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The Temperance Crusade in American Fiction, 1830-1860

David H. Vigeland

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THE TEMPERANCE CRUSADE IN AMERICAN FICTION,
1830-1860

by
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for the degree of
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This thesis submitted by David H. Vigeland in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	v
Chapter I. Prologue: Introduction and Brief History of the Temperance Movement.....	1
Chapter II. Anxiety, Temperance, and the New In- dustrial Society.....	12
Chapter III. Projection and Unconscious Desire.....	39
Chapter IV. The Family as a Symbol.....	47
Chapter V. Woman as a Symbol.....	61
Chapter VI. Themes of the Temperance Authors.....	85
Chapter VII. Temperance and Popular Culture.....	107
Chapter VIII. Epilogue.....	121
Bibliography.....	127

ABSTRACT

The American movement in support of temperance was especially strong from 1830 to 1860. During these decades, numerous authors used the medium of fiction to convince their readers of the values of abstinence from intoxicants. The purpose of this study is to examine a cross section of this fictional temperance literature in an effort to discover the viewpoints of these writers and to determine the attitudes toward antebellum American society which their works revealed.

In order to investigate more fully the feelings of both the authors and the historically voiceless masses who made their works so popular, such concepts as status anxiety and projection were added to the usual methods of literary analysis. It would seem that both the authors and their receptive audience found the years prior to the Civil War filled with rapid change. Unable to adjust quickly to growing cities and increasing industrialism, and fearful of being left behind in a society turning in new directions, these people looked for reasons for their displacement and loss of status. In such a situation it was easy to believe that one factor, liquor, was the cause of much of their misfortune. Authors

and their readers looked to the past and remembered an idealized time when beautiful, patient women and diligent men experienced only happiness. This Golden Age could be recaptured, they hopefully theorized, if only the menace of liquor could be eliminated. The literature which was written and the reception it received tell us a great deal about the fears, hopes, and ideals of the generation whose feelings it reflected.

"As fountains run to brooks and brooks to rivers,
Rivers to bays and bays to mighty seas,
So leads a single glass to drunkenness."

Old Play

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE: INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Leo Marx has written that "the response of American writers to industrialism has been a typical, and in many respects, a distinguishing feature of our culture."¹ This reaction is especially noticeable in the decades immediately prior to the Civil War, when the life-style of the United States' population was being profoundly altered by the introduction of machines and the corresponding industrialization. The quickly developing factory system, with its stress on new leadership, new wealth, and perhaps even new morality, appeared alien and unfamiliar to generations used to the older standards of a rural America.

This rapidly changing world was thus not enthusiastically welcomed by Americans who had little connection with rising industrialism and found little to be gained from it. Many feared the development of a world that seemed to be passing them by. Those who were discontented with the growing industrialization found their spokesmen in authors who

¹Leo Marx, "The Machine in the Garden," New England Quarterly, XXIX (March, 1956), 27.

called for a reassertion of traditional values and celebrated a by-gone age when there was little uncertainty and despair. They wrote with nostalgia of a former Golden Age and longed for an earlier day. The response to unsettling developments also resulted in the appearance or acceleration of a number of reform causes, one of which, the temperance crusade, is the subject of this study.

The dispute over the use of alcoholic beverages was not new in the years before the Civil War. Indeed, drinking had been a subject of controversy in the United States since the earliest days of the nation. The use of liquor had been widely accepted in the American colonies. The tavern not only saved the traveler from drinking the local water, but also served as a forum for discussion, policy formation, and the exchange of gossip.² Aristocrats, commoners, and clergy took the opportunity to meet in these public houses or taverns and to give their views on a variety of topics.

Not everyone, however, accepted the use of intoxicants as beneficial. Colonial legislatures and the Continental Congress gave serious consideration to the alcohol problem,³ and the first three Presidents of the new country each

²Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History from the Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), p. 309.

³Ernest H. Cherrington, The Evolution of Prohibition in the United States of America (n. p.: n. p., 1920), p. 39.

expressed his concern with the evils that liquor might cause.⁴ George Washington, for example, referred to drink as "the source of all evil and the ruin of half the workmen in the country."⁵

Perhaps the most important figure in the early agitation for temperance was the Philadelphia physician Dr. Benjamin Rush. His multitude of interests included the liquor question, and in 1785 he published a pamphlet dealing with this subject.⁶ He pictured in quite effective language the moral and physical degradation that would follow man's indulgence in drink. He urged both civil and spiritual authorities to fight against this evil and was very influential in later temperance movements. It should be noted, however, that Rush was concerned with the use of distilled liquors, not with those which were fermented. Beer and wine were acceptable; hard liquor was not.⁷

Due in part to Rush's influence, a number of local temperance societies were formed in the early 1800's. One of the first was begun at Moreau, New York, in 1808. A local doctor and minister were able to convince a number of men in the

⁴D. Leigh Colvin, Prohibition in the United States (New York: n. p., 1926), pp. 13, 14.

⁵Ibid., p. 14.

⁶Benjamin Rush, An Inquiry Into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1790).

⁷Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 314.

community to take a pledge against the use of distilled liquors. Other temperance reformers also met with small successes.

At the same time, churches increasingly became connected with the temperance movement. In 1812 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church adopted a report which recommended that all ministers urge temperance reform,⁸ and the 1816 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church passed a resolution which prohibited any minister from retailing spirituous liquors.⁹ Other churches, including the United Brethern, Universalist, and Congregational, also became involved.

As church influence increased during the revivals of the early nineteenth century, the temperance crusade also grew, becoming "connected with the spread of revivalism in religion and with the advance of humanitarian reform in general."¹⁰ Temperance was seen as a moral virtue, and people were urged to save others from succumbing to strong drink and drunkenness. Through the medium of these religious revivals, crowds were called upon to change their habits and to avoid all vices, including insobriety.

The temperance reformers also pointed to the cost, both monetary and moral, of the use of alcohol. "It was estimated

⁸Cherrington, Evolution of Prohibition, p. 70.

⁹Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 316.

that the consumption of spirits in 1792 was two and a half gallons per person; in 1810, four and a half gallons; and in 1823, seven and a half gallons."¹¹ Certainly this money could be used for more worthwhile pursuits. Aside from money, however, was the equally serious cost in moral ruin. The drinker's soul, wrote the Reverend Lyman Beecher, faced moral ruin because the human body was not made for drink. Beecher listed the signs and symptoms of intemperance, discussed the evils of national intemperance, and devoted numerous pages to temperance advice. These sentiments, linked with calls for reform, were published by Beecher in 1826, under the title "Sermons on Intemperance."¹² Along with Rush, Beecher was one of the important early temperance publicists. Though later writers used the novel and short story to make their point, sermons such as Beecher's continued their dry exhortations throughout the period.

In the same year that Beecher published his sermons, the movement was furthered by the formation of the American Temperance Society in Boston. This group was very effective, since it gave the crusade much-needed organization and leadership. Numerous college educators lent their support to the cause, including the presidents of Brown, Amherst, Williams,

¹¹Ibid., p. 312.

¹²Lyman Beecher, Six Sermons. . . . (New York: American Tract Society, 1843).

Bowdoin, Union, Dartmouth, and Yale, all of whom spoke in favor of reform.¹³

Similar temperance societies flourished throughout much of the country during the late 1820's and early 1830's. In 1833 the movement culminated in the first National Temperance Convention. Delegates from twenty-one states resolved that "the traffic in ardent spirits as a drink and the use of it as such is morally wrong and ought to be abandoned throughout the world."¹⁴ It was of course well known that many people became intoxicated on beverages such as cider, wine, or beer. Therefore, at the Second National Temperance Convention in 1836, the next step of the reformers was a call for total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors.¹⁵ Some reformers went so far as to hint that prohibition of intoxicants might be the best idea.¹⁶

¹³August F. Fehlandt, A Century of Drink Reform in the United States (New York: n. p., 1904), p. 63.

¹⁴Colvin, Prohibition in the United States, p. 17.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁶Historians have usually used the word temperance, which means self-restraint or moderation, to refer to abstinence, which means total avoidance. Thus what historians have called the "temperance" movement in actuality wished to abolish completely the availability of drink. According to Joseph Gusfield, the word temperance was affixed to the movement during years when its doctrine was not as extreme as it later came to be. See Joseph R. Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1963), p. 5n5.

The late 1830's brought a temporary decline in the fortunes of the temperance crusaders. Many groups were divided with regard to the wisdom of the total abstinence resolution passed by the Second National Temperance Convention. The moral enthusiasm of the crusade could not remain at such a high level indefinitely, and Southerners oftentimes closely identified temperance leaders with those supporting the abolition of the slave trade or of slavery itself. Furthermore, temperance was just one of the reform movements which suffered due to the economic depression following the Panic of 1837.¹⁷

This decline was quickly halted, however, and a new crusade begun, with the formation of the Washingtonians in 1840. This movement was started by a group of reformed drunkards in Baltimore. Naming themselves after the first president, they pledged "that we will not drink any spirituous or malt liquors, wine, or cider."¹⁸ The temperance movement had previously concerned itself with moderate drinkers or with those who had not begun drinking. The emphasis was now shifted to the reclamation of those who had previously been

¹⁷Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 329; Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 215.

¹⁸Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade, p. 46.

classified as hopeless drunkards. The Washingtonian movement became highly successful almost immediately.

The Washingtonians relied on moral suasion, not legislative action. They thus stressed the signing of a total abstinence pledge. Lending support to the movement were "evangelists" such as John B. Gough. These men traveled around the country giving fiery speeches combining emotionalism and sentimentalism--the same characteristics found in temperance fiction.¹⁹ The movement was obviously not intellectual (nor was its literature), but relied on the emotional testimonies of men who had once been drunkards and who now had reformed and signed the pledge. The victims of drink were now aiming at their own reformation.

The Washingtonian movement was largely made up of "common men" with lay rather than religious leadership. In order to spread their message, they made great use of popular songs, poetry, drama, fiction, and pictures. The fiction was perhaps the most effective means of mass persuasion, but even parades and demonstrations by children were sometimes used.²⁰

The Washingtonians had done a great deal of good, but they had overestimated the abilities of moral suasion and

¹⁹Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, p. 345. For more information, see the autobiography by John B. Gough, Platform Echoes: Or Living Truths for Head and Heart (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Publishing Co., 1886).

²⁰Ibid., pp. 49, 50.

enthusiasm. Their force had diminished by 1843. Saloons still sprung up, and "many who had been reclaimed yielded to temptation and again became victims of alcohol. . . ." ²¹ Because of the failure of moral suasion, prohibition began to gain more support. License laws were sometimes tried, and such men as Neal Dow in Maine were able to push through legal prohibition. ²² Thirteen states passed prohibitory laws during the years 1851 to 1855, as the temperance campaign began to experience real progress. ²³

About 1856, however, the temperance movement came to a halt, at least to a large degree. Some of the prohibitory laws were difficult to enforce, and others were declared unconstitutional by state courts, or lacked public support. More importantly, perhaps, the country had become absorbed in the debate over slavery. Temperance reformers had to delay their crusades until an even more fundamental question than temperance had been decided; indeed, many of them joined the anti-slavery movement.

As has been suggested, the movement in support of temperance was especially strong during the years from 1830 to 1860. These decades were marked by countless tracts, novels,

²¹ Colvin, Prohibition in the United States, p. 23.

²² See Neal Dow, The Reminiscences of Neal Dow (Portland, Maine: The Evening Express Publishing Company, 1898).

²³ Colvin, Prohibition in the United States, p. 31.

short stories, poems, and prints, all urging the reader to forgo the habit. Numerous fictional accounts were presented in order to guide the reader to the proper path, and then to keep him there. This fictional temperance literature, which revealed more than attitudes toward drink, is the subject of this study. While it is easy enough to ridicule these overdramatized novels and short stories, we must remember that they dealt with a problem that was very real. About the time this literature was being written, rum and cider were especially popular in New England, vast quantities of wine and brandy were being consumed in the South, and whiskey was used as "commodity money" in the West.²⁴ In an early temperance tale, for example, Parson Weems described a sample tavern bill which included one breakfast costing fifty cents, and three mint-slings before breakfast costing seventy-five cents.²⁵ Horace Greely recalled of his childhood that there were few instances of people gathering together when liquor was not present.²⁶ Alcoholism was a matter of serious concern in the decades prior to the Civil War and remains a pressing problem today.

This study will analyze the literature generated by the temperance crusade in an effort to determine the popular

²⁴Tyler, Freedom's Ferment, pp. 310, 311.

²⁵Ibid., p. 309.

²⁶Ibid., p. 310.

feelings which it represented. It is my thesis that the many themes of the literature show the temperance authors at least, and perhaps their readers as well, to be the anxiety-ridden and somewhat repressed victims of an idealized past who placed their women on pedestals, distorted the reality of their families, feared the growing industrialism, and saw liquor as the reason for any deviation from their dreams of an earlier day.

CHAPTER II

ANXIETY, TEMPERANCE, AND THE NEW INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Temperance reformers, in their crusade to free the country from the evils of liquor, relied heavily on works of fiction--novels and short stories--to spread their message. Although a great deal of this literature was published anonymously, the authors of a considerable number of works with a temperance theme are known. A number of common characteristics were present in the lives of these writers, and it may be of value to inspect their backgrounds briefly.

Perhaps the most famous of the temperance authors was Timothy Shay Arthur, who grew up in Baltimore, but lived in Philadelphia for the greater part of his life. Arthur had trained to become a tailor, but was forced to abandon the trade when his sight failed. He wrote in a brief autobiography that this unfortunate circumstance had caused him "great discouragement of mind."¹ He later went to work for a banking company, but it eventually failed. Arthur's Ladies' Magazine, which was begun in 1846, was also a failure, but eventual success came with his writings on temperance and

¹Timothy Shay Arthur, Illustrated Temperance Tales. . . . (Philadelphia: J. W. Bradley, 1850), p. 5.

other crusades. Although his novels and short stories were highly moralistic with stereotyped plots and characters, they achieved a great deal of popularity.²

Another author of temperance fiction was George Shepard Burleigh, who lived in Connecticut and Rhode Island. He came from a distinguished family; his mother was a descendant of Governor William Bradford of Plymouth colony and his father was principal of three Connecticut academies. He also had five gifted brothers. Burleigh, who wrote "The House That Jack Built," was both an author and a reformer. He not only campaigned for temperance but also supported movements favoring abolition, religious liberty, and women's rights.

Thomas Dunn English was both an author of temperance stories and a politician. He was born in Philadelphia of Quaker stock and later resided in New Jersey. The fact that his father failed in business did not prevent English from getting a broad education; he became a physician as well as a member of the bar. His main career was in journalism, despite a discouraging beginning when a literary magazine he produced ceased publication after only one issue. His later work in this field was quite extensive and considerably more successful.

²Information concerning the lives of the authors of temperance fiction has been found in The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (53 vols.; New York: James T. White and Company, 1898-1971); and in James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography (6 vols.; New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888-1896).

Lucius Manlius Sargent was a lecturer and writer for the cause of temperance for thirty years. Descended from a distinguished family, he was born in Boston and lived in Massachusetts. Sargent was the author of numerous temperance tales and was well known for his philanthropic as well as his literary labors.

Clergymen were also among the spokesmen of the temperance crusade. Both Thomas Poage Hunt and John Marsh were ministers as well as lecturers and authors. Hunt was born in Virginia, moved to Philadelphia, and then lived in Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania. After serving as a minister, he became a temperance lecturer and attained a wide reputation. Marsh was born in Connecticut, where he was to serve as a Congregational minister, and later lived in Philadelphia and New York City. He worked as a financial agent for Yale theological seminary and was an officer in several temperance societies.

Women authors were also temperance reformers. Sarah Josepha Hale, born in New Hampshire, was an important figure in the temperance movement. Her husband's death forced her at age thirty-four to support her family. She turned to writing after an unsuccessful attempt to secure a livelihood by establishing a millinery business. Eventually, in a stroke of good fortune, a friend asked her to become editor of the now-famous Codey's Lady's Book. The author of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," she strongly supported not only temperance but

also women's rights, and she worked for several social reforms and public spirited enterprises.

Lydia H. Signourney was another woman who played a role in the temperance campaign. She was born in Norwich, Connecticut, lived in Hartford, and was accustomed to the best society. Her husband's failure in both health and business made her literary work a necessity in order to support her family. Besides temperance, she was also concerned with the sick, the afflicted, the orphan, and the prisoner. Her writing emphasized morality and showed a strong religious sentiment.

