

THE SIN OF THE TEMPTER.¹

“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness.”—HABAKKUK ii. 15.

ABOUT six hundred years before Christ, the great Chaldean or Babylonian empire reached the height of its power. It rose rapidly in a few generations upon the ruins of the Assyrian or Ninevite kingdom by treacherous rebellion and violent wars, until it reached the zenith of its wickedness and success under Nebuchadnezzar. It is this triumphant power which forms the main subject of Habakkuk's prophecies. He foresees it founded in violence and revolt, ravaging its unoffending neighbors abroad, and building up its splendor at home by domestic tyranny and exaction, until its iniquities are full; and it meets an overthrow as astounding as its successes. But it was in this short and rapid career of national crime that it was employed by God as a rod to scourge rebellious Judah. In like manner had Assyria been used to punish the kingdom of the Ten Tribes.

We learn that rapacity and violence were not the only crimes of the Babylonian kingdom. It appears that it was also notoriously guilty of propagating its false religion: a form of gross idolatry which was probably peculiarly arrogant and wicked. This people not only overthrew the altar and worship of the true God, and did what they could to suppress the very existence of his visible church, but profanely asserted the inferiority of Jehovah, and inculcated in the conquered nations the imitation of their own vices. Idolatry is as corrupting to man as it is dishonorable to God. It is the parent of all forms of moral depravity, and of all crimes. Hence the question between idolatry and the worship of the true God is always one between vice and virtue; so that, even if God's exclusive claim to the homage of

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his creatures be set aside, a most solid reason remains for his forbidding and punishing the worship of idols.

This intimate relation between false religions and gross morals may help to explain the fact that the symbolical language of prophecy has selected some of the more sensual vices to represent the complex guilt of idolatry. In many places (as Jer. iii. 1; Ezek. xvi. 15; and Rev. xix. 12) it is represented by the sin of unchastity; in Rev. xvii. 2-5, the idolatry of Rome is symbolized by the combined figures of adultery and drunkenness; and in the text, the inculcation of false religion by the Chaldeans by enticing to the sin of drunkenness alone. When we give this general sense to the figure of one putting his bottle to his neighbor, we by no means exclude a particular reference to the literal sin of intoxication; for doubtless this was one of the abominations with which the orgies of their pagan worship were celebrated.

Now, as Babylon was the great persecutor and destroyer of the church under the Old Testament, so the Romish apostasy has been its great enemy and corrupter under the New. Hence it is, that in the Apocalypse, *Babylon* is the prophetic name for Rome and Popery. The symbol of Rev. xvii. 2-5, a pompous and licentious queen, as abandoned as splendid, seducing with the golden cup of her uncleanness and abominations the mighty ones of the earth, and drunk with the blood of saints, may assist us to explain the figure of the text. The crime of Rome was that she persecuted and slew a part and endeavored to corrupt the remainder of Christendom with her false religion and gross morals. Such, therefore, was the sin which the text denounces in Babylon: the teaching of irreligion and vice, and soliciting to its commission. The disgraceful exposure resulting from the seduction of the foolish victim represents the degradation and shame which the malignant tempter produces, and then scorns.

The principles of God's moral government are stable; the tremendous judgment of the Chaldean empire is but one instance of the righteous rule by which God has ever punished those who tempt their fellows to sin. The verses next to our text predict, in language of terrible power, the appropriate retribution which he poured out upon Babylon. The humiliation and ruin which this people had wrought upon so many of their innocent neighbors was speedily visited in its extremest form upon them; and

