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Built his Own Prison

Evil Ways Entail Degradation and Remorse.

A wealthy contractor, who built the tombs in New York, slept in it as a prisoner not long ago. In his prosperous days he did a business of a half a million a year, but when caught in hard circumstances he forged a note for \$2,000 and was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. The building of the Tombs was his last contract, and into it he stepped as a prisoner.

"I never dreamed" he said, "when I built this prison that I would be an inmate one day. But here I am. It is a hard luck." It is not hard luck, for it is not luck at all, but it is the hard way in which the transgressor walks and which he builds for himself. Every man imprisoned in sin has built his own prison. The retribution which wrongdoing brings is not an arbitrary punishment inflicted by the revenge or caprice of an outside judge or fate, but it is just the necessary consequence of the wrong itself.

Drunkenness shuts a man up in his own habits, as unyielding as stone walls and iron bars; and with his own fiery appetite, what worse prison could he have? yet he built it himself. Of

course he "never dreamed" while he was indulging his appetite, and especially when he was beginning the habit, that he was building such a prison for himself; but so he was.

Every glass of intoxicating drink put a stone into the wall and a bar into the windows of his body and soul, until he found himself shut in behind those walls and bars in a prison more dreadful than one of stone and steel. So every sin builds its own prison. Lying cuts off the confidence of others and shuts the liar up in a cell of social isolation. Pride encases the soul in a hard shell that inflames and irritates the self and excludes the sympathy and fellowship of others. Selfishness crystalizes the soul into a narrow cell from which no generous impulse can escape. All wrongdoing tends to build itself into the habits and are the walls and bars of his prison.

He may "never dream" that he will one day be chained in such a prison, but he is building the prison all the while he is shaping his habits in sin. Even the final retribution of sin will be the eternal prisonhouse which the sinner has built around his own soul. It is a good thing to tear away these walls while we can, and, better still, to build no habits that may become our prison. It is not luck, but law that builds a man's character and destiny; and this issue is in our hands.—Presbyterian Banner.