

## “Naught but the Awful Fiery Draught”

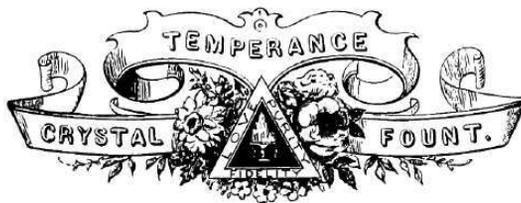
A POSTSCRIPT to the mystery of Sheridan Knowles MacKay which was posed by Merrill E. Jarchow's article, "Exploring Local History," in the Fall issue of Minnesota History has been uncovered by the author. In the Northfield Recorder for June 5, 1868 — nearly a year after MacKay's death — Mr. Jarchow recently found this account by the Reverend Edwin S. Williams:

Not many months ago there came to our village a young man — a stranger — who soon became the object of more remark and attention than anyone else had ever done in so short a time. He brought fine testimonials as a lawyer of high culture and generous learning, and we were not long in finding . . . the wonderful charm of his social nature and . . . rare gifts of mind. . . . Why was he here? . . . he had come sadly, disgracefully, from home and friends [to] . . . put an ocean of water between him and his wine-loving associates . . . . Our hearts went out to him. . . . Professional friends took him by the hand and shared business with him. An office was secured — books were loaned him — clients came — a kind family opened hospitable doors to him . . . and best of all he was promptly elected . . . into our Good Templar Lodge, where we . . . reach out loving hands to lift brothers from the ditch. . . .

We really expected with God's blessing to save him. . . . Our hope and his sad self-confidence were soon to have a terrible shock and fall. A disappointment in the issue of a

petty law case drove him rashly to the cup again, and in a moment he was fallen lower than ever before. . . . For days friends were patient with him. . . . Once he rallied and again his friends took hope. At this momentous crisis in the life of a brilliant soul, a being . . . by infernal occupation a rum-seller . . . beguiled this poor trembling brother man — all riddled with "shots from the decanter" . . . to drink again. . . . There was no will-power left . . . his tormenting thirst was quenched with draught after draught in a long debauch which could have but one ending. . . . Our youth showed golden qualities in their fidelity in warning, watching, and protecting him from self-inflicted violence. . . . Naught but the awful fiery draught could calm for a few moments his phrenzy. . . . He escaped his guardians and fled to the woods.

Soon missed by zealous friends he was traced. . . . And what a sight . . . greeted them. He . . . the gifted — the eloquent — the gentle — the accomplished — the life of the gay company — the charmer of the festive crowd — the fair haired boy of England — lay on the ground a horrid corpse. . . . a black, hideous bloated mass of rum's corruption. . . . Death did not come at once to his deliverance. It were needful that his fearful *clutches* at the grass and the marks of his fierce struggle . . . should *gesture* others away from the bar. . . . Awe stricken and horrified true men gathered into a box . . . the remains . . . and they were buried tenderly in a drunkard's grave.





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