

Literature, &c.

From the Canada Temperance Advocate.
THE DRUNKARD'S WIFE.

I well remember a cold and stormy eve in the winter of 1824. Two of my boys had been off that day fishing; and I sat at home, over the nearly expiring embers, endeavouring to prepare something for my youngest son, who was stretched upon the low bed beside me; nearly gone with the scarlet fever. My tears fell fast, as his low moaning voice reached my ear. I rose to assist him, but I noticed a mortal paleness and come over his face. I staggered towards the bed. One gasp for breath, and then it was all over with him for ever. How long I lay insensible I know not, but when I revived, I found myself in another apartment. The candle burnt feebly in its socket, the fire was entirely extinguished, and beside me, in the habiliments of the grave, stretched upon a plank across two chairs, lay my son, so lately full of health and animation, now a cold and silent corpse. I arose and entered the other room; neither my husband nor my boys had returned. The storm howled without, and the rain beat violently against the window; and there I was, alone, in that dreary cottage, at the late hour of midnight, with the corpse of my darling boy. Some neighbour had accidentally entered whilst I was insensible, and had laid him out for his long resting place; a few arms full of wood they had also kindly left me, and some provisions.

An hour elapsed ere I heard any sound without, save the storm. Voices were then heard, approaching the cottage, and in a few moments my husband and my two eldest sons stood before me, dripping with rain—and shall I write it, all of them beastly intoxicated. I cannot, oh! I cannot describe the terrors of that fatal night; the harsh abuse of my husband; heartless contempt and neglect of my boys, whom I had loved with all a mother's fondness. 'Where is your nursing Sam,' demanded my husband, casting an eye towards the bed. I handed him the lamp, and pointed to the other room. He took it, and staggered towards the door. Upon opening it, the pale inanimate corpse of his son met his eye. With an exclamation of terror he fell upon the floor. The boys hastened to help him. They stood a moment to contemplate the emaciated countenance of their brother, and then burst forth into a wild and childish sob of grief. Intoxicated though they were, their hearts had not yet closed over every generous feeling.

But the morning brought new horrors. Oh how can I write it, and yet, my heart has become so burdened with grief, that I feel I must give vent to my tale of woe. The boat in which my two sons went a fishing was found upset a few rods below the house, and both of them were drowned beside it with their fishing tackle in their hands. What a scene for a mother. Deprived in one short night of three of my children, and these three the dearest to my soul. My poor heart which had hitherto borne up under all the accumulated ills which I was afflicted, now gave way. No tear, no sob escaped me; but a low brooding melancholy settled upon my mind. Days and weeks passed away. I was insensible alike to harshness and pity. Even the iron hearted rum selling christian, who came to see me, appeared touched with my situation, and was heard to declare, that if he was not commanded to look out for his family, he would never sell any more rum to my husband.

I said before, days and weeks passed away, and still I heeded not the scenes which were transpiring around me. When I awoke to returning consciousness, I found myself in another dwelling, much more comfortable, and my husband seated beside me anxiously regarding me. He had been so shocked at the death of our children, all of which had arisen from his beastly thirst for rum, that he swore he would never take a glass again. During the six weeks of my sickness, he had religiously kept his word. Several of his former friends had heard of his reform, and had come forward to assist him. They had procured him a situation in a large establishment in the village, and we had removed from the thatched cottage by the river side to a small and neat dwelling, nearly opposite my former residence.

I well remember the smile that played over my husband's fine features as I awoke from that living death. It was like the smile which I had often seen in our young days of innocence and hope. Oh, what a cheering sensation it sent to my heart. It atoned, at once, for the errors and abuse of years, and I arose from my bed with a lightness of step to which

I was a stranger. My husband flung his arms around me, I will drink no more rum, my dear Mary,' he observed, 'I will treat you better than I ever did before, I have been a harsh and unfeeling monster to you; yet now I intend to reform.' 'Amen,' I responded with my whole heart.

I was standing the first morning after my recovery, looking out of the front window, regarding the splendid mansion before me into which I had once entered with all the youthful gaiety of a happy bride, and out of which I had been driven by a deadlier curse than that which sent our first parents from Paradise. Our rum selling professor stood at the door. My heart ached at the sight of him. I knew him to be the man, who, under the plea of friendship for my husband, had allured him to his store, and had been the chief cause of consummating his ruin; I knew that my husband had spent whole nights at his store, surrounded with a number of worthless associates. I knew that my two eldest boys had been brought often under this man's influence, and I then turned aside from the sight of him, pained and affected even to tears. Now my eyes were open to that man's real character. I could no longer discover in him any trait of christian gentleness or love. And yet he would sit at the communion table. He made a loud profession of his zeal in the cause of Christ. He would exhort the longest and loudest in meetings, and with his hands still covered with the poison, which was sending death and desolation around him, he would lift them up in holy prayer to God. What consummate hypocrisy!