the heaven-daring compound of impiety and sensuality, which they had gloried in inculcating, was the immediate occasion of their punishment. The proud kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar so speedily raised to the pinnacle of pomp and seeming strength, as speedily tottered to its fall. In the third generation from him the weak and impious Belshazzar held the throne, successful only in disorganizing his empire, provoking his enemies and distinguishing his own infamy. In the very night that he was celebrating an impious and disgusting revel, profaning the holy utensils of Jehovah's temple, and filling his palace with vile excess and lust, the hardy Medes and Persians forced the two-barred gates of brass, ravaged the pompous city, and slew the swinish king with his herd of parasites in the midst of their debauch. Here ended the haughty dynasty of Chaldea in ignominious and vile defeat, the victim rather of its own baseness than of its enemies' force. And the same God who directed this retributive drama sits in judgment upon sinners now, and pronounces the same "woe" against him who entices his neighbor to dishonor God by irreligion or himself by vice. Do not feel, my hearer, that we are enervating the majesty of this truth when we descend from the review of that grand assize of Providence in which nations and thrones were the culprits, and apply the principle to the conscience of the individual tempter of his fellow-man. Viewed in the light of eternity, the infliction of the disease of sin upon one soul is a more tremendous calamity than the overthrow of dominions and powers on this earth. No scenery of earthly crime and woe can form too grand a background for the suitable presentation of this sin and its punishment, though pertaining to the smallest sinner in this house.

My subject, then, is *the sin of tempting a fellow-man to transgression*. For the sake of brevity, I must classify the multifarious forms in which this sin is committed, under four heads.

The lowest class in guilt is that which unintentionally entices others to transgression by the mere force of evil example. These persons directly intend only their own sinful gratification in the breaking of God's law, and, therefore, their purpose is not intentionally malignant towards their fellows, nor their guilt so aggravated in this respect. But yet it is their duty to remember the obvious fact that man is an imitative and social creature, so that every deed performed by fellow-men exerts some

influence to produce its imitation. The power of different habits and principles dictating opposite acts may not be in every case overcome by this influence, but it is always to some extent undermined by a process, it may be as slight and yet as sure as the "continual dropping which weareth away a stone." No evil action done in the knowledge of a fellow-creature is wholly devoid of the mischievous power of example, and no man is so obscure as to be without influence on others. Hence, while he who creates an unintentional evil example is not guilty of the malignant design of ruining the souls of others, he is guilty of a reckless indifference to their ruin. In carrying out the sinful and forbidden purpose of grasping unlawful pleasures, he incurs the further sinful result of misleading others. As he who accidentally takes life when he intended to commit an unlawful assault is guilty of murder, so these men are guilty of the blood of souls.

The second class is of those who provide for their fellow-men the means and appliances of vice from motives of gain or other selfish good to themselves. Their immediate object is not to ruin the virtue of others, but to secure for themselves advantage from the employment of the *apparatus* of transgression, while they well know, and coolly disregard the fact, that the use of the appliances they provide usually and surely results in sin, guilt, and injury to their victims. If it were equally convenient to secure from those victims the selfish advantages which they desire, by some more innocent expedient, they would have no objection to doing so; but as interest and convenience dictate it, they deliberately plan to make their ends out of the ruin of their neighbors' morality. To this class belong those who offer to the community the common means of drunkenness; to it belong all the varied troops of harpies, the gamesters, the thespians, the "singing men and singing women," who live by the dissipated and corrupting amusements of society. Here, likewise, must be classed all those literary caterers, whether the Grub-street hack who spins out of his sordid brain the penny fiction for the million or the towering genius who seeks readers and applause (objects as sordid, when prized as he prizes them, as the rusty shilling that is craved to relieve the hunger and purchase the dirty debauch of Grub-street) by painting vice or inflaming unholy emotions; whether the merchant prince at whose golden wand

steam presses whirl to print the mental poison or the smaller dealer who scatters them for a penny profit through the land. We denounce the unfeeling man who for filthy lucre will offer his fellow-man the stupifying anodyne or the fiery draught which steals away the brain. By what argument do we judge him a less sinner who perverts the heavenly gifts of intellect in order to debauch the conscience or to burn in on the mind the images of lust and vice with the fires of eloquence or fancy till the brain is intoxicated with a worse phrensy than that of wine?

The guilt of all this class of tempters is far heavier than of the first, because the result is with them intentional and the motive selfish. In God's sight they are the deliberate producers of all the crime, guilt, and misery which may be reasonably foreseen as flowing from the vicious appliances which they provide and display. According to the Levitical law (Exod. xxi. 19), the man who reared an ox which slew a human being, if he knew that his ox was *wont to push* with his horns, was judged guilty of murder; he was held responsible for the whole result which he had selfishly contemplated for a paltry gain.