The backgrounds of these representative authors of temperance fiction suggest certain common themes in their lives. Most obviously, each of the authors spent most of his life in the northeastern United States. There were no authors who worked in either the South or the West. At least half of the authors were more likely than not members of the upper classes or came from distinguished families. At least five of these temperance writers also worked for other reforms and philanthropic causes, and it would seem likely that the others did too. Four of the eight were intimately connected with some type of dislocation; two went on to other activities after serving as clergymen, and another, George Shepard Burleigh, found himself in the difficult position of competing with five gifted brothers. Perhaps, of the eight writers surveyed, only Lucius Sargent led

a life generally free from anxiety.

Each of these authors lived in the decades prior to the Civil War when rapid change was commonplace. The rural character of American society was losing ground to the new industrial and commercial interests. The percentage of non-farm laborers increased from 31 per cent in 1840 to 36 per cent in 1850 to 41 per cent in 1860.³ Many of those people who might have been the leaders of society found themselves looking at an evolving society from the outside, viewing an alien and unfamiliar system with which they had little connection, or at least less connection than they may have thought they should have. Even though they were better off than the majority of Americans, it is quite likely that many such individuals, including the temperance authors, did not view the situation in this way. Their reference group was not the contemporary members of their own social class, but rather those ancestors who had been more successful.⁴ These people looked with horror on the seemingly new and easy morality of the age; they idealized the past as a time of little uncertainty and despair. Some strongholds would have

³United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 72.

⁴Reference group theory is discussed at length in Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957).

to be maintained against the tide of the new age, and one of the virtues they saw in the people of this older, idealized age was abstinence from intoxicating liquor.

In his book, Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement, Joseph R. Gusfield saw the concern of the temperance authors as "both a protest against a changing status system and a mechanism for influencing the distribution of prestige."⁵ He wrote of the variety of cultural groups which made up society and suggested that temperate or intemperate attitudes were very important in distinguishing one cultural group from another. Each cultural group wishes "to preserve, defend, or enhance the dominance and prestige of its own style of living within the total society."⁶ Those who crusaded for temperance goals evidently wished to achieve and maintain positions of importance, but found difficult challenges in a changing society.

This transformation of society was seen as a very real threat to one who believed in temperance. Because his own claims to social respect, honor, and financial position were being diminished, the sober and abstaining citizen sought public acts through which he could reaffirm the dominance and prestige of his own style of life.⁷ Convincing others

⁵Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade, p. 12.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

⁷Ibid., p. 4.

that the temperate life was the proper path to follow was one way for the people of this status group to make a contribution to a society in which they felt they had less importance than they should have had.

Liquor was a serious social problem during this period and of course people did not object to alcohol just because they were insecure. However, it must also be noted that many of those people who believed in temperance were members of an old and established social, ethnic, or status group. This group feared rising industrialism because it brought with it new values and no longer emphasized such hallowed virtues as temperance. Gusfield's observation about a later period seems to pertain as well to the antebellum era: "Even after they have ceased to be relevant economic groups, the old middle classes of America are still searching for some way to restore a sense of lost respect."⁸ Drink was a problem for everyone, but it seemed a question of special importance to the middle-class people Gusfield was describing.

In the early 1800's, increased drinking had become symbolic of the "decline in the power and prestige of the old aristocracy in the new social order."⁹ Because of the new wealth in an industrializing society, members of the higher classes found themselves losing their dominant economic

⁸Ibid., p. 9.

⁹Ibid., p. 39.

positions as well as their social status. However, this old order still felt it could maintain some prestige by providing moral leadership for the newly developing society. As the years passed, temperance tended to become a middle-class movement (aided by the religious revivalist movements of the 1820's and 1830's which emphasized doctrines of self-improvement). Temperance was seen by many as a vital part of middle-class values. It seems reasonable to suppose that by supporting temperance many members of the middle classes or upper middle classes tried to preserve their status and maintain their prestige in a world that seemed to be passing them by.

It would appear that Gusfield's concepts can be applied to the backgrounds of the authors of the temperance fiction surveyed above. All had spent their lives in the Northeast, a section of the country which was becoming less important as the growing nation expanded westward. Most of these authors had come from distinguished families, but found that their backgrounds were not automatically enabling them to have influence in the developing society. A number of the authors had been connected, either personally or through their families, with business failure--during a time when others without their better backgrounds were achieving business success. Certainly both this social and financial dislocation must have had an effect on their attitudes. They naturally would have longed anxiously for a by-gone and a better day. All these attitudes were shown in the temperance fiction

these authors produced.

The following representative plots of temperance fiction illustrate well the point that drink brought only failure. Lucius Sargent's story Wild Dick and Good Little Robin portrayed Robert Little as "truly a good boy," largely because he had been brought up trusting in God by parents who believed in temperance.¹⁰ Richard Wild's parents, however, paid less attention to the Sabbath, and both indulged in drink. It was not surprising that Richard was suspected both of drinking and occasionally stealing. Dick's parents eventually lost everything because of drink and were forced to go to the workhouse. Dick's father later died of dropsy, his mother died of consumption, "and both were buried from the workhouse in the drunkard's grave."¹¹ Dick Wild finally ran away.

The tale ended happily, however, as Dick's character underwent a change for the better at a House of Reformation. He returned to his former home and went to work for the prosperous Little family. Instead of being a "wretched and ragged little runaway" with dirty clothes and bare feet, Dick was now described in this manner: "His ruddy complexion, well washed face, and smooth dark hair, together with his blue jacket and trousers, white collar and neat black riband, were indicative of cleanliness and health."¹² As time passed,

¹⁰ Lucius Manlius Sargent, Wild Dick and Good Little Robin (Boston: Ford and Damrell, 1833), p. 8.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹² Ibid., p. 32.

Dick "gave farmer Little complete satisfaction by his obedience, industry, and sobriety," and "continued to grow in favor with God and man."¹³ Dick soon got his own land and eventually came into possession of about \$17,000, left him by an old friend. He lived happily, not too far from his childhood companion, the Reverend Robert Little.

In the short story "My Mother's Gold Ring," Sargent further described the degradation of the drunkard and the virtues of the abstainer.¹⁴ Directly because of drink, the husband in the story neglected his business and spent what little money he did earn at the dramsellers. After forcing his family to live in poverty and causing great unhappiness, he reformed and his business increased. At the tale's conclusion, the husband reminded others of his duties to God, wife, family, and society--duties that could only be accomplished by abstinence from liquor.

Thomas Dunn English wrote of the economic ruin that would befall the drinker.¹⁵ The main character of this story, Walter Woolfe, had inherited over \$100,000 at his father's death. He could have made a real contribution to society and lived happily, but his fondness for drink made Woolfe and

¹³Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁴Sargent, "My Mother's Gold Ring," J. N. Stearns, ed., Foot-prints of Temperance Pioneers (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1885).

¹⁵Thomas Dunn English, Walter Woolfe; Or, the Doom of the Drinker (New York: W. B. Smith, 1847).

his friends "careless of the forms of morality, and accustomed to consider our own passions, the law of nature, and our own enjoyment, the end and aim of existence."¹⁶ Because of too much wine and gambling, and because he disregarded the moral code he should have lived by, Walter Woolfe soon lost everything and became only a wandering common drunkard.

Mrs. Lydia Signourney also portrayed the economic result of drinking. In The Intemperate, James Harwood was described as a man who, though once industrious and affectionate, had grown "inattentive to his business, and indifferent to his fireside."¹⁷ The reason for his conduct was of course his love of intoxicating beverages. Despite the death of one of his children, the love of his wife, and the support of his friends, Harwood did not reform, but continued on his intemperate path. His wife hoped without success that he would repent and be reclaimed, but this was not to be. Harwood drowned one night, most likely because of having had too much to drink, and the author could only conclude that "he had died in his sin."¹⁸

Ann S. Stephans dealt with this same theme. In "The Wife," the beautiful Lucy was warned by her guardian not to marry a known drinker, since the union would not only bring

¹⁶Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁷Mrs. Lydia H. Signourney, The Intemperate and the Reformed. . . . (Boston: S. Bliss, 1833), pp. 7, 8.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 21.

certain poverty but also perhaps a worse fate.¹⁹ Lucy, who would listen to none of this advice, married the young man anyway. Unfortunately for Lucy, her guardian's prophecy came all too true, and "ruin, total and irretrievable ruin, swept over the thoughtless husband."²⁰ Lucy was no longer one of the members of high society, but only a suffering wife whose husband lay in debtor's prison.

The inverse relation between drink and economic well being was described in Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate.²¹ The anonymous author of this novel told his readers that "it can scarcely be expected that the habitual inebriate will be a successful business man."²² Drinking was expensive and reduced the businessman's capital. Drinking took time, and thus not enough attention was paid to work. Drinking led to disreputable associations from which the businessman would suffer a loss of confidence, credit, and patronage. And drinking would often prevent the businessman from using sound judgment in his business activities. The businessman who drank would have to be fortunate indeed to survive all of these disadvantages.

¹⁹Ann S. Stephans, "The Wife," in Maria Woodruff, ed., A Drop from the Bucket, for the Sons of Temperance (Auburn: Alden and Markham, 1847), p. 43.

²⁰Ibid., p. 55.

²¹Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate (New York: American Temperance Union, 1844).

²²Ibid., pp. 74, 75.

Because of drink, the businessman in this novel became morose and ill-tempered instead of agreeable towards his customers. He was unable to think and figure correctly, lost established customers, saw his profits decrease, and eventually found himself a complete failure facing bankruptcy. His corresponding loss of pride made him "a more degraded and brutish drunkard than ever."²³

Fortunately, in this case, the main character was able to reform. He resumed work, though only as a field hand on a farm, and found that his health improved daily. He was eventually able to take the lease of a dairy farm and move his happy family to a new home. Because he had given up drink, and discovered again what the real values of life were, he was able to conclude that "brighter prospects are opening before us, and we look forward with a confident expectation of better days."²⁴

Timothy Shay Arthur also dealt with the theme of drink's effect on a person's business and social standing. "The Broken Merchant" told the story of a prosperous young merchant of Baltimore named Wilson Hamilton.²⁵ Arthur wrote that Hamilton was one of the richest men in the city and that his social intercourse "was with the highest class for wealth,

²³Ibid., p. 101.

²⁴Ibid., p. 180.

²⁵Timothy Shay Arthur, Six Nights with the Washingtonians: A Series of Temperance Tales (New York: E. Ferrett, 1842).

refinement, and intelligence."²⁶ Unfortunately, Mr. Hamilton was too fond of wine and strong drink. Because of his intemperate habits, his business losses increased, and he was soon completely ruined.

It was only after his loving daughter had worked and suffered for many years in order to support herself and her degraded father that Mr. Hamilton again became a sober man, thanks to his signing the pledge of the Washingtonians. He was then able to obtain "an easy situation" in which he was usefully employed and which yielded him a "comfortable income."²⁷ His daughter's health improved and they had enough to satisfy all their wants. Certainly both father and daughter had seen the lessons that could be learned from leading an intemperate as opposed to a sober life.

The drunkard was typically portrayed in temperance fiction as an outcast from society, with everything to lose and nothing to gain. The drinker would maintain neither his devotion to work, his reputation for reliability, nor eventually his job. If he owned a business himself, it would be ruined. His social position would be the lowest in society, and he might well forfeit his own life. Not only would the drinker lose everything of his own, but also he would drag his suffering family down with him.

²⁶Ibid., p. 8.

²⁷Ibid., p. 43.

Yet he could reform, and if he did he would face the same "brighter prospects" and "confident expectation of better days" which portended for the confessing reformed inebriate. His business career would be resumed, or perhaps a miraculous bequest would be willed him "by an old friend," as it was to Richard Wild. Whatever the mechanism, prosperity could be restored to the reformed one, but only if he realized his errors in time. Material well being was pictured as a natural reward of sobriety.

Those who believed in abstinence, therefore, were usually portrayed as economically well off. They realized their duties to both family and society. They had a faith in God and probably attended church regularly. They became economically richer because of their habit of sobriety. Perhaps the injured family could not return to its previous position of financial and social dominance, but it would be able to live happily and comfortably.

For the temperance authors, business success was extremely important if one's position were to be maintained. If the characters these writers described drank, they lost their status due to business failure. Those characters who abstained from liquor suffered no status loss, and the authors must have felt that their situations should be the same as the situations of the figures they described. Since the temperance authors blamed all troubles on the liquor problem, and since they did not drink, they saw no reason for

their own status to be diminished. Even if they already had lost some status in a rapidly developing society, they could insure themselves against further slippage by forsaking drink. Sobriety could even be seen as a way in which lost status could perhaps be regained. For these reasons, writers supporting temperance showed a strong interest in detailing the status issue in their works.

According to Gusfield, "Each status group operates with an image of correct behavior which it prizes and with a contrast conception in the behavior of despised groups whose status is beneath theirs."²⁸ The use of drink was a symbol of social status for many Americans. The temperance authors, often concerned about their own status in a changing society, pictured abstinence as "a symbol of middle-class membership and a necessity for ambitious and aspiring young men."²⁹ The temperance authors stressed morality, self-mastery, and industry. Impulsive actions, such as having a drink on the spur of the moment, were to be resisted. Unlike many today who view alcoholism as a disease, the authors of temperance fiction pictured drinking as a moral defect and a sure sign of weak character.

The temperance authors saw only economic and social ruin as the result of a drunkard's life. Abstinence, however, was a moral virtue and "a mark of the man bent on improving his

²⁸Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade, p. 27.

²⁹Ibid., p. 5.

conditions of income and his status in the community."³⁰

Those who believed in temperance had the opportunity for economic success and were firmly in the center of middle-class life.

These attitudes were not unique to temperance reformers. Other reformers held them as well. In his essay "Towards a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," David Donald described the leading abolitionists as frequently being from old and socially dominant northeastern families, having little connection with the rising industrialism.³¹ These people were neither rich nor poor, but were usually economic conservatives. They stressed moral self-improvement and tried to uphold old standards and traditional values in a changing world. They felt no kinship or responsibility toward an alien and unfamiliar factory system.³² They were a class which was trained and expected to lead, but found no followers³³ as society seemed to be moving in other directions without any longing for their leadership. Their agitation for reform thus allowed them "the only chance for personal and social self-fulfillment."³⁴

³⁰Ibid., p. 45.

³¹David Donald, "Towards a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 19-36.

³²Ibid., p. 31.

³³Ibid., p. 33.

³⁴Ibid., p. 34.

More surprising is the fact that these characteristics were also found in some who were active on reform issues but hardly in the capacity of reformers. David Donald also examined a representative group of proslavery advocates. He found that they, too, nostalgically looked back at an idealized earlier day and longed for a return to the former Golden Age.³⁵ In a time of social change and social disorganization, pro-slavery writers wished to return to agrarian simplicity, hoped for a restoration of social order and hierarchy, and dreamed of the pure, calm days of an earlier era.³⁶ Donald concluded that the proslavery argument should be seen "as part of a general, though diverse, search for social stability in a rapidly changing world."³⁷

It may be suggested that the temperance authors also displayed the characteristics which the abolitionists and pro-slavery apologists possessed. Many of the crusaders for temperance suffered from social, financial, and psychological dislocation in the decades prior to the Civil War. They felt themselves out of place in a society which seemed to be passing them by. "They were men who felt the demise of the traditional values of their social class, and, in trying to

³⁵David Donald, "The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered," Journal of Southern History, XXXVII (February, 1971), 17.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 18.

restore those values, attempted to recoup their dwindled status."³⁸ Such authors as Lydia Signourney, Thomas Dunn English, and George Burleigh may fit this pattern. Their anxiety and concern with their situation in society was reflected in the themes of the temperance literature they produced.

One of the major attitudes they expressed was a preference for rural rather than city living. While the city was not explicitly condemned, a great many of the temperance authors chose rural areas close to nature as the setting for their novels and short stories. This was despite the fact that almost every temperance writer was a city-dweller. The rural area was an ideal place to live, with happiness abounding for all.

The typical setting for temperance stories was the idealized American countryside:

The setting sun of a warm Saturday night in early June was melting its golden ray through the fresh, green foliage, to gild the windows of his cottage parlor, on which the dancing leaves threw their wide, serrated shadows, and from which, glowing out, a white hand pushing back the clean, white curtain, showed a look of pleased expectance when the laborer returned.³⁹

The white cottage nestled among tall and splendid trees was certainly a pleasant picture, and one that was often painted

³⁸Gusfield, Symbolic Crusade, p. 41.

³⁹George Shepard Burleigh, Mason Hodges. A Tale of Our Village (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1848), pp. 6, 7.

by temperance authors.

Across this landscape on a beautiful Sunday morning, "quiet villagers" could be seen on their way to church, accompanied by the pleasant chiming of a variety of bells. Everyone wore their finest clothes; and the women's dresses were like "opening flowers, suddenly taking wing, . . . instinct with the grace of the tasteful country girls, whose humbler habits were untainted by the gaudy vanities of the metropolis."⁴⁰ Both a small child picking wild flowers as she ran and an old man peacefully shuffling along were content and happy.

