

THREE YOUNG MEN.

"I remember them well, for I lived near them and knew much about them in my earlier years. All of them were sons of farmers, and the homes in which they were severally born and grew to manhood, were less than three miles from each other. The dwellers in all that region were industrious and thrifty, honest in their dealings, and primitive in their manners and style of living. But in some respects they were not a model people. The old drinking customs still prevailed among them. Every farm had its apple-orchard, and cider was a very common drink; even to the boys it was almost as free as the water in the wells. In harvest time it was customary to grant the workmen a liberal allowance of cider, brandy or Jamaica rum. It was considered an evidence of hospitality, too, to treat visitors, and even transient callers, with a glass of some kind of liquor. The result of such customs can be easily guessed. Intemperance was common. Men often returned from their work at night under the influence of liquor, and were not the most agreeable and profitable kind of laborers. Their appetite for cider grew stronger and stronger, till at last, in many cases at least, it began to clamor for the more vigorous drinks, and would be satisfied with nothing else.

After a time, however, a temperance wave rolled in from other parts of the country; some were aroused from their slumbers, and looked with concern on the state of things around them. The evils resulting from the use of alcoholic liquors as a beverage were everywhere obvious, and they felt that something ought to be done to remove them. These convictions led to a call for a public meeting to consider the liquor question, and as a result a society was formed on the basis of a pledge requiring total abstinence from all kinds of intoxicating drinks.

In this movement the pastor of the church was very active and earnest. Some young men also appeared early among the total abstiners. Three in particular, all belonging to the same family, were quite conspicuous. On the old farm where they had been brought up intoxicating drinks had flowed freely all around them, and it would have been no wonder if they had fallen into dissolute habits. But this fate they happily escaped, and were thus qualified to take a clearer view of the effects of drinking on others. Their observation constrained them, not only to discard all intoxicants themselves, but also to try to induce others to do the same. This they did in private conversation often, and sometimes too in public addresses as occasion offered.

The meetings of the society were held in

the church once a month. One evening after an address by a gentleman from abroad, one of the three young men to whom reference has been made, approached his pastor and said: "I will deliver the next temperance address." "Well, you can," was the answer.

What was the matter with that young man? What bold and impertinent spirit had taken possession of him? He was naturally modest and exceedingly diffident, and he was greatly astonished at himself before he went to bed that night at the boldness of his proposition. He had made it, however, and must necessarily stick to it. But his address had to be prepared under difficulties. He was required to work every day in the barn, but he kept paper and pencil at hand that he might put down as chances offered such sentences as he could arrange in his mind while his hands were busy; these he copied out during the long winter evenings, and continued the composition as much farther as he could. So it came to pass that his address was written and carefully studied in due time.

The appointed evening came. The church was full, all the surrounding country having crowded into it. Another speaker was on hand also, for it seemed that there had been some fears that the stripping might break down in the time of trial, and put the audience in an awkward position. But the stripping did not prove to be a failure. He began his address resolutely, and the people were more than satisfied with it. The other speaker himself declared afterwards: "If I had known that young M—would talk in that way you would not have caught me here."

I have mentioned those three young men to show how great the contrast was between them and three others of nearly the same age. The latter stood firmly on the opposite side of the temperance question, following the example of their fathers, and of others who still held to their old views and customs in regard to the use of alcoholic beverages. I will present them separately to the reader.

THE FIRST YOUNG MAN.

During the period under consideration arrangements were made for a public debate in the church on the temperance question. After several speeches had been made, some on one side and some on the other, a young man rose and with a good deal of energy and vehemence spoke in opposition to the principle of total abstinence. He contended that the moderate use of intoxicating drinks was harmless, and, in many cases, even beneficial. Some were grieved and astonished not a little as they listened to his utterances.

Some years later, as I was riding along near the place where that young man had settled down, I saw him coming towards me.