

## THE ARGUMENT FOR MODERATION.

A CRITICISM BY DAWSON BURNS, D.D.

Multitudes of good people have stood, and are standing, aloof from the temperance movement, because they think they are examples of Christian moderation. Their reasoning is short and simple and to themselves perfectly satisfactory: Moderation is a Christian virtue. We practice moderation; therefore we practice a Christian virtue. And being thus virtuous and exemplary, what more need they be or do? Anything more would be a work of supererogation; and in works of supererogation they do not believe, either doctrinally or practically. This easy way of settling a great question, involving the welfare of the world, is one of the most extraordinary evidences of the bias, often unconscious, exerted on the intelligence by habit and custom. For it is not exclusively the ignorant and selfish who adopt this style of reasoning, it is rather, as a rule, the favorite resource of the educated, and those who are in other ways doing good work for God and their neighbor.

Let us look into this subject a little carefully. "Moderation is a Christian virtue." Truly, where it is, as the word properly means, a state or act of regulating the passions and appetites, so that they shall be servants and not masters of the man. But when it is said, "We practice moderation," nothing is really affirmed until it is made clear as to the way in which this moderation—or right government of the passions and appetites—is exercised. What is meant in this particular case is, that the desire for intoxicating liquor is so moderated or regulated, that only a harmless quantity is consumed. But see what assumptions are included in this application of the term, "moderation." It is assumed, at the outset, that a desire for intoxicating liquors is a natural and legitimate one; whereas it is certain that no such desire would ever exist were intoxicating liquors not consumed; that, in fact, they excite a desire for themselves not previously existing. Whether such a desire is healthy and natural is surely a proper subject for inquiry, and to decide off-hand, that is natural and healthy, is not acting with discretion and judgment. Inquiry would show that while the demand for food and drink is natural, the use of any particular solid and liquid should be dependent upon a knowledge of its qualities and effects. There can be no moderation, physiologically speaking, in taking anything because it is desired, especially when the desire is excited by a previous use. Then, again, it is assumed that the desire is so indulged as to produce only, at least, harmless results. But what evidence of this is forthcoming? To say that no immediate ill-effects are experienced is to say nothing to the purpose; and it is to say what is worse than nothing, when, as in the case of intoxicating liquors, there is specific danger from their tendency to producing a sensation of pleasure which masks the evils arising from their use. How does the user know that the alcohol he takes is so moderated in quantity as to produce no harm and put him into no peril? Has he ascertained how much alcohol he daily consumes? And does he never consume more daily than one exact amount? The amount of alcohol varies so much in all intoxicating liquors, even those of the same name, that such a knowledge would be very difficult to acquire. As a matter of fact, it is not acquired, and yet its possession is requisite to the assurance that the amount has been so moderated as to be without injury, direct or indirect, immediate or remote. Where narcotics are concerned, sensations are notoriously untrustworthy; yet alcohol is not only a narcotic, but is so dangerous in its action as to make even its undoubtedly-injurious effects mistaken for beneficial ones. Men drink on and on, with anything but moderation, yet with increasing zest, and without any conception that they are doing themselves definite and perhaps serious mischief. When, therefore, persons say, "We practice moderation," meaning that the virtue of moderation is exemplified in their use of intoxicating liquors, they are simply begging the two cardinal points in dispute, viz., that such liquors are fit to be taken at all; and, secondly, that they are taking them in such measure as renders them innocuous, if not advantageous. The root of the error consists in using the word "moderation" in two senses. As a virtue, moderation is the government of the appetites by the reason, but moderation in the use of intoxicating liquors is an indulgence of the appetite which reason; does not sanction. The blunder of confounding moderateness of quantity, with moderation as a virtue, is one which educated people should be free from. The man who prides himself on the virtue of moderation,

because he takes moderate doses of alcohol, ought to be asked what he thinks of the virtue of the man who uses moderate doses of laudanum, arsenic, or nux-vomica? Moderation conveys a moral meaning which may be absolutely absent from moderation or moderateness as an expression of quantity. There is no value in being moderately ignorant, lazy, dirty, or foolish. And if anyone asks, Is there no virtue in using intoxicating liquors moderately as distinguished from excess? the answer must be, that the virtue resides not in what is done, but in what is not done; in the limitation of the use, and not in the use itself. As compared with drunkenness, "moderation" is to be preferred; but the merit is comparative, not absolute; just as we may say of a man, that he is wiser and better than another, without intending to describe him as really wise or good. He who takes little alcohol rather than much does well; he who takes less does better; and he who takes none does best. The virtue present in the first state is increased in the second, and is perfected in the third. It is, in short, the abstainer who strictly applies and exemplifies the virtue of moderation in regard to intoxicating liquors; for it is by abstinence, and not by indulgence, that the moderating or controlling power of reason is displayed in the relation proper to be observed towards drink which supply no natural demand and serve no real use as food or liquid, but which give rise to evils, countless in number, and the most appalling in their influence on the condition of our race.—*Temperance Record*.

## General News.

## CANADIAN.

Eight inches of snow fell at Fort McLeod, North-West Territory, on 26 April.

Sir John Glover, Governor of Newfoundland, is expected to sail for that colony from Liverpool on the 20th.

At Belleville there was a light fall of snow between 5 and 6 on the morning of the 16th.

Freight trains will probably begin running over the Ontario & Quebec line in about two weeks. Passenger trains in July.

Mr. D. D. Calvin, formerly M. P. P. for Frontenac, and a large vessel owner, died at Garden Island on the 18th.

A 15-months-old child of Thomas McKee, a farmer living in East Sandwich, seven miles from Windsor, fell into a tub of water, on Tuesday, and was drowned.

A 4-year-old son of Mr. Jas. Cook, of Paris, was drowned, last Friday evening near Gill's plaster mills.

At Goodwood, on May 17th, Clarke's saw mill accidentally caught fire and was burned while the men were at dinner. Loss about \$2,000.

The interest in the Ottawa phosphate regions seems to have increased this season, and the number of parties prospecting is quite large.

At Corinth, on May 21st, Thomas Hawley, while working with a stump machine was instantly killed by the breaking of the machine.

Last week a little daughter of M. McKinnon, Nassagaweya township, fell into a flowing well three feet deep, and was drowned.

At Hespeler, on May 21 a little boy of five years named Huebner accidentally overturned a boiler of scalding water upon himself and was so severely burned that he died soon after.

At Laffrair Lake, while a gang of men were employed in driving logs, J. Larose was feeding the slide when he lost his footing and fell into the water, being carried down by the rapid current and perishing before any assistance could be brought.

Lawson & Wallace's carriage factory, in Amherst, N. S. and an adjoining dwelling were destroyed this morning by fire. Both buildings were owned by R. W. Bolston and insured in the Northern office for \$1,000. Lawson & Wallace, whose loss amounts to about \$3,000, have an insurance in the Northern and Imperial office of \$1,700. The fire is thought to have been of incendiary origin.

About four o'clock on Saturday morning the stables of Mr. W. Harvie, University avenue, Cobourg, were found to be on fire. His team of fine horses, valued at three hundred dollars, together with a set of harness and a quantity of hay, oats, etc. were totally consumed. The brigade turned out promptly, but the fire had gained such headway before the alarm was given that their services were