

**INTEMPERANCE, AN  
ETHICAL POEM  
IN THREE PARTS**

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Intemperance, an ethical poem in three parts by J. K. C.

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AN ETHICAL POEM

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BY

J. K. C.



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JAMES DUFFY AND SONS,  
15 WELLINGTON QUAY,  
AND 1A PATERNOSTER ROW LONDON.  
1876.

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## PREFACE.

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WHEN a writer presents to the public an Essay, Book, or Poem, he generally does so with a modest apology or explanation, assigning the reasons that led him to publish it, and expressing a hope that the reader will pardon the intrusion, patronise the work, and derive some pleasure or profit from its perusal.

If such a Preface is deemed necessary by literary athletes, conscious of their strength and confident in their intellectual prowess, how much more necessary does it become in a nameless and fameless writer like the present?

The present writer, however, deems it unnecessary, conscious though he is of its many imperfections, to make any apology for presenting to the public the following Ethical and Didactic Poem on the prevailing and destructive vice of Intemperance, "the direful spring of woes unnumbered". An effort, no matter how humble, to promote the great virtue of Temperance, needs, he is persuaded, no apology. He feels, however, that his having preferred poetry to prose needs a word of expla-

nation. He has not done so without reflection. Not having been a trained soldier in the ranks of literature, but rather an undisciplined volunteer, he feared he would find himself too much encumbered by the heavy armour of prose, and therefore preferred the bow of Apollo to the sword of Achilles, as more congenial to his taste and suited to his strength. If he has recently taken aim at the Goliath of Materialism, and if he now shoots his arrows amongst the Philistines of Intemperance, it is not because of any overweening confidence he has in his own skill or strength, as in the righteousness of that cause which makes war upon the giant evils—Infidelity and Vice. He considers that a gallant though unsuccessful effort on the part of the weak is calculated to animate and encourage the strong to spring forward and repel the invading foe. So great and widespread has become the evil of intemperance, that every one able to do so should render what assistance he can to the gallant army of Gedeonites—preachers, orators, lecturers, and journalists—who, armed with the trumpet of truth and the torch of experience, are bravely fighting in the cause of Temperance. If “the poet is a preacher with the universe for his congregation”, and if “a verse may reach him who a sermon flies”, those gallant soldiers, in their war on the Medianites of Drink, will not refuse the aid of an auxiliary poet, unestablished though his claim be to the

honourable appellation. Poets, from Anacreon to Moore, from Horace to Burns, have done so much injury to the cause of Temperance by their ill-bestowed praises on Bacchus and John Barleycorn, that the muse of Temperance is bound, as far as in her lies, to repair the evils their laudatory verses have done to humanity.

A friend, with a view of dissuading the writer from writing in verse, remarked to him that poetry is not read nowadays, or, if read in the drawingrooms of the great, it is not so much to improve the taste or to mend the morals, as to indulge the vanity of the readers by enabling them to boast the acquaintance of some titled poet or pensioned laureate, the favourite of the gods in the Olympus of fashion. If good poetry is not read and admired, so worse for the age in which we live. It is another proof of its degeneracy and of its material tendencies. The writer does not expect that any thing that he writes will be read by the great or praised by the titled; but there is room enough, he thinks, for moral essays to do good without taking such ærial flights. He writes for the many, and he hopes some of the many will take his lessons to heart, and aid in checking the dreadful vice of intemperance. He shall be more than rewarded if his Essay become the humble instrument in the hands of Providence, of reforming one drunkard, or of keeping one temperate youth from becoming one. Fame and fortune



are slender rewards compared with saving families from ruin and souls from destruction.

Some who are not without a taste for poetry, seem to have no relish for Ethical or Didactic Poetry, of which the writer has ever been fond, and which has been to him during life a source of greater pleasure and keener enjoyment than the sparkling glass has been to others. For the benefit of this class of readers, whom he wishes to convert to his own views concerning this species of poetry, he takes the liberty of quoting the words of Lord Byron, whose judgment of all kinds of poetry no one will question, and whose praise of moral poetry no one will suspect. What says this great authority of ethical poetry, which some seem not to relish and others to undervalue? Here are his words: "In my mind, the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects is moral truth. What made Socrates the greatest of men? His moral truth—his ethics. What proved Jesus Christ the Son of God hardly less than His miracles? His moral precepts. And if ethics have made a philosopher the first of men, and have not been disdained as an adjunct to His Gospel by the Deity Itself, are we to be told that ethical poetry, or didactic poetry, or by whatever name you term it, whose object is to make men better and wiser, is not the *very first order* of poetry? and are we to be told this by

one of the priesthood? It requires more mind, more wisdom, more power, than all the 'forests' that were ever 'walked' for their 'description', and all the epics that ever were founded upon fields of battle. The Georgics are indisputably, and, I believe, *undisputedly*, a finer poem than the *Æneid*. Virgil knew this; he did not order *them* to be burned.

'The proper study of mankind is man'.

It is the fashion of the day to lay great stress upon what they call 'imagination' and 'invention', the two commonest of qualities; an Irish peasant with a little whisky in his head will imagine and invent more than would furnish forth a modern poem". Lord Byron adds: "In my mind, the latter (ethical) is the highest of all poetry, because it does that in verse which the greatest men have wished to accomplish in prose. If the essence of poetry must be a *lie*, throw it to the dogs, or banish it from your republic as Plato would have done. He who can reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom is the only true '*poet*' in its real sense, the '*maker*', the '*creator*'. Why must this mean the '*liar*', the '*feigner*', the '*tale-teller*'? A man may make and create better things than these".

After this high and impartial testimony to the dignity and excellence of ethical poetry, the writer of the following poem needs no apology for presenting it to his readers,

and soliciting their patronage. If he has not succeeded to their wish or to his own, they will readily accord to an humble and unknown writer, who hopes neither fame nor fortune from his verses, the merit of an honest and earnest endeavour to "reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom", and "to make men better and wiser".

September 8th, 1876.