City dwellers, when they traveled into the country, were delighted with the opportunity to observe everything they could of a rural nature.⁴¹ The children's surprise and glee at viewing what the country folks probably considered to be commonplace plainly could be taken as certain proof that these youngsters had been raised in the city. Temperance authors emphasized that people from the country seeing the city for the first time would not have been nearly as favorably as impressed. Upon visiting one large city, Walter Woolfe did make a pleasant discovery, since he found it to be fairly quiet, and largely without the noise and bustle

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 17, 18.

⁴¹ Reverend John Marsh, Hannah Hawkins, the Reformed Drunkard's Daughter (New York: American Temperance Union, 1844).

which were known to be the characteristic marks of such a place. Of course it was not as peaceful as his own "secluded village."⁴²

The countryside was also an area which nicely served as a place of reformation for the reclaimed drinker. Temperance stories often related the manner in which a fallen, but reformed city-dweller moved to the country and regained some measure of prosperity and self-respect,⁴³ or of the runaway who changed the direction of his life by giving up alcohol, working on a farm, and finally coming to own his own land.⁴⁴

A good number of the characters in the temperance tales were praiseworthy laborers, farmers, or small businessmen, all living in peaceful areas seemingly far away from the frenzied pace of the city. These people and their families were portrayed as living a very enjoyable life; they had the opportunity to maintain that life style only if they avoided the menace of intoxicating beverages.

Although they often avoided mention of the city in their novels and short stories, the temperance authors of the 1830's and 1840's showed an even greater reluctance to discuss the increasing industrialization society was undergoing. Despite the rapidly developing factory system, temperance writers made almost no mention of the word factory

⁴²English, Walter Woolfe.

⁴³Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate.

⁴⁴Sargent, Wild Dick.

in their work.

In an exception to this pattern, a tale closed as the main character reformed and signed a pledge of total abstinence. He was then able to obtain employment, first as a laborer, and then as a field-hand on a nearby farm.⁴⁵ The protagonist told the reader that he could have earned greater wages by working at a factory, but did not because its workers (as was frequently the case in this period) were supplied with whiskey. Even if this situation had not existed, he still would not have taken the job because very near the factory was a grocery which did a thriving business selling liquor, and he did not wish to approach the scene of his former degradation. Thus one of the few mentions the temperance writers made of the factory associated it with the drinking problem.

It indeed does seem odd that there was not a much greater inclusion of the factory in the works of temperance fiction of this period. Few of the temperance stories referred to the topic of industrialization, although it was certainly becoming an increasingly important part of the lives of the authors of these tales. This notable absence demands explanation.

Perhaps this problem can be at least partially solved by the theory presented in the American Quarterly article

⁴⁵Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate.

"Literature and Covert Culture."⁴⁶ In this article, authors Bernard Bowron, Leo Marx, and Arnold Rose defined covert culture as "traits of culture rarely acknowledged by those who possess them."⁴⁷ These traits are common to members of a society and representative of people's attitudes, but are repressed. The temperance writers fit into this class, since they were of course conscious of the growing factory system, but did not acknowledge it in their works.

In other words, it seems possible that the avoidance of the factory system by the temperance authors reveals an unconscious theme in their literature--a hostility to industrialization. Many Americans feared the rapidly developing industries and factories and found little to be gained from them. As has been previously suggested, these people feared the new leadership and wealth (in which they played no part) and longed for the traditional (and perhaps rural) values of an earlier day. It may be that many of those people urging temperance connected the use of drink with the rising industrialism.

In The Machine in the Garden, Leo Marx wrote that "the pastoral ideal is evoked against industrialization chiefly by those who . . . are radically disaffected."⁴⁸ It has been

⁴⁶ Bernard Bowron, Leo Marx, and Arnold Rose, "Literature and Covert Culture," American Quarterly, IX (Winter, 1957), 377-86.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 377.

⁴⁸ Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 219.

previously demonstrated that many of the temperance authors had indeed suffered serious social and financial dislocation. Thus they might well have been just the group which would have reacted to the increased industrialization going on around them by turning away from it and actually showing hostility toward it by the complete absence of this very real and fearful topic in their literature.

The authors of "Literature and Covert Culture" wrote that the era before the Civil War was one "of unprecedented expansion, social mobility, and optimism."⁴⁹ Newspapers, magazines, and orations celebrated the new technological achievements as demonstrating "man's increasing dominion over nature."⁵⁰ Most people were quite enthusiastic about the new machines and their own future.

However, this was also a time when Americans were praising the "natural" things in life as opposed to the artificial. To Bowron, Marx, and Rose, "At all levels of culture, from the relatively abstruse speculations of Emerson to the popular gift books, from Cooper's novels to the paintings of the Hudson River School, Americans affirmed values and meanings said to reside in nature."⁵¹ It was even said that the key to solving all man's problems lay in nature.

⁴⁹Bowron, Marx, and Rose, p. 382.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 384.

The authors pointed out the contradiction between these two schools of thought. On one hand man wished to dominate nature through the use of industrialization and machines, while on the other hand he wished to turn to nature as the source of his strength. The authors concluded that this "unacknowledged conflict of values may have been an important source of the anxiety" which many writers demonstrated.⁵² It would appear that the temperance authors of this time also reflected a tension created by the machine in their writing. They were not among the group that enthusiastically welcomed a changing society. Instead, they longed more for a rural age when life was simpler and when enemies, such as liquor, could be clearly identified and then opposed. Thus they usually avoided mention of both cities and industrialism, and rather portrayed an ideal and rural life in the small villages of their stories.

In "The Jacksonian Persuasion," Marvin Meyers argued that Jacksonian Democracy was a bit different from the way many historians had pictured it.⁵³ Instead of always looking to the future, he saw Jacksonian Democracy as stressing old virtues like proper morals and character. It was Meyer's contention

⁵²Ibid., p. 385.

⁵³Marvin Meyers, "The Jacksonian Persuasion," American Quarterly, V (Spring, 1953), 3-15.

that the Jacksonian appeal evokes the image of a calm and stable order of republican simplicity, content with the modest rewards of useful toil; and menacing the rustic peace, an alien spirit of risk and novelty, greed and extravagance, rapid motion and complex dealings.⁵⁴

In other words, there was an emphasis during this period on simplicity, stability, useful work, and honesty as opposed to many of the new excesses.

Authors of the fictional temperance literature during the 1830's, 1840's, and 1850's resembled the people Meyers was referring to. The temperance writers longed for an earlier day. In their works they stressed a rural simplicity which did not contain the pressures of an expanding society. Their characters worked in a quiet and peaceful environment where they were secure, not in a rootless and rapidly changing society. They pictured men who were content to toil hard for a living rather than greedily attempt to accumulate new wealth as fast as possible. Their characters were farmers, tradesmen, or small store owners pleasantly at home in a small village, not overbearing graspers of the new industrial wealth. The temperance authors showed the anxiety they felt in a changing society by largely ignoring the developing cities and industries and concentrating rather on themes of an older day.

Perhaps it is too narrow to say that status anxiety is

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 6.

a characteristic of reformers. It may be that the "movers and shakers," whether of reform variety or not, sought the past Golden Age by changing their own age. Whatever the case, it is obvious that changing antebellum society motivated activism by those who felt left behind, and that many of these anxiety-ridden individuals directed their energies toward temperance. Among them were those who used fiction as a means of promoting reform in an apparent effort not only to counter the evils of drink but also, at least unconsciously, to maintain or restore their own status. The social mobility found in the novels and short stories seems to be an unmistakable reflection of the hopes and fears of the authors. Alcohol, as a symbol of the threat to their status and the ideal way of life they desired, was an easily identifiable enemy which had to be opposed.

CHAPTER III

PROJECTION AND UNCONSCIOUS DESIRE

During the Jacksonian era, expansion and material progress were taking place in society. Change was very welcome to a great number of Americans, and they faced the future with unbounded optimism. Not everyone shared this view, however; many viewed the nation's development with concern. They realized that the new economic growth would destroy old ways of life and transform traditional symbols of status and prestige.¹ Often left out of the new developments society was experiencing, and despite the Jacksonian emphasis on individualism, many people yearned for reassurance and security. This was a time of numerous religious revivals and reform movements and the beginning of a variety of fraternal orders and associations as people sought some kind of unity in an increasingly rootless environment. Many people acquired a sense of self-identity and personal direction by articulating their loyalties, proving their faith, and demonstrating their allegiance to certain ideals and

¹David B. Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII (September, 1960), 209.

institutions.² The temperance crusade of the time enlisted the aid of a large number of people who felt in exactly these terms.

Attempting to explain and to adjust to the diverse changes was, of course, not an easy task. Authors of the temperance fiction simplified the bewildering changes taking place in society by demonstrating that there was a common enemy--intemperance--for all people which was the cause of a good many of their troubles. Temperance authors were quite explicit in their portrayal and condemnation of the drinker's fall and destruction. But this strong emphasis was necessary if determined action and unity for the cause were to result. Temperance leaders felt that the obvious righteousness of their beliefs was a real help to this unity of their cause, which, if successful, would abolish many of the problems which a large segment of the population was facing.

There is reason to suggest that temperance crusaders, in their condemnation of drink, actually projected their own unconscious desires.³ In other words, the fact that temperance authors strongly condemned drink may have actually masked

²Ibid.

³Projection is a psychological defense mechanism whereby an individual, experiencing guilt about his own behavior or desires, unconsciously attributes his own shortcomings to others and finds an outlet for his own guilt feeling by condemning in others what he fears or dislikes in himself.

their desire to participate in an occasional glass (if feelings of conscience could have been set aside). While it is certainly true that authors of temperance fiction were sincere in their cause, it does seem possible that their constant dwelling on certain themes may have shown a certain fascination for, and perhaps a wish to join in, some of the drinker's excesses.

The temperance authors stressed that drink would always bring ruin to the businessman or laborer and devoted many paragraphs to detailing man's fall. Of course, the drinker eventually suffered for his conduct, but he did seem to enjoy himself for a time. He was able to invite his friends to his home for an evening of fun and carousing, and he was able to walk away from family responsibilities (including his idealized wife, who was not so inevitably beautiful as the patient angels the authors wrote about) and forget his problems for the time being at the local tavern or grog shop. The drinker was able to take out his frustrations on his wife and children instead of continually struggling to be the provider and source of comfort to his family in rapidly changing times. Perhaps the temperance authors somewhat envied the drinker who could lead whatever life he chose without worry of retaining his status in a threatening society. This envy would help to explain some of the fascination of these writers with the intemperate life. In one sense, the drunkard, at least in the early stages of his career, was a much

freer individual than the do-gooder who set out to save him.

The authors of temperance fiction also frequently wrote of men who economically exploited their wives or daughters by their intemperate conduct. Those men who surrendered to the attractions of drink usually quickly lost both the desire and the ability to support themselves. Thus the wives and daughters of these drinkers were forced to provide for the family by whatever means they could, usually by sewing at home for minimal wages. Perhaps temperate men who worked long hours to earn less wages than others did who led intemperate lives may have occasionally wished that they, too, could spend their time as they pleased, with the wife or daughter providing the means of their support. Life was not easy for many in the ante-bellum period, and receiving the support of a female family member may have been quite attractive and fascinating for some readers of the temperance fiction.

David Brian Davis, in an article dealing with the themes of anti-Masonic, anti-Catholic, and anti-Mormon literature during the same years when authors of temperance fiction were especially active, wrote that "this literature was written in a period of increasing anxiety and uncertainty over sexual values and the proper role of women."⁴ Temperance writers reflected these fears and responded to them by

⁴Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion," p. 219.

portraying a highly idealized woman in their stories. They pictured the female as she should be and what she would be if neither she nor her husband turned to drink. Temperance authors wrote that the woman's role as a beautiful and hard-working wife and mother could be maintained despite the changes society was undergoing if people would only unite against the evil of the enemy of drink. Men were advised not to disrupt the united family by drinking, and women were shown the terrible results of their own foolish conduct if they, too, turned to liquor. Temperance writers responded to the uncertainty of women's role by describing numerous examples of the proper course women were to follow to dispel this uncertainty and to enable the family to stand against an evolving society the authors feared.

For temperance authors, the innocent victims of drink were usually female, and most often young and pretty (and hence sexually desirable). This would appear to fit Davis' contention that the period under consideration showed concern and uncertainty over sexual values. If this were an age of sexual repression, the constant (though subtle) portrayal of the lovely and desirable female as a sex object could have been an outlet for the repressed feelings of the temperance authors and an outlet for "releasing the tension and guilt arising from rapid social change and conflicting values."⁵

⁵Ibid., p. 220.

Thus, while it is true that continual use of the female character in the temperance literature may have served as an outlet for forbidden desires, this is only part of the picture. Guilt for having these feelings was also apparently expressed. Women who did not follow the accepted pattern of temperate ways were the object of both the temperance writers' scorn and their own well-deserved punishment. Men, whether they were only "moderate" drinkers or degraded drunkards, were still not completely lost because the suffering yet enduring wives remained by their sides with hope for their future reformation. If a woman took to drink, however, there was little chance that she could be reclaimed. The woman was occasionally able to reform, but her death was more often the result of her drinking. In this period of the woman's changing role, writers of temperance fiction portrayed the alcoholic woman (and thus one who did not fit the pretty, energetic, and faithful stereotype) as a figure who deserved her fate. In this way, temperance authors were able to express the guilt they felt and yet escape from it.

Davis suggests that the topics of confession and conversion were important to the nativists. "Those most deeply involved in sin often made the most dramatic conversions."⁶ These same themes were stressed by temperance authors. Works such as Confessions of a Reformed Incubriate and Letters From

⁶Ibid., p. 221.

the Alms-House . . . By a Drunkard told in vivid terms what it was like to have fallen victim to intemperance. Not only could the writers of such tales show the error of their ways or the horrors awaiting them if they pursued the improper path, but they could also prove that they had recognized and conquered the evil themselves. Temperance tales abounded with examples of those who had given in to alcohol, but subsequently reformed and told their story to others.

Davis found that the nativist movements came from the people and reflected "their fears, prejudices, hopes, and perhaps even unconscious desires."⁷ Temperance literature of this period bears similarity to nativist writings. Like the nativist, the temperance advocate hoped for a better future, but feared the changes taking place in society. Temperance writers looked to an imaginary past when the menace of this change was not so evident. They portrayed liquor as the reason for their trouble, or the symbol of the challenges they were facing, and felt that, if it were eliminated, things would again be secure.

Like the nativists, temperance authors perhaps also projected their own feelings into their writing. They condemned alcohol as the cause of all problems, yet showed a real fascination in describing some of its effects. They demonstrated concern over sexual roles and values by their presentation of the female characters in their novels and

⁷Ibid., p. 205.

short stories. They stressed that conversion and confession were often necessary in order to free the individual from temptation. In the changing environment of pre-Civil War America, temperance authors called for a united front to oppose a danger that seemed to threaten their entire way of life. They condemned in others what they perhaps feared most of all in themselves.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAMILY AS A SYMBOL

In his book The Machine In The Garden, Leo Marx defined a "cultural symbol" as "an image that conveys a special meaning (thought and feeling) to a large number of those who share the culture."¹ It would seem that the authors of temperance fiction in the 1830's, 1840's, and 1850's used the family as a cultural symbol of an America they earnestly desired, but feared was either threatened or not properly evolving. Although liquor was a very real threat which might cause the destruction of the ideal, perhaps for the temperance crusaders it was only the best possible symbol of a number of threats to the whole way of life they believed in and thought they represented.

Although some no doubt may have existed, it would seem likely that the ideal family described in so many of the temperance novels during this period may never have truly been very widespread in society. More importantly, however, this ideal family was what the temperance fiction writers described, and what an eager public read. The family appears

¹Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden, p. 4.

to have been a symbol of the older and better day which authors and readers longed for or remembered fondly as they faced the threat of a somewhat new and frightening environment.