The third class exhibits a still more revolting grade of malignity. It is composed of those who inculcate vice and solicit transgression for the very pleasure of corrupting those who are less guilty than themselves. There are men, such is the fiendish malice to which human nature can sink, who, after they have degraded themselves to the abyss of corruption, delight to drag down as many others as they may into the same slough. Their superior experience in evil, their guilty skill in the commission of crime, are the merits on which they plume themselves; and the callousness with which they can tread on conscience, on vows, on all sanctities and restraints, where less hardy sinners blush to venture their foot, is the very glory of their position. It is on these super-eminent traits of depravity, and on the exploits of superior crime they base their proud pretensions to be the admired instructors of younger sinners than themselves. Does the fair earth bear on its indignant bosom a spectacle more abhorrent than that of one of these "oracles of profligacy," as he gathers around him his circle of younger sinners, less lost than himself, busies himself by every art of treacherous kindness or unfeeling ridicule to obliterate the last blush from the cheek of his victim, and encourages the dubious heart yet

trembling with some sense of right to plunge into the debauch, or to roll forth the words of blasphemy, or to venture the approaches of her whose house is the way to hell? Other tempters win at least a selfish advantage by the ruin of their fellow-men. But this, like the gorged tiger, destroys for the gratification of a pure malignity, which draws its delight directly from the useless miseries of its victims.

The fourth species of this sin, doubtless, deserves the "bad preëminence" above all other forms. It is that usually designated by the term "seduction," when used in popular language in its special sense. If you will consider, you will decide that the honorable mind justly condemns it as the most loathsome combination of treachery, cruelty and selfishness which can be exhibited towards a fellow-creature. The victim is one whose feebler sex should have appealed to every manly instinct for honorable protection instead of wrong; and whose love, stronger than the instinct of life, creates of itself a sacred obligation to refrain from injury. But that very love, so generously and unsuspectingly bestowed, is the fatal weapon employed with meditated perfidy for her ruin. And then, the wiles by which virtue is disarmed; what are they but pretended tenderness and false vows of affection, in which the sacred bonds of truth and love, which are the foundation of all well-being, are prostituted by the traitor to his treacherous purpose. The baseness of the means can only be surpassed by the atrocity of the result; a result by which parents and relatives are wrung with a shame and anguish, beside which the emotions which would have followed the lost one to an early grave seem almost a joy; and the miserable victim herself, after becoming the sacrifice of ruthless selfishness, is "flung like a worthless weed away," and left either to a remorse, if enough of virtue survives a wrong so crushing to feel remorse, and a shame which court the grave as a coveted refuge; or else to a degradation and despairing depravity more lamentable than even a despairing death. Is there any symbol vile enough to body forth the seducer's wickedness? None but that serpent form which the satanic father of the brood assumes. Like a serpent he glides into the household he would ruin, hiding his sibilant malice and his fatal fangs under his burnished skin; displaying his perfidious graces with pretended innocence, until the moment is found to strike his remediless venom into the bosom

which he has beguiled to cherish him. And yet there are men who, though foul with these treasons against all that is most holy and tender of human affections and social vows, dare to call themselves "men of honor!"—so honorable, forsooth, that the insinuation against their spotless fame must needs be washed out in blood! For such hypocritical iniquity there is no earthly infamy deep enough and no penalty heavy enough. The very cord that should stop their perjured breath would be dishonored to embrace their necks, and the gibbet would be defiled by the burden it had to sustain.

Having pointed out the leading forms in which the sin of tempting to evil may be committed, I proceed to that which is the main object of this discourse—to justify the "woe" which is pronounced against it—by some general considerations. And—

I. The sin of the tempter is enormous, because in enticing his neighbor to do wrong he has inflicted upon him the greatest mischief of which his nature is capable.

It has been said :

" Who steals my purse steals trash,
But he who filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And leaves me poor indeed."

