AN APPEAL

TO MEN OF WEALTH AND INFLUENCE, AGAINST THE USE OF INTOXICATING DRINKS.

Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.—DEUT. xxxii. 33.

ACCOUNTABILITY, proportionate to privileges possessed, and blessings conferred, constitutes an unvarying and prominent feature in God's moral government of sentient beings. Each individual of the human race is a unit in the mighty sum of humanity, and one cannot be removed without reducing the total of mankind; but, as in numericals, the value of each figure is affected by the position which it occupies in relation to the whole; so the circumstances in which a man is placed in time enhance or reduce his value as a member of human society; and as coin is only useful in administering to the necessities or happiness of mankind, so the highest position and the most commanding attainments should each be regarded as a a circulating medium, designed to promote the well-being of their possessor, and through him to benefit as large a number as possible of the human family. What is more utterly worthless than the miser's gold? Encased in coffers designed to resist the efforts of dishonesty to appropriate, it remains, secure it may be, but utterly valueless. Indeed, so far from conferring happiness on numbers, its only effect appears to be to render its proprietor miserable; for being quite unacquainted with its proper use, he is usually tortured with apprehension lest some unforeseen accident or subtle enemy should deprive him of his treasure. The principle by which men should govern their actions, so as to secure to themselves the greatest possible amount of good, is simply to use appropriately and wisely all the blessings they receive at the hands of a beneficent Providence.

Amongst the ordinary blessings which God bestows on man the most general are wealth and intellectual capacity. We select these from the mass, because they belong more especially to our present object, and are the fruitful soil in which many others germinate. Thus wealth confers station, and station begets influence, and influence, properly applied to the promotion of virtue and amelioration of suffering, sheds a heavenly radiance over the dark pathway of crime and sorrow. It is wisely ordained by "the only wise Potentate," that a great degree of apparent inequality should characterise the distribution of these benefits; nor should any question the propriety of the arrangement. Even human wisdom can discern to some

extent the utility of the plan, while faith reposes upon the assurance that "He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind."

"Order is heaven's first law, and this confess'd,
Some are, and must be greater than the rest;
More rich, more wise; but who infers from hence
That such are happier, shocks all common sense"

While the possession of wealth lays open to its possessor a large field for the exercise of benevolence, and thus renders accessible the sources of purest pleasure—that pleasure which rebounds upon the bestower from the recipient of his bounty—it is also accompanied with a tremendous responsibility, because of the effects which result from the proper or improper exercise of the influence which it commands. Every man exerts a two-fold influence in his own sphere of operation—the influence of precept and that of example. Of the preceptial influence of the wealthy little requires to be said, because experience proves, that unaccompanied by a corresponding example, the clearest truisms may be enunciated in vain. Precept indeed may be regarded as a dependant which requires the continual assistance of its proper predecessor and superior, a virtuous example. On the contrary, examplary tuition will rest secure upon its own basis, or proceed by the power of its own volition with the certainty of a good degree of success to the attainment of its desired object.

Let it be assumed then that the influence of every man's example is important—and this modest assumption we think none will deny—then it only requires that we remember, that in proportion to the extent of every man's influence upon society, his example will prove more or less beneficial or injurious, according to its character; and the conclusion is obvious, that each individual whom God has blessed with wealth, and consequently extensive influence, incurs an awful responsibility in presenting to the world an impure example.

In the following pages we purpose shewing that all adherents to the drinking customs of polite society are constantly setting a pernicious example before the members of their own households, and before the world.

The example of such is pernicious because it teaches that those whose opportunities for mental culture have been most numerous—and who consequently should be best prepared to judge—believe the use of intoxicating beverages to be a source of enjoyment. Now all men love pleasure; the mind naturally seeks for it: and if the rich and reputed wise derive pleasure from the use of liquor, the poor and the illiterate will naturally infer that they too may find it in the *flowing bowl and sparkling glass;* and in their pursuit of fancied happiness, many, very many, become the victims of a depraved and imperious appetite. It is generally admitted by the rich that temperance is very necessary for the poor; and some will even condescend to recommend to such the adoption of the principle of total abstinence, all unconscious, perhaps, that the voice of their example swells high above the utterance of their inconsistent pre-

cept, and brands them in the eyes of the world as men who "know the right, and who approve it too. Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue." The idea of giving offence to any class of men is quite foreign to our purpose; but we have to do with a subject which requires plainness of speech. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies; and society is bleeding and groaning in agony from the dire ravages of this blighting, corrupting plague; and you! yes! you who sit in high places! you are propagating the infection—you are perpetuating the torment, and that at the imminent peril of your own, your children's, and your friends' souls, bodies, and worldly property.