Charles Burdett's novel, Mary Grover; Or, The Trusting Wife,² is an excellent example of the temperance authors' symbolic use of the family. The husband, father, and main character, Edward Grover, age thirty-five, seemed to have almost everything he desired. The son of respectable although poor parents, Grover had begun work in a counting house at age fifteen. Despite a lack of education, his abilities were soon apparent; and Grover eventually became the head salesman in a large firm. The success Edward Grover experienced was quite similar to the rapid advances several characters made in the Horatio Alger stories, since these tales also told of penniless heroes who succeeded by goodness and courage. Like her husband, Edward Grover's wife was an attractive figure, since she was described as not only industrious and prudent, but also as active and thriving. Mrs. Grover deeply loved her husband, and both were without habits of extravagance and contented with their situation in life. Each of the Grover's three children was a pet of the family. This is not to say that the children were spoiled, however;

²Charles Burdett, Mary Grover, Or, The Trusting Wife; A Domestic Temperance Tale (New York: Harper, 1848).

in fact, the oldest, thirteen-year-old Rose, helped her mother whenever possible. All of Mr. Grover's evenings were spent at home with his closely-knit family. There appeared to be nothing which could disrupt their wonderful life. We might easily guess, as Charles Burdett suggested, that "husband and wife were happy in each other's love--happy in the possession of loving and dutiful children, and they were wealthy, for they were contented."³

Another temperance author, G. S. Burleigh, writing during the same year as Burdett, portrayed a similar setting. Burleigh described his main character as a frank and warm-hearted man, and as an honest, earnest, and truthful laborer.⁴ His work may have been hard and long, but he gained comfort at the day's end from his loving wife and nine-year-old daughter. The wife was further pictured as beautiful, noble, quiet, and industrious; the child was lively and affectionate.⁵

This family lived in "a neat white cottage, nestled among the trees."⁶ The father, Mason Hodges, returned each day from work to his clean and white-curtained home, surrounded by great elms and rockmaples (and paid for by his own

³Ibid., p. 12.

⁴G. S. Burleigh, Mason Hodges.

⁵Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

⁶Ibid., p. 4.

labor). As they relaxed in the love and warmth of their own picturesque home, who could doubt but that the future looked bright indeed for the family of Mason Hodges.

The History of the Bottle⁷ also demonstrated the idealization of the family. In this case, James Latimer, although a mechanic, still made good wages, since he was an industrious, sober, and first-rate workman. His wife and three children were all faring nicely, especially since the wife was able to manage the finances so that they not only lived comfortably, but were even able to save some money each year. Again the temperance author has sketched a picture of a happy family.

The characters in temperance tales were not always members of the laboring class, nor did they always live in somewhat small homes. Timothy Shay Arthur, perhaps the most famous of the temperance authors, presented a contrasting social and economic picture in "The Ruined Family."⁸ In this story, Arthur, who dealt in his books with nearly all aspects of the temperance crusade, wrote of Mr. Graham, a merchant of Philadelphia engaged in trade with the East Indies. Graham had an elevated social position not only because of his wealth, but also because of his strong

⁷The History of the Bottle. . . . (New York: Oliver, 1848).

⁸Timothy Shay Arthur, The Ruined Family and Other Tales (Philadelphia: Godey and M^cMichael, 1843).

intelligence and the high moral tone of his character.⁹

Mr. Graham's family, consisting of his wife, a son, and three daughters, was a happy one, but not because of either wealth or position in society. Mr. Graham had taught his children to be useful to others and had constantly set a good example for them to follow. He was thus loved and deeply respected. Arthur suggested that with a devoted wife, four admirable children, a fashionable home, and a prosperous business, Mr. Graham led a very enjoyable life.

What could happen to these four happy families if conditions were to change? Would the use of alcoholic beverages by the family head have a disruptive effect on an ideal life? The temperance authors made it a very vital part of their works to answer these questions by describing the heartbreak and suffering experienced by the family of the drinker.

Charles Burdett wrote of a once kind and generous father, Edward Grover, who, after becoming addicted to strong drink, avoided his wife and children as much as possible and dissipated himself by continual drinking and gambling without thinking of those at home. His conduct was quite detrimental to his work, and eventually his employers were forced to dismiss him. Although the Grover family still lived in the same apartments, a great change had come over them. Edward's wife had become "pale, thin, and haggard"; her countenance was

⁹Ibid., p. 12.

"but the reflection of a breaking heart."¹⁰ The once healthy and active children were similarly affected, now having listless attitudes and ragged clothes. Rooms once filled with furniture were now almost empty. Ornaments which had tastefully graced the mantelpiece had been sold, most likely to supply more money for Mr. Grover's drink. The house, which once reflected the happiness and contentment of its tenants, was now "cold and cheerless." Intemperance had done its work well.

The family of Mason Hodges likewise had been affected by the father's use of liquor. Although Hodges had not meant to drink intoxicants, he had been tricked into it and his loved ones shared in the consequences. Mason himself looked with a vacant stare as delerium and fever overcame him. His little daughter cried in terror, and his wife feared for her husband's life with "an agony too deep for expression."¹²

The Latimer family had also suffered because of the intemperate ways of, in this case, both parents. The health of every member of the family had deteriorated because of the parents' fondness for drink. Father and mother frequently

¹⁰Burdett, Mary Grover, pp. 96, 97.

¹¹Ibid., p. 95.

¹²Burleigh, Mason Hodges, p. 23.

quarreled and often took out their discontent on the innocent children. James Latimer was soon discharged from his position, the savings were quickly used up, and the now miserable family was left with few worldly possessions and facing starvation.

And what of Mr. Graham, the prosperous Philadelphia merchant? Surely it would be impossible to lose all that he had, just because of a liking for strong drink. Unfortunately, this is exactly what had occurred, as Mr. Graham was unable to run his widespread business while half-intoxicated. With disposition, health, and business sense impaired, he eventually found his whole estate in ruin:

The beautiful family mansion on Chestnut street had to be given up--the carriage and elegant furniture sold under the hammer, while the family retired, overwhelmed with distress, to an humble dwelling in an obscure part of the city.¹³

Graham was not the only one to suffer from his habit. His only son began to follow the same course his father had pursued, soon becoming equally idle and dissipated. His daughters and wife suffered both physically and mentally as they desperately worked for minimal wages in order to support the once proud family. The years of Mr. Graham's drinking had wrought a sad change in their appearances, and an even sadder one in their feelings.¹⁴

These authors were not unique in their use of the family

¹³Arthur, The Ruined Family, p. 20.

¹⁴Ibid.

as a cultural symbol. Other writers commonly described male characters working as artisans or mechanics who were among the kindest of husbands and fathers before they turned to drink. In one example the narrator wife echoed what the authors probably thought was in the heart of every new wife whose spouse did not imbibe. She was sure that everyone, including herself, thought her to be the luckiest girl in the parish on her wedding day. She added that, because her husband was such a good man,

our wedding day--and it was a happy one--was but an indifferent sample of those days of rational happiness and uninterrupted harmony which we were permitted to enjoy together for the space of six years.¹⁵

When the husband turned to drink, however, this wonderful happiness soon disappeared. He began to neglect his business, and poverty appeared not far away. Despite the wife's exertions, she found it difficult to keep her children "decently clothed and sufficiently fed."¹⁶ All these troubles were caused because the husband spent his money for liquor rather than the needs of his once-happy family.

Until drink entered the scene, Henry and Helen Darling also seemed to have everything they could want.¹⁷ They both were handsome, energetic, kind, and intelligent, and were blessed with a "beautiful, curly headed, bright eyed boy" who

¹⁵Sargent, "My Mother's Gold Ring," Stearns, ed., Footprints of Temperance Pioneers, p. 45.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁷R. T. Trall, "The Angel Tempter," in Woodruff, ed., A Drop from the Bucket.

reflected their blended features.¹⁸ Their friends were certain that their future happiness was assured.

A tremendous change came over this family, however, after Henry turned to drink. When sober, he would resolve never to drink again, and his wife devoted "her whole mind and soul" to convincing him of the necessity of this goal. But just as often as he promised, Henry would slip back and turn once more to drinking and gambling.

As time passed, Henry was forced to mortgage their house in order to allow the family something to live on and to repay debts occurred by gambling while drunk. They now occupied only "an obscure room in a poor wooden house in a back street of a remote part of the city."¹⁹ No longer was Henry the provider. In fact, Helen, who had never sewn until driven to it by Henry's dissipations, was now forced to support the family by making and selling shirts for meager prices. A second-hand suit was a poor substitute for the fine clothes Henry had once worn. He reeled as he walked instead of showing the firm step he had once displayed. His face, once always fair and laughing, was now clouded with gloom as he looked with a vacant stare.

Mrs. Darling had been similarly affected by Henry's habit. Although still a young woman, "her form was bent

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

forward as with age; deep untimely furrows had come upon those cheeks, lately so radiant with happiness and health; and that crowning mark of earthly woe, despair, was stamped upon that face, once so lovely and happy."²⁰

The innocent son was also a victim of his father's passion. Instead of looking like the beautiful child he once was, his features were now dulled, and he appeared thin and emaciated. Drink had done its work well in reducing another once-happy and prosperous family to misery and poverty.

In a similar tale, James Boynton was a handsome and intelligent college graduate who had married "a pretty orphan girl."²¹ The happy pair and their children lived "in a modern house, furnished with every luxury."²² Boynton was unfortunately too good-natured and could not refuse when some acquaintances asked him to drink with them. This incident was of course the beginning of all his problems. He tried to keep up appearances despite his increasing habit, but was not successful. His business was soon neglected; and, as he gave in further to intemperance, everything was lost.

At the story's conclusion, gone was the fine house

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Jane Campbell, "Steps to Ruin," in The Fountain and the Bottle. . . . (Boston: H. Wentworth, 1850).

²²Ibid., p. 336.

with the elegant furnishings the Boyntons had once enjoyed. The family was now forced to live "in one room of a miserable, dilapidated tenement," surrounded by numerous other victims of poverty and vice.²³ James Boynton was no longer good-natured, but was rather constantly filled with wrath. His pale and sickly children avoided their father's footsteps, which they had once anticipated with joy. Boynton no longer even tried to work; his wife was forced to support all of them by whatever means she could. As the author wrote:

Of all the woe and want, and wretchedness, which awaken one's compassion; of all the scenes of misery which call so loudly for sympathy, there is none that so harrows up the feelings as the drunkard's home.²⁴

Reverend John Marsh gave a bleak description when he wrote that a drunkard's home could generally be quickly recognized by the shabby appearance of the outside, with its broken fences, fallen gate, and windows stuffed with rags.²⁵ The inside would be in no better condition, with perhaps only the drunkard's bottle and glass not in need of repair. Huddled together in one corner might be the drunkard's wife and children, fearfully awaiting the return of the intoxicated husband and father.

This was not a pretty picture, and the temperance authors made sure their readers understood not only its ugliness but also its frequency. In order to make the lesson

²³Ibid., p. 338.

²⁴Ibid., p. 333.

²⁵John Marsh, Hannah Hawkins.

even more understandable, the contrast between life before and after the bottle was made as extreme as possible. Thus a typical character, such as Walter Woolfe, enjoyed only bliss after his marriage to the beautiful and affectionate Alice; there were months in which "no black cloud crossed over the sky of life; and all was serene and bright--all was the delicious and glorious calm of an autumnal sunset."²⁶ After Woolfe turned to liquor, however, major changes occurred. At one point, Woolfe, after drinking heavily with some rowdy companions, evicted his own wife and child from their home during a driving snowstorm, just because they had sought briefly to interrupt his wild carousing. After this incident, Woolfe lost both wife and child, and eventually everything else--thanks to his fondness for drink. Once again the protagonist, who had formerly had all that life could offer, became a common drunkard.

Though obvious enough to the reader, this remarkable change might not be apparent to everyone concerned. Friends, enemies, wife, and children might all be able to perceive the horrible degradation of the drunkard, but not the poor victim. One such example was Albert Percy, who, because he was too drunk to perceive his own situation, obviously could not reform despite his wife's pleas that "you, whom next to my God I have loved and worshipped, have given me the

²⁶English, Walter Woolfe, p. 35.

severest wound which one human being can inflict on another."²⁷ His wife was eventually forced to take the children Percy had hoped to raise and leave the man she loved so much.

The separation did neither party any good. Forced to work long hours for little pay, the wife saw her health fail, and soon died, leaving only strangers to care for the children. Percy, without the presence of his family, was completely alone and descended further from a once promising position. The lesson was clear--the drinker was an outcast from the society of which he was once an important member. More to the point, the family unit had been violated

by reducing a lovely and intelligent woman to misery and penury; by depriving her of a home and consigning her to a premature grave; by depriving . . . children of a father and protector, and sending them to depend on the cold charity of the world for sustenance and relief. . . .²⁸

Temperance writers pictured (perhaps somewhat unconsciously) an ideal family that could successfully stand against all opposition--if the family (at least unconsciously) realized the dangers that it was facing in a rapidly changing society. Monetary riches were not essential to the happy family even if others were becoming wealthy through industry and trade. If the parents maintained high morals and were honest, industrious, and sober, and if they lived

²⁷The Price of a Glass of Brandy. By a Lady of Baltimore (Baltimore: R. Neilson, 1841), p. 14.

²⁸Ibid., p. 24.

within their means and were content with what they had, then a secure home could be established. Living in this type of atmosphere, the children would be lively, cheerful, and affectionate.

If, however, the family gave in to the use of liquor, the result would be the complete ruin of the ideal family structure. Not only would the parents' health and possessions be lost, but also the childrens' chance for either happiness or contentment would be destroyed.

Writers of temperance fiction from 1830 to 1860 delighted in describing scenes of domestic happiness. The family served as a cultural symbol conveying to those of a like mind all the good which life could offer, and numerous temperance stories began with the author's picture of the peaceful and contented family living within its means in a pleasant and secure home. This life-style was seemingly an ideal one and could be maintained without too much concentrated effort if only all intruders could be kept out of the scene. Unfortunately for many of the families described in the temperance literature, however, the menace of drink--or more precisely the numerous problems it brought and symbolized --was all too near.

CHAPTER V

WOMAN AS A SYMBOL

As they did with the family, the authors of temperance fiction used the woman as a symbol of all that was good in the society they longed for. Although there were exceptions, the female character--whether wife, mother, or daughter--was beautiful, or at least pretty, as well as intelligent, loving, and devoted to her family. Although often filled with considerable grief because of the errors of a husband or father who drank, she did not complain. She rather remained steadfast and hoped to redeem wrongdoers by her own good example. The symbolic way in which the temperance writers portrayed women in their novels and short stories tells us a great deal about the authors and the time in which they lived.

Temperance authors were by no means in a minority when they presented an idealized picture of the woman. This attitude was in fact reflected consistently by most Americans throughout the period from 1830 to 1860.¹ "In a society where

¹This idealized view of women was also held in Mid-Victorian England. See Charlene M. Heinecke, "A Tradition Maintained: Mid-Victorian Women as Seen Through the Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Act and the Married Women's Property Act of 1870" (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of North Dakota, 1971).

values changed frequently, where fortunes rose and fell with frightening rapidity, where social and economic mobility provided instability as well as hope, one thing remained the same--a true woman was a true woman, wherever she was found."² The woman who cared for her home and family was constantly identified with everything beautiful and holy.³ Her virtues included "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity."⁴ Those authors concerned with the drinking problem added one more quality to the ideal woman--an abhorance of intoxicants.

In almost every temperance story, there was a beautiful and loving wife, or a happy and pretty daughter who would be adversely affected if the husband or father turned to drink. George Burleigh wrote that "if the girl of twenty, laughing and rosy, was beautiful, when no care had touched her; no less beautiful, and lovelier far, was the matron of thirty, through whose sadly-wise expression beamed the permeating light of higher hopes and holier duties."⁵ This is not the type of character a reader might expect to discover frequently in real life, but she was a common occurrence in the temperance writings. Thus, Richard Wild's wife was a pious

²Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Summer, 1966), 151, 152.

³Ibid., p. 174.

⁴Ibid., p. 152.

⁵Burleigh, Mason Hodges, p. 7.

girl, but, "if it were sinful to be pretty, no girl in the parish had more to answer for than Margaret Lamson."⁶ The wife was often not only the prettiest girl in the village, but also the best.⁷ She was also "a dutiful child to her widowed mother, a kind affectionate friend to her companions, and a devoted wife" to her husband.⁸

Such a woman might well be pictured as "one of those earthly embodiments of angel loveliness."⁹ "Her disposition was as sweet as her manners were graceful, and in relation to her mind, no pains or expense had been spared to cultivate the 'richer graces.'"¹⁰ This sort of young woman would be quite an improvement upon the girl she had once been, as Walter Woolfe discovered when he barely recognized his former childhood playmate. In the few years since he had last seen her, the beautiful Alice had gone from a "bud into a blossom"¹¹--a description which implies a good deal more than just growing older, and which might give a psychoanalyst something to ponder. In a lengthy paragraph, Woolfe painted a seductive word picture, in suitably muted victorian tones, as

⁶Sargent, Wild Dick, p. 40.

⁷Marsh, Hannah Hawkins, p. 2.

⁸Ibid.

⁹R. T. Trall, "The Angel Tempter," p. 93.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 94.

¹¹English, Walter Woolfe.

he described her figure as "well shaped and graceful in all its motions" (what eager male reader could read this without his heart pounding just a little?); her hair as "singularly silky and beautiful;" her eyes as "full, lustrous, and with a very mournful and captivating expression;" and her smile as "a token of innate purity and the happiness of truth."¹² No wonder young Woolfe was joyously happy when he married her. The idealized woman was considered extremely attractive. Perhaps, in a not always unconscious way, she was also subtly seductive.

