

a community called ...

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A BRAND PLUCKED

FROM

THE BURNING.

BY

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A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING.

IT was a sharp, cold, freezing night, that of January 1, 18—. The snow was lying thick on the sidewalk and in the streets of the city, and over valley and hill in the country. The clock had just struck ten, when, in a corner saloon, in Jersey City, there was gathered a number of men, accustomed to meeting there. Among that number was a young, unmarried man, about twenty-eight years of age. For a long time he had been a drunkard. There was no saloon in that city to which his presence and appearance were

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unknown. He had begun to drink early; mayhap inheriting the taste for intoxicants from his inebriate father. And the more he drank the deeper he sank into sin of every form. The early loss of his mother, who was a Christian, threw him out upon this dark and cold world, and he was soon hastening on in his career to eternal death. Several times he had experienced the hellish horrors of delirium tremens, which had shaken and shattered his physical and mental system as a mighty tempest. Still he continued to drink—with no respite, by day or by night, until he was brought nigh to the verge of eternal realities.

He had gone to the saloon on that first night of the New Year to drink and carouse with his gay and godless companions. All around him was hilarity and revelry. Glasses were rattling, decanters were flashing in the gas-light, men were swearing, and fiends of darkness looked on with demoniacal delight. Suddenly the young man of whom we write was startled by hearing a voice in the depths

of his consciousness, as if it had been an audible voice, saying to him as follows: "Here you are again to night, Aleck, at the beginning of another year! Are you going to spend this year as you spent the last? If you do, you will perish." For a moment he was stunned, unable to look or speak. Then, when consciousness was restored, he trembled from head to foot, and was alarmed beyond measure. What should he do? Should he go on and drink with damnation in his view? Should he despise the heavenly voice which was speaking to him in such solemn warning tones? No; he could not do that. Amazed and bewildered he went to an old man, whom he knew well, and whom he had often met in these haunts of infamy, and told him what had just occurred to him. The old man listened to his story, and then, looking him in the eyes, said, "Aleck, you had better get out of this. This is no place for you."

Accordingly he went out and stood for a few moments on the sidewalk in front of the saloon. What should he do? Where should

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he go? Who would take him by the hand and help him to live another and a better life? The only one he could think of was the writer of this tract. And this was the reason why he thought of me: He had attended my church once at a funeral service, and something which I was then enabled to say had, for the time at least, interested and somewhat affected him. He thought he would come right to my house and tell me all his contrition, and ask me to help him. But it was then late; it was after eleven o'clock, and he could not bear the idea of disturbing me after I had retired. So he made up his mind to go to his home and to see me the next day.

That was a long and dreary night to him. He thought of God; he thought of his mother, who used to take him, with her other children, into a room by themselves, and talk and pray with them. Then he would try to pray himself; but his prayers seemed to him of no avail. When the morning dawned he arose from his bed, weak and trembling.

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His old appetite demanded its usual supply ; but he dared not go out and drink, nor did he wish to come and see me, without some one whom he knew to come with him and to introduce him. He thought of a young man whom he had known, who had recently been converted in my church, and he concluded to see him, and ask him if he would not introduce him to me. To this Brother S. gladly consented, and they arranged to come in the early evening, before the public service.

The hour arrived and they came. Aleck was worn and haggard, his eyes sunken, and his whole picture indicated distress and anguish. He told me the story of his sad and wicked life. He told me what had occurred in the saloon, as before related. He told me, also, that he wanted to sign the pledge. I was delighted to hear him say this, and hurried to my study to get a pledge and pen and ink for him to carry out his purpose. With a trembling hand he signed the pledge—Alexander B——y. I took it into my pos-

session, and I have it still among my papers. I will not part with it.

“But,” I said to him, “my friend, you cannot keep this pledge by your own strength; you will break it, I fear, under the force and fury of temptation. The only way you can be enabled to keep it will be by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is able and willing to save you; and if you will give to him your heart and your life, he will keep you.”

He replied: “O no: I never can become a Christian; I am too far gone for that; if I can only just keep the pledge I shall be content.”

To this I answered, “You cannot keep the pledge unless the Lord helps you. He will help you if you will trust in him.”

When he was about to leave me, after I had prayed with him and commended him to God, I invited him to attend our revival services, and to seek earnestly after God. That evening he was in our lecture room, an earnest listener to the songs, the preaching, and the prayers; and before the meeting closed he

rose, requesting us to pray for him. The next night he was again present, and when the invitation was given for persons to come forward he came, with several others, and bowed at the altar for prayer. The meeting was drawing toward a close; his agony of spirit seemed to be increasing with every moment, and I knelt beside him, putting my hand upon his shoulder, and saying to him, "My brother, the Lord Jesus will save you."

At that moment began the most fearful conflict I have ever witnessed. I cannot describe it. It seemed almost as if legions of demons were in the room. Some of the congregation fainted; others, in their fright, arose and fled from the presence of such agony. I endeavored to keep calm in the midst of this fearful storm. I thought of the demonized son of whom St. Mark speaks, whom the demon would take and dash him down, causing him to foam, and grind his teeth, and pine away. I said to the congregation, which was terrorized, "Be calm, Jesus will bring him out all right." The struggle

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only lasted for a few moments ; then it was all over, the demon was cast out, and Aleck was converted—joyfully converted. He rose to his feet, with the light of the Lord in his eyes and on his face, and told the people, in a few brief words, what the Lord had done for his soul.

Now, what was the result? First of all, his whole character and life were changed. He was now numbered with “salvation’s heirs.” He was adopted into the divine family. He became a child and an heir of God. He went about among his old companions to tell them what Christ had done for his soul—inviting and urging them to come to the same Saviour and be saved. He united with our church as a probationer, faithfully lived out the period of his probation, and was received into full membership. From that time he lived a little more than a year, a monument of God’s mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. All around “took knowledge of him, that he had been with Jesus.” Another result to which he testified, and I think no one doubted

his testimony, was his complete deliverance from all desire for strong drink. He fairly hated it; nothing could have induced him to resume his former habits of ungodliness.

But his long and fast career had undermined his constitution, and consumption claimed him for its prey. For weeks together he would sit in his chair, calmly contemplating his approaching dissolution. One night, it was our regular prayer-meeting service, a brother came to me while leading the meeting and told me that Brother B——y was dying. When the meeting closed I took with me two or three of the brethren, and went to see him. When we entered the room a new inspiration seemed to come upon his soul. With his feeble voice he cried out, triumphantly, “‘O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory?’” And then turning to me he said, “I am going to heaven, to see Jesus; and when I have seen him I will come and sit down by the gates and wait until you come. And when you come I

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will take you in my arms and carry you to Jesus, and I will say, 'Here is the man that brought me to thee.'"

In a little while he departed in holy joy and glorious triumph.

Truly this was a brand plucked from the burning fire. And what Jesus did for Aleck, he can do for you. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Heb. vii, 25.

"Come, weary sinners, come,
Groaning beneath your load ;
The Saviour calls his wand'ers home ;
Haste to your pard'ning God.

"Come, all by guilt oppressed,
Answer the Saviour's call—
O come, and I will give you rest,
And I will save you all."