

Temperance and Prohibition.

THE BOTTLE.

A room, whose windows—windows in name only, since every vestige of glass had vanished, it may have been years ago, its place being supplied by rags—rattled their skeletons of frames in a stiff November gale. A few crazy tiles upon the roof kept up an intermittent accompaniment, while every now and again small cascades of mortar coursed down the chimney into the rusty and broken-barred grate.

With his head upon his arm, lying over an old table, was a man, apparently contented—aye, it may be said, happy—with his lot, since the roar of the elements made no impression, awoke no expression of annoyance, or disturbed his dreams, for he slept soundly. His face was not a good face to look upon, sodden, with pendulous, trembling lower lip and twitching features, that told only too plainly what scaffolding had reared it. Vice, passion and drink. Behold a slave more bound than by fetters of steel, more powerless than if held in granite walls, more helpless than if guarded by an army. Upon the table behold his fetters, his dungeon, and his gaoler—the bottle.

Upon the floor was the child, wide and hollow-eyed, gaunt with hunger, and vainly striving to get some warmth by huddling the straw upon which it lay closer to its shivering body.

Evidently it was no relation to the man, else, surely upon such a night as this, he would have clasped it to his breast for warmth and comfort; but he took no notice, though for a moment he stirred uneasily, then stretched out a hand, as if blindly groping for something that he loved. The child saw the movement and scrambled up on its bare feet to go towards the man, but at that moment he found what he was searching for, and clasped it tightly to his heart—the bottle. The child, looking through eyes that had long forsaken weeping as of no avail, fell back shivering upon its wet straw pallet; yet, though you may believe me not, the man was father to the child. The squalid room, the drunken man, the starving child, and, triumphant over all, the bottle. It was a picture fit for the pen of Hogarth.

An hour passed, two hours, and awoke some semblance of animation in the man. The child had managed to get a little sleep, but, at the first movement of the man, awoke alert and ready. Seeing the man was not yet awake, but heavy in a drunken stupor, the child rose stealthily and withdrew the bottle from the arms that hugged it to his heart, and hid it underneath the straw of his pallet, and then lay down upon it. A few minutes and the man awoke. This time he looked around, searching for his treasure, then he lurched heavily towards the wretched bed, and dealt the child a heavy kick.

"Whersh bottle, you young devil?" he stammered.

"Father!" came from the child's lips. Father! Oh! the mockery of that name! "Father, I haven't it; and father, you've had plenty to-night. Don't drink more! You've had it all. The bottle's empty!"

"Give it 'ere," he yelled. "You've

emptied it, but I'll teach you to steal my drink." He seized the child by the neck and dragged it roughly off the straw, and in so doing disclosed the bottle that the child had lain upon to hide. Grasping the bottle by the neck, he dealt the child a fearful blow upon the temple. With a low moan it fell back, bleeding from a frightful wound, and the man, muttering to himself and clasping the treasure, once more, sat again at the table, took a long draught, and relapsed in drunken unconsciousness, while a glint of moonlight reflected on the bottle made it appear as the eye of a basilisk, cold, malignant, and still triumphant, gazing upon the scene.

Daybreak. The man woke slowly from his debauch.

"Ned," he said; "Ned, lad, come here."

No answer.

"Ned, lad, here."

Again no answer.

"Ned, my lad." Surely those tones, so gentle, could never come from him. And yet they did; they were spoken as if they held a world of love for the lad that lay dead upon the floor, and, sunk, debased, and murderer though he was, he had loved his victim dearly.

"Ned! He must have gone out," he muttered. Then, staggering up, he went to get some few sticks to make a handful of fire. What was that that lay across the floor, a dark red stream still flowing freely from his poor head. He pressed his hands to his temples.

"My God," he cried, "my God, he is dead! He has been killed! God have mercy, I have killed him!"

In a moment he was down upon his knees, with the poor boy pressed tightly to his breast, rocking to and fro in anguish, crying wildly.

"Ned—my Ned!" kissing with fearful energy the dead lips of his son, as though by every passion he could bring back life to him. Alas, there was no answering kiss, and the child that had hungered for a word only a few short hours ago had now a thousand endearments showered upon its deaf, dead ears. And the man who spurned him with a kick was now a broken suppliant for one last kiss.

Gazing round, his eyes fell upon the bottle, the dirty label, smeared a dull crimson. With a loud cry, as recollection forced itself upon him, he seized the accursed thing and flung it across the room to shatter it in ten thousand pieces; but it struck the straw pallet, and with a sneering ring rolled undamaged to the floor. And the man, with a piercing scream, fell senseless by the body of his son.

Night. Again he woke to consciousness to find two policemen bending over him, the light from a "bullseye" thrown upon his face.

Said one, "He has murdered the lad with the bottle. See where he hit him, and the label is bloodstained. That was his weapon. Come, my man, up you get."

They had placed the bottle upon the table, and, catching the reflection from the "bullseye" it seemed to show the dull red gleam of murder in its wicked eye of light.

With a shuddering cry he hid his face in his hands and passed with his

captors out into the night. And the bottle stood triumphant upon the table. Triumphant over honor, over duty, over love, over life itself. The uncrowned king, whose monarchy was absolute, nay, whose power is supreme when once its subjects bend the knee to its allegiance.—*Reynold's Newspaper.*

IS MODERATION IN DRINK A VIRTUE?