The female character in the temperance novels and short stories was not always described as beautiful. However, she was most likely very pretty at the least, with sweet red lips, lively blue eyes, a happy countenance, and graceful and winning manners.¹³

Women had strong character as well as beauty. Because her husband succumbed to the evils of drink, Mary Grover was forced to undergo much suffering. But although her husband had lost almost everything the family once possessed, she tried not to complain.

She hoped, when others would have yielded to despair-- she entreated, when sure that insolence and abuse would be her return--she prayed, when others would have felt

¹²Ibid., p. 18.

¹³Sarah Josepha Hale, My Cousin Mary: Or, the Inebriate (Boston: Whipple and Damrell, 1839), p. 7.

that the gates of heaven were closed against their petitions. But she was a wife and a mother. As a wife, she nerved herself to discharge all those duties to which she pledged herself before God and man; as a mother, she determined to descend to the grave with a conscience freed from the reproach of having neglected those who looked to her example.¹⁴

Even though her suffering was great, Mary Grover did the best she could to maintain the family, despite her husband's drinking.

Lucy, the accomplished and beautiful wife of Charley Temple, also stood by her husband even though he had become degraded due to drink and had caused her much grief and anguish.¹⁵ At the story's conclusion, she actually went into the tavern herself and convinced her husband to sign the temperance pledge. Thanks to the influence of his concerned wife, Charley Temple eventually became fairly wealthy and lived a happy life. In spite of her husband's failure and bankruptcy because of drinking, then, a wife did not complain, but continued to perform "all her duties as a wife and mother."¹⁶ She had the strength to withstand poverty, loss of the home she loved, self-denial of much for her husband's sake, and unending labor without complaint.¹⁷ Her neighbors

¹⁴Burdett, Mary Grover, pp. 99, 100.

¹⁵Harry Spofford, The Mysteries of Worcester: Or, Charley Temple and His First Glass of Liquor. A Temperance Tale (Worcester: H. S. Copp, 1846).

¹⁶Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate, p. 116.

¹⁷Signourney, The Intemperate.

would most likely comment on "the example of uniform patience and piety" and "the saint-like manner" which she exhibited.¹⁸

The wife in the temperance stories was usually quite good-looking, and had the strength of character to bear her burdens without complaint while she hoped to reform her husband by her own good example. The wife was a very sympathetic character; the temperance authors would have it no other way.

Of course the wife and the fiancée were not the only female characters found in the works of temperance fiction. The daughter of the family also played an important role. The descriptions were usually longer than Sargent's portrayal of the daughter (she was simply "a very pretty girl of sixteen").¹⁹ But whether brief or lengthy, the picture was usually the same--the daughter was a pretty girl strongly devoted to her father.

Oedipus Theme

The daughter in the temperance tales sometimes was quite young. She was then her father's "little girl, whose darling arms clung round him, and let go, and clung again, and loosed, only to feel the luxury of a new embrace. . . ."²⁰ Youngsters such as this were happy and carefree, and secure in a home where liquor had not entered. These little girls occasionally

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁹ Sargent, A Word in Season, Or the Sailor's Widow (Boston: William S. Damrell, 1835).

²⁰ Burleigh, Mason Hodges, p. 7.

assumed active roles in the unfolding of the usually stereotyped plots, and much praise was extended to those who had begged their fathers not to send them for more whiskey. Thanks to his daughter's influence, one father did give up his awful habit, and the writer described how "the firmness and love of a little daughter proved a father's rescue."²¹ Other small girls could have the same influence over erring family members. These children "never doubted that their decisions were clear," for abstinence from liquor was always portrayed as a virtue.²²

Rather than being a youngster, however, the daughter was more often a teen-ager. In Timothy Shay Arthur's "The Ruined Family," there were three girls in the family, aged nineteen, eighteen, and sixteen.²³ The author did not specifically describe the girls, but the reader cannot help but get the idea that all were good-looking and hard-working (an impressive combination).

Arthur devoted more space to description in The Broken Merchant.²⁴ The daughter, Kate Hamilton, was sixteen years old as the story opened, having "sprung up in a few years into young, blushing womanhood, beloved, admired, and honored

²¹Marsh, Hannah Hawkins, p. 47.

²²Bernard Wishy, The Child and the Republic (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 93.

²³Arthur, The Ruined Family and Other Tales.

²⁴Arthur, Six Nights with the Washingtonians.

for her affectionate nature, beautiful person, high-toned feelings, and enlarged intelligence."²⁵ She was very devoted to her father, who was a successful and prosperous Baltimore merchant.

Unfortunately for the Hamiltons, this happy state did not continue. Due to Mr. Hamilton's heavy drinking, his business was completely destroyed, and he and his daughter were forced to forego high society and live in poverty. Instead of being able to enjoy all the benefits of youth, wealth, and beauty, Kate was forced to take a job binding shoes in order to procure enough money for her father and her to live, even at minimum standards. The long hours of labor in support of her fallen father caused Kate both physical and mental strain, but though she almost died from overwork, she did not complain. Mr. Hamilton later signed the pledge of the Washingtonians and was able to obtain a job which provided for a comfortable state of living. Kate's health gradually improved, her countenance became more cheerful, and father and daughter were happy once again.

The daughter was usually "the loveliest girl in the village . . . as superior in mental qualities as in personal attractions . . . , with a reputation as unblemished as her beauty."²⁶ She possessed "a cheerful though staid and quiet

²⁵Ibid., p. 9.

²⁶Mrs. J. Thayer, Picnic Tales, Number Three. The Drunkard's Daughter (Boston: W. S. Damrell, 1842), p. 38.

disposition," and was "naturally amiable and obliging."²⁷ Having seen what ruin drink could bring to families, she might also be an eloquent speaker for temperance.

As was the case with the wife, even if the daughter were not beautiful, she could still be called lovely. An anonymous author wrote that "Mary Jones could not be called a beauty, according to the standard of correct taste, yet there was something in her small, yet bright eyes, her pretty mouth, and lively smile, which won the admiration of Henry."²⁸ The writer went on to praise her animation and liveliness. Mary was not always to be happy, as her husband turned to drink and eventually died, but, with the aid of her child, and with "a mother's courage," she endured her sorrow and hoped for a better tomorrow.

Like the wives in the temperance stories, the daughters were usually attractive, hard-working, and able to bear suffering without complaint. Both daughters and wives were highly idealized by the temperance authors, and both stood as clear examples of the proper path to follow.

After reviewing the manner in which the authors of the temperance fiction praised wives and daughters in their stories, it is not surprising to discover that the writers felt much the same way about women in general. In one tale

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 42, 43.

²⁸ "The Dangers of Irresolution," Woodruff, ed., A Drop from the Bucket, pp. 21, 22.

the main character, Walter Woolfe, had been drinking heavily and was in ill humor when he returned home. Because his wife Alice began to cry after observing his condition, Woolfe struck her and then fell into a drunken but uneasy slumber. He finally awoke when he felt a tear drop upon his cheek. It of course belonged to his wife, who had sat up throughout the night watching over her husband. Woolfe expected his wife only to despise him, but she refused to remember the injury and found excuses for her husband's rash actions. As he sat in his home that day, Woolfe "watched every motion of Alice with a feeling like reverance, and felt like a sinful being in presence of an angelic creature."²⁹ This incident moved the author, speaking through the character of Walter Woolfe, to make these comments:

Oh! Woman--woman--devoted woman! Man in his pride condemns thee, but thou art our guide, our watcher, our soother, and our friend. Without thee the garden of life were indeed a wilderness, and man's most boasted delights barren non-entities.³⁰

Similar sentiments were expressed by a female author:

However much the boasted supremacy of man's intellectual and physical supremacy may gratify his vanity, the pages of history reveal to us the fidelity, truth, and perseverance of women's love and faith. In private life, it enables her to share distress and even disgrace with him, unworthy as he may be, who is the partner of her joys and sorrows. The gloom of a dungeon, or the ignominy of the scaffold cannot deter

²⁹English, Walter Woolfe, p. 46.

³⁰Ibid., p. 45.

her. Man cannot imagine the depth and purity of that fountain--none but woman can feel it.³¹

Other authors wrote with pity of those poor victims who found themselves married to a drunkard. One writer asserted that "women, lovely patient women," even when faced with a drunken husband's cruelty, returned kindness rather than reproaches.³² The wonderful conduct of these mothers did have its reward, as their examples could only serve to give children knowledge of proper behavior.

Although each day brought her husband nearer a drunkard's grave, the woman in one other story remained true and devoted to the one she loved. This wife, the author concluded, "showed the strength of that love, gave proof that holy constancy which can only exist in the heart of the true woman."³³

Even while such material portraying the ideal woman was being written, however, the changing character of the nineteenth century was calling forth new responses from American women which differed from older standards.³⁴ Industrialism, reform and missionary activity, and the growing feminist movement were changing the roles women would be able

³¹The Price of a Glass of Brandy, pp. 19, 20.

³²Letters from the Alms-House, on the Subject of Temperance. By a Drunkard (n. p.: Lowell, Brown and Colby, 1841), p. 40.

³³"Drink and Death," Woodruff, ed., A Drop from the Bucket, p. 135.

³⁴Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," p. 174.

to play in future years.³⁵ A woman would no longer have to remain only in the home, unless she so chose.

Temperance authors, however, did not embrace the changes occurring in antebellum America. They rather stressed the symbol of an ideal woman and seemingly told their readers that, if drink were opposed, then change would not be so widespread and perhaps society would not pass a discontented and fearful people by. Instead, an optimistic outlook on life could be maintained--with the aid of a beautiful and hard-working wife or daughter.

The idealized woman might have a role other than that of the suffering victim of a man's craving for liquor. A few authors went further and also dealt with the female alcoholic. Women were often convinced to drink by men, of course, so the fault was not entirely their own; but there were occasional others who needed no such urging. Both male and female temperance authors stressed that if a woman did consume alcoholic beverages, her children would be improperly influenced, her home life would suffer, her physical and mental health would deteriorate, and her own death or the death of a loved one would oftentimes result. Liquor could be only a harmful influence on her life.

The mother of Richard Wild was a drinker, and she was particularly fond of a glass of liquor on washing days,

³⁵The growth in American feminism is discussed in Aileen S. Kraditor, ed., Up from the Pedestal (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968).

although "she soon became convinced, that it tasted quite as well, on any other day of the week."³⁶ Unwilling to let her husband or neighbors know of her addiction, Mrs. Wild kept her strong drink in a teapot, from which she could drink freely without suspicion. When little Dick also drank from the teapot and quickly became ill, her secret was discovered.

Since her use of drink was now common knowledge, Mrs. Wild no longer hid her liquor, but rather drank openly and freely. Dick was frequently sent to the grog shop to replenish her supply, and his efforts were often rewarded with a sip from his mother's glass. Thanks to this example, Richard Wild grew up believing that no harm could result from the use of alcoholic beverages. Both mother and son would later pay heavily for the bad judgment the mother had shown.

A lone woman might be especially vulnerable to such problems. Mrs. Ross, a widow trying to raise a young son, did not have the same resolve her late husband had. While Mr. Ross had been alive, he had not permitted the child to taste either wine or liquor. The widow, however, allowed her son to sample portions of liquor she left in her glass, or at least let him bring the bottle to her. The result for her son was that "at an early age he had imbibed a strong appetite for spirituous liquor, and sought to gratify it in

³⁶Sargent, Wild Dick, p. 10.

every possible way."³⁷ The son was soon drinking his mother's wine, spending money at taverns and liquor stores, and associating with more experienced drinkers.

Mrs. Ross allowed this conduct to continue until she discovered that her son was frequently becoming intoxicated. By this time, it was too late for her to change the habits she had formed because of her lack of guidance and influence. Her son later attempted to murder a man who had accused him of cheating at cards, and was thus forced to serve time in prison. Upon his release, he resumed his intemperate ways and finally died of delirium tremens.

Mrs. Ross spent her time grieving over the loss of her son, although she was spared knowledge of his degraded death. "Her features naturally bright with the glow of health, became wan and sickly; her cheerfulness departed; and she grew adverse to that round of pleasures and social intercourse which had formerly been her chief enjoyment."³⁸ Soon after becoming mad, she died, and was buried with her husband. Thus two lives had been ruined because the woman had not shown a child the proper path to tread.

Unlike Mrs. Wild and Mrs. Ross, Mrs. James Latimer was not used to drink. One day, however, an unscrupulous

³⁷"The Spoiled Child," The Fountain and the Bottle, p. 67.

³⁸Ibid., p. 71.

grog-shop owner gave her husband a free bottle of liquor (thinking not of his customer's welfare, but of the future business the enticement might bring). After the evening meal, Latimer shared the bottle with his wife and, unfortunately for both them and their family, both found it pleasing.

Since James Latimer had been a steady laborer, his family had been able to live comfortably on the wages he earned. However, as his trips to the tavern became more frequent, and as he and his wife drank more often at home, their savings disappeared. Latimer was soon discharged from his position, and he and his wife and family quickly found themselves living in poverty. Mrs. Latimer found that she craved liquor even more than food, so she sent one of her children to pawn some clothing in order to buy more brandy. Because of her love of drink, she had sunk so low as to neglect her own children's need for milk in order to supply her own desires.

As time passed, the Latimers were evicted from their home. However, even in the miserable quarters they now occupied, husband and wife still longed for more liquor. Mrs. Latimer finally pawned her wedding ring and a small breast-pin that had belonged to her mother in order to refill the bottle once more.

As may be obvious from some of the previous discussion, temperance authors felt that the woman had more of an obligation to the family than the man. Even if the man did fall,

the woman should remain firm; thus if Mrs. Latimer had not possessed such a terrible habit, at least the family's situation would not have been quite as hopeless. Mrs. Latimer did have "resources in herself that would have been developed, and pinching want and keen privation, if not sorrow, would have been kept from their home."³⁹ Unfortunately, Mrs. Latimer's love of drink prevented her from aiding the family a great deal. After pawning every valuable thing the family owned, she finally took to begging for money in the streets and forced her children to join her.

The death of one of their children because of lack of love and care did not make the Latimers see the error of their ways. Instead, the father and mother sought consolation in the bottle. Frequent quarrels and harsh words constituted what little home life they had; beatings were given the wife instead of love. James Latimer returned home one night after drinking heavily and wasting what little money he had. After still another argument, Latimer, in a drunken rage, seized a liquor bottle and killed his wife by cracking it against her head.

He who had done this stood looking on, with a wild horror-stricken countenance--now a madman indeed. He was soon in the hands of an officer, and borne struggling and yelling away. For him, as well as for his wife, the bottle had done its work, and it might well be in broken fragments upon the floor of that

³⁹The History of the Bottle, p. 17.

room into which it had brought misery, desolation of heart, and crime.⁴⁰

When a woman faltered, the result was not only degradation, but murder. Female drunkenness seemed to be much more horrible than that of the male; thus its consequences had to be all the more severe. Murder seldom appears in these stories, but when it does it is usually due to the failure of a woman to meet her extraordinary obligations.

It was not only women from the laboring classes who would be adversely affected if they drank. Helen More was extremely wealthy and countless suitors were willing to do anything she wished. Because three of her admirers never drank wine, Helen More, in order to test her powers of persuasion, resolved to make them all drunk. She succeeded and was quite pleased with herself. Eventually, she even married one of them.

To her horror, Helen later discovered that her husband had become a drunkard. Because of urging her husband to drink she had become "tied to a living corpse. . . ."⁴¹ Her husband later reformed and began to take better care of his wife and infant son. But amidst this reform, Helen discovered that she herself had become a slave of drink. "I was utterly unable," Helen told the reader, "to break the

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴¹ Maria Lamas, The Glass; Or, the Trials of Helen More, A Thrilling Temperance Tale (Philadelphia: M. E. Harmstead, 1849), p. 14.

chains of a habit which must result in my mental and physical ruin . . . I saw the gulf into which I was about to plunge but was unable to escape it."⁴² Her drinking became directly responsible for her husband's return to intemperance, his eventual disappearance, and the death of her child.

Helen was able to abandon drink for a time after these tragedies, but more trouble followed. The two wealthy banks she owned completely failed, and she was forced to procure employment in a variety of jobs, the last as a saleswoman in a fashionable dry goods store. Helen wished to avoid recognition, and her wish was granted since the results of her drinking had changed her appearance so much that "none saw in the faded and spiritless shop woman, the once handsome and dashing Helen More."⁴³

One day, after working extremely hard, Helen fainted from fatigue after returning to the house where she boarded. Someone gave her a bit of brandy to aid her recovery.⁴⁴ This caused Helen to again be possessed by liquor, and she relapsed into old habits. She lost her job (and herself) and sank deeper and deeper in degradation until she was finally taken to an alms house after a fit of delirium tremens. Upon

⁴²Ibid., p. 21.