With a more truthful emphasis may this be said of him who robs his fellow-man of his innocence; he strips him of that which adds no wealth except store of wrath to the plunderer, and leaves the victim beggared of happiness. Sin is the monster mischief of our world. He who brings it upon his neighbor has thereby helped to dash the image of God in which he was created, and to mar the health of his nature. He assists in spreading a moral leprosy which eats into the soul until the last lineament of virtue is effaced, and the corruption of spiritual death is spread over the whole being. He assists in opening a spring of perpetual misery in the victim's soul, from which the bitter floods of remorse must some day burst forth, with all their ingredients of selfishness, hatred, fear and despair. The transgression which he inculcates may for a season appear to sear the conscience in corrupting it, but just so surely as there is truth in Jehovah must man's "sin find him out," and avenge itself in the lashes of self-accusation. Nor does the tempter injure the object of his seductions alone; others suffer with him the pangs of shame and mor-

tified affection, and those others perhaps virtuous, or at least innocent of wrong against the author of their calamity. But, above all, to entice into sin is to lead our brother under the wrath of the Almighty. It is to pluck down upon his head the penalty of eternal death. It is to thrust him into a quarrel with the omnipotent God, whose righteous wrath "burns to the lowest hell"; whose justice condemns the impenitent transgressor to make experiment of what infinite power can inflict through endless ages in recompense for the outrage of infinite attributes. This, sinful man, is what transgression accomplishes—that transgression which you so lightly commit—which you seek to thrust upon your comrade as though his fall into it were a merry jest. "Fools make a mock at sin!" That sin at which all else above the pit is solemn as eternity—"which brought death into our world and all our woe"—which hollowed out the abyss of hell and filled it with its torments and wails—which kills the soul with the second death. Had nature sense and feeling it would not be unreasonable to imagine the ground in mourning, and the skies dropping down their tears at every sin; as when the first tempter triumphed, Milton sang

"Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe
That all was lost."

II. The wrong done to our neighbor and to God in this sin is enormous, because it is irreparable by man. The creature can successfully solicit to evil, but God alone can efficiently recall the corrupted soul to good. Sin, when once committed, leaves its *virus* in the soul to spread and propagate itself in evil habits and dispositions, defying all stay by human power. Nor does he who tempts to evil intend to make any effort for its arrest. He puts forth his hand to begin or to accelerate the downward career, but he has no mind to trouble himself to stay it. No! when the irreparable injury is inflicted, he is done; his purpose is accomplished, and unless there is still some lower deep of ruin into which his victim may be plunged, he has no further concern with him than, like the Chaldean in the text, to ridicule or to despise the degradation which he has helped to produce.

Nor is the tempter either able or willing to bear the wrath of God which he has been the instrument of drawing down upon

his fellow. Had he even magnanimity enough to offer it he would be refused; for it is written (Prov. ix. 12), "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." The selfish cruelty which could inflict the mischief will not now awaken into disinterestedness when it has plucked down upon its comrade the mountainous load of Almighty vengeance, or put forth so much as a little finger to lighten it. And did it endeavor the rescue, it would find itself immovable beneath a still more tremendous burden—the judgments due to its own guilt.

So that, according to every rule of fellowship by which the men of this world combine, there is an element of mean treachery in the conduct of the tempter. When one invites his fellow to join him in some venture or enterprise of risk, it is well understood that he thereby makes an implied promise, in case his invitation is accepted, to stand by his comrade in any danger or disaster which may result. The associates are to be faithful to each other in sharing both the gains and the losses of their common undertaking; and the man who was not willing to be pledged to this, would refrain if he had one spark of magnanimity or honesty, from soliciting any one to join his enterprise. Thus, when the professed patriot summons his fellow-citizens to join him in the dangerous attempt to pluck their liberties by force from the grasp of the angry despot, and when they rally to his side, they expect him to share their risks and exposures—to share in the storm of battle, and if defeat and captivity must needs be, to share their bonds. When men who have any spirit combine to break the laws, when heedless youth associate to tempt the authority of their instructors, even they would think it foul shame that the very inventor of the offence should desert the friends whom he had inveigled into it, so soon as danger or exposure overtook them. Now, then, seeing that the tempter is neither willing nor able to do anything to remedy either the defilement or the guilt—either the shame and remorse of the polluted conscience, or the wrath of God incurred by the sin he is about to inculcate—if he has one spark of the honor of a man, one instinct of honesty or pity, he should refrain. If you must walk the dangerous road of transgression, if you must brave the power of the Almighty, we beseech you proceed on your way alone, and carry no comrade with you to your dreary fate. It

will be horrible enough without being aggravated by the sight of their ruin, procured, in part, by your treachery, and without the torment of their just reproaches.