Six months rolled rapidly away, during which time my husband still continued kindly, affectionate, and temperate. My two sons had procured excellent situations on board one of our merchant ships, and were already many thousand miles off at sea, on a long and distant voyage. My mind had become sobered with many long years' acquaintance with grief; and although I found considerable comfort from the consciousness that I had always done my duty to my husband and my family, still there were hours in which I experienced deep and uncontrollable agony of heart. I had my fears for the strength of my husband's mind to resist temptation. Like the wave tossed, wearied and troubled mariner, I had ventured my all upon the strength of an almost foundered bark; and if this failed, I knew that my earthly career would be short, and sad; yet I studiously concealed all my fears from my husband, I met him with a smile whenever he came home, and tasked all my powers to render his fireside happy. He treated me with the utmost affection, as if to atone for his many cruel neglects; and his smile was as winning, and the tone of his voice as gentle as they ever appeared in the days of our early love. But oh! another cloud—dense, dark, and dreadful, came over our peaceful fireside. Well do I remember the night. Oh, yes! it is stamped with a fearful force upon my memory for ever. It was a cold and windy Saturday night, in November, 1825. The shutters were closed; a good fire was burning upon the hearth; and I was seated beside it, with my work in my hand, waiting the return of my husband. He had gone to our rum selling christian's store, against my advice, to buy a few groceries for family use. Ten o'clock had passed ere he returned. My quick eye detected an unsteadiness in his step as he entered, and his whole appearance betrayed the effects of his deadly enemy. I passed a sleepless night; my couch was literally wet with tears; and in the agony of my heart, I wished I had never been born.

My husband's descent was fearfully rapid. Within a few weeks, he was seen lying at mid day in the streets, absolutely helpless, the sport of unfeeling boys. He lost his situation, and was again deserted by all his friends. In vain I reasoned with him. So powerfully had his thirst for liquor become aroused, that for me to attempt to speak to him was sufficient to draw upon me the most bitter imprecations; and yet I begged, and entreated, and wept, yea more, upon my knees I imploringly besought him to renounce a habit which would ruin forever both his soul and body. I called also upon the rum selling professor, and upon several other persons, two of whom were the select men of the village, and entreated them not to sell him liquor. I pleaded with them with all the eloquence that a wretched and neglected wife could command. I told them of all my early history—of my once peaceful fireside—of the deadly blight which had come over it—of the many wretched hours I had passed—of the many sleepless nights and troubled days I had experienced—of the many, many tears I had shed—of the cold neglect and harsh treatment of a once

kind and still tenderly beloved husband. And what, think you, were the feeling answers I received to my appeal. The answer of the wealthy rum selling christian was: 'I have a family to look out for, and must provide for them;' and then when I mentioned his ability to support his family without selling rum to my husband, his answer was, 'if I don't sell him rum, others will.' Some of them, I must say, were however so conscientious, that they said they would not sell to him when he was already drunk, but if he came to their store perfectly sober, and called for liquor, he should have it.

My husband had now become a common labourer upon the wharfs, and all the money he obtained was spent for rum. I was compelled for a subsistence to take in sewing; and often have I, after a hard day's work, during which I had not tasted a mouthful of food, been compelled to relinquish to him my earnings, with which he would get dreadfully intoxicated. My former neighbours and friends now stood afar off. All had deserted me. I was miserably wretched. How could it be otherwise? I was the wife of a drunkard.

In this state four years rolled away. I well remember one night when my husband came home more deeply intoxicated than usual. He had been fighting with some one of his companions, and had been badly bruised. My tears fell fast as I bound up a severe wound upon his head. A few of them fell upon his hand; he looked up in my face, and sternly commanded me to stop my tears. I bent upon my knees before him, to supplicate his mercy and forgiveness. Oh that blow! that blow! It fell with a fearful force upon my defenceless head.

Nearly four years had since passed, and I am now the tenant of a poor house. My husband is still alive, they say, a wretched wanderer on the face of the earth; and my two boys have become the most profligate and abandoned sailors in the navy. I am a wife and a mother, and I have still all of a wife's and mother's solicitude for the objects once so dear, and still so tenderly beloved. But ah! why do I weep? There are many wretched widows, and many miserable wives in this poor house with me, who have been sent here by the intemperance of their husbands; there are many tears shed in this house over ruined prospects and blighted hopes; there are many hearts here broken with anguish, and rendered desolate with sorrow, and often, in the still hour of night, have I heard a deep and convulsive sob, and then the mention of a name dear to the heart of some of my wretched companions.

Christian fathers and mothers! have you followed me through the pages of my short and painful history? What think you of the sufferings of a drunkard's wife? Oh! could you know of the many dark hours of unutterable wretchedness which they are compelled to pass! Could you look but once into their care worn and desolate hearts, you would read here a deadlier picture of the evil effects of intemperance of their husbands; than my pen can draw! You would not, you could not, hesitate to lend every influence you possess, in favour of the Temperance cause. The very happiness and peace of your domestic fireside demands it of you. How do you know but what these precious young immortals, now sporting upon your knee, may yet become the wretched and deluded victims of this insatiate monster? Your influence and your example will, in a great measure, decide this question.