⁴³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴⁴Temperance authors would have none of the argument that liquor had some medicinal value.

her recovery and release from the institution, she could only hope that her wholesome remorse would atone somewhat for her failings.

At the close of this story, the feminine author took the liberty to make a few remarks. The "love of wine is not an innate but an acquired taste," she wrote, and she urged women to "openly discourage the use of wine, or any other drink that intoxicates."⁴⁵ She also stated that the woman suffered the most when men drank, and called upon women to make others aware of the drinking problem. Besides the authors of temperance fiction, the temperance evangelists like John Gough also urged women to exercise their influence in the temperance crusade.⁴⁶

The woman was urged to set a good example for others to follow. If she followed this course, there could always be hope that husband, sweetheart, or brother would reform. She must abstain herself, for temperance authors felt that "however great may be the sorrow and distress occasioned by a man's love of drink, it is not to be compared to the deep wretchedness by the same cause in a woman."⁴⁷

Just as Eve had discovered after tempting Adam to sin, a woman who offered liquor to a man would experience

⁴⁵Lamas, Helen More, p. 31.

⁴⁶Gough, Platform Echoes, p. 529.

⁴⁷"Steps To Ruin," The Fountain and the Bottle, p. 339.

disasterous consequences. In Arthur's "The Fair Tempter,"⁴⁸ Clara Haley convinced her husband James (despite his protests that he drank nothing stronger than water) to drink a glass of wine at the reception following their wedding. After having once tasted the beverage, Haley could not restrain himself from overindulging, making a complete fool of himself in the process. The once-happy bride spent a "sad and loney" wedding night, since her husband had fallen into "a state of drunken insensibility. . . ." ⁴⁹

The following day a letter was delivered to Clara which stated that James Haley had left the area in disgrace. (He had previously been a heavy drinker, but had reformed and avoided intoxicants completely until his wedding.) Five sorrowful years passed for Clara before James returned. He had been only a common drunkard for four of those years, until he had signed the temperance pledge and resumed work. The physical health and mental outlook of both Clara and James Haley rapidly improved after James' return, and his continued avoidance of drink. The lesson the woman had learned was certainly obvious to all.

A similarly titled story, "The Angel Tempter,"⁵⁰ told of a more sorrowful conclusion in demonstrating its lesson.

⁴⁸ Arthur, The Ruined Family and Other Tales.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁰ R. T. Trall, "The Angel Tempter."

In this particular example, Henry and Helen Darling were a promising couple with bright prospects for the future. Although Henry had not drunk any liquor for weeks, Helen convinced him to share a social glass with her. This one glass was Henry's undoing; and, as time passed, he lost everything because of his passion for drink.

As he lay on his death bed, Henry was able to give Helen some words of advice. Henry realized he was dying, but praised Heaven for at least taking him away from liquor's temptations. As his life slipped away, he stated to his wife, "I charge you, as a dying man, never to proffer to any living being, the intoxicating cup."⁵¹ Helen, and women in general, were able to see all too clearly the results of offering liquor to someone they loved.

Temperance writers were fond of pointing out examples of women who drank or who even associated with people in the liquor business. The author of Letters from the Alms House⁵² was a reluctant member of that institution and had the opportunity to observe four women who were also inmates. One of them, a Mrs. Rawley, had discovered several months after her marriage that she was wed to a drunkard. Since that time, she had experienced only sorrow. Her husband mortgaged their home to a rumseller, and upon his death she had no place to go but the alms house. A Mrs. Jennings was the quarrelsome

⁵¹Ibid., p. 112.

⁵²Letters From the Alms-House.

widow of a drunkard who had failed completely to provide for her. A Mrs. Barlow had a son who was a tavern keeper--he had certainly taken good care of his mother! A Mrs. Jones had been the wife of a rumseller. She had unfortunately become "one of the vilest pests of society. . . ." ⁵³ In each of these cases, the result of women associating with drink was only suffering and degradation.

Along with the mental agony she was forced to bear, the woman drinker also faced certain physical degeneration. Erroneously thinking that drink "gave life to her step, a thrill to her voice, sharpness to her wit, and caused soft words to flow melodiously," ⁵⁴ the female drinker perhaps stole wine from her husband's supply or sent the servants for gin at night. Her addiction would soon be discovered, however, since "her vacant eye, and bloated face, and silly speech, and feeble gait" gave evidence which was all too clear to her broken-hearted husband and ashamed children. ⁵⁵ A woman who gave up drinking, however, noticed a great improvement in both her health and spirits.

A woman was reminded that even being associated with liquor would cause the loss of physical beauty. Her once beautiful face would show signs of anxiety and care. Her cheek would become thinner and paler, her voice become soft

⁵³ Ibid., p. 47.

⁵⁴ Marsh, Hannah Hawkins, p. 55.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

and low, and her smile lose something of its former brightness.⁵⁶ Instead of frequenting her former social circle, she would have to remain in her poorly-furnished home, still loving her husband, but longing for a better day.

If her husband should reform, however, her appearance would remarkably improve, and her husband might state that "in fact, notwithstanding the long years of sorrow and toil, and penury, that have gone over her, I see not, as she sits before me, that she is today less beautiful than ever."⁵⁷

In summary, both male and female authors did write temperance works which portrayed the woman as a drinker, and not just as a victim of drink. If she did use liquor, however, her pleasant home-life would be radically altered, and her family would be reduced to poverty or worse. She would be unable to fulfill the special obligations which only a woman had, and her physical appearance would degenerate--perhaps resulting in her death. Even if she (or her family) fell, however, she still could do needlework and sewing; rarely was she forced to turn to more sordid occupations that may have existed. Women who drank often tried to hide their addition while men could drink openly. These female characters, like the authors of temperance fiction from 1830 to 1860, realized that their behavior would not meet the

⁵⁶Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate, p. 116.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 174.

standards of the times. If a woman did drink, she always suffered for her error, but by far the majority of women portrayed in the temperance fiction were the beautiful and industrious idealized figures of the temperance authors' pens.

CHAPTER VI

THEMES OF THE TEMPERANCE AUTHORS

Temperance authors constantly stressed certain themes to show the evils drink would cause and the benefits of temperance. They emphasized that the drinker would be materially, physically, and spiritually ruined--a fate which could be avoided if the temperance pledge was signed, but not if a course of moderate drinking were pursued. They expressed scorn for the rumseller, but only praise was directed toward the link between temperance, God, and the Church. Each of these themes played an important role in the crusade to free the country from the slippery coils of liquor.

The complete destruction alcohol would bring to either a businessman or a laborer was one of the most common subjects in temperance fiction. The drinker would not only be economically ruined by intemperance, but he would also suffer damage to his health and lose all self-respect. In Wild Dick and Good Little Robin,¹ Lucius Sargent contrasted the families of the two boys. Although they were neighbors and occupied similar situations in life, there were important differences between the two families. Dick's father,

¹Sargent, Wild Dick.

Mr. Wild, was not a habitual drinker; but he did speak against temperance reform. Mrs. Wild's feeling's were similar to those of her husband. By contrast, Robin Little's father was a member of the local temperance society and set an excellent example for his son.

Predictably, the Wild's drinking increased as time passed. Both parents became irritable, their quarrels became more frequent, and they made even less of an attempt to influence their son properly. The town's inhabitants soon came to view the Wild family as only a nuisance. Mr. and Mrs. Wild were forced to part with their house and land in order to satisfy their appetites; no longer able to support themselves, they were sent to the workhouse, where they both lost their health and died in shame. The Little family, meanwhile, experienced success by following temperate principles. Eventually, the Littles aided in reforming Richard Wild, who became successful. At the story's beginning, the Wild and Little families had shared similar circumstances; at the tale's conclusion, it was obvious which had lived by the proper set of values.

The effect of continual indulgence in drink on a man's attitude was another frequent theme of temperance fiction. Charles Burdett expressed this concern when he wrote that intoxication "deadens every feeling; it blunts every sympathy; it steels the heart against every appeal; it makes a man in

sober truth worse than the brute."²

This theme ran through Mrs. Thayer's novel, The Drunkard's Daughter.³ At first, John Ray appeared to be leading an almost ideal life. He had a wonderful wife and child, a pleasant home, and a lucrative business as a carpenter. Through his diligence, he had acquired quite a bit of property (thus edging up to the valued middle class norms). However, as his taste for wine increased, he began to forsake family, home, and business. He invited his intemperate friends to his house for an evening of revelry. Because his daughter preferred to stay with her sick mother rather than waiting on his drunken companions, Ray ordered his own child and wife to leave their home. Ray acted in this fashion because "he had drunk of the cup that maddens, that washes from the heart all the kindly affections of our nature, and fits it for the abiding place of every evil passion."⁴ Ray eventually reformed, but not until after his wife had died, his lovely daughter had been burdened with grief, and he had existed for many years as a degraded common drunkard.

All the evil results of drink were put on view in Timothy Shay Arthur's "The Ruined Family."⁵ As Mr. Graham, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant, began drinking he took less

²Burdett, Mary Grover, pp. 113, 114.

³Thayer, The Drunkard's Daughter.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Arthur, The Ruined Family.

of an interest in his family. Upon returning home each day, he would proceed immediately to his chambers and fall into a drunken slumber instead of spending time with his wife and children. Soon his family awaited his return each night with fear rather than joy.

It was not only his family that suffered from his intemperance. Graham soon grew irritable and morose in his business dealings, and his entire business operation became confused. During a three-year period, as he continued to drink, Graham's wealth shrunk from more than a million and a half dollars until he finally found himself in poverty and complete ruin.

Mr. Graham was now so degraded that he sold the needed family possessions in order to obtain money for liquor. When everything was gone, and when the other family members could give him no money for drink, "he became almost mad with the intolerable desire that was burning within him for the fiery poison which had robbed him of rationality and freedom."⁶ Graham soon began to suffer from delirium tremens and had to be taken to an almshouse for medical treatment. Despite the care he received, he soon died. Directly because of drinking, Mr. Graham had lost his business, his health, his self-respect, and his life.

The author of Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate gave

⁶Ibid., p. 28.

advice on how to avoid such failures as Mr. Graham's. "It can scarcely be expected that the habitual inebriate will be a successful business man," he wrote, and gave a number of reasons why.⁷ First, drinking was expensive. The drinker might think that a glass of liquor, beer, or wine was quite inexpensive, but when all the glasses were added together, a considerable amount had been spent. There was never any return for this waste of available capital.

The "reformed inebriate" also pointed out that the drinker was wasting his valuable time which, like capital, was very important in an age of expanding industrialism. An intemperate man would not devote the hours of attention to his business that would be required to make it successful. Drinking would also lead the businessman into associations with disreputable characters whom he would encounter in taverns and grog-shops. From this he would suffer "a loss of confidence, credit, and patronage"⁸ from his customers. Finally, drinking would result in the loss of sound business judgment. The drinker would be apt to enter into foolish speculations and ruinous bargains which could destroy him. Each of these reasons should have been convincing enough by itself to prevent the intelligent businessman from ever taking a drink.

⁷Confessions of a Reformed Inebriate, p. 74.

⁸Ibid., p. 75.

The narrator of this novel also described the hazards to health that drinking posed. Continued use of intoxicants would make the drinker's mind lose the power of self-control. An inebriate would no longer be able to discriminate between the real and the fancied; he would suffer from delirium tremens, a disease in which imaginary horrors assuited his mind. The drinker might believe himself attacked by countless creatures of every description, including slimy reptiles, skeletons, phantoms, and demons. The result of this malady was often death.

Maria Lamas also stressed the ruin of the drinker:

"No more instructive and effective temperance lecture could be delivered than a properly prefaced statistical account of the inmates of the alms house."⁹ Contending that every pauper had been reduced to his or her condition either directly or indirectly because of drink, she argued that use of liquor would adversely affect not only the drinker, but also the other members of his society. People thus had a social responsibility to abstain from drink.

Although temperance stories almost always described a successful man failing in business because of his love of intoxicating beverages, there were a few exceptions to this general pattern. In "Drink and Death,"¹⁰ the causal

⁹Lamas, Helen More, p. 25.

¹⁰"Drink and Death," in Maria Woodruff, ed.

connection was reversed, as the main character turned to drink because of business losses. The liquor, however, brought him neither escape from disappointment nor true consolation; it only led the way to an anguished death. The anonymous author commented that "instead of braving with true courage, the coming of adversity, and seeking for peace and happiness in the bosom of his family," he fled their presence, "and looked instead to the bottle."¹¹ The solution to his problems lay in himself and his family, not in a glass of liquor or the "soul-killing bowl."

Two of Timothy Shay Arthur's characters also viewed drink as an aid in a time of trouble. Mr. Graham, in "The Ruined Family," drank even more deeply because of the business reverses he had suffered.¹² And Mr. Hamilton, in "The Broken Merchant," upon learning of his business failure, viewed it as a maddening rather than a sobering occurrence and turned more avidly to the bottle.¹³ Of course, the fall of these two men had been caused because they were drinkers--they had begun drinking before they failed.

Temperance authors generally made the point that, if a man turned to drink, he would probably not only experience failure in business, but would also be likely to lose his

¹¹Ibid., p. 134.

¹²Arthur, The Ruined Family.

¹³Arthur, Six Nights with the Washingtonians.

health and self-respect. If tragedy did occur, the way to face it was to rely on one's goodness and loving family, and not search for forgetfulness in drink. The writers of the temperance fiction used many pages to detail man's fall; however, like the Christian stories of man's fall and redemption, they always held out the promise of a better life for those who saw the error of their ways and reformed.

One of the ways to avoid the drinker's certain failure was to sign the pledge of the Washingtonian movement. In this way, anyone, whether abstainer or reformed drunkard, could vow to forsake all alcoholic beverages. The benefits of signing the pledge were thoroughly explored in temperance fiction. Typical was author Harry Spofford's vivid description of Charley Temple.¹⁴ Charley had been "an affectionate and devoted husband" and a "smart and active businessman" before he began to drink.¹⁵ As we might expect, he was favored with a beautiful wife and child. The Temples, however, were reduced to poverty as Charley's intoxication became more regular. Temple himself was no more than a drunken loafer, while his wife and child had barely enough food to eat or clothes to wear.

A remarkable change took place in their situation when Charley's wife finally convinced her husband to sign the temperance pledge. Not only were Charley and his wife better

¹⁴Spofford, Charley Temple.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 30.

off, and their friends and relatives overjoyed, but one year after signing and faithfully following the pledge, Charley Temple came into possession of a considerable amount of property left him by his father. (Charley's father had left the property with a relative until the time when Charley would prove to be a temperate man.) Neither Charley Temple nor the reader had to search hard to discover the immediate material benefits of signing the temperance pledge.

Life also improved rapidly for Edward Grover after he "formally enlisted in the glorious army of temperance."¹⁶ His home became the scene of complete happiness rather than of despair, and his conscience was freed from the burden of his former degradation. Grover and other signers of the pledge agreed with the author of this story when he concluded:

Your only safety is in total abstinence from all that can intoxicate, and if you would become honored, respected, and esteemed; if you would add to your own happiness, and that of all who love you - be temperate. If you would ensure prosperity in your worldly affairs - be temperate. If you would be happy in your domestic relations - be temperate. If you would lead a virtuous and pious life here, with the hope of life eternal, hereafter - be temperate.¹⁷

James Latimer also reversed the direction of his life by signing the pledge. Latimer knew the troubles drink had brought to his family--the deaths of his mother, sister,

¹⁶Burdett, Mary Grover, p. 159.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 164, 165.

and father¹⁸ and he saved himself from a probable similar fate by placing his faith in the temperance pledge.¹⁹ He later gave proof of his reformation by rescuing his wife's father and brother from the hands of intemperance. The whole family was finally happy.

The most famous of the temperance authors, Timothy Shay Arthur, wrote a short story which he simply entitled "The Temperance Pledge."²⁰ As the tale began, a husband described as "a miserable creature, bloated and disfigured by intemperance" demanded a quarter from "a woman, whose thin, pale face, and heart-broken look told but too plainly that she was the drunkard's wife."²¹ The wife was not eager to part with any of the little money she had, especially since by her sewing she could barely provide food and clothes for the children as it was. Despite her protests however, her husband remained adamant and eventually obtained the money and left. The wife resumed her sewing, knowing that their lives appeared to be without hope.

On his way to the tavern, however, the drunkard realized the error of his ways and proceeded instead to the store of a respected tradesman. He then paid the quarter as an initiation fee for the temperance society and signed the

¹⁸The History of the Bottle.

¹⁹The Power of the Pledge. . . . (New York: Oliver and Brother, 1848).

²⁰Arthur, The Ruined Family.

²¹Ibid., p. 167.

pledge.

