

THE TEMPERANCE TRACT.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

A young man, who felt a good deal of enthusiasm in the temperance cause, procured some tracts for distribution. He had a dozen, and in the ardor of his feelings, he calculated that at least twelve men would be reformed through their agency. Having an idle afternoon to devote to the cause, he started out with his dozen tracts in his pocket, his mind somewhat elated in the prospect of the good that was to be done. In walking along, the first man who came in his way was a tavern-keeper. "Here is a good subject," said Wilton to himself, as the tavern-keeper drew near. "Let me see what I have that will suit him. Ah! this is it. An Appeal to the People on the Liquor Traffic." And selecting a tract with this title, he presented it to the tavern-keeper as they met, saying as he did so—

"Accept this, if you please."

Taken by surprise, the man received the tract, and the distributor, bowing, moved on.

"A dead shot for him!" thought he; but the thought was scarcely formed ere he felt a hand laid roughly on his shoulder. Turning quickly, he confronted the tavern-keeper, whose face was red with anger.

"What is this?" he demanded imperatively.

"It is a tract," replied the young man, looking confused.

"See here, my friend!" and as the tavern-keeper spoke he withdrew his hand from his shoulder, "My first impulse was to pitch you over the fence. On second thought, however, I will let you go unpunished for your impudence; but, with this piece of good advice—'If you wish to keep out of trouble, mind your own business.'"

Then crumpling the tract in his hand and tossing it from him contemptuously, he turned away, leaving the young temperance reformer with his enthusiasm in the cause down to zero. While this state of mind was predominant, the balance of the tracts on hand were thrown over a fence, and meeting a gust of wind, were scattered apart, and driven in various directions. The distributor returned home feeling mortified and discouraged. On reflection, however, he was vexed at himself, both for the bungling manner in which he had proceeded, and for his having been so easily thrown off by a rebuff.

"The tracts, at least, needn't have been wasted," said he, "that was a folly of which I ought to be heartily ashamed."

About an hour after this occurrence, a man came walking along the road, near where this little adventure took place. A piece of paper caught his eye, and stooping, he picked it up. Moving on, as he opened it, he commenced reading, and was soon deeply interested, for he walked slower and slower, and sometimes stopped altogether. This man was also a tavern-keeper. After reading the tract through, he placed it in his pocket and continued on his way.

"Stop and think, John," said a wife, in an appealing voice to her husband as the latter was about leaving the house.

"Don't talk to me in that way," replied the husband impatiently. "You couldn't act worse if I were a common drunkard."

"But the danger, John. Stop and think of that! There is a lion in the way."

"I am out of patience with you, Alice," said the man. "A high respect you have for your husband's good sense and good principles! As if I couldn't enjoy a glass now and then, without being in danger of becoming a miserable sot."

With this the man turned off, and took his way to the tavern, while his wife went weeping into the house. As he walked along, the words she had uttered—"Stop and think" wrung in his ears, and he tried to push them from his

thoughts, in order that he might not think. All at once, a fresh blast of wind blew from a field that adjoined the road, a piece of paper, and as it fell at his feet, his eye caught the words—

"STOP AND THINK."

The coincidence of language startled him for a moment. He took the piece of paper and commenced reading, and as he read, he walked slower and slower. One of Wilton's temperance tracts had fallen into his hands. It was a close appeal to the moderate drinker and set forth his danger in the fullest manner. At last the man stood still. Then he sat down by the road side, still reading on.

"There is danger," he at length murmured, folding up the tract as he spoke. Rising, he was irresolute as to whether he should return home, or keep on his way to the tavern. Had any one thrust the tract in his hand, he would have rejected it; but coming to him as it did, it found his mind prepared to hearken to its appeals. But the love of drink had been formed, and, at the prospect of having its accustomed gratification cut off, began to cry out for indulgence. A combat in the mind of the man was the result; and this continued, until appetite gained the victory so far, that he concluded for this time, at least, to go to the tavern, but to give up the habit thereafter. "I hate to turn back after I once start to do a thing," said he, as he moved on towards the tavern. "It's bad luck."

Still the argument for and against any further indulgence, kept going on, and he could not turn his mind from it.

At length the sign of the "Punch Bowl," whither he was wending his way, came in view, and the sight affected him with the old pleasure. In imagination, the refreshing and exhilarating glass was at his lips, and he quickened his pace involuntarily.

As he drew near, he saw the landlord sitting on the porch. The good natured old fellow did not smile with the broad smile of welcome that usually played over his countenance when a customer approached.

"How are you to-day, landlord?" said the man cheerfully, as he stepped upon the porch.

"Do you know the road you have come?" asked the landlord with a gravity of manner that surprised his customer.

"Yes," replied the man, "I've come the road to the Punch Bowl."

"Better say the road to ruin," returned the landlord.

"What is the matter?" inquired the man. "I never heard a landlord talk in that way before."

"It was the road to ruin for poor Bill Jenkins. That I know too well, and has been the road to ruin of a good many more that I don't like to think about. It will be your road to ruin if you keep on; so I would advise you to stop and think a little on the matter. If you want any liquor, you can get it from Jim at the bar; but I'd rather not have your sixpence in my till to-day. I won't feel right about it."

"What's the matter, landlord? What has put you in this humour?" said the man, who, in turn, became serious.

"I found a piece of paper on the road, as I walked along just now, and it had something printed on it that has set me to thinking. That's the matter. Ah me! I wish I was in better business. It doesn't make a man feel very pleasant to think that, in building himself up, he had dragged others down. And I'm rather afraid that's my position. Go home my friend, and don't let the sin of your ruin be on my conscience. You've got to loving liquor a little too well. May be you don't think so; but I know it. I have seen a great many men go down the hill, and I can tell the first steps. You have taken them. Stop and think before you go any farther."