

WE LICENSE THEE.

BY J. PIERPONT.

“For so much gold we license thee,”

So say our laws—“a draught to sell
That bows the strong—enslaves the free,
And opens wide the gates of hell;
For ‘public good’ requires that some
Should live, since many die by rum.”

Ye civil fathers! while the foes
Of this destroyer seize their swords,
And heaven’s own hail is in the blows
They’re dealing—will ye cut the cords
That round the falling fiend they draw,
And o’er him hold your shield of law?

And will ye give to man a bill
Divorcing him from Heaven’s high sway,
And while God says, “Thou shalt not kill,”
Say ye for gold, “Ye may, ye may?”
Compare the body with the soul,
Compare the bullet with the bowl!

The living to the rotting dead,
The God-contemning Tuscan tied,
Till by the way, or on his bed,
The poor corpse-carrier drooped and died;
Lashed hand to hand and face to face,
In fatal and in loathed embrace.

Less cutting, think ye, is the thong
That to a breathing corpse, for life,
Lashes, in torture loathed and long,
The drunkard’s child, the drunkard’s wife?
To clasp that clay, to breathe that breath,
And no escape!—Oh! that is death.

Are ye not fathers? When your sons
Look to you for their daily bread,
Dare ye in mockery load with stones
The table that for them ye spread?
How can ye hope your sons will live,
If ye, for a fish, a serpent give?

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