The example of such is pernicious, because it teaches that the presence of alcoholic stimulants in the social circle is necessary to the due entertainment of friends. If a man be poor, the fact that he is so does not lessen his attachments, or prevent the action of the generous impulses of his nature. On the contrary, experience proves that as riches increase—in many instances if not invariably—selfishness assumes a more prominent place, and the unsocial qualities of the mind become more clearly developed. Yet the humbler classes are prone to look upward for an example of sociability and hospitality in the entertainment of friends; and too many, in their weakness, are prepared to imitate to the utmost of their ability, and even beyond it, the custom prevalent in higher circles; and what an example is there presented for their imitation. "The tabret, pipe and wine are in their feasts,"—the bowl sparkling with what poets call *ruby wine*, but what the sacred canon designates *raging strong drink*,—the biting serpent and the stinging adder—and what modern science pronounces to be a concoction of deleterious substances skillfully amalgamated to please the taste, intoxicate the brain, destroy the system, and pollute society. But the rich drink and are merry. They assemble their friends and entertain them with this *elevating*, *enobling* elixir; and why should not the poor? Yes! ye rich men! the humbler classes of society follow your example, they pursue your footsteps in the dangerous path; and tens of thousands of each generation are thereby utterly, irrecoverably destroyed.

When we speak in general terms of the corrupting influence of the prevailing customs of the higher classes, there is danger that individuality may be forgotten, and the intended effect be frustrated. Many who are quite willing to admit the description as applicable to the united whole, will be convinced with greater difficulty of their own personal concern in the matter. Men are apt to underrate their own influence, especially when charged with exerting that influence for an evil purpose, but it must not be forgotten, that the great aggregate of mankind is composed of individuals; and if ever society is to be reformed, and pernicious customs abandoned, the work must proceed step by step, from one individual to another, until all the sources which supply the stream of evil are dried up; and then will earth hold jubilee, and the lips of virtue, while quaffing the nectar of the hills, will sweetly sing the redemption song of

thousands of liberated captives, too long the slaves of a tyrannical vice, which, approaching in the garb of a cheering friend, winds its adamantine chain around its victim; and then changing its aspect—throwing off its disguise—it infuses deadly poison into every vein, and prostrates all the energies of man.

If the reader is convinced that we have not overrated the evil effects which these drinking customs produce—if he is himself a member of the class addressed, and if philanthropy still finds a lodgment in his heart, surely he will no longer hesitate to sacrifice fashion at the shrine of humanity—to dash the empoisoned chalice from his lips, and add no more to the burden of condemnation accumulating through years past, which must now press with intolerable weight upon his soul. But if, after all, our labour is yet in vain—if we have failed to touch a sensitive chord in any heart, attend while we draw nearer home. Listen to the voice of wailing arising from your own firesides.

