Which day and night his guilty spirit rived.

A cruel Demon, on destruction bent,
 Was stalking weirdly up and down the earth,
 Watching his opportunity to float
 A well planned, deadly, and infernal scheme,
 By which he sought to frustrate God's design
 In making man, intensify the curse
 By Adam's disobedience entailed,
 Precipitate man's ruin, mar for aye
 The crowning work of God's creative power,
 And lead men captive in the shades of death.

This end in view, a cordial he prepared
 By cunning chymistry, and process dark,
 Whose vital essence, was essential death—
 A potent extract of inverted life,
 From death distilled, wormed in the throat of hell—
 Which, he alleged, those qualities possessed,
 That man in his adversity required
 To mitigate his heaped up wretchedness,
 Invigorate his spirit, heal disease,
 And lubricate the earth—clogged wheels of life—
 At once a panacea for all his ills.

With goblet dripping o'er with sparkling juice,
 With fascinating smile, persuasive words,
 And sympathetic mien he gained his point,
 And broached his deep-laid plan to willing ears—
 "What means that rueful careworn countenance?
 What mean that languid eye and furrowed brow?
 What mean those deep-drawn sighs that greet mine ear?
 That seem to heave the inmost chambers of thy soul,
 And test the tissue fibres of thy heart?
 Why such unsought-for misery endured?
 Is there no power to whom thou canst appeal
 Willing and able to repair thy loss,
 No pitying eye, no ear to catch thy plaint,
 No bowels of compassion, no reprieve?
 Art thou content thus hopelessly to plod,
 A drudging beast of burden all thy days,
 Perpetual toil, no respite, no redress?
 And all for what? Forsooth one silly act."

"Thou knowest too well; thou surely canst but know,
 The very elements, Fire, Hail, and Wind,
 Aye, e'en the Moon and Stars and all their host,
 The chilly frost, and the untempered blast,
 Are chartered to oppose thy enterprise,
 And foil thy best laid plans of providence.
 When grisly want impels to delve the soil,
 And plant the wholesome seed, forthwith spring up
 The noxious thistle, and the prickly thorn.
 Be these with timely thrift plucked by the root,
 Straight is withheld the fertilizing showers;
 And should thy husbandry in spite of this,
 Attain at length to full corn in the ear,
 Comes down the hurricane and thunderbolt,
 Blasting with one fell swoop thy cherished hopes.

Thy little ones are blighted at the breast,
 The partner of thy bosom droops and dies,
 And thou art left alone, despised, forgot!
 No comfort here, no hope of future bliss."

"Would'st, if thou could'st, avert thy hapless fate,
 And taste of joys thou hast a right to feel?
 Art thou not free? in liberty to act?
 Then why submit to such imposed restraints?
 Up! be a man; stand forth! assert thy right?
 Strike for emancipation from thy yoke,
 Such degradation hast thou not outgrown?
 List, now, to my suggestion: I have power,
 By virtue of a secret I possess,
 To change this gloomy aspect of thy lot,
 And turn the tide of sorrow from thy gates.
 Let down bright rays of sunshine through the clouds,
 The present light with joy, the future hope.
 See! I have here prepared a simple drink,
 Pleasant to taste, delightful in effect;
 Such virtues can be found in nought beside.
 'Twill cheer thy spirit, lift thy load of care,
 Furnish the sinew for thy daily work,
 Strengthen thy nerve to face the deadliest foe,
 Quicken thy sight to regulate thine aim,
 The swiftest deer must fall before thy bow,
 Open thy soul to all that's beautiful,
 Bury in deep oblivion all the past,
 Give thee to feel the measure of a man.
 Come, drink, and prove me, if my words are vain."

Man was beguiled, and took the proffered cup,
 And certainly the Demon's words were true:
 For all the virtues that he claimed were there,
 And more, the long sought remedy was found;
 Life, health, and pleasure, this Elixir gave.
 Gloomy forebodings turned to joyous mirth,
 Distracting fears yielded to brightest hope,
 All anxious thought and pressing cares retired,
 He stood out fearless, every whit a man.
 "Here's to our friend who gave us wine," he said,
 "Henceforth our ivy-crowned god is he."

All this did wine, and did it all too well.
 "Twill drown thy care," the wily Demon said,
 And pregnant words the Demon uttered then,
 For even natural care, to foster young,
 Possessed in common with the beasts of prey,
 Was choked, therewith all love of hearth and home.
 Under its influence, men could sit unmoved,
 And hear their helpless children cry for bread;
 Mothers, erstwhile of tenderest heart, and fond,
 Now, strange to tell, forgot their suckling babes;
 Man would ignore his sacred nuptial vows;
 Woman, incontinent, degrade her sex;
 Sons, spurn their aged parents' rightful claims;
 Daughters, to virtue lost, desert their homes.

"Twill nerve thee to withstand thy mortal foes,
 And give thee manly courage in the chase."
 The Demon hinted not that bravery,
 Unchecked by prudence, caution, soberness,
 Most surely meets disaster in the end.
 To deeds of daring, drinking oft incites,
 To reckless unpremeditated violence,
 Ending unstayed by outward force, in blood.
 Full well that shrewd, malignant Demon knew
 The power of that fell drug, to throw a spell
 Of soporific stupor o'er the mind,
 The latent passions rouse, the conscience sear,
 Wake sensuous appetites, the judgment lull,
 Excite to hellish deeds, manhood subdue,
 And spite of all that's good, maintain its hold,
 Dragging at length its victims down to Hell.

The weaker natures no resistance made,
 The stronger dallied, and were overcome,
 The pure and chaste gave up to wantonness,
 Honor and innocence were undermined,
 Each added draught from that insidious cup
 Welded a stronger link into the chain;
 Wreck, spoliation, carnage, ruin, death,
 Followed the wake of that destroying fiend!