

A Prodigal's Career and End.

Passing up the East River from the city of New York, just before the traveller enters Long Island Sound, he may be tempted to inquire the name of the owner of a fine house, and spacious ground, that attract the eye, and by their elegance and neatness appear to be in the hands of a man of wealth and taste. His name is not known to me, but the spot, now the abode of strangers, is full of deep and painful interest as the early home of one whose story I am about to tell.

Charles L.—— was the son of a wealthy man of business in the city of New York. His parents were neither of them Christians, but their associations were chiefly among religious friends, and their social and domestic relations were governed by a rigid regard to sound morals.

Charles was an only son. Nursed on the lap of luxury, and in infancy, and childhood freely indulged by the fondness of a tender mother, and a father who doted on his boy, . . . there were some traits of his character that endeared him to his parents and friends. Grown up to youth and full of spirits and fond of pleasure, Charles was the life and circle of young companions that gathered around him. Generous to a fault, and supplied too freely by his father with spending money, he had both the disposition and the means to indulge himself and others in those amusements that lay the foundation for future vice and spread flowers in the pathway to eternal ruin.

Long before he left college, he had distinguished himself in the ball room far more than any in his class; and he was far more ambitious to obtain conquest, in the halls of fashionable folly than in the fields of learning, or the world of fame. Passionately fond of dancing, he pursued it with enthusiasm, at the risk of reputation, and regardless of the advice which reflecting friends wasted upon him.

While Charles was at college, his father purchased the beautiful mansion on East River to which I have already referred, for a summer residence. His winters were passed in the city, and when Charles came home, with no taste for the drudgery of professional life, and no fitness for business, he was installed in his father's counting room as a clerk, spending his days in the forms of business, and his evenings in the pursuit of pleasure.

The theatre was his favorite resort. Its glare and glitter, its thrilling excitements and wild amusements caught his heart, and night after night he revelled in ideal scenes of passionate interest, till he learned to look with cold indifference upon the every day realities about him.

He found his way to the gaming table, and with reckless impetuosity plunged into the vortex which there opens for the souls of the young. Not far from the theatre and the billiard room, was the house of her whose steps take hold on hell. With a madness that defied all restraint, and shut out hope of his recovery, he abandoned himself to sensual indulgences of an enemy, the efforts of friends who, at each step of his downward course, had interfered to save him from ruin.

How often in these days of dissipation had a mother wept over him, with tears that none but heart broken mothers shed over ruined sons! How often a fond father sought him out in the dark and hidden haunts of vice to which he nightly resorted, and mingling a parent's love with the strongest authority of an injured father, led him home, and

watched by his bedside till the morning light, that with the first return of consciousness he might extort a promise of reform. Such influences, stronger than any restraining power but the grace of God, might have saved him but for the grasp of an enemy, that was dragging him downward to death and hell. It was scarcely possible that he should have run his course thus far without having drunk often and deeply of the intoxicating cup. Intemperance had marked him for his prey. This was some years ago, in the morning of the great temperance reformation which has since so signally and gloriously blessed our country and the world. And he was persuaded by the united entreaties of his parents and friends to pledge himself to abstain from "ardent spirits," the smile of hope was seen on a mother's faded cheek, and a mountain weight was removed from his father's heart.

There was a change in Charles that all regarded with intense delight. It lasted for months. Again he was the pride of his parents and the centre of a thousand hopes.

The cup of happiness seemed to his parents to be full when Charles led to the altar, and brought home to their house a lovely bride whom of all others they had chosen as one who would make him happy, and throw around him the restraints of love, should he ever be allured again into the paths of vice.

On the very evening of his marriage, it was painfully evident, that he was not beyond the reach of the destroyer.

I have said that this period was at the opening of the present temperance reformation, and few had then thought of danger from the use of wine. But in festivities of the marriage day, in the midst of company of which young L.—— was the life and soul, and called on again and again to drink his "health and happiness; (Oh! the mockery of such words over the wine cup!) he lost command of his appetite, and before he suspected his danger he was overcome. Deeply mortified at this occurrence, he determined to regain his self respect by a rigid adherence to entire abstinence from all means of intoxication. But the appetite was excited, and it would be gratified. The rest of the story is soon told.

Months passed away, and the once elegant, accomplished, fascinating Charles L.—— was sinking deeper, and deeper into the abyss of shameful, disgusting intemperance. The appetite became a passion—became a *mania*. The last hopes of his recovery was now blasted. The prospects of wealth and honour, and domestic bliss, had lost all charms in his eye. The gross sensuality of his darling sins, the vile companions of his nightly debauch, the delirious excitement of the theatre and gaming table, again absorbed the desires of his depraved heart. In vain did parental affection plead, in vain did a young wife with her first born on her breast, weep tears of bitter grief over his fall: in vain did he hear the strong appeals of religious truth; in vain was he admonished of the danger of his immortal soul, and the certainty of his swift destruction, if he persisted in his downward course:—he was in the grasp of the destroyer. Deaf to the cries of affection, blind to his own guilt and shame, and dead to all the sweet sensibilities of the soul, and lost for ever.

In the mean time he has plunged deeper than ever into his destroying indulgences, and the terrible *delirium* that haunts