

LAMENT OF THE ALBANY BREWERS.

AFTER THE VERDICT IN THE LIBEL CASE TAYLOR vs. DELAVAN. By John Pierpont.

[1740]



It is not pretended that the above picture represents accurately the condition of things about the pond near Mr. Taylor's malt-house. Distances, of course, could not be preserved, in so small a drawing. To save room, we have made the slaughter-house and grave-yard drain into the pond, which, without explanation, might convey a wrong impression. They actually drained into the Poor-house creek, from which also water was obtained for malting, as shown by the testimony. Whoever will carefully peruse the extracts from the testimony which are added below, in explanation of the poem, will discover that fancy has had but little to do either with the picture or poem.

The figures placed at the left hand of some of the stanzas, will refer the reader to the testimony, given under oath, in relation to the facts alluded to in the verse opposite the figure.

I.
It is all up with us!—As said the Moor,
Who killed folks with his old Damascus blade,
'Othello's occupation's gone!' We, poor
Traduced and libelled brewers, who have made
'An honest living,' o'er our ruined trade,
Which was not killing folks with murderous steel,
'Some natural drops' must shed: no great parade
Of our deep sorrows make we, but appeal
For sympathy, to such as cannot fail to feel.

II.
Are there no bottles for a brewer's tears?
If ye've one empty, bring it, with a funnel!
The briny drops, that have not leaked for years,
Gush forth, and, like the poet's 'bubbling runnel,'
We feel the coming torrent. Ye have done ill,
Jury and Judge, to side with the defendant!
That Libel Case he certainly hath won ill:
Could we appeal, this should not be the end on't,
Ye'd not soon hear the last of it, ye may depend on't.

III.
But 'tis all up with us!—Have ye an onion?
Our eyes are getting dry too soon: we're fond
Of a long snivel.—There! now bring us Bunyan,
And let us read about his 'Slough Despond':
It will bring back the image of that pond
Hard by our malt-house, whence are all our woes!
And of the Potter's Field that lies beyond,
Where gullyng rains sometimes the dead expose,
And where the passer-by holds on his way, and—nose.

IV.
He had been wiser had he held his tongue,
Nor blabbed of what it was not his to tell,—
That awful offal story, that has rung,
Or will yet ring, through all the depths of hell—
The press groans with it; and it is the knell
Of the beer-maker's profit. Why reveal
Places of business not of such a smell
As our May winds from blooming orchards steal?
On these our brew-house Muse would set her privy seal.

V.
Ye sleeping cats, who would not let us sleep,
When, at the noon of night, our ears were smitten
With the key-note that caterwaulers keep,
Or with the monotone of some lone kitten,
That, in its mother's absence, hath been bitten
By hunger, or an old revengeful rat,—
Shall not your nine lives by the Nine be written,
Since ye our pury friends have made so fat,
Yea, and our purses, too?—Mute mousers, tell us that.

* Some natural drops they shed.—Milton's Paradise Lost.
† Bubbling runnels join the sound.—Collins' Ode on the Passions.

VI.
False is the proverb,—not that we would doubt
The holy book of Proverbs,—that were wrong;
Though, sooth to say, we could do well without
Some of thy sayings, Solomon!—That song
About 'dead flies,'* we think, cannot belong
To the true canon; for a 'topic' graver
Than 'the apothecary's ointment' strong
Would have become a preacher of good flavor:
Thy song, that ointment makes 'send forth a stinking savor.'

VII.
But, speaking of false proverbs, all we meant
To question, as we might do without sin,
When we were drawn off on another scent,
Was that which saith that 'No more than her skin
Can of a cat be had.' For ye'll be in
(Should we your various contributions call up)
The cat-egory your Kilkenny kin
Were found in, after they had done their squall up;
If even your tails are left: our ale will use ye all up!

VIII.
For, our dissolving pool doth nothing spare,
Of all that goes to make a living creature!
Weeks roll around, and neither hide nor hair,
Bowels, nor bones, are left; nor form, nor feature
Of gray grimalkin from the wave will greet your
Inquiring eye; albeit, we do suppose,
Should he go dabbling there, a temperance preacher,
Intent our malting secrets to disclose,
Would swear (what won't they swear!) they greeted still
his nose!

