

# Canada Temperance Advocate.

*Temperance is the moderate use of things beneficial, and abstinence from things hurtful.*

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## THE SOCIAL MAN.

*Abridged from "Tales of the Borders."*

As we look upon the title of our tale, now that we have written it, we cannot suppress a shudder of horror. Like the handwriting on the wall, it seems typical of misery, revolution, and death. Revolution and death, do we say? What revolution, in the common sense of the word—we mean in a political one—was ever productive of such deplorable effects, as that moral revolution to which the bottle bears the social man?—what death, viewed merely as a physical evil, can be compared to that moral and intellectual destruction to which the good-fellow so often subjects himself?

Our heart sickens as we pass in review before us the numbers of our early friends who have run this terrific career, who now fill timeless graves, or are yet in the land of existence, bearing about in their bosoms a living hell—whose hearts are already sepulchres. And, but that we thought the relation we are about to deliver, may be of service to some who, already standing on the brink, are not fully aware of their danger—but that we conceived the tale of talent, generosity, and worth, miserably destroyed by the unregulated social feelings, may arrest some kindred spirit in its path to unanticipated misery—we should yield to the feelings which urge us to fling down our pen, and give ourselves up to sorrow for the departed.

William Riddle was the only son of a shepherd, who dwelt upon the moorlands that overhang one of the tributaries of the Tweed. The old man was one of those characters which have been so often and so well described—a stern, grave, intelligent, religious Scottish shepherd. The broad Lowland bonnet did not cover a shrewder head than old David Riddle's; nor did the hoddie grey coat, throughout wide Scotland, wrap a warmer or more honest heart. His wife Rachel was one of those women of whom, notwithstanding the habitual discontent and sneers of men, there are thousands in this world, in this kingdom, nay, among our own Border hills—who, like the stars of heaven during the daylight, hold on their course noiselessly and unseen, but are, nevertheless, shining with a sweet and steady radiance, every one in its place, in the firmament. Placid, pious, and cheerful, with a quiet but kind heart, that ever and anon displayed its workings in the sweet light of her eyes, or in the "heartsome" smile that arranged her still lovely features into the symmetry of benevolence. David Riddle was verging towards three score, when William, the subject of the following narrative, was born. The old man's heart was entirely bound up in this child of his age. Frequently, not from necessity, but impelled by love, had he performed the ministrations of a mother to him; often on a sunny day, had he carried him, like a lamb, in the corner of his plaid, up to the hills; and often, laying the unconscious infant on the purple heath on the mountain side, had he knelt down before him, beneath the solitary sky, and poured out his heart in gratitude to the God who had bestowed on him this precious gift. When little William was able to follow his father among the flocks, they became inseparable; and it was beautiful to behold the old man laying aside the gravity and sternness of his nature, and renewing, with his little boy, the sports which the lapse of half a century had well nigh swept from his memory. They sought out together the nest of the lapwing and the moorfowl; they chased the humble bee over the heath in company; or, loitering down the mountain streams, assisted each other in the pursuit of the speckled trout. The old man taught his boy, amid the secluded glens, or upon the naked hill-tops, to modulate his voice to the hymns consecrated to religion throughout Scotland; the rich melody of the "Old Hundred," or the "Martyrs," rose in concert from their lips; or, perhaps, the aged shepherd played on the simple Scottish bagpipe, or which he had been, in his youth, a skillful performer, some of the touching airs of his mother-land, and then, placing the

pipe in William's hands, assisted him, by kind encouragement or skillful rebuke, to follow out the beautiful strain. Thus they lived together—

"A pair of friends, though one was young,  
And Matthew seventy-two."

A little incident, which occurred in William's childhood, had determined his father to rear him for the ministry. While yet only five years of age, he was found one day by his father, with an old family Bible upon his knee, some of the leaves of which he had torn out, and was arranging after a fashion of his own. On being asked by his father what he was doing, he replied—"That he thought the Evangelists differed in some portions of their history, and that he was trying to discover wherein the difference lay." The old man retired with streaming eyes; and from that moment, William Riddle was, like Samuel of old, vowed to the service of God. As he grew in years, he displayed proofs of talent which astonished the shepherd, and filled old David's heart with exultation. Before he was fifteen, there was not a stream, nor a legend that belonged to his native hills, which he had not celebrated in song. At length the period arrived when he was to be sent to College.

For four years William attended college during the winter, and remained with his father during the summer months.

It was not that his labour was required by the old man; for he had now amassed a sufficient sum, with his moderate habits, to make him independent; but the sight of William was pleasant to the aged shepherd, among the hills where they had played together, and which were consecrated to their affections. The young student had distinguished himself highly at college, and had gained the esteem, both publicly and privately expressed, of many of his preceptors. His heart was still uncontaminated, his morals pure, and his habits simple, as when he was a boy. It was at this time that Rachel died. As her life had been peaceful and, upon the whole, happy, so her deathbed was tranquil and resigned. Yet the misery which his ardent and imaginative nature might inflict upon him was still not shut out from her mind, and almost her last words were to warn him against indulging it too far. She died, and the old shepherd and his son were left to attempt to comfort each other. William was about again to depart to college, and he would fain have had his father to give up his duties and accompany him to Edinburgh. He dwelt upon his increasing feebleness, his age, already beyond the common lot of man, the solitude to which he would be left, the comfort they would be to each other if together. To all this the old man replied—"Comfort, my boy, there is none for me in this world, except in thee. Gradually the circle of my love has been narrowed: first, my own parents, then my children, last, my beloved Rachel, have been swept away; and now thou only art left for my earthly affections to embrace. Gladly for thy sake would I go to the city; but I think these hills could not bear to look on another while I lived—this cottage to shelter another shepherd while I am able to fling my plaid around me. It is a foolish fancy for an old man to cherish, yet I cannot bid it depart. Go, then alone, my dearest lad, and leave me in these scenes, which have become part of my being, to perform the duties in which my life has been spent. And still remember, William, when temptations assail thee, or bad men would lead thee by the cords of vanity or friendship, into vice, that there is a grey-haired man among these hills, whom the tale would send in sorrow to the grave."

William returned to college, with a heart softened both by grief and love. Strange, that out of this wholesome state of mind should have sprung the elements of wretchedness and vice! Yet so it was. He had written a poem on the subject of his late

\* The same anecdote is related of Dr. Thomas Brown, the philosopher.