The promised results were immediately forthcoming, for later that very day he was able to secure a job. As he worked, he was occasionally tempted to submit once again to the joys of alcohol, but was able to resist these desires by drinking only water. At the week's end, he was able to supply his family with the needed groceries, and still set some money aside for the days ahead (a real middle class virtue). With the love and respect of his wife and children once again his, he could look to the future with a happy assurance.

According to temperance fiction, the situation never remained the same for someone who signed the pledge; life always improved. The pledge was pictured as a necessary step to future happiness. Although the reader might have expected it, no one slipped back to drunkenness after once signing the pledge. Thus, a man's signature attesting to the fact that he was giving up alcohol was the final step in putting evil behind and entering a new life largely free from either care or want. The temperance authors did not have enough faith in their readers to suggest that they pledge only "to themselves." A public ceremony in an organization was instead usually necessary in order to insure the success and reformation of the former drinker.

Some people opposed signing the temperance pledge, or felt they were in no danger from intoxicants because they were only "moderate" drinkers. This difference of opinion

did cause some conflict in the reform movement. Most authors of temperance fiction, however, illustrated the folly of this idea. Reverend John Marsh wrote that drinkers often say they will have just a little alcohol, since they are able to quit whenever they please. The trouble with this attitude is that, although the drinker always says he can stop at any moment and have no more, he never does. Marsh insisted that "the moderate drinker is training to take the place of the drunkard."²²

The anonymous author of "It's Only A Drop" warned that to sample liquor just once would prove ruinous and "a temptation fatal if unresisted."²³ R. T. Trall expressed similar sentiments: "There is but one medium of transition, but one road from abstinence to drunkenness,--it is moderate drinking."²⁴ He related that a great many men had thought themselves firm in principle and strong in purpose as they began a career of "only" moderate drinking. But the results for each was the same--drunkenness.

In "The Dangers of Irresolution,"²⁵ Henry Warren, a prosperous, happy young blacksmith who was accustomed to occasional drinking, was easily persuaded by others to stop

²²Marsh, Hannah Hawkins, p. 35.

²³"It's Only A Drop," in The Fountain and the Bottle, p. 232.

²⁴R. T. Trall, "The Angel Tempter," in Woodruff, ed., A Drop from the Bucket, p. 104.

²⁵"The Dangers of Irresolution," in Woodruff, ed., A Drop from the Bucket.

at a local inn for some refreshments. Henry returned home drunk that night, but he solemnly promised his mother that such a scene would never be repeated. Despite Henry's promises, the taste for liquor he had acquired from moderate drinking led him further towards complete degradation. His fondness for the bottle resulted in his own death and in the suffering of his family.

Charley Temple was another of those who felt that there was no harm in an occasional drink. As he was returning from a concert one evening, two men asked him to drink with them. Not wanting to offend them, Charley agreed. Some time later, he did refuse, but soon relented, since he wished to avoid being ridiculed by the others. These occasions were, of course, the beginnings of Charley's fall. Charley gave no thought to becoming a drunkard; after all, he felt he could take a glass now and then without any harm whatsoever. He did not realize until too late that his appetite for liquor had increased beyond his control. He had not listened to the author's advice that there would be no drunkards if there were no first glasses.²⁶ Fortunately for him, but after many troubles, Charley came to believe some of the other warnings of the author:

Alas! when will our young men learn that to taste the poison is but to take the first step towards the drunkard's grave? That just so sure as they drink

²⁶Spofford, Charley Temple, p. 15.

from the intoxicating fountain, just so sure they will fall in degradation, ignominy and shame.²⁷

Timothy Shay Arthur dealt with the theme of the occasional drinker in his short story "The Moderate Drinker."²⁸ Harvey Martin was not a heavy drinker, and he scoffed when a friend pointed out that the way to drunkenness was through habitual moderate drinking. Harvey continued his "moderate" drinking, unconscious of the danger. He only realized that he had been drinking to excess when his own family saw him drunk. Harvey then decided to limit himself to a certain number of glasses of liquor per day. This might have worked, but he filled the glasses fuller than ever before. His continual drinking resulted in the failure of his business and forced his family to move to a smaller home. Harvey's "moderate" appetite for drink increased from two or three glasses a day to fifty or sixty glasses a day. He was reduced to selling his clothes in order to supply himself with money to buy strong spirits. He was finally saved by joining the local temperance society and signing the pledge, but his "success" at drinking moderately was painfully remembered by his wife, friends, and family.

Temperance authors agreed that the way to avoid becoming a common drunkard was to abstain completely from all intoxicants. Time and again they described the futility of

²⁷Ibid., p. 24.

²⁸Arthur, Six Nights with the Washingtonians.

attempting to live as a moderate drinker. If a man were totally committed to achieving success, both for himself and for his family, he would pursue the path of abstinence rather than of moderation.

As might be expected, those who operated taverns and sold intoxicating beverages were the subject of much temperance literature. Since it made sense that there would be no drunkards were it not for that initial glass of liquor, it made even more sense that there would be no drinkers at all were it not for those who made their livelihood selling trouble to others.

George Burleigh envisioned a terrible end for the grog-seller who had threatened the happiness of Mason Hodges. The rumseller was struck down by illness; and, as he lay dying "in a large room, whose dim light could not reveal the rich furnishings which told the ruin of a hundred souls,"²⁹ he experienced a vision which was startlingly real. As he looked down into hell, the grog-seller saw his many victims pass before him. Each of them, whether the man who had been enticed to drink or his suffering wife, pointed an accusing finger at the wretch who had led them to his troubles. He also saw the horrible form of his own son, a youth who had been a degraded victim of his father's liquor business. A host of "jeering devils seemed to toss him to and fro over a

²⁹Burleigh, Mason Hodges, p. 34.

wide pit," at whose bottom was a "living fire, whose every flame was conscious, toothed, and venomous."³⁰ While the rumseller begged for mercy, the devils threw him so high in the air that he was able to look upon heaven, where he could quickly glimpse everything of joy and happiness (and a place where non-drinkers would most likely rest). This was not to be the final home of the rumseller, however, for he plunged back into the terrible depths of hell as his vision and his life drew to a close. The rumseller's sin was so severe that even a merciful God would not aid him.

The two men who sold liquor in Wild Dick and Good Little Robin³¹ also spent their final days in agony, although Lucius Sargent was not as imaginative about their deaths as was Burleigh in his tale. But there certainly was a lesson in the fact that one man who had been a grog-shop owner for a few years died of dropsy, while another became a victim of his own business and died in the poor house as a lowly drunkard.

There were few aspects of the temperance movement that illuded the pen of Timothy Shay Arthur, and the character of the man who sold intoxicants was not one of them. In one of his most entertaining short stories, "The Rum-Seller's Dream,"³² a tavern keeper, after a successful day of enticing others to drink, lay down for a rest. He dreamed of the misery his occupation had caused, seeing the miserable men

³⁰Ibid., p. 35.

³¹Sargent, Wild Dick.

³²Arthur, The Ruined Family.

whose hard-earned dollars he had taken and their suffering wives and children who were also forced to pay liquor's price. He viewed various devils in hell who either spent their time suggesting ways to improve the tavern's business or devoted their energies to convincing others to pursue intemperate lives. He was told that there was no middle ground between evil and good, and he was on the side of hell, for would good spirits either "for the sake of gain, take the food out of the mouths of starving children," or "put allurements in a brother's way to entice him to ruin?"³³ Upon awakening, the rum seller closed down his tavern, poured his liquor into the gutters, and opened an honest business.

Letters from the Alms House. . . .³⁴ also expressed contempt for the rum-seller. The author asked who benefitted by the sale of strong drink and answered the question himself:

Certainly not the drunkard, who is ruined by it, in body and soul and estate; nor his family, who suffer from his neglect - perhaps his cruelty; nor the community, upon whom this traffic inflicts such an amount of evil, in the shape of pauperism and crime. Who then are benefited by it? None, but that small portion of the community who are engaged in the traffic.³⁵

The author considered rum-selling to be a monopoly, the cause of three-fourths of society's evils, and a crime from which

³³Ibid., p. 124.

³⁴Letters from the Alms-House.

³⁵Ibid., p. 70.

people should be protected by law. The other men and women in the alms house were pictured as only the innocent victims of the liquor sellers.

Needless to say, the grog-shop owner was not portrayed as a man of virtue by the authors of temperance fiction. The point of their writings again was that if liquor could be removed from the scene, then people would be free to create the healthful and happy environment which was rightfully theirs.

The help of God and his church was also enlisted as an aid to the temperance reformation. This is not surprising, since the 1830's and 1840's were a time of religious awakening as well as a time when crusades for a number of reforms were gaining prominence. Many temperance spokesmen were ministers, and a number of the authors of the fiction made use of religious themes in their writings.

This trend is especially apparent in the works of Lucius Sargent. In Wild Dick and Good Little Robin, Mr. and Mrs. Wild (who later became drunkards) paid much less respect to the Sabbath than did Mr. and Mrs. Little (who taught their son "principles of piety and virtue," and "brought him up in the fear of God").³⁶ The Wild's son later performed numerous kind and generous actions - because he had become a Christian.

³⁶Sargent, Wild Dick, p. 8.

In Sargent's A Word in Season . . .,³⁷ the family of Mary Morison had not observed the Sabbath closely. When her son went off to sea, she neglected to send a Bible along with him; when he returned several years later, he had unfortunately become a drunkard. Upon hearing this story, one of the other characters in Sargent's novel replaced the liquor stand in his parlor with a new family Bible.

In "My Mother's Gold Ring,"³⁸ although the main character, a drinker, knew he had frequently sinned, he turned to God in prayer. With God's help, he was able to reform and make a successful life for himself and his family. Suggesting the parallel between Christianity and temperance, his wife stated: "If there is great joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth, there is no less joy in the heart of a faithful wife over a husband that was lost and is found."³⁹

Charles Burdett also stressed God's aid to the temperate man in the tale of Mary Grover.⁴⁰ Although her husband badly mistreated her, Mary Grover daily forgave him and prayed that "in His own good time," God would show her husband the error of his conduct and lead him to reform. This did occur, and Grover found that,

³⁷Sargent, A Word In Season.

³⁸Sargent, "My Mother's Gold Ring," Stearns, ed., Footprints of Temperance Pioneers.

³⁹Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁰Burdett, Mary Grover.

as his trust and faith in God increased, so prosperity increased with him, thus verifying what the faithful minister of Christ had said to him - "God will honor those who honor him."⁴¹

Another temperance story related that Mason Hodges had turned to the church as soon as he was reclaimed from drink.⁴² All of Mason's worthier neighbors were already members, and Mason thought it a privilege to be able to join with them in asking God's blessings. Author George Burleigh seemed to suggest that it was far better to have a spiritual hunger than a spirituous thirst.

Not unexpectedly, Reverend John Marsh also praised both God and temperance in his tale of Hannah Hawkins.⁴³ Marsh was especially concerned with those children who were daughters of drunkards, and he was extremely grateful to the church's Sunday School system for providing a place of instruction for these unfortunates. This system also provided concerned teachers who would do their best to give their charges comfort, in both material and spiritual ways.

A final example of the way several temperance authors viewed God or his church can be found in The Power of the Pledge.⁴⁴ The minister who had just married the reformed James Latimer pointed out to the others who had assembled that God was to be credited for Latimer's decision to give

⁴¹Ibid., p. 161.

⁴²Burleigh, Mason Hodges.

⁴³Marsh, Hannah Hawkins.

⁴⁴The Power of the Pledge.

up alcohol and sign the temperance pledge. Making further reference to the Lord, the minister continued:

Were he not present in every good resolution - the inspirer and sustainer thereof - no pledge could be kept. To God, therefore, let us ascribe the praise. We are humble instruments in his hands, and for every good act we perform, he rewards us amply.⁴⁵

There was widespread use of religious themes and parallels in the temperance literature written during the period under consideration. Authors demonstrated that those who had little respect for church or God would surely die in sin, often after having lived as worthless drunkards. God was merciful and would forgive, but an effort at redemption would also have to be made by the drinker. In much the same way as they had portrayed the suffering, yet enduring woman, temperance authors seemed to suggest that God would eventually aid those whose faith remained strong despite having to bear the burden of, in most cases, a drunken husband or father. The final result would be that God would reward those who followed the proper rules of conduct (and thus did not drink). For some, the reward was seen in tangible benefits that came because of proper behavior. For others, the reward would be in heaven.

Each of the themes discussed in this chapter--the material and physical ruin of the drinker, the saving power of the temperance pledge, the certain fall of the moderate drinker, the criticism of the rum seller, and the praise of

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 32.

God and the church - were integral parts of many works of temperance fiction. The authors of these novels and short stories reassured their readers of the benefits that would come to them if they trusted the proper leaders and followed the correct ideals. Although United States society in the 1830's, 1840's, and 1850's was undergoing rapid social and economic change, authors of temperance fiction sought to convince others that there could still be hope for the future - if the menace of drink (and all that it stood for) were opposed.

CHAPTER VII

TEMPERANCE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Temperance short stories and novels in antebellum America reflected many of the same tensions as did other popular art forms of the period. For example, many of the themes David Grimsted found in his article "Melodrama as Echo of the Historically Voiceless"¹ were also present in temperance writing. The poetry, plays, fiction, songs, and graphic arts of the period all evidenced the concern of both the artist and the general public with the nation's changing values.

Historians have not always been very interested in attempting to discover truths about a society by studying its popular culture.² The important and controversial political or economical occurrences of an age usually draw more of their attention. And of course it is difficult to discover, and then assess, the broad concepts that a study of popular culture must deal with.

Most of a historian's available information, moreover, often comes only from official sources or from atypical

¹David Grimstead, "Melodrama as Echo of the Historically Voiceless," in Tamara K. Hareven, ed., Anonymous Americans: Explorations in Nineteenth Century Social History (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971).

²Ibid., p. 94.

individuals who have kept detailed records.³ Thus the great majority of the population is not really represented. Historians can sometimes discover the feelings of these historically voiceless men and women by looking at the popular art forms which might have described their attitudes. The literature these people read, the plays they attended, and the prints they viewed were not always very realistic, but they did reflect dreams and fears of both artist and mass audience. This chapter will therefore examine the close similarities of temperance fiction, melodrama, and Currier and Ives prints during the pre-Civil War period.

Grimsted believes that "the religious reality of the melodrama revolved around a clear moral order in which reward depended on the righteousness of one's conduct. . . ." ⁴ If a person followed the proper paths, he would be happy and prosperous. If he violated the code, however, destruction would be the result. Every temperance story related this moral exactly. In Sargent's Wild Dick And Good Little Robin, for example, the family which led a temperate life was completely successful while the family that turned to drink was completely ruined.⁵ The conclusion of each temperance tale demonstrated that there were clear moral laws in the universe. The drinker might think he was enjoying himself, or

³Ibid., p. 95.

⁴Ibid., p. 83.

⁵Sargent, Wild Dick.

the rum-seller might be pleased with his momentary wealth, but their demise would be imminent and unavoidable. The temperate man, woman, or family would just as certainly be eventually rewarded.

This world of perfect justice was pictured by the temperance authors because they could not accept the idea that results could be otherwise. If it were not definitely known that the drinker would be punished and the temperate rewarded, there would have been no point to writing their stories at all. As times changed, it was reassuring to learn that there were definite codes which should be followed. Drink was used as a symbol of all that was evil, but readers were assured that, if they were good, there was nothing to fear.

In the melodrama as well as the temperance fiction, the heroine represented all that was good. The wife or daughter was not only outwardly lovely, but also had wonderful inner strength and character. The temperance authors devoted numerous pages to describing the enjoyable lives these female characters lived, and the happiness they brought to their husbands and fathers. Of course these pleasant scenes were possible only if alcohol had not intruded. The woman would suffer greatly if the man drank, but she would be even worse off if she drank herself. As in the melodrama, if the female character in the temperance fiction fell, "only her death or at best many years of repentance could remove the blot."⁶

⁶Grimsted, "Melodrama," p. 85.

This fact has already been illustrated in the stories of Mrs. Latimer and Helen More.

The home was also a common symbol for both melodrama and temperance stories. The home and its female occupants was pictured as a bastion of strength and refuge in a changing society. Grimsted described this symbolic usage of the home nicely:

In a demoractic and bourgeois society where institutions such as class, community, preordained authority, established church, and historic family were weakened to allow the individual competitive mobility, the home came to represent a "mansion of peace," a locus of permanence and order amidst the chaos of social, financial, geographic, and spiritual movement.⁷

The home was an especially important symbol because it was largely a permanent institution. Other symbols might undergo some transformation, but domestic scenes would always be present and appealing.

