

## WHO KILLED HIM?

BY J. A. CRUZAN.

"At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."—Prov. xxiii., 32.

Portland packed New Market Theater from pit to dome, Friday night, June 25th, in honor of a great actor. The mimic tragedy of Julius Cæsar held the great audience breathlessly intent. A few hours earlier, in a hardware store on First street, occurred the last act in a tragedy of real life. How many acts are there in a tragedy? Five in Julius Cæsar. We'll make five of this real life tragedy.

ACT I.—A pleasant home. A proud mother holds her baby-boy in her arms, rains kisses upon his lips, looks into his eyes, and wonders what high station he is born to fill; looks dreamily into the future, sees herself aged, gray-haired, leaning upon her son as a tower of strength. Ring the bell, and let the curtain drop.

ACT II.—A printing office. Boy at the case; thinks of Franklin, and Greeley, and the Bennetts, and the Harpers, and as the type rattle into the "stick," ambition is "set up" with them. But the foul atmosphere of a printing office poisons his soul as well as his blood. The weary hours, past midnight, when he toils at the case to give unthinking thousands their morning paper with their coffee, jade his body. He must spur it to unnatural power. He takes in his hand that scorpion whip, Rum! Ring the bell, and let the curtain drop!

ACT III.—Tented fields. The battle's hellish carnival! Chicamauga! Stone river! A wounded soldier! Andersonville and its horrors! Peace, and home alive at last! Ring the bell, and let the curtain drop!

ACT IV.—A desert of red-hot sands. A drunkard's heavy feet dragging a shrieking soul across that terrible waste to that awful "at last!" His soul acutely sensitive, his will-power gone! Chained! "Quit drink! Quit drink! Why, I would walk into that saloon, when the fit is on me, and drink if I knew that the next moment I should drop into hell! Hell! Hell! I am in hell! Every day I suffer the torments of the damned! There can be no more horrible hell!" Drop the curtain!

ACT V.—A hardware store! "It's a good pistol—well suited to carry in

the pocket!" "Let me try it!" Crash! Thud! There lies that proud mother's boy! Quick! What is that in his pocket? A card! What does it say? "From a man who is about to die. Bury me as I am, without a shroud. I've been drunk three weeks, and can't keep sober!" Dead! By his own hand! "At the last, truly, it does bite like a serpent and sting like an adder!" Quick! Quick! Ring down the curtain! Turn out the lights! The tragedy is ended!

No! No! No! It is not! The suicide's grave is not the end! There is one act more! God's own hand raises the curtain!

ACT VI.—Eternity! Something is written over the door of the future: "No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God!" A destroyed soul! No light! No music! No hope! Despair coiling around the heart, with unutterable anguish! Blackness of darkness forever! Woe! Woe! Woe! I cannot bear longer to look! My soul sickens at this last act of this terrible life-tragedy! Quick! Quick! Quick! O merciful Father! Let the curtain drop, and hide this eternity of horror!

Coleman Brown, aged only 41, a good mechanic, a brave soldier, a man of more than ordinary ability, is dead!

Who killed him?

1. "Why," you say, "he killed himself!"

Yes. Years ago he began that self-murder, when he took that first glass in his hand, just as some young men here, perhaps, have already begun their's. He did not see that that first glass was shaped like a pistol, but it was! That first glass had blood in it! But he did not taste it, else it would have been the last. And every day since that first glass has his hand been fastening its vice-like grasp tighter and tighter upon that pistol! Yes, he killed himself! His own hand grasped the pistol! His own finger pressed the fatal trigger! But there were other fingers on that trigger, other hands grasped the pistol.

2. Was the hand of his own father one?

I do not know the facts in this case, but this I know: That the parent whose blood and secretions are narcotized with tobacco, or saturated with liquor, must transmit to his child a terrible legacy. That father may feel none of the ill-effects of his indulgen-

ces, but the child will have within him a fiery nerve of appetite when he is born, which awaits only the liquid spark of the first glass to make it a raging, destroying conflagration.

This is not rhetoric, but physiological fact, which any physician who is not a quack will corroborate.

I've seen boys—sons of "moderate drinkers," men who never were the "worse for liquor," and yet who drank daily—I've seen their boys drunkards before they were ten years of age, and on the swift road to a drunkard's or a suicide's grave! I tell you, *heredity* has long arms, and strong, merciless hands. Many a father, long years dead, reaches out from his grave that skeleton arm, thrusts the pistol against his son's head, and with his own bony fingers presses the fatal trigger that sends his suicide-son into eternity!

Parents! God's word is just as true now as when written on Sinaitic tables of stone. He says that he will "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Beware how you put your children under this remorseless law of moral gravitation.

3. The hand of society was upon that pistol also.

"Whiskey did it!" And whiskey is sold at every street corner, and society not only permits it, but legalizes it and shares in the blood-money. Who is society? We are. Yes; your hand and mine were on that fatal trigger! We know that men will throng these saloons and drink themselves into brutality; that some of them will commit murder, and others will murder themselves. We see Coleman Browns thronging our saloons by the score, breeding fatal appetites, diseasing their bodies, crazing their brains, breaking down their wills and losing all self-restraint. And all this is done by the authority of society, for a certain price in money—money that is blood-stained—which we eagerly take because it saves us so much in taxes, forgetting that for every dime saved in direct taxation whiskey levies dollars of indirect taxes! Then when the saloons produce their legitimate results—when the suicide's, or murderer's blood cries to Heaven—society snatches away its hands from the trigger, drops its blood-money, and lifts these hands in holy horror, and cries: "What a reign of