III. The work of the tempter has this farther element of treachery, that while the purpose is mischievous, and either directly or indirectly malignant, the pretence is always one of good fellowship and kindness. Whatever be the sin to which the inexperienced is allured, the seducer well knows, as it is his solemn duty to know, that it must in the end result in nothing but misery; and if his immediate purpose is not to inflict that misery, it is at best a purpose to gain some unholy, selfish, and often trivial end, by a reckless indifference to the terrible result. He is willing to help to murder a soul in order to gain the coveted companionship of an hour in forbidden indulgences! Were this repulsive atrocity of purpose candidly professed, who would not recoil from it with salutary horror? "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." But it is always concealed under the veil of benevolence. The aggravated perfidy by which the destroyer, in the peculiar sin of seduction, employs the dearest and most sacred symbols of affection and vows of devotion to work his purpose, has been already noted. But all tempters are in this alike. Saith Solomon, "When sinners entice thee they plead, 'we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in thy lot among us—let us all have one purse.'" Here is the language of a pretended generosity, of a genial, free-handed kindness. "But they lay wait for their blood; they lurk privily for their lives." In the case of all the classes who seek their selfish ends at the expense of their neighbor's moral injury, by offering the apparatus of dissipation, we find the same mask. Do they publish the cold selfishness of their purpose to batten on the sin and ruin of their fellow-man, to clear a shilling on a folly of his which will be to him more costly than all the jewels of an emperor's estate? Not they. Do they advertise thus, "The public is invited to come, that I may turn a penny by giving them to drink liquid damnation"? Or, "The young of both sexes are requested to attend, in order that I may give them the fires of remorse for their money"? Not they. Well would it be for their dupes if they did. But their guise before the public is always one of cheerful, benevolent alacrity, of polite attention, as though they delighted to

confer true happiness. And the hardened reprobate who glories to extinguish the virtuous scruple from the heart, and the ingenuous blush from the cheek of the inexperienced, also assumes the suppleness of the serpent, and professes that his only motive is to confer enjoyment. So that in every form of the sin of the tempter, there is some degree of that TREASON, smaller or greater, which gave the satanic trait to the crime of Joab, the son of Zeruah, when he took his comrade, Amasa, by the beard to salute him, while he smote him with his sword in the fifth rib; and to that blackest human act ever wrought on earth, in which Judas betrayed his Redeemer with a kiss.

IV. I have intimated that there is a satanic trait in all such enticements. Here, in truth, is the most startling view of their wickedness; that they do precisely the devil's work and carry out his cause. Consider the fearful analogy between the two. The cause which impelled Satan to attempt the ruin of the human race was that he had himself fallen; he desired to make his fellow-creatures as miserable as himself. So the seducer of his fellow-man endeavors to drag him down, because he cannot patiently endure the sight of a virtue superior to his own. The instrument by which Satan seeks to destroy is not the sword, or fire, or poison, but sin; so that his victim may be his own destroyer. It is thus with the human tempter. The guise under which the adversary appeared was one of innocence and amiability, and his plea was, "in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." So the seducer pleads only the gratification which he pretends to offer. And last, the result in both cases is the same—the *death of the soul*—a misery irreparable, immeasurable and endless. To this whole class of sinners then may be justly applied those words of our Saviour to the apostate scribes—words too full of dread severity for any other than the all-knowing to frame: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do, who was a murderer from the beginning."

Not seldom the dire results of temptation begin to manifest themselves on earth, so that the soul-murderer is enabled to look on his own work in its true lights. Pictures of those results are so frequent in human experience, dark as they are, that I shall not be justly liable to the charge of personal allusions, when I draw one or two in such a way as to represent what is, alas! too

