

S16/K/9/6

Canada Temperance Advocate.

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

No. 8.

MONTREAL, DECEMBER, 1838.

VOL. IV.

As the Public Weekly Meetings have for the present been greatly interrupted by the state of affairs, the Committee have judged it proper to circulate the *Advocate* more widely in town; so that the present Number will be sent to many who do not subscribe, and who are requested to read and lend it to others.

From the "Stage Coach."

NELLY BELCHER.

Uncle Snooks had a pretty hard time on it sometimes, when the women folks used to come and plague him about not selling any more to their husbands. There was one Barny Belcher, who drank up his farm. They used to say his old cow choked him; because he sold her last of all his stock, and died in a fit, while he was drinking the very first dram, that he bought with the money he got for her. Barny's wife tormented uncle Zeik from morning to night; and her persecution, together with the loss of his property, as I always thought, drove him out of his business, and shortened his days. She was a proper firebrand, though she never took any spirit herself. There was not a happier couple in our parish, when they were first married; and they had a family of four little children, that every body used to notice, for their neat appearance. I've seen them many a time, of a Sunday, going to meeting, hand in hand, and all four abreast, along with their father and mother. Barny was a very thrifty farmer, and I never thought he was the man to die a drunkard. It used to be said, that there had'n't been a likelier couple married in the parish for many years; for though they had almost nothing to start with, yet they were, both of them amazing handsome to look at; they were as smart as a couple of steel traps, and very industrious into the bargain. They did surprising well for several years. But he got to be an ensign, and rum and regimentals did the business for poor Barny, in less than no time. When he got to be pretty bad, she first came to the house, and then to the shop, to get uncle Zeik not to let him have any more liquor. They had a good many talks about it, but uncle Zeik would have his way. At last she consulted a lawyer, and came over to the shop, and gave uncle Zeik a real dressing, before more than a dozen customers. 'Well Nelly Belcher,' said uncle Zeik, when she came in, resolved to be beforehand with her, 'what do you want to-day?' 'Mercy,' said she, 'if I can't have justice. You well know what I want. I now request once again to sell my husband no more spirit.' 'And how can I help it?' said Zeik, somewhat disturbed by her resolute manner. 'I have taken a lawyer's advice,' said she, 'and you have no right to sell to common drunkards.' 'Do you say that your husband is a common drunkard?' said he. 'To be sure I do,' she replied. 'I really do not think your husband is a common drunkard, Nelly Belcher,' said uncle Zeik. 'Snooks,' said she, clenching her fist, 'you are—what you are. You know that Barny is a common drunkard, and you made him so, you old—licensed, rum-selling, church-member.' 'Go out of my shop,' cried uncle Zeik, stepping towards her. 'I would'n't touch the poor woman,' said one of the company; 'she's driven on by the state of her husband and children.' 'Touch the poor woman!' cried Nelly, stretching herself up—and she was the tallest woman in the parish—'let him lay the weight of his rummy finger upon me if he dares; and though I'm poor enough in purse, Heaven knows I'll show him that I've the spirit of my father, who thrashed him when he was eighteen, for stealing a sheep-skin. I won't go out of his shop, nor budge an inch, till I've said my say, in the presence of ye all.' 'Nelly Belcher,' said uncle Zeik, 'you'll have to pay for this.' 'Pay for it!

cried Nelly, in a screaming voice, 'and hav'n't you got your pay already? Hav'n't you got the homestead and the stock and the furniture? And did'n't Barny pawn the children's clothes last Friday, and bring you every cent that he got for them? You've got every thing from the ridge-pole down; you've got all here, among your wages of iniquity; and as she said this, she gave a blow with her fist, upon the top of uncle Zeik's till, that made the coppers pretty lively, I tell ye. 'Snooks' said she, 'you've got every thing. I have not a pint of meal, nor a peck of potatoes for my children. Stop—I'm mistaken, there's an old rum jug in the house, that's been in your shop often enough; you ought to have that; and there's a ragged straw bed, you shall have them both, and any thing else you'll find, if you don't let Barny have any more rum. You've made your bargain Snooks, your own way; but there's a third party to it, that's the devil. You've got poor Barny's money in your till, and the devil's got your soul in his fire-proof, and he'll keep it there till the day of judgment.' Uncle Zeik offered Bijah Cody a handsome present, if he'd turn her out of the shop. 'I'd a leetle rather not, Mr. Snooks,' answered Bijah, with a look that showed plainly enough how much he enjoyed uncle Zeik's torment. 'Look here, Nelly Belcher,' said uncle Zeik—and he was getting wrathful, for he stamped his foot pretty considerable smart—'the second Tuesday of November next the court will sit, and you shall answer for this.' 'What care I for your court?' replied she; 'the day will come and it may come this hour, when a higher court will sit: and you shall answer for more than all this a thousand fold. Then you cold-hearted old man, I will lead my poor ragged children, before the bar of a righteous God, and make a short story of their wrongs, and of that poor young man's who has fallen by your hands, just as surely as though he had been killed with rat-bane. There's none of you here, that don't remember me and Barny, when we were married. Now, I ask you if you ever dreamt that we should come to this? Was there ever a little farm better managed?—And if I was not a careful, faithful, industrious wife to Barny, I wish you to say the very worst to my face. And were my little ones ill-treated? Had'n't they whole clothes for Sunday, and was'n't they constant at meeting for years, till this curse crept in upon us, like an adder? And till then did ye ever see a likelier man than Barny? And for his kindness to me and the children till that hour, it's for me to witness; and I say it before ye all, that before he tasted this old man's liquor, there never was a hard thought or a fitter word between us. He was the boy of my foolish love when he was seventeen, and the man of my choice when he was three and twenty. I gave him an honest heart that never loved another, and the trifle of worldly goods that my old mother left me; but he has broken the one and squandered the other. Last night, as I lay upon my straw bed, with my poor children, I thought of our young days, and our little projects of happiness; and, as I saw poor Barny, in my fancy, just the trim lad that he was, with his bright eye and ruddy cheek, I felt my eyes filling with tears, as they're filling now. I hope I may never shed another,' said she, dashing them off with the back of her hand, and resuming her look of vengeance. 'I'm going to cross your threshold for the last time, and now mark me well. I ask you once for all, to sell poor Barny no more liquor. If you do,