



51 1/19/11

THE CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE.

TEMPERANCE IS THE MODERATE USE OF THINGS BENEFICIAL, AND ABSTINENCE FROM THINGS HURTFUL.

No. 12.

MONTREAL, APRIL, 1837.

Vol. II.

Temperance Convention.

The Executive Committee believing that the objects of Temperance Societies would be greatly promoted by an assembly of Delegates from all parts of this Province—such a meeting tending to increase the union and co-operation of the friends of the cause—hereby respectfully request the attendance of Delegates from every Temperance Society in the Province, to meet in Convention at Montreal, on Wednesday the 5th day of July next, time, place, and other particulars to be hereafter notified.

By order of the Executive Committee,
JAMES COURT, Sec.

Essay upon the Nature of the Wine and Strong Drink mentioned in the Scriptures.

BY JOHN DOUGLAS, ESQ.

As I have long thought it would be desirable to place the Temperance Reformation upon more stable and certain ground than that of mere expediency, (a motive which, with some, may have the weight of moral duty, but which the greater part of mankind, in conformity with the selfishness of their natures, will utterly neglect.) and as I believe the common understanding of certain passages of Scripture to be the only serious obstacle to the formation of a correct judgment on the subject, I propose to investigate the true meaning and import of these passages, as far as the limited means within my reach will permit.

The Scripture authority for drinking being, with a vast number, the only reason for believing that intoxicating drinks cannot be so invariably injurious as modern science goes to prove them, we only need to be convinced that this authority does not exist, to have it acknowledged by all candid and well-informed persons, that the use of such drinks, as an article of diet, is invariably injurious to health, and consequently invariably sinful, whether that use be moderate or excessive. And whenever this truth is admitted, it will be at once seen that the Temperance reformation is independent of pledges or any adventitious aid whatever, except that of proclaiming the truth as rapidly and as widely as possible.

In conducting this investigation, I shall take certain preliminaries for granted, not because they are universally admitted, but because I believe them to be fully established by many proofs and authorities which

my space does not allow me to recapitulate, but to which I shall make reference as I go along, in order that others may investigate them to their satisfaction.

The first of these is, that alcohol is the product of the vinous fermentation, and is the intoxicating principle of fermented and distilled drinks.*

The second is, that alcohol is a poison.†

The third is, that drinks containing alcohol are never necessary nor useful as a beverage or article of diet, but on the contrary always injurious to health.‡

The fourth is, that the moderate as well as the immoderate use of an article which is injurious to health, as it has a certain tendency to shorten and destroy life, is a breach of the Sixth Commandment.

I assume also, that the Almighty could never sanction the use of an article, if that use involved a breach of his commandments. And therefore I deduce, that if alcohol is a poison, and drinks containing it have an invariable tendency to destroy health and life itself, it would amount to a positive absurdity to say that the Deity could sanction their use as an article of diet. The whole scope and tendency of the law of God is to secure the health and well-being both of soul and body. We cannot, therefore, without the most serious contradiction, affirm that he sanctioned the use of an article, the certain effects of which are to destroy that health and well-being.

Further, if alcohol has produced and is producing all the bad effects which are universally admitted, and yet be a good article of diet, the axioms are contradicted which say that a good tree cannot yield bad fruit, nor a sweet fountain bitter waters.

As the Word of God can never contradict a matter of fact, nor a matter of fact contradict the Word of God; it follows, wherever we find facts opposed to the common understanding of passages of Scripture, that either our knowledge of the facts must be imper-

fect, or our interpretation of the passages erroneous.

Now, I think a little investigation will render it at least highly probable, that one universal error has entered into the understanding of the modern world, concerning the nature of the wines and drinks commonly used in ancient times, not only among the Jews, but among the Greeks and other nations. An error which can only be accounted for by supposing that all men have taken for granted, without any examination, that the liquors called wine and strong drink in olden times, must necessarily have been of an intoxicating nature, like the articles which are now used under these names. That this was sometimes the case, is sufficiently obvious; but I think it can be satisfactorily proved, that it was not always nor even commonly the case.

In Henderson's "History of Wines," which I regret I am not now able to procure, he states, if I recollect right, that many of the celebrated Greek wines were thick or inspissated like syrup, and some of them were hard like pitch or paste; and that these wines being dried to a small compass, were easily preserved and transported by travellers or merchants, and when wanted for use they were diluted with water.

Homer expressly mentions a very famous wine of Maronea, in Thrace, which would bear mixing with twenty times as much water. A fact which can only be accounted for satisfactorily, by supposing that the wine had previously been dried to a thick syrup. The supposition that it was on account of the strength of the wine that it was so much diluted, is untenable, because distilled spirit is stronger than any wine, and yet no one ever heard of a spirit that was commonly mixed with twenty times, or even five times its own bulk of water.

Morewood, surveyor of excise in London, who published a History of Inebriating Liquors, in 1824, makes the following statement on the authority of a recent traveller: "The Syrian wine is now prepared by boiling immediately after the juice is expressed from the grape; and to preserve it for use,

* See Ure's Dictionary of Chemistry; arts. Alcohol and Fermentation.

† See Orfila's & Christison's Treatises on Poisons; and, a Man in a state of Intoxication.

‡ See that able document the Eighth Report of the American Temperance Society; together with the testimony of nearly a million of human beings, in all occupations and ranks of life, who formerly drank, and who now practice total abstinence.

§ "The juice of the grape becomes almost of a pitchy thickness when dried."—Ure's Dictionary of Chemistry; art. Wine.

¶ Morewood's Essay on Inebriating Liquors, p 19