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ALCOHOL AND OPIUM; OR, THE TWO-EDGED ARGUMENTS.

"I hope you will attend the teetotal meeting this evening, Mr. Wilson," said Mr. Ruby, the wine merchant, to his young minister, whom he met in the main street of the small country town in which they both resided.

"For what purpose?" was the interrogative reply.

"So that you may be able to confute and overturn the arguments of their famous speaker, who is so much talked about among them. I have, for my own part, no patience with their absurdities—nothing can exceed the preposterousness of the positions they assume. Only think, for instance, of the statement made at their last meeting, that the respectable moderate drinker did more, in effect, to perpetuate the evils of intemperance than the low and degraded drunkard."

"If they go to such lengths," said Mr. Wilson, "it is necessary that they should be shown their error: I will go to their meeting, and if an opportunity occurs, express my opinions on behalf of moderate drinking."

Having said this, and having engaged to meet his friend, the wine merchant, at the meeting, the preacher went to his own house, seriously impressed with the propriety of the course upon which he had determined.

He found when he got home that his sister, who was his housekeeper, had provided for sitting down to tea. During this cheering repast he was unusually taciturn, and was not tempted into conversation by his sister, who understood her esteemed brother's habits thoroughly, and knew that his silence betokened deep cogitation upon some absorbing theme. She gathered from him, however, before tea was over, that he intended to go to the teetotal meeting. This surprised, and, indeed, rather amused her, for as she knew nothing of the system but its name, and that none of the leading (i. e. the rich) members of her brother's church encouraged it, she sagely inferred that it must be truly ridiculous, if not something worse."

As soon as the young minister had risen from the tea table

he proceeded to his study, where he seated himself at his writing desk, and rapidly struck off the following leading ideas, intended to guide him in the delivery of his speech at the meeting.

REASONS FOR USING STRONG DRINK.

1. The fruits of the earth, from which it is made, are given by Providence.
2. Many gain a livelihood by making and vending it.
3. We have had its use recommended by the advice and experience of our forefathers before us.
4. Its excessive use (or abuse) should be denounced, but not its careful and temperate use.
5. The Scriptures nowhere say, "Thou shalt not use strong drinks temperately."
6. We all know that we are the better for using it, because we feel refreshed when we have taken some.
7. Men who labour hard testify that they could not do their work without it.

Whether or not our ardent antagonist of total abstinence thought well of his seven "points," from his recollection of the fact that "seven" was deemed in olden time a perfect number, we cannot determine. When, however, he had completed his task, he smiled with a little self-complacency, then drawing his chair close to the window, which commanded a fine view of the country, then taking from the table a religious newspaper which had arrived by that day's post, he skimmed over the columns of general news, occasionally lifting his eyes, and feasting them with the prospect before him.

It was a calm and pleasant evening. The sun was near its setting. The sky presented the glowing and beautiful appearance, which has been held in all ages to be predictive of a fine and peaceful morning, when the still and stormless night shall have passed away. On one side of the landscape could be seen the old church-yard gate, and its scattered moss-covered grave-stones, while the ivy-crowned steeple towered above the lime-trees which bordered the scene behind. On the other side lay the open country, partitioned into fields and meadows, and dotted with farm houses, and then more fields and trees and hedges in the distance, until all mingled and then melted to the gaze, in the gathering gloom of the eastern sky. In the centre of the prospect there were some plantations and a short range of hills in the background. A narrow gravel road wound its devious way over these hills, and along this road the carrier's cart, which had paid its weekly visit to the nearest market town, was slowly returning, now seen and anon hidden by a turning in the road, or the high hedge foliage which grew upon its sides. Then, to give more life and pleasantness to the picture, there were the rooks flying home on wearied wings to the rookery near the manor house, labourers plodding upon tired feet from the furrowed field, and the faint tinkling of the sheep bell in the meadows, as the flocks were gathered by the shepherd's dog, so that his master might count them and see that all were safe ere he left them to their night's repose. These things seemed to attract the greater part of Mr. Wilson's attention, until his eye rested upon a paragraph in the paper, which was headed thus: "Great Meeting to