

**Habit : a lecture / by John B. Gough.**

**Contributors**

Gough, John B. 1817-1886.  
Royal College of Surgeons of England

**Publication/Creation**

London : James Nisbet, [1853?]

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/rusdqbg4>

**Provider**

Royal College of Surgeons

**License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.




Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

# Habit.

A LECTURE

BY  
JOHN B. GOUGH, ESQ.

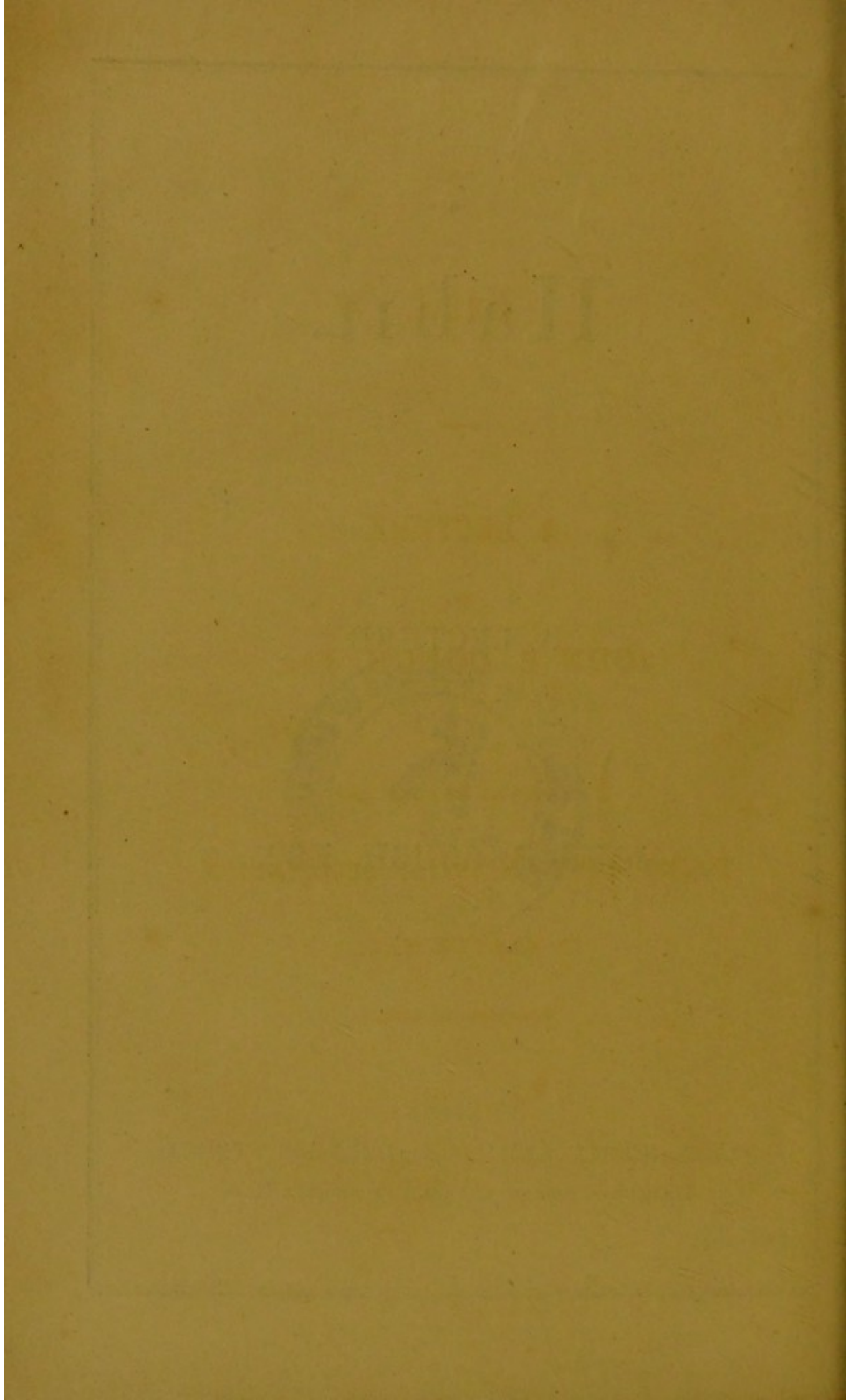


LONDON:

JAMES NISBET AND CO. 21 BERNERS STREET;

HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW.

*Threepence.*





Habit.

—

A LECTURE

BY  
JOHN B. GOUGH, Esq.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

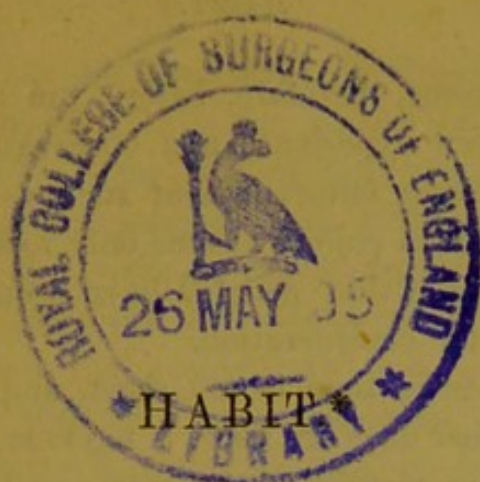
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

NOVEMBER 22, 1853.

LONDON:  
Printed by G. BARCLAY, Castle St. Leicester Sq.





WHEN I received the programme of the Lectures of this Association for the year, I assure you I felt a trembling at the heart, rather unusual for me, when I found my name associated with some of the greatest and most gifted men of this country; and when I remembered that I had given my consent to speak before one of the most important Associations, I may say, in the world—The Young Men's Christian Association of London—I would have shrunk, indeed I would, from the position in which I had placed myself, were it not that I felt that the feeblest instrumentality might be made mighty, by God's power, for doing good.