One of the other symbols common to both temperance fiction and melodrama was the city. In both types of literature the small village or the farm seemed to be preferred to the large city. The town or the countryside was quiet and close to nature while the city represented frantic activity, industry, change, and "man's triumphing over nature rather than cooperating with it. . . ."⁸ Needless to say, virtue was a great deal more apparent away from the large city than it was

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 86.

within its boundaries.

The writers of melodrama and temperance fiction were also concerned with changing morals. The rapid development of the factory system and the corresponding industrialization, with the problems it brought, made writers long for an earlier day. There had been a time, the writers idealized, when change was slow, people lived in harmony rather than in fierce competition, and men concerned themselves more with doing the right thing rather than in getting ahead.⁹ The temperance authors longed for an earlier time when liquor and other threats were not as real.

One of the main points of temperance literature which the voiceless American would have been quick to embrace was the matter of individual choice. Readers were assured that every man was able to make his own decisions. The influence of the Jacksonian period, with its emphasis on the fact that the individual had the ability to know what is right and to decide for himself, was reflected in the temperance literature. A definite choice of life-styles was available to the man who contemplated taking a drink--one would lead to success and happiness; the other only to destruction. The temperance authors could portray the results of intemperance, but they could not force the acceptance of their views. Thus even the "unimportant" member of society was assured that he, too, could participate in the use of power.

⁹Ibid.

There was no moral ambiguity in either melodrama or temperance fiction. The characters in the melodramas were either heroes or villains; there was no middle ground. In the temperance stories, liquor was always bad--there were no instances when either a friendly glass with associates or other "moderate" drinking was acceptable. The individual characters in the temperance fiction were not always so morally segregated. There were many instances in which a man was portrayed as having few faults, but who fell anyway. But of course the one fault he did have in each case, and the reason for his destruction, was a weakness for drink. This was one error that could not be allowed without the character's punishment.

The temperance fiction and the melodramas of antebellum America were also similar in other ways. Both "forged the hopes of a competitive society to the traditional virtues of Christian content and generosity."¹⁰ The characters in the temperance stories were content with what they had--they did not desperately strive for more wealth and possessions. They rather made financial or social gains because they were good. Once again the authors of such stories looked back to a time when upright morals, and not competition in the new and threatening industries, were rewarded. The temperance stories seemed to promise the reader that he could obtain rewards in life without being a competitor. This of course

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 89, 90.

appealed to the average American, who lacked the opportunity to either make a great deal of money or to live a life of luxury.

The temperance stories and the melodramas were also popular because they were presented within the general framework of Christian religion. This was quite a popular literary method in the nineteenth century, and the tales involving Christian ideas of man's temptation, fall, and redemption struck familiar chords among readers and playgoers whether they realized it or not. The feelings of a great many Americans are revealed in the literature which they read and wrote.

Temperance novels and short stories did presume literacy on the part of their audience, and thus were not able to appeal to all. Pictures which extolled the virtues and values of abstinence, however, could carry the message to everyone, regardless of reading ability. Illiteracy was no excuse for intemperate habits. Although there were numerous illustrations in the works of fiction, even more popular were the prints dealing with temperance themes issued by Currier and Ives. These examples of graphic art were found throughout the country and can add to our knowledge of the attitudes of those who believed in temperance and of the age in which they lived.

One of the most striking of the temperance prints was

entitled "The Drunkard's Progress."¹¹ This print showed in nine steps the journey of a young man from his first encounter with liquor to his eventual death. Although most of the prints dealing with temperance themes portrayed a workingman as the central character, "The Drunkard's Progress" showed the ruin of a man of the upper class.

Step one of this picture presented a well-dressed young man making his first mistake. In a rash act common to many of the characters in the temperance stories, he agreed to "A glass with a Friend." This was, of course, the beginning of his sudden fall.

Many of those who made excuses for the use of alcohol stressed liquor's medicinal value. Needless to say, this type of reasoning was not acceptable to people who believed in temperance. Consequently, in step two of "The Drunkard's Progress," the young man drank "A glass to keep the cold out." By step three, the drinker had consumed "A glass too much." He now appeared insensible or in a drunken slumber. Gone was the happy and intelligent expression of an earlier day. Instead of devoting time to his business, the young man was now proceeding further down the road to drunkenness. Rather than displaying the good conduct we might expect from someone who had known the best of society, the youth in step four had become "Drunk and riotous."

¹¹ Harry T. Peters, Currier and Ives, Printmakers to the American People (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc., 1942), plate 90.

The caption for step five stated, "The summit attained, Jolly companions, A confirmed drunkard." The young man was shown leaning back in his chair with his feet on the table. A degraded expression covered his face, and he appeared concerned with only smoking and toasting the health of his equally inebriated friends. The confirmed drunkard thought he was leading an enjoyable life; little did he realize the state into which he had fallen and his terrible prospects for the future.

Thanks to his habitual drinking, the main character found himself beset by "Poverty and Disease" in step six. His clothes were ill-fitting and torn, his top hat, crushed and battered. His face was covered with a scraggly beard, his hair was unkempt, and his countenance was that of a man laid low by illness. His former wealth had disappeared. The drinker had become even more degraded in step seven when he was "Forsaken by Friends." No one wished to be associated with such a dissipated character. His clothes were now only rags; his face bore the marks of disease and filth. He gazed at the viewer with an obnoxious sneer.

His business and savings gone, and with no means of support, the drinker turned in step eight to "Desperation and crime." He was shown robbing a well-dressed man, most likely in order to get a few more dollars to waste on liquor. Step nine pictured the final result of this young man's use of alcohol. Now a hopeless drunkard, stricken by poverty and

disease and without the aid of family or friends, he ended his once-promising life by taking his pistol and committing "Death by suicide." Such was the end of a man who had tasted liquor.

At the bottom of "The Drunkard's Progress" is one more small interesting picture. It showed a woman covering her face in sorrow while leading a small child. These were, of course, the innocent victims of the drinker and the liquor business. The background for this mournful scene appears to be a factory or a city, serving as one more example of the fears and anxieties of the temperance crusaders.

Two companion prints by Currier and Ives further demonstrated the value of liquor. In "Coming The Putty," an older man was shown standing at the bar.¹² Although his clothes were somewhat tattered, and he looked none too respectable, he did appear to have some money in his hand. Thus when he asked the man behind the counter for a drink, the bartender replied: "Yes Sir-ee."

Two similar characters appeared in the second print, "The Momentous Question." But in this case the drinker looked even more degraded than before. His clothes were still in need of repairs, but the real difference lay in his expression. Whereas he had at least appeared somewhat

¹²Frederick A. Conningham, Currier and Ives Prints, an Illustrated Check List (New York: Crown Publishers, 1949), p. 62.

¹³Ibid., p. 183.

intelligent in the first print, in the second he now peered at the bartender with a vacant look of dull despair. Since he had probably already wasted the little money he had on liquor, he could only ask, "Is my face good for a drink?" The bartender, of course unwilling to trust a drunkard, replied, "No Sir-ee!" The rumsellers were willing to befriend a drinker as long as he could pay, but once his funds ran out, they, too, were aware of the worthlessness of the drunkard.

Several other temperance themes of the antebellum period were contained in a series of four prints entitled "The Bible and Temperance."¹⁴ Each of these prints contained a paragraph of annotation so the reader could learn more than just what met the eye.

The first scene was the nicely-furnished and orderly home of Harry Brown. Brown was "a respectable mechanic" with a good-looking family made up of a son, a daughter, and "a steady industrious wife."¹⁵ Their pleasant evening was interrupted, however, when an unmarried mechanic, William White, made a call. White had just inherited some money and wanted Brown to join him in a night of revelry. The other family members in the print pointed to the attractively-set table and urged Brown to join them in a cup of tea, but his

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 29, 30.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 29.

character was too weak to resist liquor's temptation, and he instead departed with William White.

Once he had tasted liquor, Brown could not turn down his "friend's" invitation to join him again and again. He soon was no longer either a diligent or a responsible workman and was discharged from his position. His family was forced to part with many of their possessions and endured suffering and poverty because of their father and husband's love of drink. In scene two, Brown was shown lying down behind a partition trying to sleep through another day, while his wife worked washing the few remaining clothes the family possessed. Just at that dark moment, the parish minister stopped in and proceeded to read from the Bible to Brown's wife and children.

The words of the minister did not fall on deaf ears, for Brown could not help but listen, too. After the pastor had left, Brown jumped out of his hiding place (he had not wished to be seen in his present condition). In scene three, he swore upon the Bible which the minister had left to give up drinking and lead a new life. His wife and children were, of course, overwhelmed and thankful for this new attitude.

Since Harry Brown had reformed, he again was able to find a good job. As a "steady, sober, and industrious" worker, he put some money aside in savings and was later able to buy a small cottage. He began attending church regularly, where he thanked God for his own conversion and prayed for that of others. In scene four, Brown and his family were

shown meeting the minister and his wife in a pleasant and probably rural setting. The Browns were once again a nice-appearing and happy family.

Temperance authors dealt with the subjects of the hard-working laborer, the happy family (made-up of an industrious and good-looking wife and well-behaved children), the fact that one drink was too much, the power of the Bible and Christian principles, the material benefits of abstinence, and the praise of the country or small village style of living. Each of these themes was displayed in this series of four Currier and Ives prints.

Like the works of the temperance authors, the popular prints of Currier and Ives also described temperance as a real virtue. "The Tree of Life"¹⁶ was a print which showed two angels guarding and caring for a tree upon which hung numerous apples, each representing an admired trait. Among these virtues were perseverance, purity, goodness, patience, resignation, prayer, humility, and temperance. As the angels guarded the tree against a devil with an ax in his hand, so the temperance authors sought to guard the America they longed and hoped for against a variety of threats, one of which was (or was symbolized by) liquor.

In an article in American Quarterly, Morton Cronin wrote that a certain group of these temperance prints were

¹⁶Peters, Currier and Ives, plate 86.

significant because they suggested "a popular identification between laborers and hard drinking" and because they indicated "that it was chiefly the workingman's drinking habits which caused concern. . . ." ¹⁷ While this statement is true, temperance prints by Currier and Ives are even more revealing than this. Like the works of temperance fiction, they portrayed not only all that could be accomplished by temperate lives but also all that would be lost if liquor gained command.

The temperance novels and short stories, the melodramas, and the prints of antebellum American (and the popularity they enjoyed with a massive, but usually historically voiceless audience) do suggest that there was an anxiety-ridden group in society which was somewhat fearful of the increasingly unfamiliar environment in which they lived. Caught in a disturbing situation, this mass audience found it easy to blame all problems on one cause, to remember a better time, and to read a tale, see a play, or view a picture in which the result was always as it should be. These art forms reveal many of the fears and attitudes of the people who made them so popular.

¹⁷Morton Cronin, "Currier and Ives: A Content Analysis," American Quarterly, IV (Winter, 1952), 317-30, see p. 327.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

The authors of temperance fiction from 1830 to 1860, and their many readers, found themselves in an increasingly unsettling environment. Anxiously concerned about their status in a rapidly developing industrial society, they searched for reasons for their dissatisfaction and displacement. The menace of liquor seemed to be a threat which, perhaps unconsciously, could represent the changes which were occurring. Temperance writers and their wide audience thus condemned drink as the cause of others' problems, criticizing in others what they perhaps feared and repressed in themselves.

Temperance authors praised the past as a time when they thought there was not so much to fear. They stressed that, if liquor were avoided, happiness and prosperity would always result, and one's status could be improved and maintained; degradation and ruin, however, were the outcomes of drink. The family symbolized all the good life had to offer--he who abstained from drink would live in a pleasant and secure country home, away from industrialized and crowded cities, and surrounded by a dutiful son, an attractive and devoted daughter, and a beautiful and industrious wife.

None of these promises would become reality if the drinker refused reform, since intemperance was the destroyer of an individual's social position, financial well-being, health, and self-respect. Although women and children were especially liable to be the indirect victims of liquor, they were also subject to drunkenness themselves. Intemperance wasted property, produced crime and poverty, injured religious feeling, lowered morals, and prevented domestic happiness. Even the moderate drinker only served to support the hideous business of the distiller and rum-seller, at grave danger to himself. Hope was present, though, if people would only sign a pledge promising to refrain from all intoxicants. Temperate habits were virtuous--even godly--and each of the authors' themes was presented within the framework of Christian religion.

These themes could show every American the results of correct and incorrect behavior. In the novels and tales he read, the plays he attended, and the pictures he saw, the individual was advised that he had the power of decision. If the proper choices were made, and if a man were somewhat content and generous (despite those others who were selfishly competing for wealth), then there would be nothing to fear from a changing society.

There were those who disagreed with the ideas of the temperance authors, but obviously their arguments had little effect on many of the reformers. People so totally committed

to a cause they fervently believed in were not likely to listen closely to any opposition. As is the case with many crusaders, the temperance advocates often examined but one side of the question.

While this study is concerned with the most important themes of the temperance fiction, the decades prior to the Civil War were filled with a variety of humanitarian crusades; a possible further field of investigation might be whether the fictional literature of such movements as abolition, prison reform, peace, and women's rights portrayed a changing America in the same terms as that of the temperance movement. The developing antebellum society did bring forth a response from those who saw temperance as a primary goal; possibly, believers in other movements took the same monolithic approach.

The religious atmosphere which permeated these works also needs additional examination. Forgiveness was always available to the drunkard. But, it is curious that, in a nineteenth-century society which supposedly had been made aware through various religious movements and revivals of God's mercy for all, temperance authors mercilessly condemned the rum-seller. Even if he reformed and was saved (whether on earth or in heaven), it was because he initiated an active quest for forgiveness, and not because grace had been offered to him. The atmosphere created by the novels seems to indicate that the seller of liquor needed far more initiative to

obtain grace than other men needed. In at least one case, the purveyor was not even allowed forgiveness despite his sincere repentance. Similar absolutist attitudes may have been found in other reform movements. In any case, religious themes, such as vicarious suffering and atonement, played a major part in the temperance works and may also have been important themes in other literature of the period.

Although religious fervor was no less great in the South and West than in the Northeast, very few of the novels and short stories praising temperance were published outside of the northeastern portion of the country. While the temperance campaign received a better reception in the South than most other movements, it is possible that some Southerners identified the temperance crusaders with reformers in general, notably the abolitionists. This identification would certainly have hampered the publication of temperance fiction. Writers may also have idealized the rural nature of the South and West, and thus have viewed intemperance as occurring mainly in the more congested urban areas of the northeastern section of the country. The realities and hardships of attempting to live on a small farm in the South or of beginning life on the frontier were ignored in their desire to idealize the country. Intemperance, however, must have been prevalent in these areas as well as in the Northeast--yet this is a subject which is infrequently mentioned.

If some sections of the nation were ignored by these

writers, so too were some problems which were national in scope. Although heavy immigration began in the 1840's and continued in the 1850's, there is no mention in these novels and short stories of such stock characters as the whiskey-drinking Irishman or the beer-drinking German. Nor was there any reference to blacks. Perhaps immigrants and blacks represented problems to be ignored; or, perhaps even if they drank, these people were not likely to be susceptible to the reform and regeneration which an Anglo-Saxon Protestant could supposedly embrace. Whether caused by racism or blindness, this absence calls for future study.

Temperance authors also usually avoided mention of the reality of a faithless wife or undutiful child. Women and children were instead continually placed on a pedestal, and men almost always caused the family's ruin. Men were of course urged to remain temperate because, as heads of families, they bore the greatest share of responsibility for the family's welfare. However, the wife (who had many obligations herself) might also be cursed with intemperance; yet this was a problem which the writers of temperance fiction in antebellum America usually avoided discussing. The role women have been expected to play in history is certainly open to investigation. Perhaps there actually were few female alcoholics--at least the temperance authors preferred to view the situation in this way.

Although writers of temperance fiction also generally

preferred to minimize the value of the increasing wealth and prosperity of the time, their characters did achieve these same results when they abstained from drink. The premium this age placed on success may be another subject which would lend itself to further study. As the years passed, people realized that avoidance of liquor was not enough to insure their happiness, and the temperance novels and short stories which portrayed an idealized picture were largely without an audience.

Temperance authors constantly stressed that liquor was the reason for any deviation from their dreams of an earlier day. They placed their faith in a crusade rather than in an expanding and industrializing society. As one of the writers noted,

The Temperance Reformation, now pending on this globe of earth, when fully consummated, will dispel the darkness, gloom, wretchedness, sorrows, crimes, and punishments, which are created and fostered by intoxicating liquors; and the whole atmosphere of human existence will be sweetened into social improvements and enjoyments of the ordinary and proper business of life.¹

This mood was reflected in the temperance fiction written from 1830 to 1860. An examination of the themes, sentiments, and stereotypes which the writers of these works presented can indeed tell us a great deal about the fears, hopes, and ideals of an earlier generation.

¹Lebbeus Armstrong, The Temperance Reformation: Its History. . . . (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1853), p. 39.

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