IX.
Corpses that, living, bloated on our beer,
And died of dropsy, long before your time,
Were it not better that ye give back here
The moisture that converts your clay to slime,
And eke supplies us, as we brew our rhyme,
With such suggestions as become our rats,
Than to be cased in lead, or burnt with lime?
For here there riot round your river rats,
That care not for the claws of countless carrion cats.

X.
Poor putrid relics! while with us ye dealt,
We never heard ye called 'of earth the salt';
For neither wit nor wisdom with ye dwelt,—
Though that was your misfortune, not your fault!
Had ye been wise, ye'd ta'en the pledge to halt,
On your way downward to this slandered spot;
Nor would ye, with the liquor of our malt,
Have so prepared your carcasses to rot,
And make the soil, and us, the richer: ye would not!

* Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor.—Ecc. 10: 1.

XI.
Ye murdered dogs, who, when ye had your day,
Were wont, by moonlight, o'er yon graves to howl,
Who from cash customers would walk away,
But at the ragged ones would turn and growl,
Though round our premises no more ye prowled,
Against the loafer to 'keep watch and ward,'
Still do ye serve us, though reformers scowled;
For, since ye dangled in the strangling cord,
Ye've helped make many a lout as tipsy as a lord.

XII.
Bullocks, who bellowed just before your blood
Was, for our benefit, poured out like water,
Dreamed ye, as erst ye lay and chewed the cud,
That, from yon house, where ye were led to slaughter,
There would drain down, for many a blouzy daughter
Of our good city, who sits guzzling ale,
Such 'real stuff?' Our Trial now hath taught her
(Grew she not, as she read it, 'very pale?')
That from your horns and hoofs there hangeth quite a tale.

XIII.
Thou ponderous porker, who art numbered '6'
Upon the map in Delavan's 'Report,'
Who didst sink into our Albanian Styx,
And rise again before the Circuit Court,
Like sightless Samson, there thou madest sport
For temperance Philistines—but, 'tis clear,
The very place for thee was in our wort:
Why should not we, who have, from year to year,
Our beer in hogsheads put, put hogs' heads in our beer?

XIV.
Speaking of Samson,—Bible-readers know
That, with the bone of a dead ass's jaw,
He made a dreadful onslaught on the foe
Of Israel's tribes and the Mosaic Law.
'Heaps upon heaps' they fell. But when we saw
That dead horse swelling our 'steep-tub's' resources,
And giving them the virtues of his maw,
We thought that, measuring the respective forces
Of horse and ass's bones, the mightier were the horse's.

XV.
For, when well brewed, and sent away in kegs,
There is such vigor in them, that we've known
Men so transported by a horse's legs
That, for their souls, they couldn't keep their own.
'Still had we hoped, poor steed, that, bone by bone,
Thou wouldst have come commingled with the mass
Of filth and fluid flesh, around thee thrown,
That, when thy foaming flanks should foam in glass,
Thou wouldst lay sprawling more than ev'n did Samson's ass.

* Hamlet.—What, looked he frowningly?
Horatio.—A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
Hamlet.—Pale, or red?
Horatio.—Nay, very pale.—Shakespeare, Hamlet.

XVI.
If Samson from the strong could draw forth sweetness,*
The honey, namely, eaten by the riddler
From a dead lion's skull; may not the fleetness
Of a dead horse's legs bear Messrs. Fiddler
And Taylor on to wealth, like Mr. Biddle, or
The cleverest he of all the financiers,
From Baron Rothschild down to Jerry Diddler?
Alas! alas! this dream the cruel shears
Of fate have cut off, in—THAT VERDICT OF OUR PEERS

XVII.
O spes fallaces! O fallacious hopes!
(For thus we English our lugubrious Latin.)
Now, every man who in the tap-room topes,
Nosing his tumbler's cream, will 'smell a rat' in
Our pool, that had the 'cream' of many a cat in,
When that was drawn which he so long has quaffed;
And, when he takes the 'Journal' up, with that in
About green gutter-wash,—the venomous shaft
Of Delavan!—we fear he may not 'mend his draught.'

XVIII.
Where shall this end! Shall every temperance angel
Wade into the Bethesda of a brewer,
Troubling the pool, like a dog, of the mange ill,
Barking about its heaps of rich manure,
And snuffing where the factories of glue are
Drained into it! O that some friendly Fury
Would thrust him, neck and heels, into the sewer
He yelps of!—where, to lie the more secure, he
Should have, rammed after him, the Circuit Judge and Jury!