Young men and maidens! listen for a moment to one who was once the gayest and happiest of you all. I conjure you, for the sake of all that you hold sacred in this life, and all that is valuable in eternity, to banish from your presence, henceforth and forever, the intoxicating glass. Your hearts are now light and unaffected by the blighting, withering, curse of intemperance; so was mine. Your prospects for many future years of happiness are now roselent with promise; so were mine. The morning of your life is now bright and unclouded; so was mine.

And yet believe me, all these prospects, so bright and so beautiful, cannot save you from a dark and troubled destiny like mine. You will often meet in it those, who, under the plea of friendly mirth, will set before you the sparkling, inebriating glass. If you would seal your character for this world, and your destiny for eternity—*DRINK, DRINK.* Believe me, your summer's sun will go down at noon in darkness and desolation.

Reader, whoever you are, and whatever you may be, my blessing is upon you. Written as this appeal is, in the midst of bodily pain, and under circumstances so full of anguish, I hope it will find its way to your heart, and exert a

salutary influence upon your future conduct. Farewell.

From Blackwood's Magazine.
THE FIRST AND LAST DINNER.

A TALE OF LIFE.
TWELVE friends, much about the same age, and fixed, by their pursuits, as permanent inhabitants of the metropolis, agreed, one day when they were drinking their wine at the Star and Garter at Richmond, to institute an annual dinner among themselves, under the following regulations: That they should dine alternately at each other's houses on the first and last day of the year; and the first bottle of wine uncorked at the first dinner, should be recorked and put away to be drunk by him who should be the last of their number; that they should never admit a new member; that when one died, eleven were to meet, and so on; and that when only one remained, he should, on those two days, dine by himself, and sit the usual hours at his solitary table; but the first time he dined so alone lest it should be the only one, he should then uncork the first bottle, and in the first glass, drink to the memory of those who were gone.

There was something original and whimsical in the idea, and it was eagerly embraced. They were all in the prime of life, closely attached by reciprocal friendship, fond of social enjoyments, and looked forward to their future meetings with unalloyed anticipations of pleasure. The only thought, indeed, that could have darkened those anticipations, was one not likely to intrude itself at this moment, that of the hapless wight who was destined to uncork the first bottle at his lonely repast.

It was high summer when this frolic compact was entered into; and as their pleasure yacht skimmed along the dark bosom of the Thames, on their return to London, they talked of nothing but their first and last feasts of ensuing years.—Their imaginations ran out with a thousand gay predictions of festive merriment. They wanted in conjectures of what changes time would create.

'As for you, George,' exclaimed one of the twelve, addressing his brother-in-law, 'I expect I shall see you as dry, withered and shrunken as an old eel skin, your mere outside of a man!' and he accompanied the words with a hearty slap on the shoulder.

George Fortescue was leaning carelessly over the side of the yacht, laughing the loudest of any at the conversation which had been carried on. The sudden manual salutation of his brother-in-law threw him off his balance, and in a moment he was overboard. They heard the heavy splash of his fall, before they could be said to have seen him fall.—The yacht was proceeding swiftly along; but it was instantly stopped.

The utmost consternation now prevailed. It was nearly dark, but Fortescue was known to be an excellent swimmer, and startling as the accident was, they felt certain he would regain the vessel. They could not see him. They listened. They heard the sound of his hands and feet. An answer was returned, but in a faint, guttural voice, and the exclamation 'O God!' struck upon their ears. In an instant, two or three, who were expert swimmers, plunged into the river, and swam toward the spot whence the exclamation had proceeded. One of them was within arm's length of Fortescue; he saw him; before he could be reached, he went down, and his distracted friend beheld the eddying circles of the wave just over the spot where he had sunk. He dived after him, and touched the bottom; but the tide must have drifted the body onward, for it could not be found.

They proceeded to one of the nearest stations where drags were kept, and having procured the necessary apparatus, they proceeded to the fatal spot. After the lapse of about an hour, they succeeded in raising the lifeless body of their lost friend. All the usual remedies were employed for restoring animation, but in vain; they now pursued the remainder of their course to London in mournful silence, with the corpse of him who commenced the day of pleasure with them in the fullness of health, of spirits, and of life! And in their severe grief, they could not but reflect how soon one of the joyous twelve had slipped out of the little festive circle.

The months rolled on, and cold December came with all its cheering round of kindly greetings and merry hospitalities; and with it came a softened recollection of the fate of poor Fortescue: eleven of the twelve assembled on the last day of the year, and it was impossible not to feel their loss as they sat down to dinner. The very irregularity of the table, five on one side and six on the other, forced