The example of the adherents of the drinking customs of *polite society* is *pernicious* to the members of *their own households.* Who will lightly jeopardize the present and eternal interests of those to whom they are bound by the ties of near relationship? One of the delusions to which affluence is peculiarly subject is an unwarranted confidence in the security which it affords its possessor. It is true that wealth can purchase exemption from many of the sufferings and dangers to which poverty is exposed; but there are dangers equally common to both; and there cannot be found on earth a more thorough leveller of all distinctions than intoxicating drink. Every human frame is formed after the same model. Whatever may be the characteristics of the exterior, none can claim a superior internal organization. The same food nourishes, and the same poison kills. All are subject to the same diseases, and all are liable to injury from the same causes. It is difficult to realize the transition from beauty to deformity—from virtue to vice, until the change has actually taken place. It is hard to conceive how the manly form may be bowed—the flashing eye grow dim—the brilliant intellect clouded, and all before the season of youth has passed away. Yet the change is not only possible, but easy, and is often accomplished with a rapidity astonishing to contemplate. To those who have carefully marked the effects of the habitual uses of intoxicating drinks, it has ceased to be a wonder that so many of the most promising of mankind are annually sacrificed upon the blood-stained altar of Bachus. Its sure result is the formation of an unnatural and craving appetite, which, when once matured, almost defies control, and hurries its victim onward, despite of every barrier erected as an impediment in his downward course, until self-respect itself sickens under its influence, and an entire abandonment to its gratification ensues. Then wealth, station, honour, ambition, intellect and truth, yea, even the persuasive influence of love itself exerts its power in vain. Lost to every good and ennobling feeling, the spell-bound victim slides down the slimy steep until he drops into the abyss of utter ruin.

In view of these startling truths we now appeal to you, whose position among men is high—whose influence is undeniably great; and we enquire, are you not aware that your sparkling glasses, so inviting in the eyes of youth, contain the elixir of death? Are you not aware that the poor debased specimens of the drunkard tribe, from the sight of whom you turn with loathing, and contact with whom you would consider polluting, in many cases commenced their evil course when they pledged your wives and daughters in your own halls, and at your own tables? Do you not know that some of your sons—your loved ones—have already forfeited their places in the ranks of fashion, and are sunk to the filthy level of pot house drunkards? Can you be unaware of the fact that the efforts of temperance associations to reclaim them have all been frustrated by the continuance of the tempting beverage in your houses? How think you can that young man, whose whole system is corrupted by the enervating vice—whose morbid appetite, like the *Horse Leech*, continually cries give! give!—how can he resist the powerful temptation to indulge, when his father, and, alas! it may be, his mother and lovely sisters, with the whole circle of his once loved and respected relatives, allure him by their example—that most powerful preacher—to partake of the drink he has cause to dread more than death? The sight, the smell, the taste, are all grateful to his disordered senses. The knawing, craving sensations of his awakened appetite plead hard for their accustomed stimulant. The remembrance of past suffering, it is true, admonishes him to beware. To drink he knows is death—moral if not temporal death; but his system is unnerved, his moral principle is weakened, if not destroyed, and his mental energy is gone. How can he resist? He cannot. He drinks again—again he falls, and he falls the victim of your fashionable drinking customs. You have furnished the means by which he completes his ruin.

But you contend that he should control his appetite. He should drink in moderation, and avoid excess. If he would adhere to the example of his friends, no evil would ensue. We cannot pause to reason this point with you. We should undervalue your intelligence in supposing that you were blinded by such sophistry. You cannot suppose that the raging maniac can control his ravings, or that the helpless paralytic can command his motions. No more can the confirmed inebriate control his appetite, when once aroused by the application of the producing and exciting cause.

Conscious of the unpalatable character of many of the foregoing statements, we should hesitate to send this messenger into your houses, were we not fully persuaded of the truthfulness of the picture which we have drawn, and the consequent necessity for an immediate change. In our day the spirit of progression and improvement is abroad. The humbler classes are rapidly becoming elevated in the scale of society. Education and the diffusion of general information are producing very important changes in the feelings and views of mankind, and gradually, but surely, is the principle of *total abstinence* from intoxicating drinks gaining ground.

and becoming incorporated with the codes of morality of all sections of the Christian church. And, sweeping as the assertion may appear, we hesitate not to declare that the time is at hand, when even riches will fail to secure respect without the adoption of that principle. We are aware that a prejudice exists amongst the higher classes against uniting in the temperance movement, because of the supposed necessity of mingling too much with men of inferior station. Happily, however, such a result is by no means necessary. Retain if you will all your exclusiveness. Shun as much as ever all intercourse with the *vulgar*. We are by no means fastidious on such minor points; but abandon the wine cup, abandon it forever; and henceforth let the influence of your example be thrown on the side of humanity, of benevolence, and of virtue.