XIX.
Mourn! Mourn! all ye who shun cold water shops,
Bibbers of beer, and fuddlers upon ale,
Who daily doze upon our malt and hops,
'Brown Stout,' in bottles, and the milder 'Pale,'
Join in our loud Lament! and let your wail,
From State and Lark streets rising—like a lark,
Load every breeze that sweeps across the vale
Where Hudson flows, and has borne many a bark
Freighted with barreled beer, and 'rigged with curses
dark.'

XX.
Those barks our barreled beer shall bear no more!
Our Libel Trial has a tale unfolded,
To frighten all, alike on 'Ship and Shore,'
Who, daily, for their flip or brimming bowl, did
Call, as ye're all aware that 'old King Cole' did:
And now, we fear, his royal steps to follow
Few will be found. For five long years we've scolded
At the fanatics: but we're beaten, all hollow,
And we must cease to brew, when ye all cease to swallow!

The fates of our mourning are ended.
* Out of the enter came forth meat; and out of the strong came forth sweetness.—Samson's Riddle, Judges 14: 14.
† Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark.—Milton's Lycidas.

[The names of the witnesses are given in connection with their testimony, which is in the form of answers to questions proposed by the counsel in the case.]
(1) C. W. HARVEY'S TESTIMONY. Question by Counsel.—From how many places did you assist in drawing this water? I think 15 or 20.
From what places? From the big pond; that was always a standing source; and then, after rains, from whatever points were nearest the malt house. From puddles on the surface? Yes, from puddles. Any from Poor-house creek? Yes. Below the bridge of Poor-house creek? Yes.
Rector.—Where does the wash of all these grave-yards run? The wash of all of them, in the end, must go into the creek.
Keith.—It (the creek) gets the wash of the grave-yards, or one of them. There are drains dug out from the grave-yards, and it runs right down into the creek.
R. Harvey.—Am acquainted with the Strangers' burying-ground. It drains into a branch of the Poor-house creek. Saw (in 1833 or 4) the edge of coffins sticking out into the ravine. That was where the water runs.
C. W. Harvey.—Were there any puddles in front of the grave-yard that you got water from? Yes.
(2) T. Coulson.—What kind of water was there in that pond? Always bad; in a putrid state, in the fall of the year. What was in the water—anything to make it bad? Different kinds of animals floating in the water. In the warmth of the weather the water was green. Dogs, and cats, and hogs, I've seen.
C. W. Harvey.—What was the character of the water in the pond? Very bad. How so? Bad from the fact that it was receiving almost all the offal from the hill: dead hogs, and dogs, and cats.
Elder Israel Smith.—Had frequently seen dead animals in it (the pond) as he was riding by—dogs, hogs and cats.

G. Middleton.—I have seen dead dogs and cats in it.
T. A. Hughes.—I have seen cats, and dogs, and hogs in it (the pond) when drawing it (water).
Elder Amos Fessell.—I have seen dead dogs, and cats, and hogs there—it was always a receptacle for dead animals.
(3) Judge Savage.—About that time, did you examine the Poor-house creek? I did, a part of it. What was the condition of the water in that? I examined it near Wilson's slaughter-house, I think. The filth from the slaughter-house yard was then running and coaling into the creek.
Elder A. Fessell.—The offal and blood, &c., were thrown out, and the creek being lower, it all descended, of course, into the creek.
John Lassing.—In the fall, when they are slaughtering at Wilson's, it (the creek) will be of the color of blood.
C. G. Harvey.—Anything offensive that drained into the puddle near Judson's slaughter-house? Part of the offal of the slaughter-house drained into the pond from which water was taken. Where did you see it (the water) green? I have seen it along the whole course of it, up as far as the slaughter-house.
(4) T. Coulson.—I have seen a dead horse that died there, pretty near the pond—on the rising ground near it. Seen any larger animal in the pond? Don't recollect. Did he decay there? The horse remained there, sir.
C. W. Harvey.—Seen any dead cows or horses thereabouts? I have seen horses up towards the glue factory. This while you were dipping? Don't know that it was exactly at the time. Were they left there to decay? Yes. Have you known dead animals on the banks of the Poor-house creek? Yes. Was it a place to which they were taken? It was—I assisted in drawing one horse there.
(5) T. Coulson.—About how far from the pond was your glue factory? Perhaps 7 or 800 feet. Did the wash of your glue factory run into the pond? I suppose so.

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