

In the morning this wretched victim of rum would awake from his debauch, and, restored to his natural affection, would reflect upon his brutality in the deepest abyss of horror and remorse. He would fall upon his knees before his wife, with tears of anguish rolling down his cheeks, and implore her forgiveness: he would curse the day in which he was born; he would call himself a brute and a fiend; he would wish himself dead; he would resolve and re-resolve that he would never drink again. For a few days he would succeed in keeping himself away from temptation. But the acquired appetite would gather strength by the transient restraint. Associates would lure him into the village store; the sight of the deucanters—the fumes of the spirits—the persuasions of toppers would sweep away, with hurricane fury, all his resolutions. On a glass would follow another in the desperation of remorse and despair. Frenzied with the fiend-creating poison, he would return to his home, and re-enact those scenes of outrage, the bare imagination of which makes humanity shudder.

The Importuning Wife.

Again and again his wife, in her wretchedness, went to the village groceries, and with all the influence of a despairing and broken-hearted mother, implored them not to sell her husband rum. She would show them her own wounds; she would lead to them her children, and tell the awful story of her woes. But all her entreaties were in vain. Sometimes they would refuse to sell to him. But then every toper in the village could get his pint bottle filled, and at the very door of the store, hold the bottle to the mouth of this wretched sot. Drunkards, like misery, love company. And a toper seems to be always pleased to see his fellow toper drunk. The sale of ardent spirits was free in the village, and of course there was no such thing as keeping it from one who had no mental resolution of his own to resist temptation.

Misery is a slow and cruel murderer. But he gnawed with vulture tooth at the heart of this much injured woman, till exhausted nature sank and expired. Where that wretched father now is, whether in the grave, the almshouse, or the state prison, I know not; where those children—those wrecks of a once happy family—now are, I know not; but they are probably scattered as melancholy ruins over a tempestuous world; the daughters fondled in the embraces of a faithful mother's love, perchance in the warehouses of infamy—the sons, inheriting their father's appetite, and discouraged by his disgrace, and lured by his example, growing up in shame, and poverty, and crime,—candidates for highway robbery and midnight arson, and for the pirate's deeds of deadly daring.

Is there no Balm in Gilead?

Now what, in the light of such facts, shall a wise community do? Shall it decide that the public good demands that this baneful and earthly happiness shall still be freely retailed. That rum, brandy, gin, and whiskey, after all the ruin they have caused, and are still causing, shall yet be sold by the quart, the pint, the half pint, the gill, and the glass—alluring the young to destruction, provoking the appetite for intemperance, and holding out facilities for any poor wretch, who has but three cents in the world, to squander it for rum.

It is amazing that any one who has the reason of a man, and the humanity of a man, can be willing to spread through our state these flood fountains of wretchedness. And can any one in sober earnest, say that he thinks the public good is promoted by this sale; that the cause of temperance will be promoted by having the retail traffic in rum legalized, sustained by the dignity of law.

As long as the community allows the retail traffic to exist, it will be impossible to prevent the frequent repetition of such scenes of woe and ruin as I have just described. What can persuasion do, when temptation encounters the excited appetite of the drunkard? You may as well beset Mount Etna to smother its fires.

Suppose, on the other hand, the voice of the community had twenty years ago forbidden the retail of this article—suppose the present license law had been during that time in peaceful operation. Would not this family have been saved, and saved with a great salvation? The retailing of ardent spirits caused their ruin. The prohibition of this retail would have insured their safety, and they would probably have been at this moment blest and happy, in all the domestic enjoyments of the most favored New England home.

And think not that the case I have mentioned is a solitary one. There is hardly a village in New England, in which its main features may not be recognised. There is hardly an observing man in the state, who cannot tell not merely one, nor two, but many a similar tale. As I allow my mind to retrace the scenes of my parochial visitings for the last eight years, I find these awful recollections crowding upon me in troops.

And is the community to seek no redress from all these evils, that a few persons may make money in selling rum? Are we patiently to allow death and destruction thus to ravage our land, that the distiller and liquor vender may grow rich? Are our sons to be thus ruined, and our daughters to be thus exposed, and our beloved state to be enduring such calamities, that a few thousands may amass wealth, by disseminating disease and poverty through our dwellings, and paralyzing the very nerve of public industry and thrift?

For be it remembered that no respectable man now pretends, that the use of rum, brandy, gin, and whiskey, as a drink, does any one any good, but on the contrary, only injury. This is almost the unanimous decision of the most eminent physicians of this country and of Europe—confirmed by past experience and every day's observation. Alcohol may occasionally be needed as a medicine, and as such it may be found on the shelves of the apothecary.

And now is it possible that any one can seriously say, that the public good demands that the retail of this poverty-engendering, misery-making liquor, should be legalized!—that the public good demands that energy and influence should be given, to the most fell destroyer of the public good!

The Law framed in Mercy.

On the contrary, is it not as clear as truth, that the present license law, prohibiting the retail of the article, is framed in mercy? Is it not most manifestly promotive of the best interests of the community? Does it not already make the widow's heart leap for joy, and cause the orphans to rise up and call down blessings upon its makers? If there ever were a question upon which there was a right and a wrong, which could be seen and felt, it is this.

It is stated that among the petitions which were poured in upon our legislature last winter, in favor of the prohibition of the retail traffic in spirits, there was one signed by a number of unhappy inebriates, who implored protection from the strong, and to them, resistless temptation to which they were exposed. Notwithstanding all the resolution they could summon to their aid, notwithstanding the ruin of their own reputation, the disgrace of their families, and their prospective beggary, when business called them to the grocery or the tavern, where the air itself was impregnated with the fumes of alcohol, the power of appetite was so intensely stimulated within them, that they could not resist; and they implored the legislature to bring them the protection of law, that they might pass safely through the village streets, unexposed to the contagion of this most deadly plague. It is an affecting fact that there are thousands of these unhappy men, who have awoke to the consciousness that they are drunkards—having been gradually and imperceptibly led to their ruin by the bar-room and the grog-shop meeting them at every turn, and who are now struggling in the most desperate, yet unavailing efforts, to escape from the passions by which they are completely and most treacherously ensnared;—and they—*they*, with palsied limb, and blood-shot eye, and bloated cheek, beseech us that the bar-room may be shut up, and the grog-shop closed;—and their wasted wives, haggard with woe, and wan with despair, still more earnestly beg and pray, that protective law might come to their rescue; and their famished children, in rags and wretchedness, ashamed of their fathers, and inheriting disgrace, cry to the state to pity and to help them in their dreadful orphanage;—and when the state in its paternal mercy, stretches out its arm to protect the helpless and the lost; when it would gather them under the shadow of its wing—a voice of remonstrance comes from the liquor vendors of the land, declaring that the cause of temperance requires that the grog-shops should be well replenished with rum; and that the public good demands that brandy, and gin, and whiskey should gush forth in unending fountains from these bar-rooms!

INTERESTING INCIDENT IN THE HISTORY OF KENTUCKY.

Note—It is a fact, that the celebrated Miami Chief Little Turtle, made application to the Legislature of Kentucky, about 1803,