I am to speak to you to-night upon Habit. Now, I have never been in the habit of arranging my thoughts or ideas previous to coming before an assembly. I did think, however, that on this occasion it was necessary to do it, and I have tried for the past three or four weeks, but without success. I have been speaking five or six times each week, travelling, writing letters, meeting committees; so that positively I have had no time to arrange my ideas: and indeed if I had attempted it, I know not that I should have

\* This Lecture, delivered extemporaneously, has been printed from the reporter's notes.



succeeded. I come, therefore, before you simply with the result of my own experience and observation. You must not expect a literary entertainment such as you have been used in this Hall to enjoy; I come only to tell that which I know, and testify of that which I have seen, in reference to the subject under consideration.

Ah! my friends, time is too short, and that great day for which all other days are made is too near, for me to spend time in speaking merely of the term—which itself opens before us a continent of thought—Habit,—that disposition or condition of the mind or body acquired by the frequent repetition of an act. We hold or retain the effect of custom, and this is called habit. We can hardly speak of anything in connexion with our life without speaking of habit. We will, if you please, put habit under two classifications—good and bad habits. I have found, by my own experience and the experience of others, that there is this difference between the two—that a good habit is harder to attain and easier to give up than a bad one; and this is evidence to me of the deep depravity of the human heart. A good habit requires self-denial, and moral courage, and manliness to acquire; an evil habit is just to yield to the feeling of pleasure, without thought, without principle, without care. This Association is formed for the purpose of exerting an influence to save the souls of men; and a higher position than that on the face of the earth you cannot occupy. Therefore, in speaking of evil habits, let me speak of those which, in my opinion, tend more than any other to the destruction of men, soul and body.

I hardly know how to begin this subject unless I bring before you, as an illustration, a young man coming from a religious home—coming from all the tender, hallowed, clustering associations of his early days—a young man, who has been taught to pray at his mother's knee, her soft, warm



hand resting upon his head while he lisped the first prayer his lips ever uttered. Take the young man from the Sabbath-school, and all the blessed influences which cluster around him in that nursery of piety, and bring him into this large, this vast city, with so much of good and so much of evil. He is between the two — between evil influences and good influences. The young man coming from his home goes into one of your shops as a shopman, or a clerk, or in some other capacity. It may be that he has no particular religious principle, but religious truths have been taught him; and I say to you that the effect of early religious teaching is one that will, in a very great degree, prove permanent. I remember myself the days of Sabbath-school instruction. I remember the teachings of a praying, pious mother. That mother was very poor, but she was one of the Lord Jesus Christ's nobility, and she had a patent signed and sealed with his blood. She died a pauper, and was buried without a shroud and without a prayer; but she left her children the legacy of a mother's prayer, and the Lord God Almighty was the executor of her last will and testament. That mother taught me to pray, and in early life I had acquired the habit of praying. She, with the assistance of teachers in the Sabbath-school, had helped to store my mind with passages of Scripture. And, young men, we do not forget that which we learn. It may be buried — it may be hid away in some obscure corner of the heart; but, by-and-bye, circumstances will reveal to us the fact, that we know much more than we dreamed we knew. After that mother's death I went out into the world; exposed to temptation, I fell,—I acquired bad habits; for seven years of my life I wandered over God's beautiful earth like an unblessed spirit—wandering, whipped, over a burning desert, digging deep wells to quench my thirst, and bringing up the dry hot sand. The livery of my master had become to me a



garment of burning poison, bound with the fetters of evil habit—evil habit like an iron net encircling me in its folds—fascinated with my bondage, and yet with a desire—oh, how fervent!—to stand where I had once hoped to stand. Seven years of darkness, seven years of dissipation, seven years of sin! There I stood. “Ah!” says one, “what is the effect now of a mother’s teaching, and of a mother’s prayers—of Sabbath-school instruction, and of your good habits that you formed in early life?” Oh! I stood there—I remember it well—feeling my own weakness, feeling that “the way of transgressors is hard,” and that “the wages of sin is death”—feeling in my heart of hearts all the bitterness that arises from the consciousness of powers that God had given to me wasted, conscious that I had been chasing the bubble pleasure and finding nothing, gaining nothing by it,—there I stood; that mother had passed to heaven. I remember one night sitting with her in the garret, and we had no candle. She said to me, “John, I am growing blind; I don’t feel it much; but you are young—it is hard for you; but never mind. John, there’s no night there, there’s no need of any candle there—‘the Lamb is the light thereof.’” She has changed that dark, gloomy garret, to bask in the sunshine of her Saviour’s smiles. But was her influence lost? No. As I stood, feeling my own weakness, knowing that I could not resist temptation, it seemed as if the very light she left as she passed had spanned the dark gap of seven years of sin and dissipation, and struck the heart and opened it. I felt utterly my own weakness, and the passages of Scripture that were stored away in my mind—buried, as it were, in the memory, came as if whispered again by the loving lips of that mother into my ear. “He is able to save to the *uttermost*,”—that is what I want. I want to be saved—I cannot save myself—“saved to the *uttermost*.” “He that cometh unto me I will



in no wise cast out." This was the force and influence of a mother's teaching. It was the force, as it were, of a good habit that had been utterly broken up and destroyed by the acquisition of the evil habits of sin.

