

ture to pronounce the sober use of wine sinful advocate their views on the ground of expediency, and urge us to sign the pledge that thereby others might be influenced by our example to do the same. To enforce their exhortation they refer us to certain well known passages of scripture, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak," Rom. xiv. 21. If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend," 1 Cor. viii. 13. It is evident that the articles of food and drink concerning the use of which the apostle recommended self-denial, on certain occasions for the sake of weak brethren, were otherwise lawful and proper to be used; and it was for Christians, that is, brethren in the faith that he desired them to act in that way. He did not mean heathens and wicked drunkards. It is to be observed that, as soon as one pledges himself to abstain, he passes from expediency to obligation, and has no longer any choice but abstinence. We may admit that such a course might be right, and safe to enter on, if God had promised grace to enable one to keep his pledge; but if he has not made any such promise, it is rash and presumptuous to undertake the matter in one's own strength. No person is safe in promising or vowing anything that God has not commanded, and God does not certainly enjoin upon sober men to become pledged members of Total Abstinence Societies, nor are there many of those who do so, whether sober or drunken, that keep their pledge very long. There is usually a short period of inordinate zeal which, as a rule, consumes itself after a while. A man is at liberty to abstain, if he sees good reason for it, and those who drink to excess should abstain; but no man, nor body of men, ecclesiastical or civil, has any authority from God to impose abstinence on others. We are bound to live soberly and to avoid excess in all things. It is a moral obligation, as the late Rev. Dr. Hodge said, "to abstain from things indifferent, when the use of them is the occasion of sin to others. This is a principle the application of which must be left to everyone's conscience, in the fear of God. No rule of conduct founded