

THE UTILITARIAN ARGUMENT FOR ABSTINENCE FROM LIQUOR.

INDEPENDENT OF ANY SCRIPTURAL SANCTION OR
CONDEMNATION.

(From Lectures on the Use of Intoxicating Liquors; by
Dr. Nott.)

Milk and honey were among the promised blessings of the land of promise, and they are employed in Scripture as emblems of the richest mercies; and yet, who does not know that honey is often detestable, and that there are times and places in which to taste of milk is death?

"At Logansport"—I quote here from a letter in the *Danbury Herald*, dated July 11th, 1833—"At Logansport, on the banks of the Wabash, I was cautioned by an elderly lady against using either milk, butter, or beef, on my way to Vincennes; as a reason for her caution, she informed me that the milk sickness was common in that state. I had heard of it before, but knew little of it; she informed me that very many deaths occurred annually by this dreadful malady. There is a difference of opinion as to the cause that produces it; but the general opinion is, that it is occasioned by the yellow oxide of arsenic in the low ground and woodland, and particularly near the Wabash river; and that some weed, yet unknown, imbibes the poison, and when eaten by the cattle, causes them to quiver, stagger, and die, within a few hours. If cows eat it, the milk is poisoned, or butter that is made from the milk; and it is sure death to those who eat of either, as it is to the animal that eats of the weed. Great care is taken to bury such cattle as die with it; for if dogs eat their flesh, they share the same fate, and it operates upon them as violently as upon the creature that was affected with it. The butcher, uniformly in this State, runs the victim of the knife a mile to heat the blood, and, if it has eaten the weed, it will at once, on stopping, quiver and shake; if it does not, it is considered safe to butcher; and this is the uniform test, even when beef cattle show no signs of having eaten the weed.

"Indiana is not alone in this misfortune; there have been many cases in some parts of Ohio, and south of St. Louis, and other south-western States. I have seen many farms, with comfortable buildings and improvements, entirely abandoned, and their owners fled, to avoid this dreadful curse."

Now, what I ask, would be thought of the sanity of a man who, with his Bible in his hand, and his finger pointing to the text that speaks of the milk and honey of the Holy Land, should undertake to rebuke that mother in Israel, for presuming to recommend to that stranger traveller, not the moderate use, but total abstinence from an article in Indiana, which God himself had authorized to be used in Palestine? What would be thought of the sanity of the man who, standing in the great valley of the West, amid the dying and the dead, and after having surveyed the sick-rooms where the victims of milk were agonizing, or the fresh graves where their corpses had been buried, should gravely talk, not of abstinence, but moderation, in the use of this fatal aliment—should provide it for his family, place it on his table, proffer it to his friends, and even make a show of tasting it himself, out of reverence for the Bible, and through the dread of appearing to give countenance to ultraism? What would be thought of the sanity of such a man? And yet, what are all the ills which milk has occasioned on the other side of the mountains since the foot of the white man first trod the great valley of the West, compared with those which intoxicating liquor occasions annually in any one of the cities of the East?

If these cases are not parallel, their want of parallelism only gives additional force to the argument drawn from their comparison. For, the milk in the valley of the West, deadly as it may be, is, notwithstanding, truly the milk of kine, whereas the drunkard's drink of the East is not even the

fruit of the vine, but the product of the brew-house; or if it indeed ever partake of the fruit of the vine, it is not of that fruit in its purity, but in admixture with articles that debase it, so that the mixture no longer comes within the limits of that license granted to the wine of Palestine, whatever that license may be; so that the whole question of the merit or demerit of the intoxicating liquors here in use, and of the innocence or guilt of using them, is to be decided, not by appealing to the Bible, but to observation and experience. To that tribunal we appeal, and are prepared to abide the issue—the only rightful issue; and, in making this appeal, we take no vantage ground, we claim no right to bind the conscience of others, or to sit in judgment on our brother.

If patriots shall think—I speak as to wise men—if patriots shall think, having examined the facts of the case, and with all these evils before their eyes, that it is befitting in them to continue the use of the branded, or even brewed, wines; if they shall think, on the whole, that the happiness these liquors confer exceeds in amount the miseries they inflict,—let them drink on, and abide the consequence.

If Christians think—I speak as to conscientious men—if Christians think, having examined the facts of the case, and with all these evils before their eyes, that the benefits resulting from this drink of drunkards are so numerous, or so signal, as to require the influence of their example in the furtherance of its use, especially on gala-days and at weddings, let them give to the good cause the benefit of their influence; but let them do this understandingly, and on account of the benefits which the church and the world are likely to derive from continuing its use, and not because the Bible sanctions it. If this drunkard's drink is to be hereafter drunk by Christians, let it be done by the authority of reason, and in the name of Ceres or Vesta, and not of Religion and Jesus. And why by the authority of Religion, and in the name of Jesus? Neither the Bible, nor its Author—whatever may have been said of the mere fruit of the vine in Palestine—has said anything in commemoration of the products of the still and the brew-house in America.

These unbidden, exciting, maddening mixtures, are, in every sense, profane, and befit the orgies of Bacchus, rather than the festivities of Christians. They are, at best, mixed wines—mixed with branly, or even worse materials; which mixture the Bible nowhere tolerates, and which cannot, therefore, under its sanction, be distributed even to bridal guests. If hereafter, therefore, any Christian shall claim the liberty of countenancing the use of wine, falsely so called, on gala-days and at weddings, let him do so as a man, not as a Christian; nor let him lay to his soul the flattering unction that in doing so he is borne out by the Bible, and sheltered behind the example of his Saviour. If the use of these articles as a common beverage can be vindicated at all, it is because of their utility, and only because of their utility, and not because religion either requires or sanctions their use; for no such article as even the brandied wine of commerce existed in our Saviour's time, for brandy itself did not then exist. This intenser poison is a product of human skill, and of later times.

THE TEMPERANCE PRINCIPLE AT SEA.

We had prepared an article on this subject, but prefer giving the following, which we extract from the *Inquirer*, of January 23:d. In the Number for February 6th, is a letter from a FOREMAST HAND, worthy of the most serious attention, which we shall give in our next Number, with some remarks on the important subject on which it treats. The paragraph quoted originally appeared in the *Times* of Jan. 7th, 1847, and was dated Plymouth, January 1st, 1847.—Ed. N. T. C.

Under this title, a paragraph is passing from one paper to another throughout the country, which is of most flagitious