But let me come back, if you please, and place the young man here in this city exposed to temptations and fascinations on every hand. If such an Association as this throws not its arms around him, and draws him within its hallowed circle, is he not exposed to temptation in this city of snares? Oh! I sometimes believe that there is not only a fight going on in heaven, but a fight going on upon earth for the souls of men. It seems as if the army of the foul fiend itself was in full array upon this earth fighting against every good influence to draw away the souls of men; and that is by presenting vice in its most attractive form. A minister once said to me at my own house, "John, if every young man would write over his chamber or his office door this simple line, it might do him good, 'No man was ever yet lost on a straight road.'" There is but one right road; every other road leads out of it, and none leads into it. I have found by my own experience, and the experience of others, that if we pursue a wrong path we must come back again to the starting-point, or we shall never get into the right one again, for there is no by-way to it. Now, let the young man take the straight course; he is accosted on this side by the votary of pleasure, and on that by the votary of vice; he is invited to walk along the road that Christian and Hopeful saw—a path in a meadow leading along by the main road—and as sure as he steps out of the right way he begins to acquire evil habits. And, first, habits of *thinking* wrong.

Perhaps he may be invited by some friend to go to the theatre. Some people say the theatre is not necessarily a school of vice; but in my experience, young men, I have



found that in the theatre piety, and religion, and virtue, are almost always held up to ridicule. If the praying, consistent Christian is represented on the stage, he is represented as a sneak, a mean fellow, a prying, impudent Cantwell or Mawworm ; whereas a dashing, reckless, seducing fellow is presented as a gentleman with every noble quality under the sun. Now, the young man fresh from his country home sees these representations ; there is nothing in them of grosser vice, nothing to startle him and make him draw back : there is not a bold word of blasphemy and cursing,—should he hear that he would go no more ; but there is the covert sneer at that which he has considered sacred—there is the flippant quotation from Scripture in terms of ridicule and contempt. To pray is to cant ; to be conscientious is to be a sneak ; and to be consistent in following out virtuous purposes is to be a fool. He sees this ; probably it startles him at first. There is the music—there are the flashing lights—there, perhaps, is the splendid elocution or the fine dramatic power, and if he is of an exciteable temperament, if he is fond of anything like public speaking or declamation, it has there its charms for him. He is drawn there again and again ; and what is its effect ? The very first effect is to break up the good habit of prayer. That I have found by my own experience. I never went to the theatre, and then went home and kneeled down to pray that night—never that I can remember in the whole course of my experience. There are many, many more excitements besides the excitement produced by strong drink. There is the mental excitement. The young man lives, with such associations, and frequenting such places, in a whirl of excitement. I have read, it is true, the motto over some of our theatres, to “hold the mirror up to nature ;” but I consider that mirror is either a concave or a convex one, or else it is a very poor piece of plate-glass ; for I have very seldom seen nature



represented there, except very much distorted.\* He lives, I say, in a whirl of excitement, and then the services of the sanctuary become to him tame; the services of the church or chapel and the evening prayer-meeting, are not exciting enough for him. Mark me, I am speaking now not of the converted man, but the man who may have received a religious education; and if an Association like this can clasp him in its fraternal arms, it may save him from the influences by which he is surrounded in such a city as this—influences that tend to draw him gradually away from the sanctuary, from the chapel, from the prayer-meeting, from the religious association. Now, then, what is the evident consequence of this? I believe that most of the scepticism, so called, in this land is produced, first, by a deviation from the right way, and, then, from a consciousness that the way in which the man is walking is the wrong way, and from a desire to get rid of the responsibility. Let me trace it out. When I say scepticism, I do not mean the bold, brazen-faced infidelity that says, “I believe God is matter, and matter is God; and it is no matter whether there is a God or not;” I do not mean the atheism that prompted Shelley to write in the album at Mont Anvern *atheos*; but I mean that rejection of religious truth that is sufficient to lose a man his soul. Let a young man religiously educated follow these pursuits—let him go into our drinking saloons, into our casinos, and into some of the other places of vicious amusement: he knows he is doing wrong; he knows if he breaks the Sabbath he is doing wrong—no matter what he may say his belief is. Now, there is no happiness without perfect security. We are placed in this world, thank God,

\* If any proof were necessary as to the tendency of the theatre *as it is*, I might simply urge, that amongst its representations those works of highest merit in which virtue and vice are most truthfully portrayed, scarcely find any place.



to be happy; there are sources of enjoyment above us, about us, around us, and beneath us; we have capacities for enjoyment worthy of a God to give, and of a man to receive. Young men, did you ever stand up and feel,—I am a man with glorious capacities; I am not an animal. There is no loveliness in the flower to the animal—there is to me. There is no beauty in the landscape to the animal—there is to me. There is no glory in the sunset to the animal—there is to me. I see the day going out in one flood of glory; I look at the silver-tinged clouds, and my heart glows with a sense of enjoyment. Where is this beauty? The animal lifts its dull eyes, and gazes around upon all creation, and sees no beauty. There is no grandeur there, there is no sublimity there, there is no beauty there, no sweetness there. Where is it? It is here in my soul, like an urn full of light, and shedding rays of light upon all creation, and making it beautiful. I thank God that he has given me a sense of beauty. Sublimity tabernacles not in the chambers of thunder, nor rides upon the lightning's flash, nor walks upon the wings of the wind; but it is man's spirit up there in its lofty aspirings, yoking itself with the whirlwind, riding upon the northern blast, scattering beauty all around it on its upward, wondrous, circling way. There are other sources of enjoyment God has given to us. Take some glorious book, and as your eye is fixed on the page, and you turn over leaf after leaf, your body is there—your spirit yonder, roaming in regions hitherto unexplored by you! There is enjoyment. Take God's book—that holy Volume—turn it over, and read it year after year, there is always something new, delightful, and sublime in it; it never is an old book to the man who will read it, loving to seek that enjoyment in it for which God has given him the capacity. We are all seeking for enjoyment, and it is a lawful seeking. But there is no happiness without perfect



security. When a man is insecure, you know he cannot be very happy. The proverb says, "The righteous hath hope in his death." Yes, but some will say to me, "The infidel hath hope in his death; the man of pleasure hath hope in his death; the worldling hath hope in his death." Yes, but their only hope is, that the Bible is not true. The Christian is the only being on the face of the earth that can meet death with a smile, that can lie down in peace, and have hope in his death, believing in the inflexibility of God's justice, and that he will in no wise clear the guilty. We are all, then, seeking for enjoyment, and cannot have it without security.

