

TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE,

DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE & NEWS.

PLEDGE.—We, the undersigned, do agree, that we will not use intoxicating liquors as a beverage, nor traffic in them; that we will not provide them as an article of entertainment, nor for persons in our employment; and that in all suitable ways we will discountenance their use throughout the community.

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The Bottle.—Chapter VI.

Latimer and his wife had sowed the wind, and were now reaping, indeed, the whirlwind. They had tarried long at the wine, and it was biting like an adder. Strong drink had burnt out from their hearts all the affection that once glowed there. The death of Lotty, whom both had neglected and abused, made a wider space between them. They disagreed oftener; used harsher words to each other and the children; and when more excited by drink than usual, Latimer would sometimes threaten his wife with blows.

Months passed, and Agnes and her brother, who lived upon the street, began to change for the worse. Idleness, the daily practice of falsehood in order to excite pity, and exposure to vicious company, all tended to deprave them. They were open to a thousand temptations abroad, and had no promptings to good at home. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, that so soon as they became familiar with the new life they were leading, they began to feel the allurements of vice, and to yield to them, a little and a little at a time. The profane language used by boys and girls of her own age, which so shocked the ears of Agnes when she went upon the streets to beg, had lost its strangeness, and she could even utter expressions at which, when first heard, her young heart shuddered. Not only had profane language ceased to hurt her moral sense, but she could listen to immodest words with more of pleasure than pain. James also was proving an apt scholar in the school of vice. Not alone by begging did they obtain that for which the idle and besotted parents had sent them forth. They scrupled not to perloin any article upon which they could place their hands, if it could be done without too great an exposure to the danger of detection. In this way, they often obtained much more than they did by begging.

To the vice of stealing, the children were first driven by punishment for not being more successful in their begging expeditions. The small pittance sometimes brought home at night, called down upon them the charge of spending a portion of what they had received, and first put the thoughts of doing so into their heads. After that, they were tempted to spend pennies and the sixpences, for their own gratification; the consequences were that their returns at the close of the day became less and less. Punishment followed; although both the children earnestly denied the truth that was charged upon them.

After this, the tempter suggested the crime of petty theft, and they hearkened to his words. Much more frequently now than before did they enter private houses to beg. The cold victuals generally received were thrown into the street as soon as they were away from the premises of those who gave them. Occasionally, they would find an area door open, and get into a house without the trouble of knocking or ringing; and occasionally, after thus gaining an admittance, they would find the servant out of the way, and be able to get possession of a spoon or some other small article

of no great value, and retire unperceived. Sometimes, while the lady of the house, or one of her domestics, turned away to get something for them to eat, they would seize the opportunity to get an article of trifling value into their hands and conceal it, which would not be missed, perhaps, until hours after they were gone; it might be not for days. These they generally sold at certain shops, the owners of which were ever ready to buy articles from children at one half or one-third their value. But, sometimes their booty was taken home, and then they said they had found it.

One evening, Agnes brought home a pair of sugar-tongs, which she had stolen.

"Why, child!" said her mother, in surprise, "where did you get these from?" She was less under the influence of liquor than usual.

"I found them," replied Agnes.

"What's that? Let me see," spoke up Latimer, his eyes sparkling at the sight of the silver; and he reached out his hand to get the tongs, but his wife kept them out of his reach.

"Why don't you give them to me?" he said, angrily; and he caught hold of his wife's arm, and after struggling with her for some moments, succeeded in wrenching the article from her hand.

"You're a brute!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer, her face flushed, and her eyes lit up with a fierce expression.

"Don't say that again!" retorted Latimer, in a menacing tone, while his thin lips parted from over his teeth.

"His wife muttered something in an under tone, and then turning to Agnes, who was little moved by the strife that had arisen between her father and mother—she had witnessed such things too often—said,

"Found them, did you say?"

"Yes; I found 'em away up in Madison-street."

"On the pavement?"

"Yes—no ma'am."

"Yes—no ma'am"—repeated Mrs. Latimer, mimicking the voice of Agnes. Then, in a loud and angry tone, she said—

"You lie, you little huzzy! you never found them tongs. You stole them!"

Agnes, to enforce her protestation of innocence, added a plentiful effusion of tears.

"If you found them, then, tell me where you found them?" said the mother, taking fiercely hold of the arm of Agnes, and jerking her around.

"I found them—I found them," sobbed Agnes, "just by the back gate of a house up in Pearl—no, Madison-street—where they had been shaken out of a table cloth. I saw the girl come out, and shake the cloth, and when I went up to the place, I saw the sugar-tongs on the ground."

"It's a lie, you little thief! you stole them; and I shouldn't wonder if you were in the House of Refuge before to-morrow night. And then see what trouble you would bring upon us, you good-for-nothing huzzy!"