generally real. Who can live to old age in this evil world, and fail to know only too many of such scenes? There was the amiable and genial youth, who departed for college or some place of business freighted with sacred affections—with a father's blessing, a mother's unutterable prayer, and pure sisterly yearnings. He went away innocent, and even ignorant of vice, gay and confident of well-doing. But he returns with the slime of the serpent upon him. His cheek is still red, but it is the flush of wine, not the rosy hue of health. His eye is no longer beaming with domestic love and cheerful animation, but is dull with the reaction of excess, or else fired with baleful passion. The simple pleasures and affections of his home are now all too mild to suit his palate, debauched with the fiery flavor of vice. Now let his tempter note the thrill of anguish which harrows the parents' hearts, as the suspicion of his change first shoots through them. Let him watch the long agony of the contest in which they strive against evidence, and are at last compelled to admit that he is lost, and the blight of the sister's bosom, as even she at last surrenders his cause and owns that she has no longer a brother. Let him follow the impetuous career of his ruin—it will not detain him long, for the fallen reprobate hastens to his catastrophe—until he is brought to his home the last time, slain, it may be, in drunken broil or dying of excess. And let him contemplate the hoary heads that are brought down in sorrow to the grave. There is his work: let him study it. There is "the beginning of the end."

Or, it may be, that the progress of the tempter's work in the early life of his victim is slower. He comes to man's estate with uncertain virtue, indeed, yet not wholly fallen; sometimes yielding far more from amiability and good fellowship than from actual love of vice, yet always restrained in part by his better instincts. His true friends tremble for him, while they love him for his generosity, and kindly conceal his danger from his own house. Thus he fares along until other destinies are linked with his own, so that when he falls he must carry a wider desolation. He has become a husband—a father. As the insidious seductions of his tempters and the folds of evil habits wind around him, he struggles against them sometimes even more manfully than before, for he is not dead to the gentle and potent pleas of love. But still his seducers return to the charge.

The quick instincts of the wife have long divined, ah! too acutely, that all is not secure; and every absence from home is to her a torturing suspense, which yet she must conceal. But we will not attempt to detail this hidden warfare of fear and hope where each party in the strife is armed by love itself to rend her gentle breast and which embitters even the happiest days of her existence. At times his irregularities almost turn her fears into despair, and then the pleasing promise of permanent amendment is so prolonged that the agitating hope rises painfully towards peaceful confidence. It is at the end of some such season that his boon companions of former days meet him again. They are delighted to see him; they urge him to go with them to some festive resort, where they may drink again to the memories of "auld lang syne" and renew its wild enjoyments. But he demurs, and at first with apparent firmness. They press him again and again, and demand to know what ungenial change has come over him. Still he deprecates the proposal, and, it may be, alludes to the dangers which overhang his sobriety, explains in touching words the long and, he trusts, successful struggle he has made to save himself, and even suggests the sacred ties which draw him to self-denial. But what is all this in their profane eyes? They regard the compunctions of honor, principle, and love as no better than childishness; they rally him on his puritanism. He reminds them of what they well know, that with the first indulgence his self-command is liable to be overthrown, and begs them to spare him. They reply by jeering him for timidity, and assure him that he is in no danger; for where is the harm of a little jollity? At length he yields to their perseverance and his own false shame, and accompanies them "as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and *knoweth not that it is for his life.*" They drink; they jest; they laugh. There is one hour of vivid social enjoyment, while his false friends applaud him for his wit, and tell him that now he is himself again. But the slumbering demon appetite, which seemed long to be bound, and would soon have been starved to extinction by denial of its indulgence, has now awakened again in its fury, bursts the restraints of conscience and affection, and casts them wildly to the winds. He pours down the fiery floods with reckless hand, his

late tempters now leave him, perhaps in genteel disgust at his excesses, and day after day he plunges on in a tempest of dissipation until brain and heart are stupefied.