Now, how did this operate upon me and others that I knew? We had acquired bad habits,—the iron net had fastened us,—the fetters and gyves were upon our wrists and ankles; and yet we were fascinated with our pursuits. We had heard, and we knew, of those who believed that God was too merciful to punish us eternally for that which we did in such a short space of time as we lived here; and we thought that a very comfortable doctrine, if we could only get hold of it so as to be satisfied. I know for myself, and for some others, that we glared upon the pages of the Bible to find a peg to hang a hope upon, that we might hold our enjoyments that were sinful, and all would be right; but I never could find it. Then the next point is, that we are progressive—and no man can stand still, he is either getting better or worse—we destroyed, or attempted to destroy, the convictions we had that the Bible was true. We read, "Rejoice, oh young man, in the days of thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee," and so on; but we read also, "For all this God will bring you into judgment;"—we did not like that. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;"—we did not like that. "The wicked shall be turned into hell;"—we did not like that.



We could not enjoy ourselves with all that staring us in the face, if we believed it; and therefore we must undermine that belief. How to do it? Put on one side every evidence of Christianity, everything that would tend to throw light upon the subject,—go to work to pick flaws in the character of professors of religion, and see how inconsistently such a man lived, how small in his dealings such a man was, how very short of the mark of his profession such another man was; and then, with Volney, with Paine, with Taylor, and with Scripture contradictions, we crammed ourselves, as a boy crams himself for examination before he is to enter college, with infidel sentiments; and so coming forth, drowning conscience by dissipation, and clinging to bad habits, and then, walking out (as we professed ourselves) full-fledged infidels, exactly like nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand young men who profess to entertain sceptical opinions, we tried to make ourselves believe that we did not believe, and we could not. Therefore we got very angry at every influence that disturbed us—with the Bible and the religion of the Bible—and the ministers of that religion, all our venom was spit out upon these instrumentalities. Now, I maintain that scepticism and infidelity were engendered in us by the power of evil habit having become a fascination to us, and we were hardly willing to burst our chains, though we felt that they were galling us.

These evil habits are, in my opinion, the influences and the instrumentalities that are doing more than anything else in this city to ruin men's souls. Let us arrive at that point, and we go farther still.

I have spoken of the habit of thinking; and I have spoken of the habit of visiting these places of excitement. Now let me speak of another habit, which I believe is, more than any other, debasing, degrading, and embruting to the



man, physically, and intellectually, and morally. Now I am not going to give you an address fully upon my favourite theme, but I must speak of it before this assembly, for I shall never see you again till we meet in that day when we shall see things as they are. Let me speak of one habit which, in its power, its influence, and its fascination, I consider, stands like a Goliath or like a Saul, head and shoulders above its fellows, in degrading, debasing, and demoralising. I allude to the habit of using intoxicating liquor as a beverage until that habit becomes a fascination. Now, you will allow me, if you please, to give my opinions upon this point freely. I consider drunkenness not only to be a moral evil, but a physical evil; and it depends greatly, in my opinion, upon the temperament, the constitution, and the disposition of the young man, whether, if he follows the drinking usages of society, it becomes a habit and conquers him by its fascination, or not, more than it depends upon his strength of mind, his power of intellect, or his genius. Here is an illustration that I have more than once used in this country; and when I can find a better one, I will drop this and give it you; but I am not going to lose an illustration simply because some here may have heard it from me before. Let us take three young men, and place them in the same position of society, and see which is the most liable to form a habit of drinking which shall bring him to disgrace, degradation, and ruin. Let me describe them if I am able. We have among us men of a cold, phlegmatic temperament,—men that very seldom laugh at anything, and they very seldom see anything to cry about. They have feelings as other people have, but they are moderate in all their manifestations; they are constitutionally moderate men. They are very much like a lot of tunes boxed up in a barrel-organ: you turn a crank, and you get tune after tune, without the slightest variation for twenty years per-



haps ; and if you turn for twenty years longer, you may get still the same music, with a few cracks in the notes. There is the constitutionally moderate man ; his temperament stands between him and excess. He always wants a joke explained to him before he can understand it ; and it is very hard to offend him, for the arrow must be very sharp that will penetrate the thick bosses of his impenetrability. There is a man so constituted that he may use intoxicating liquors without acquiring the habit. He is a moderate man, and is not liable to be drawn into any excess. I read in the "Christian Almanack" the other day, that a gentleman said, "I have drunk a bottle of wine every day for the last fifty years, and I enjoy capital health." "Yes ; but what has become of your companions ?" "Ah !" said he, "that is another thing ; I have buried three generations of them." There is many a man in this city sixty years of age, who, if he looked back upon the past thirty years, could call to mind many who have drunk wine with him at his own table who are now in a drunkard's grave ; and he will be startled if he will let the long fingers of his memory draw into the chambers of that memory the forms and faces of those who have passed away into disgrace and death, while many remain steady, moderate drinkers, for their very temperament stands between them and excess. Then take another man, of a close-fisted temperament, I do not mean to say absolutely stingy, but having the disposition of the two boys of whom the old lady said that if you were to shut them up in a room by themselves they would make a pound a-piece trading jackets. Take a youth like that with his calculating turn of mind, always looking out for the "main chance." He will probably grow up to be a man something like a member of the church they told me of in Albany. He stood up, and began to tell his brethren how cheap it was to be a member of the church, and he said, "I have been a