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Blair; how much better you look since I last saw you," was Mrs. Dunlap's remark as she met Mrs. Blair.

"Yes," was the reply. "Since our little Willie, who belongs to the Band of Hope, persuaded his father and mother to sign the pledge, we have all been very well; never enjoyed better health."

"Do you really approve of total abstinence, Mrs. Blair I don't. I think it quite necessary to take a glass of the good creature our Heavenly Father has provided for us—every night, at least. I couldn't sleep without it, I'm sure."

"Do you mean cold water, Mrs. Dunlap? because I don't know of any other good creature in the way of drink provided by him."

"Oh, no! I don't mean cold water. I've never taken more than a few drops at a time in my life, unmixed, with wine or spirit, and they gave spasms and a choking sensation in my throat."

"That's strange! I've never heard of drops of cold water giving people such complaints. They must be made of different stuff to our Father Adam, who hadn't anything else to drink."

"Well, I have no sympathy for those who drink to excess. Moderation in strong drink I believe to be a virtue."

Mrs. B.—"Moderation in the use of poison a virtue? Let me tell you a story from my own experience, and you will see whether moderation is a virtue. My mother and father were moderate, I never saw them the worse for liquor. There were four of us; we were allowed a small portion of beer at dinner, no more. David, my eldest brother, went to sea, a midshipman. After two years he came home a drunkard, robbed my father's desk and rifled my mother's pockets for money to supply the immoderate desire for strong drink."

"Shocking! but of course he hadn't proper control of himself."

"No, while he touched the liquor it controlled him. William, the second son, went to Australia, and after a few years of immoderate drinking died suddenly one Christmas morning on the floor of the bedroom he occupied. My sister was wooed and won by a moderate Christian. One Sunday night after singing at church, as he always did—he had a lovely voice—he went to supper with a moderate member of the church. He went home late at night, for the first time frenzied with drink—and gave my sister her death blow—"

"Then he must have been a great brute!"

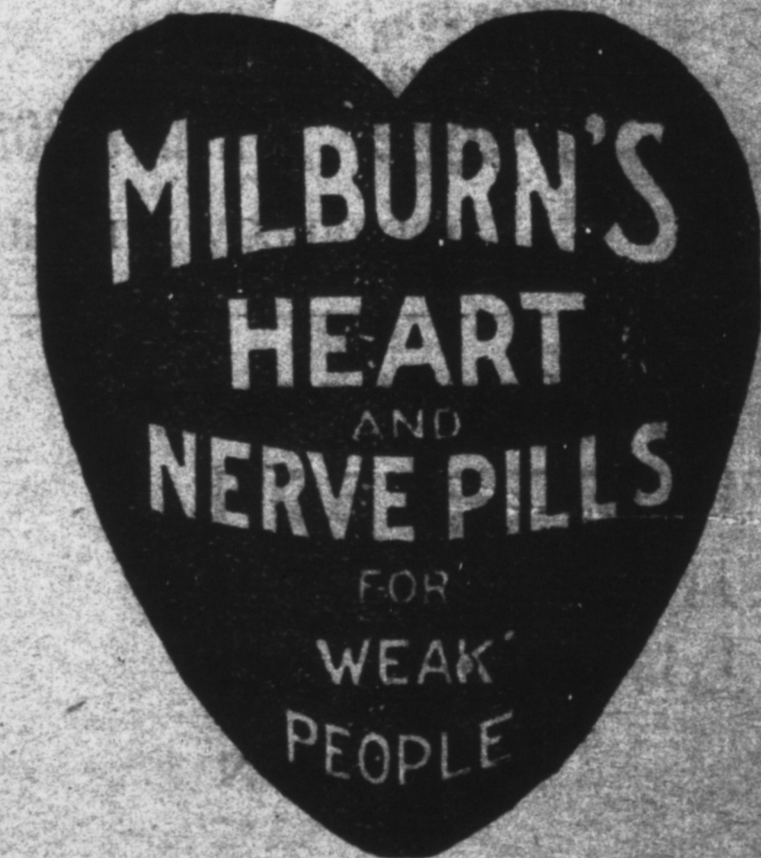
"A great brute! no, brutes never get drunk, they satisfy their thirst with cold water, and there's an end of it. A tiger will not turn his wife and cubs out of house and home because the cold water has got into his head. No, all the brute creation are water drinkers. When thirst is appeased they will not be tempted to take more."

"Well! I certainly never heard of that before, and I am afraid that I have been advocating the drink I very much like, and—and—well well I remember my bill last year doubled the one of the

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year before,—but what became of your sister's husband—was he hung?"

"No, my sister died by slow degrees of a broken heart, and he is a maniac in an asylum."

"All this is very perplexing; it really frightens me. Do you think that I am in danger? I wonder what my next bill will be?"

"The probability is, that if it was doubled last year, it may be quadrupled this, as there is no standing still in the moderate ranks. One hundred thousand drunkards die every year, and they were all moderate once. It is very sad, but quite true. I should say, flee for your life."

"By signing the pledge you mean. Well, there is no time like the present, I suppose, so let me have the pledge; and now will you go with me and see that the brandy and whiskey are destroyed."—*N. Y. Advocate.*



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