But we turn from the scene of his debauch, where his boon companions now stand afar off from his shame, or sneer at the bestiality which they helped to produce, to his home and to the anxious heart that beats and watches there. Night after night has passed, and the failure of his promised return has held her eyes waking, and day after day her aching sight is strained to see whether he is coming, till hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and she now understands it all only too well. Shall we venture to lift the veil from the chamber of holy grief on one of those long night watches? See her pacing the floor with convulsive step, and then pressing her wet cheek to the window as though the poor eyes all dimmed with tears could pierce the pitch darkness of the stormy night,—a darkness yet not equal to the blackness that incloses her heart. Now she wrings her hands, and, in utter abandonment of misery, tears her fair hair and calls upon God, scarce knowing whether to invoke his vengeance with all the phrensy of a ruined wife and mother on the seducers of her husband or to implore his mercy on herself and her babes. And now those little ones awake from short slumber, frightened by the tempest of her grief, and cluster around her in strange alarm. Thus wears away the black, endless night, and with the sad, gray dawn there comes a step, a well-known step, that makes her throbbing heart stand still. But she does not fly to meet it, for it is heavy and unsteady, and announces the drunkard's stagger. He meets her, it may be with stupid petulance and brutality, or it may be with the maudlin tenderness of the sot; but either way, every word is a dagger that stabs her to the heart until the heavy sleep of the inebriate arrests his folly. Now, see that chaste couch polluted by the senseless frame that lies snoring—a human swine! At length he wakes up with a shudder; he glares at the wall with starting eye-balls, which see serpents and devils writhing about him; now he screams with fright, and now he babbles wild gibberish. It is *delirium tremens!* And now the drama hastens to its catastrophe. Parents and friends gather to him with their kindly offices and assist the wife as she ministers at his bed. But they venture no word of consolation, for her countenance is dreadful and rigid with self-contained

agony, and shows a sorrow too deep to be intermeddled with. At length there is a bursting forth of the smothered anguish, and the wails that go up from the sick man's room tell that all is over. His ravings are now quiet, the inflamed cheeks are blanched, and the blood-shot eye has lost its speculation and its life and ceased to stare at the visions of the diseased brain. "He is dead, and gave no sign."

Shall we attempt to follow the guilty soul as it passes into the awful world of spirits and the presence of its God, from this scene of guilty pollution? No! we will not attempt to follow it; the heart recoils from an inquiry so dreadful. Let us turn rather, and look once more at the wife, as she sits a wan and woeful widow in her father's house, gathering her orphan children around her knees. They must henceforth bear a dishonored name, and study to forget the memory of him who gave them their existence.

And now, what say the tempters to this, their handiwork? Perhaps they drop a word of hypocritical regret; or, more probably, they speak virtuously of the folly of the man who "makes a beast of himself, and thus destroys the happiness of his family!" And then they walk forth, defying the stars with their brazen front, as though they had done no wrong. Just heavens! is there no thunderbolt in your arsenal to strike such monsters dead? Look at their haughty impunity, and say, is it wrong to rejoice, with a stern and righteous joy, that there is a Judge who will know how to avenge, and a hell deep enough to give to such bottomless atrocity its full deserts? Yes, it is wrong, we will not rejoice, but rather pray to be enabled to say of them, as the Redeemer said of his murderers: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

No doubt they would be more ready than is just to avail themselves of this excuse, if taxed with the mischiefs they wrought, and to plead *thoughtlessness*. Yes, the palliation is, that these terrible consequences were neither intended nor foreseen; that they thought of nothing more than a little trivial amusement. It is to be hoped, for the credit of humanity, that this extenuation is true. But for what is forecast, understanding, memory, given to man, except to show him the well-established consequences of a given course of conduct? If men will disuse their faculties—will shut their eyes—will refuse to look

at results which they could not but know lay just in the path they are wickedly pursuing, are they therefore innocent? Nay, verily! Inspiration hath decided this: "As a madman who casteth fire-brands, arrows and death, so is the man that *deceiveth his neighbor, and sayeth, am I not in sport?*"

There is another pretended justification which is often used by certain classes of the purveyors of the means of transgression. They plead, "Man will have such indulgences; if we forbear to provide them it will make no difference in the result, and we might as well enjoy the advantage of furnishing them as others." We need not dwell upon the obvious fact that this plea is always false in part, and that every addition thus made to the facilities for dissipation helps to swell the tide of temptations which bears increasing numbers to perdition. We rejoin: What is the plea itself, even if admitted to be true, but this: "Here are fellow-creatures who are bent on self-destruction, and, therefore, we are covetous, for the sake of a little filthy lucre, of a share in the horrible exploit of their damnation—of a part of the stain of the blood of souls, and of a portion in that unutterable woe which God denounces against those who give to their neighbors drink." If it is so certain that these misguided men will be corrupted by others, better leave to them the unenviable guilt and doom of that work.