member of the church for the last ten years, and I am thankful to say that the whole expense of my church-membership has been only about two shillings ;” whereupon the minister said he hoped the Lord would have mercy on his poor stingy soul. Now take another young man (I am not speaking of the converted man restrained by the special grace of God), one full of poetry, of a nervous temperament, easily excited, fond of society, a man of genius, power, and intellect, who will make a garden of green things all around him ; everybody loves him, he is such a noble-hearted, open-handed, generous-souled fellow. That is the man most likely to become intemperate. He enters into the outer circle of the whirlpool with a gay set of companions, waving the half-emptied gleaming goblet, singing the joyous song, “ Throw care to the winds. Ha ! ha ! Nobody ever saw to-morrow.” Round and round they sail, every circle becoming narrower and narrower, and swifter and swifter, until they are drawn right into the vortex and utterly ruined before they dream that they are in danger.

This habit, like all others, fastens itself upon man gradually ; it does not clutch him in his claws and bring him a bond-slave at once. Oh ! no, it is a gradual process. Every man who is acquiring the habit of using intoxicating liquor to excess is acquiring it by a course of reasoning, and by coming to certain conclusions, by boasting that he possesses certain qualities which his poor unfortunate neighbour never possessed. “ Oh ! I am not such a fool as to become a drunkard ”—as if the intemperate man was always a fool. “ I have a mind of my own ”—as if the intemperate man had not a mind of his own. “ Oh ! I can leave it off when I please ”—as if he never could leave it off. “ I have got natural affections ”—as if he was born without. “ I have ambition and pride ”—as if he came into this world looking below his present position for his future one. Thus men



acquire the habit of looking at an intemperate man as of a nature altogether inferior to themselves—not as a man robbed of certain qualities by the power of a pernicious habit, but as coming from the hands of the Creator utterly destitute of those qualities. It is by such argument from the first point all the way down that these fetters of habit are bound upon him. “I am not such a fool,” is the argument. You know they are not all fools, in the common acceptance of the term, who are ruined by this habit. You say, “I can leave it off when I please.” Perhaps you can. You see a man smoking two or three cigars a-day ; you tell him of it, and he says, “I can throw them away when I have a mind.” So when a man drinks too much, he says, “I can quit it when I please, I am not a fool.” Now, when I hear a young man say he can quit a bad habit when he pleases, I make up my mind that he never intends to quit it. He means, “I can do it, but I won’t.” You forget that this habit, as it increases, destroys or paralyses all your power. When Samson was bound three times they said, “The Philistines be upon thee !” and he burst his bonds. By-and-bye he put his head into the lap of Delilah, and she sheared his locks. Then they said, “The Philistines be upon thee !” What did he say ? “I will go out and shake myself as at other times ;” but his power was gone. God pity you, young man, if you ever begin to feel the fetters of evil habit galling you, and you go out to burst yourself from them, and find the welded iron bands eating into your marrow and preying upon your vitals, until you cry in agony of spirit, “Who shall deliver me from the bondage of an evil habit ?”

A man’s power to do a thing is valueless unless he exercises that power. You find me upon a railroad track, you see a train coming, and tell me of it. “Sir, mind your own business, I am not fool enough to be run over ; I can get up when I please :” and while I boast of my power, the train



comes up and cuts me in two. What am I then? A self-murderer. I have the power to avoid the evil, I have the warning, but I refuse to exercise the power, and I go before God a suicide. Oh! I tell you, young men, while the power of bad habit may strip you of your energy, may destroy your power, may make you conscious of powers once possessed, and of energy, freshness, and manliness, gone — while it destroys these, it does not destroy your accountability. You are accountable for every power God has given you, for the influence he has given you, and for the position in which he has placed you. Although the power of evil habit may destroy all your power for doing good, you are as accountable for that power as if with all your might and energy you had put it forth, and then too late you will find that “the wages of sin is death.” “I can quit it, but I won’t.” Yes, but another will say, “Oh! when I find out that I am acquiring habits that will injure me, when I find out that I am being injured I will give it up.” I say that that is not common sense—you come to a false conclusion. You acknowledge that these habits may injure you; you do not say, “When they *have* injured me,” but, “When I *find out* that they have injured me.” I tell you, such is the fascination thrown around the man by the power of evil habit, that it must have essentially injured him before he will acknowledge it. Many a man has been to prison for crime before he felt or acknowledged that his evil habit was injuring him. Many a man has been struck down in the very midst of his prosperity and stripped of everything, character, reputation, fortune, health, before he has acknowledged that the evil habit has injured him. You might as well say, “I will put my hand into the den of the rattlesnake, and when I find out that he has struck his fangs into me, I will draw it out and get it cured.” That is not common sense. I remember riding towards the Niagara Falls, and I said to a



gentleman near me, "What river is that, sir?" "The Niagara River," he replied. "Well," said I, "it is a beautiful stream, bright, smooth, and glassy: how far off are the Rapids?" "About a mile or two." "Is it possible that only a mile or two from us we shall find the water in such turbulence as I presume it must be near the Falls?" "You will find it so, sir." And so I found it; and that first sight of the Niagara I shall never forget.

