

**INEBRIETY ITS SOURCE,
PREVENTION, AND
CURE; PP. 39-109**

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CHARLES FOLLEN PALMER



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THE INEBRIATE'S FIRST STEP TOWARD A CURE

THE INEBRIATE IN HIS MORAL ASPECT.—
"Be a man, whatever you do," is not unfrequently the advice which men who have achieved material success give to men who have gathered in an abundant harvest of failures.

This suggestion, urged almost to the point of imperious command, is quickly tempered, however, by a sense of the folly of expecting manliness from a man who has, perhaps for a lifetime, been insidiously ungrowing, and dissipating the substratum of manhood granted him by his forebears, themselves possibly more or less derelict in transmitting the qualities which comprise true manhood. To expect, therefore, any manifestations of it other than in an affected form from the intemperate, shrinking wretch to whom the advice is commonly given is as vain as to look for a mole-hill to evolve itself on the instant into a mountain. One experiences a sudden transition of feeling in the direction of pity for the man who, knowing his deficiency in this respect, assumes the affectation of manliness which he does not feel, more especially as we reflect how utterly beggared he is as he stands before us, destitute alike of money and of what is of infinitely higher value, moral manhood.

But where there has been no greater abuse of the moral nature than that involved in greater or less intemperance and folly, there exist through a merciful and kindly moral law stronger assured hopes of building up this fallen man, beggar as he is, to the full stature of manhood than with that larger class of morally blinded men who have built up a *moneyed success* in this life at the expense of every quality and trait of manhood (including intemperance in every form but that of drink) needed to begin the next; incapacitating themselves by a lifetime of insatiable greed, injustice, cruelties, self-flatteries, and gross egoism, from reaching that *real success*, comprehended in the divine economy, which is the growing result of rightful moral doing and gradually perfecting renunciation of selfish instincts in successive periods of the soul's existence.

Moral Status of Inebriates.—Chronic inebriates are rarely, if ever, wicked; they are weak, diseased, and imperfectly developed. If they were wicked they would *not* remain drunkards, for uniform wickedness implies a certain amount of will force, which is all that the inebriates ordinarily require for a cure. The intensity of their desires and cravings for intoxication evidences a greater natural goodness, as well as a larger organic weakness, than the systematic drinker who drinks by rule; but they are, on account of the character and result of that weakness, more difficult to cure. Thoroughly wicked persons are sometimes converted and remain so, but the good-hearted, soft, and amiable men backslide continually. Their very amiability and soft-heartedness, the result of defective nervous brain-elements, exhibit the yield-

ing composition of their nature, as the strength of character requisite for moral success in life is rarely allied with the effeminate qualities in men.

TRAINED WILL POWER AN ESSENTIAL TO SELF-PRESERVATION.—A man lacking a strong will power, trained by the necessities and demands of his daily struggle for self-preservation and material advancement in the carrying out of fixed purposes, can be neither a wicked man nor a good one. He may be superlatively good at times, and at other times superlatively bad, but he is neither long. His greater periods of sobriety are spent either in a kind of chronic moral atrophy of gentle amiability and good nature, with a flavor of inoffensiveness and negative goodness, or in excess of energy and sanguineness which amounts to nothing practical. Under pleasant circumstances and ordinarily wholesome conditions of living, his desires tend largely in the direction of a good life; but he accomplishes nothing, for he cannot back up his resolves with sufficient nerve-force to give life to them. A dominant temptation, like that of the liquor habit, seizes him, and, his organic tendencies being favorable, he succumbs to it, and does not make even a consistent drunkard, but has his lapses of negative sobriety and goodness between times. He lacks backbone, solidity, strength of mind, simply because he has not realized that the sole cause of his inability to control his appetite for drink lies in the fact that his nervous structure has not been healthfully trained and disciplined from the beginning in such a manner as to develop self-control,

forcible moral resistance, wholesome desires, and will likings for successful moral-material results. To offset this neglect and to set about his education without reference to age or condition must hereafter constitute his life-work, so that every day will put a stone in the new structure of manhood and enable him to resist the attacks of his formidable enemy in all the days to come.

An Unselfish Wife not Always the Best for a Weak Husband.—It is often said of an inebriate, in a tone of wonder and reproach, that he had so good a wife, one who loved and indulged him. The universality of good wives to intemperate husbands suggests an inquiry into the connection they may bear and the influence they may exercise, however innocently, in the downfall of their husbands; not for the purpose of transferring any part of the blame and odium of the man's moral defection upon the woman's unconscious and defenseless shoulders, but as a warning to other good wives who may be pursuing a course of conduct which antagonizes the maintenance of a wholesome will force in the man; and also for the purpose of mitigating to some extent the bitter animosity which many a formerly loving spouse may entertain toward a ruined husband from whom she is parted by the inexorable liquor curse.

A good woman is not necessarily a good wife. On the contrary, she may be, without meaning it and in spite of her conscientious efforts to be otherwise, a very bad wife to her husband, and *that* in spite of her gentleness, docility, piety, and excessive love for him; and it is possible that he might not be in the position he occupies to-day if, instead of possessing these qualities, she had developed

stronger or even more selfish traits of character. The continued exercise of the spirit of unselfishness on the wife's part has helped in no small degree to restrain the husband from denying himself in a hundred ways ; and all innocently, but not less fatally, has fanned the flames of self-indulgence until his power of resistance, insidiously encroached upon by loving hands, has finally succumbed to her persistency, and his great preservative against any strong temptation to which he may be constitutionally inclined has become so weakened that he is unable to cope with the strong desire for drink when it manifests itself.

With a love which has more of the idolatry of the fond and indulgent mother than that of a wife, women of this sort are ordinarily very persistent, even obstinate, in effacing themselves and in giving up their own natural inclinations and wishes in behalf of soft-hearted and pliable husbands. They succeed in smothering the latter's protests against such unfairness and partiality until their husbands finally yield and quietly accept as the natural fitness of things that which their sense of justice and magnanimity at first rebelled at. Before either of them is aware of it the husband's strong mainstay and security against sudden and powerful temptation are gradually but surely undermined ; and when the circumstances of life, sure to be favorable at certain junctures, invite the presence of an underlying vice, the man goes down before it and, in spite of his manifold struggles and heroic resolves and efforts, fails utterly to redeem himself.

It is rarely, if ever, that the eyes of these good wives