Another excuse, raised frequently by other classes of tempters to evil is, that the subjects of their sinful allurements were already fallen: "They were corrupt before by the agency of themselves or others: we made them no worse." I reply, every repeated transgression makes the transgressor worse—more hardened and more guilty; and if ever these fallen fellow-creatures are to escape final perdition, must it not be by "ceasing to do evil and learning to do well?" Your plea, then, is this: Some previous hand thrust those wretched souls into the water: you found them in it, but alive, and only helped to hold them down until they were dead!

Sometimes a more defiant justification is pretended, and the tempters to evil say the men whom they helped to mislead were free agents; they had as good opportunities as others to know what was best for themselves, and to choose; they were not constrained to sin, and they went to it with their eyes open. "On their own heads be the consequences." I reply: just there is the

refined malignity of the tempter's work, that it ruins his fellow-man without taking from him his free agency. If the means which drew him to sin were constraining, then responsibility would be at an end, and his damnation would not result. But because the tempter acted freely and sinfully in soliciting, and the tempted in yielding, therefore, they both shall be punished for the common ruin of a soul. When one hires a bravo to strike the dagger into the heart of his neighbor whom he is too cowardly to attack alone, the hired assassin acts freely, but they both are guilty of murder. When the father of tempters seduced Eve she yielded freely, but his doom was none the less accursed.

In conclusion ; standing as I do before so many of the young, the inexperienced, and the comparatively innocent, I must be permitted to apply this discussion as an enforcement of the advice of inspiration : "My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not." When solicited to evil, I beseech you to look behind the deceitful veil of good fellowship and geniality which is worn, and consider the end, which is the death of the soul. Shun such associates, whatever their pretensions or their fascinations, as you would the scaly splendors and the serpentine grace of the venomous snake. Flee for your life.

And because we are told that, wheresoever the prey is, thither are the eagles gathered together, we fear that some of these classes of tempters to evil are here also, dogging the steps of intended victims. To them I would say: See here the dread depravity of which the human heart is capable! When these malignant instances of cruelty present themselves in the persons of hoary sinners, whose habits are hardened and whose consciences are seared by a long course of sin, the spectacle is repulsive enough, though, alas! not unnatural. How much more monstrous and abhorrent, then, to see a young man so early in his career of transgression reach this bad preëminence in mischief? Hardened men, look into your own hearts and shudder at yourselves. Look up at the woe denounced by God, and tremble before his coming judgment. And fly, even you, with all your aggravated guilt, fly to the Lamb, that he may turn your stony hearts to flesh and purge away your dreadful guilt. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. i. 18.)

MEDITATION A MEANS OF GRACE.

“My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.”—*PSA. CIV. 34.*

REVERIE is at once the seductive temptation of every sensitive mind, and the subject of reprobation in our current treatises upon education and morals. These tell us that it is the dreaming of the waking mind; that its name is from the verb by which the French denote the act of dreaming, and that this has a suspicious relationship to the word “rave.” They warn us that reverie is idle, enervating, unhealthy; that it is, in a word, the rust and canker of the spirit. But, for all this, was there ever a soul that had in it the stirrings of a true manhood which has not felt the allurements of this prohibited delight? There is no youth of pith and promise who has not felt the impulse to propitiate these stern censors, asking them whether the dew of their own youth is covered so deep with the dust of their utilitarianism that they cannot recall some still summer eve, when the breezes were sighing themselves asleep, and the slant rays of sunlight lingered upon the eastern tree tops; how they sat upon the hill over against the homes of their hearts, dreamy and lapped in bliss, while the ploughman’s homeward song, the voices of the kine lowing for the folds, and the notes of the evening bird, softened to the outer ear like echoes from elf land, mingled with the tide of sweet memories upon which their souls floated at will? Have they never known this? Then let us pity them, say we, as dull souls to whom the higher teachings of nature have ever been a sealed book.

The grandest of all the human theories of reverie was that of the ancient Mystic; for this consecrated the waking dream, provided only it was haunted by the right visions, and drew its interpretation from the depths of a past eternity, in which they supposed the intellect was born from the infinite Spirit, and made it a prophecy of the ransomed immortality, when it is to