Now launch your barque upon the Niagara River; it is bright, smooth, beautiful, and glassy; there is a ripple at the bow; the silvery wake you leave behind you adds to your enjoyment; down the stream you glide; you have oars, mast, sail, and rudder, prepared for every contingency, and thus you go out on your pleasure excursion. Some one cries out from the bank, "Young men, ahoy!" "What is it?" "The rapids are below you." "Ha! ha! we have heard of the rapids below us, but we are not such fools as to get into them; when we find we are going too fast to suit our convenience, then hard up the helm, and steer to shore; when we find we are passing a given point too rapidly, then we will set the mast in the socket, hoist the sail, and speed to land." "Young men, ahoy!" "What is it?" "The rapids are below you." "Ha! ha! we will laugh and quaff; all things delight us; what care we for the future? No man ever saw it. 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' We will enjoy life while we may, and catch pleasure as it flies. This is the time for enjoyment; time enough to steer out of danger when we find we are sailing too swiftly with the stream." "Young men, ahoy!" "What is it?" "The rapids are below you. Now see the water foaming all around you—see how fast you go; now hard up the helm!—quick! quick!—pull for your very lives!—pull till the blood starts from your nostrils, and the veins stand like whipcords upon the brow! set the mast in the socket, hoist the sail!" Ah! it is too



late. Shrieking, cursing, howling, blaspheming, over you go ; and thousands thus go over every year by the power of evil habit, declaring, "When I find out that it is injuring me, then I will give it up." The power of evil habit is deceptive and fascinating ; and the man by coming to false conclusions argues his way down to destruction.

But I find time is passing very rapidly. Let me refer now, if you please, to one or two other points. Let us look at the position of the man who is a slave to evil habit. There he stands. We might fancy that he has a vision. Before him stands a bright, fair-haired, blue-eyed, beautiful boy, with rosy cheek, and pearly teeth, and ruby lip,—the perfect picture of innocence and peace, health, purity, and joy. What is that ? That is your youth, all that is your past. Then there comes another figure before him, the youth grown a man, intellect flashing from his eye, the broad, noble brow speaking of genius as he stands in a commanding position, and claiming for himself, by the mighty power that God has given him, an influence over the words, feelings, and conduct of his fellow-men. There he stands, a glorious spectacle. What is that ? That is your ideal. Now creeps in a wretched thing, manacled hand and foot ; there are furrows upon the face ; there is the swollen lip, a fit throne for sensuality, the eyes wildly glaring or bedimmed with film. There he stands ; and what is that ? That is your present. We may have one more, if you please, to fill up the scene, and that shall be a wretched, emaciated creature. As he opens his breast you see his heart all on fire with the worm that begins to gnaw and that never will die coiled in the flames. What is that ? It is your future. Now let me tell you, young men, that the power of evil habit, though it may destroy a man's faculty, does not destroy his consciousness. The curse of the man who feels himself going down the sliding scale is the remembrance of the



past—the remembrance of those bright dreams of ambition. Those dreams, those scenes, are before him, separated from him by a whole continent of grief and gloomy disappointment, and pain of body, and fever of spirit—distinct, but distant as the stars—clear, but cold as the moon that shines on his waking agony or on his terrible repose. For, indeed, it is a terrible repose. Yonder there, he sees the point he once occupied, and the cloud of sin, brewed in the caldron of his own sensual appetite, ready to crush him and press him down deeper, with the consciousness that every particle of the propelling power emanates from himself; and such a slave is he to evil habit, that, shrieking madly, he goes down with the very smoke of future torment almost so near that he can bathe his hands in it. What does a man get in barter for all the enjoyments he has given away—for the miserable, paltry pleasures that are obtained in this world? I believe that a merciful God has set a ban upon certain pursuits, and if we follow them, we are ungrateful to him who has given us so many sources of enjoyment. Take the man that has been all his lifetime a slave to evil habit; what has he got? He has spent his life—his fortune; he has bartered his jewel, sold his birth-right, and what has he got?—nothing but the mere excitement of chasing after that which is not reality. Men talk about enjoyment in these pursuits. There is no enjoyment. The enjoyment is merely momentary and imaginary. No man ever received solid satisfaction in wicked pursuits that he could long enjoy and hold fast. “Aha! aha!” he says, “now I am happy.” It has gone from him. And the enjoyment that men can obtain in this world, apart from the enjoyments that God has sanctioned, are enjoyments that lead to destruction, through the power of fascination, habit, and excitement. It is as if a man should start in a chase after a bubble. Attracted by its bright and gorgeous



hue, a gay set of merry companions with him, it leads him through vineyards, under trellised vines, with grapes hanging in all their purple glory—through orchards under trees, bearing their golden, pulpy fruit—by sparkling fountains, with the music of singing birds. He looks at life through a rose-coloured medium; and he leads a merry chase. In the excitement he laughs and dances, and dives and laughs again. It is a merry chase. By-and-bye that excitement becomes intense—its intensity becomes a passion—its passion becomes a disease. Now his eye is fixed upon it with earnestness, and now he leaps with desperation, pleasure, and disappointment, mingled with excitement; now it leads him away from all that is bright and beautiful—from all the tender, clustering, hallowed associations of by-gone days; it leads him up the steep hot sides of a fearful volcano. Now there is pain, anguish in the chase. He leaps, falls, and rises; scorched, and bruised, and blistered. Yet still the excitement and power of evil habit become almost a passion. He forgets all that is past, or strives to forget it in his trouble. He leaps again. It is gone! He curses and bites his lips in agony. He shrieks the wild, almost wailing shriek of despair. Yet still he pursues his prize, knee-deep in the hot ashes. He staggers up, with torn limbs and bruised, the last semblance of humanity scorched out of him. Yet there is his prize, and he will have it. With a desperate effort he makes one more leap; and he has got it now; but he has leaped into the crater with it, and with a bursted bubble in his hand he goes to his retribution! Every man that is carried on, a slave to evil habit, seeking for enjoyment in those pursuits that God has not sanctioned, assuredly loses all, and gains—what? He stands before God's bar, and cannot even present the one talent unwrapped from the napkin; but as the result of his influence, power, and intellect, and



