

## Preston Herald - Saturday 29 June 1867

Fanny Lee's Testimony; a Yorkshire Tale. By Mrs. James Hanson, Manchester; John Heywood.

A well written story, enforcing the blessings of temperance, or rather teetotalism, and illustrating the sin, misery, degradation, and crime consequent upon indulgence in intoxicating drinks. Fanny Lee's mother, fair and gentle woman, high education and refinement, having fallen into ill health, was ordered wine by the family physician when she became convalescent, but was not discontinued when the necessity for it ceased; it was kept as article daily use long after the patient's strength had returned. The quantity consumed was increased from day to day, until the once peerless wife and mother was transformed into a coarse and sensual woman, and from being the ornament of select circle, and the amiable companion of the best of men, was brought to the depths of infamy and miserable and dreadful death, imploring her attendants during the last few hours of her existence to give her wine and spirits to drown her reason and her thoughts. At this time Fanny Lee was seventeen years of age, and had a suitor in the person of Walter Percy, who was himself fond of wine, for its own sake, because he loved the excitement produced, though he cultivated no wild companionships; and her father, though he never partook of wine himself, had notion of excluding from their table when Walter was with them. But one evening, few days after the funeral of Mrs. Lee, Walter entered, dreadfully intoxicated. Fanny refused his advances, and he flung out the house with oath; and when he reappeared next day to 'ask pardon' for his fault, she exacted a promise that he would give up intoxicating drinks and 'for ever', but he flatly refused to make such a promise, and begged that the subject might never be named again between them. Both were firm, and they parted—to meet no more, they thought. Fanny's father, heart-stricken since the miserable death of his wife, had been an invalid, and the day following the separation the lovers closed his eyes at death. After settlement of her affairs, Fanny went to reside at Newburn, a market town in the West Riding. Here she made the acquaintance of a young lady, about her own age, named Mary Lister, and eventually went to live with her family. But the demon of drink had invaded this home also. Mr. Lister, in the common acceptation of the term 'a gentleman,' had long been the victim of inordinate and uncontrollable passion for drink, and the dreadful scenes arising from it had caused his only son to leave home. In a fit of 'delirium tremens' Mr. Lister committed suicide one evening on the highway, having shot himself with a pistol; and this incident, and the breaking of the news to the bereaved family are very forcibly depicted by the authoress. After this sad event the two young women, when their grief was moderated, set themselves to work as teetotal missionaries in the locality, and did great amount of good in that capacity, and in other ways. After some years, during which other sad instances occurred, the blighting effects of drink and drinking customs are given. Walter Percy appears at temperance festival at Newburn as teetotal advocate. He recognizes among the audience Fanny Lee, his old affianced bride; and so far these two are concerned all turns out happily. The work is an excellent contribution to the literature of teetotalism, which is advocated with great earnestness, and with occasional touches of deep feeling and pathos.

## Sheffield Daily Telegraph - Thursday 22 June 1882

FANNY LEE'S TESTIMONY: A YORKSHIRE TALE. By Mrs. Hanson. Third Edition. (John Heywood, Manchester.)

A tale which is specially written to advocate a cause is not likely to be in all points a true delineation of human character. Its writer is apt to give an exaggerated account of human virtues and follies. It is true, no doubt, that drunkenness is the cause of great amount of misery, both to the drunkard himself and to those connected with him. But it is by no means the fact that alcohol is in itself so large a factor in the production of crime and misery the authoress of this work represents it to be. The lesson which the story is intended to teach is that alcohol is in all cases harmful, that to sign a temperance pledge, or, at all events, to abstain from alcohol altogether is the plain duty of every man. Mrs. Hanson writes in such a pleasing, unaffected style, and her descriptions of the evils of intemperance, especially amongst the lower classes, are graphic, that her book is sure to be favourite not only amongst those who have embraced the theory of total abstinence, but amongst moderate drinkers also. Mrs. Hanson would probably deny that there was any such thing as 'moderate' drinking. We do not care to join issue on this point, for the subject has been already well threshed out, but we may observe that drunkenness is often an effect rather than a cause. The attempt to alleviate by means of narcotics and anaesthetics (for it is quite in error call alcohol a stimulant) inherited or acquired weakness may, and often does, give rise to intemperance, and to such amount intemperance as must inevitably be the cause of death. Perhaps might not unfairly be argued, to take a purely scientific view of the matter, that if a man, and especially a young man, has shown that he cannot by any possibility abstain from downright drunkenness, he has thereby shown some constitutional defect which unfits him to maintain his place in the struggle for existence. At all events, in the absence of better evidence, the case of the teetotallers is not so strong to call for immediate judgment. Whilst we admire, therefore, the good intentions of the authoress, and the artless and simple manner which she has written her tale, we cannot admit that alcohol is the cause of all the misery she attributes to it. We do not know whether the poetical pieces scattered through the volume are from the pen of Mrs. Hanson, but they are not unlike the general style of her composition. Here are two stanzas from one of them:

*Sweetly sung a little maid within her cottage home;  
As she sung a smile o'erspread her cheek of rosy bloom.  
For her simple song was one her heart could understand.  
Gaily went the maiden forth with pitcher her hand:  
Singing — 'Water, bright bountiful and free.  
Purer the sweetest nectar, the drink for me.'*

*'Ale,' she sang, brings care and woe to many a lowly cot;  
They who cannot know contentment's happy lot,  
As she chanted still her song, she reached a sparkling rill.  
Kneeled the daisied grass among, her pitcher there to fill;*

*Singing — 'Water, bright water, bountiful and free.  
Purer than the sweetest nectar, the drink for me.'*

Here seems at first sight to be something ludicrous in the idea of a little girl kneeling among 'daisied grass' and singing of the woes caused by ale, and yet if we keep mind the enthusiasm of the teetotallers, and the way which many of their children are brought up, the scene will appear to be quite natural. We are not, of course, insensible to the bad grammar—such as 'sung' for 'sang.' Upon the whole the work is a very praiseworthy one, and its failings seem to 'lean to virtue's side'.