

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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Precept and Example: or Medical Light and Moral Darkness.

In gathering up the evidences of the terrific evil inflicted by alcohol, temperance advocates have been wont to refer to the authoritative testimony borne by the medical profession. And surely, if the teachers of religion come forward and bear witness to the debasing influence of drink and the drinking usages, in respect of the spiritual interests of men; if judges and gaolers, in respect of crime; if political economists, in respect of the superabundant waste of wealth; if social reformers under any name, in respect of the filth, and stench, and savagery of the most debased of our city populations; it is but fair that the men whose business and educational preparatives lead them into contact with disease, should be listened to in respect of the department that is especially their own. The great and crowning agent of intemperance—alcohol—whether taken in its pure and most etherialised form, or as combined with and disguised under the presence of some emperumatic oil or other vegetable matter—is in its chemical, physiological, therapeutic, or pathological properties, immediately under their cognisance, and, consequently, rightfully spoken of in its effects upon the human frame, whether in health or in disease.

In approaching, therefore, the medical profession in order to gain the statistics of alcohol, no witness bearing is more speedily uttered, no statistical information more speedily gained. Is alcohol a poison? The certification comes forth under a thousand Æsculapian hands. Does it lead to insanity? Every madhouse keeper in the kingdom will avouch the fact. Does it inflame the stomach, enlarge the liver, oppress the lungs, carbonize the blood, and throughout the animal organism effectuate woe, debilitation, and death? Testimonials by the gross may be evoked from any quarter of the land. Indeed, so clear, so definite, so distinct is the medical conception of the place occupied by alcoholic stimulation in reference to disease, that one might be tempted to suppose that the physician was ready to subscribe himself in the words of the witty Frenchman, when defining a doctor—"An unfortunate gentleman, who is every day required to perform a miracle, namely, to reconcile health with intemperance." To the medical eye the reign of alcohol is the atramentous vision of the shadow of death—there sits the venomous mocker of life, health, and happiness.

It might be imagined, then, that in taking up the medico-statistical testimony as to alcohol, we were about to wield a sure and certain engine of assault against the drunken habitudes of the land. That if men could not be induced to look at the moral, economical, or religious phases of this question as to strong drink, they would surely listen when the tongues of chemists, of anatomists, of physiologists, and of other scrutators of the ways of physical life in man, proclaimed the poisonous and pestiferous bearing of the daily use of the alcoholic beverages. We might have been ready to exclaim—"There now we go to the physical root of the matter. Who can resist the voice that comes from that toper's brain, or stomach, or liver, or heart? Who will stand by and imbibe the stealthy destroyer after listening to a testimony so sure as that of the medical profession? Who will topse or quaff the foaming goblet, after hearing the united evidence of men who have looked with the eyes of science into every cranny and crevice of man, and seen the footsteps of disease and death tracking the footsteps of alcohol throughout that organisation so

scarcely and wonderfully made?" 'No enlightened medical practitioner, at least,' might be expected to be the unequivocal reply.

But how far otherwise it is within the social circle and the boon companionship of those whose business is with 'life, health, and disease,' it needs no ghost to tell. Notable and noble instances there no doubt are, in which physicians do, with unflinching courage, 'suit the action to the word, and the word to the action'; in which precept and example go hand in hand; and in which the conventionalisms of society are made to bend to the dictates of scientific truth and moral duty. But even on the part of those who can certify as to the proportion of disease arising out of intemperance, at a point to the awful havoc of strong drink in their hospital and private practice—how frequently is it that we find the old formularies of social life controlling the simplest and clearest dictates of science and of daily experience? An experienced physician has trode the wards of some public institution erected for the treatment of disease or injury sustained by the destitute poor. After the most careful and prolonged investigation, he affirms that forty or fifty per cent. of all that passes under his cognisance there results, directly or indirectly, from alcoholic indulgence. Humans beings voluntarily bring about a state of suffering demanding the aid of medical skill—that skill is provided, benevolence is taxed; and all the necessary accommodation and comfort provided; and the prime agent moving the whole is drink or drunkenness. Now, what arises as a startling condition in the midst of these obvious facts is the apparent apathy of the medical observer. He witnesses the state of the comparatively poor in his hospital practice; he certifies to the facts of the ravages of intemperance; and still, without compunction and without alarm, he falls in with the social bout of port, or claret, or other alcoholic beverage. The drinking usages, in their fierce appetite and fell destruction, he is compelled as a physician to witness and deplore; but these same usages, with the most infantile simplicity, he bends to, complies with, and seems absolutely blind to the fact that there lies the fountain of all the evil to which he has certified.

This mortifying position of men whose relation to the diseased entitles them to judge with an enlightened and unprejudiced judgment, has been frequently adverted to and deplored. But we were scarcely prepared to find the cool and self-complacent avowals which recently appeared in a distinguished medical journal. Unless we are to take the following as a bitter, biting sarcasm on the ways of men, who see the better but pursue the worse, it is, in some respects, a curious revelation of medical morals:—"Precept and example are, however, two very different things; and it must be referred to the general question of morals, whether medical practitioners shall teach by example; and whether the temperate use of wine as a luxury, or as a social pleasure, shall be abandoned or not. We make no profession of asceticism; we do not 'fast often,' or 'mortify the flesh' in any way. The genial, cheerful view of christian morals is, we confess, more to our individual taste; we are thankful for God's gifts, and endeavor to enjoy them; and we, therefore, must plead guilty to the taking of wine, when in our own cases it simply conduces to social enjoyment, whilst even, perhaps, not absolutely or altogether harmless."

This, unless, as we have said, the purest irony is rather an interesting specimen of the moral *cul de sac*—or, as the doctors term it—*foramen cæcum*. It appears to be a question still un-