position, he presents before the assembled world all he has gained, and that is a bursted bubble! God pity him! There is nothing in it. He has been bartering jewels worth all the kingdoms of the earth; for "what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"—for that which is not palpable to sight or touch?—more foolish far than the Indian chief, who bartered jewels sufficient to purchase a kingdom for some glass beads and plated buttons! Young men, who are slaves of habit, barter jewels worth all the kingdoms of the earth for less than glass beads—less than plated buttons. Let me tell you, too, the influence of evil habit tends most fearfully to demoralise, to destroy, or stultify the man's moral perceptions. Let me make the matter a little personal or practical, if you please. With a committee of gentlemen for two evenings, or two nights—for we did not get through till twelve o'clock—I have been visiting your city. There is a place in this city where young men assemble nightly; and I tell you, young gentlemen, it was to me a fearful and appalling sight. An immense room, capable of holding some 1500 persons, with a very fine band of music at one end. I found young men there as genteel in appearance as any amongst you—young men that presented as fair an exterior as yours. The gentlemen with me knew some of them. "There," said one of them, "is a man in such and such a shop; there is another that I know in such and such a shop; there is another, in another establishment." And what were they doing? In one room were the tables set with the sparkling wine, and right before that assembled crowd of a thousand persons they had no more shame left than to be dancing in the middle of that hall with the common women of the town. I asked, "Why, I should think those young men should be ashamed of it!" "Shame, sir! Three or four glasses of wine will destroy shame." Think of it. There were young men that never would have



been seen in such society, who had more pride of character, if they had no religious principle, had they not been stimulated with wine. The influence, then, of the evil habit of drinking is to curse, and embrate, and stultify, and demoralise, more, I believe, than any other evil habit in the community.

But there are some influences that I might speak of were it not such an assembly as this—some influences bearing particularly upon the character of our young men; and I mourn when I look upon them, and remember what a store of sorrow and bitterness they are laying up for themselves; if they should, by God's mercy, be saved, it must be so "as by fire." For remember, young men, that that which we learn, whether for good, as I said before, or for evil, is not so easily forgotten. Let young men mingle with the dissipated, and the vile, and the impure; let them hear the word of blasphemy and profanity—the word of obscenity and filthiness, until they get accustomed to it, and I tell you that there is a lodgement made there, in their mind and heart, the influence of which they will feel to the day of their death. I was speaking to some young children at a Sabbath anniversary, and an aged clergyman said to me,—“You are right in that, sir; I have been a minister of the gospel for forty years; and a gentleman in the city of New York, in hunting for evidences of the deep debasement and degradation of some portions of the city, and of the wiles and arts thrown around to entrap young men, made a large collection of infamous matters. I went there with some clergymen and looked at them. I am an old man, sir, but as I am living I would give my right hand if I could forget that I had ever seen them.”

Ah, young men! remember that. I say to you, in sincerity, not in the excitement of a speech, but in the reso-



lution I have made, and in confession before God, I can say I would give my right hand to-night if I could forget that which I learned in evil society—if I could for ever tear it from my remembrance—scenes that I have witnessed, transactions that have taken place before me, before my face—if I could forget that which I have learned, and that which I have read. Oh, young men! you might as well undertake to take the stain out of the snow as to take away the effect of one impure thought lodged and harboured in the heart. You may pray against it, and, by God's grace, you may conquer it, but it will ever be a thorn in the flesh to you. It will ever be to you a remembrance of the past, and will cause you bitterness and anguish. Is it not a fearful position for a man to lie down to sleep, and to have abominable visions all around him, until he will start from his bed, and wipe his eyes, and pace the floor, and kneel down and pray; and then lie down again, and as he closes his eyes some scene of vile debauchery is there before him; and he will actually fight as if with a real instead of an imaginary foe in his room. Or to sit in God's house, and hear the gospel preached, and, as your heart grows warm with the subject, to hear some passage of Scripture quoted around which clusters an idea so irresistibly ludicrous and absurd, that you find yourself, in God's house, almost smothered with laughter; or else so superlatively horrible that you bow your head, and feel as if every eye was looking upon you, and you had almost whispered the words that seem as if they were uttered in your ear and sink right down into your heart. Or you kneel in prayer to God, and, as you close your eyes, there are around you spectres of the past, pointing to some scene you fain would forget. Oh! there are influences produced by the acquirement of evil habit which are not so easy to break. Young men! remember it is easier to acquire



evil habits than it is to break them. It requires power, it requires nerve, it requires some grace, to be able to break a bad habit.

I have been speaking long enough. I have been speaking of evil habits in connexion with my theme of temperance; and I believe that the remedy for every evil habit is to abandon altogether and entirely that which produces it, whatever it may be. Ah! if you have acquired an evil habit of thinking wrongly on certain subjects, take some good book and pray over it—bend your mind right down to the study of it. If you have acquired the habit of dissipation of mind, going to those places that I have mentioned, strive to acquire habits of a directly opposite character. Seek companionship and association with those who will be “aids to improvement.” Above all, turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart. Seek, oh seek His help, who, as a father, pities and forgives you. By the power of His word and Spirit your heart and your habit, too, may be renewed.

If you have acquired the habit of using intoxicating liquor as a beverage—and I say this in all kindness to young men—avoid entirely that which has produced that habit. “Yes,” but some may say, “I use intoxicating liquors, but as yet I have acquired no habit.” Now, let me just, in the spirit of kindness,—not as a teacher, not as an instructor, not as a dictator, but as one who will never see you all again on the face of this earth, and as one who has suffered and has come out from the fire scorched and scathed, with the marks upon his person, and with the memory of it burnt right into his soul—let me say to you, if you are in the habit of drinking, just try a test that I will give you, and see if you have acquired a habit or not, and whether that habit has become an appetite. There must be one of two things: you are either your own master or not; you can take up the bottle, as the Indian did, and say, “Aha!



"I am your master," and dash it to the ground—or it is your master. Now, will you test it? I will give you a simple method. The next time any young man who is using intoxicating drinks wants them, if you feel any desire for them you may rest assured it is an acquired one—the next time you want to drink, let it alone and see how much you want it. Let it alone—go about your business. You will feel yourself perhaps uneasy, nervous, a little fretful; things do not go exactly right, something is wanting. Now, just let it alone, if you please; sit down quietly to your meals. You feel it necessary to you; if you go to the doctor, probably he will encourage the idea. Now, my word for it, it won't kill you. Just let it alone. What follows? There are some of you that boast that it is not an appetite with you—that you are not getting into a bad habit; will have to fight night and day, perhaps for a month, before you can overcome this desire for stimulus. Now what is that desire but the beginning of an appetite that becomes in some men a master passion?

I would say one thing more, if you please. If there are any here in the habit of using intoxicating liquor, do you not use now more than you did five years ago? You expect, perhaps, to live twenty-five years longer. Now, if you go on increasing in the same proportion during the next five years as you have done during the last, where will you be at the end? Just think of these things. I am not giving you these ideas in the terms of dictation at all, or as a teacher, or as an instructor, but simply because there are so many of the high and the noble, and the lovely and the gifted, who are being brought down to disgrace and death by the power and the influence of an appetite for intoxicating drinks. Now, let me say, I esteem this to be one of the highest privileges of my life, to speak before such an assembly as this, to be listened to in my crude address with such



politeness and courtesy. Let me say to the young men of the Christian Association,—My heart is with you; my prayers to God shall be that you may be eminently successful in drawing numbers of these young men into the fold of Christ; and although you may not see as I do on certain points, yet am I not the man that would dare to say that I occupy a higher position than you do in the Christian scale, because I advocate the principle of total abstinence from all that can intoxicate. By no means. There are some gentlemen here—there are many behind me, and before me, and around me—who drink a glass of wine; they are better men than I am, better men than ever I expect to be; and if I am so happy as to get to heaven, I shall look at them as bright stars near the Throne. I do not say it is a sin in itself to drink a glass of wine. I never have said so, and I do not think I shall so far forget myself as to say so. But what is no sin to one man may be a sin to another. I do not say that if you drink a glass of wine it is sin; all that I ask of you is this—to allow for me the lawfulness of my principle. You say the Bible sanctions wine and approves the use of wine; I agree with you. I am not theologian enough to argue the point whether the wine of the Scriptures was intoxicating or not; I also know that the Bible permits me to adopt the principle of total abstinence from all that may intoxicate; and although it may be lawful for you to drink that glass of wine, it is not lawful for me to drink it. I see differently from you. It may be lawful for you to drink the glass of wine—it is lawful for me to be a total abstainer. And, allow me to add, I believe it is more lawful for me to abstain than it is for you to drink; because if you bring me a permission to drink, I will bring you a caution against it; if you bring me a sanction to drink, I will bring you a warning against it; if you will bring me an approval to drink, I will bring you a reproof; and I will defy you to



bring me one word of caution, or warning, or reproof, in reference to the adoption of the principle of total abstinence. Therefore I only say that it is lawful for me to abstain. I will not say that you commit sin, but I ask you, will you not allow us, will you not permit us, to stand upon this lawful ground? and will you not (I was going to say) take us under your protection? Ours is a merely human instrumentality—I know it; we do not expect to reform and regenerate men by the power of the Temperance pledge or the Temperance Society. No, no, no! But the total-abstinence principle, if adopted, must save a man from becoming a drunkard. He may be a reformed drunkard, a reformed thief, a reformed Sabbath-breaker, a reformed liar; but he may, I know, be no more a reformed man than Judas when he betrayed the Saviour. The total-abstinence pledge will cure drunkenness simply; the grace of God operating upon the heart can alone reform the man, and I maintain that the sober man is in a fitter state to receive religious instruction than when stupified by the drink. And then, is not something necessary, on the high ground of love to our neighbour, of Christian self-denial? Here we stand, in society, in the presence of a desolating evil, overwhelming myriads in its progress. Who shall arrest and roll back the tide? Those who deny themselves even lawful gratifications for the sake of saving others. But I ask, if our enterprise and yours cannot work side by side and in harmony—we going into the ditches and into the gutters after these poor victims, and bringing them to you, and introducing them into your fraternal arms, and you shall draw them under the blessed influences of the gospel, and thus God will sanctify our work as a means to a great end—not simply redeeming the drunkard from the power of his cups, or the man from the power of an evil habit, but putting him in a position where the hindrances shall be taken away to his



understanding, and he shall fully appreciate the blessed principles that it is your high and lofty privilege to promulgate.

Ah, young men, what power you have! I remember reading in a fairy tale, that a whole city was in one night changed into stone. There stood a war-horse, with nostrils distended, caparisoned for the battle. There stood the warrior, with his stone hand on the cold mane of that petrified horse. All is still, lifeless, deathlike, silent. Then the trumpet's blast is heard ringing through the clear atmosphere; the warrior leaps upon his steed, the horse utters the war-neigh, and starts forth to the battle; and the warrior, with his lance in rest, rides on to victory. Now, young men, put the trumpet to your lips, blow a blast that shall wake the dead stocks and stones, and on, on—upward to victory over all evil habits and evil influences surrounding you. God uses human instrumentality; let us bow down and thank him, if he will use us as instruments in his hands for furthering his great cause, co-operating with him and his angels in preventing sin. I thank you, young men, for your attention and courtesy; I thank you for the invitation to speak before you to-night.



