

## THOUGHTS ON TEMPERANCE.

Essay read by Sarah Fritts, at Farmington Quarterly Conference, 12th mo. 7th, 1894.

A few weeks ago people were horrified at the ravages made by the forest fires of Minnesota and Wisconsin. As the press spread the news of the disaster contributions and expressions of sympathy came to the sufferers from all parts of the United States and from foreign countries. The loss of life and property, the destitution of the survivors was a fact so appalling as to arouse into activity all the brotherly feelings.

Yet we have a daily disaster, greater in magnitude, more terrible in the suffering it inflicts, than the igneous depredations that have made the country alive with pity. This liquid fire burns up bodies, brains and morals; it destroys more life and property in one year than all the forest fires in the earth's history. Yet there is no sympathetic uprising of the people on account of it; the press is well nigh silent about this liquor fire, and there are no authoritative public expressions against it, only a feeble voice raised here and there. No one was responsible for the four hundred lives lost in the forest fires, but this nation is responsible for the millions of lives lost by the legalized liquor traffic.

Viewed by the side of this liquor problem all other questions seem subordinate. We think the tariff issue is a great question by the uproar it causes, but is it? Most devoted protectionists admit that the McKinley bill did not place more than \$60,000,000 in the national treasury, but in New York State alone last year the drink bill was \$60,000,000. Multiply that by the amount spent for liquor in all the other States, and you have a result that makes the tariff seem but a dot by the side of it.

All must admit then, that we have here in our midst this monster, whose devastations exceed any ever made by fire, pestilence or famine, that he is taking the very life of our people in an

economical, moral, physical and intellectual sense. All know this. We all know that this monster is destroying homes, ruining unnumbered minds and souls, that his grip is on our legislatures, making good government impossible; that his robber hand is in the pockets of the people, and that he is filling our prisons, insane asylums and almshouses.

Now, what are we going to do about it? No one has a right to say, "My own lips are pure, other people must take care of theirs." No religious organization has a right to say, "There is no work for us to do; we, as a society are clear of this evil." We *are* our brothers' keepers. It is a poor religion that does not make us realize this. They who have worked long in the temperance field tell us that they come more and more to believe that the key to the situation lies in the personal consecration of upright, influential, Christian men and women. When each one says, "Something *must* be done, and I must do everything I can right here and now for temperance," then success will be comparatively easy.

Temperance work thus far has been largely educational and preparatory. It would seem that the time for decisive action has come. If effective work is ever done, it can only be done through the united, whole-hearted effort of all who know of the evil and are determined that it shall be stopped.

We have now a Catholic temperance society, a Unitarian temperance society, a Methodist church standing for temperance, and various organizations with this same object in view. When all these can work together, and there shall be no scattered forces, but a united host for temperance, something definite will be done for the cause. Foretelling this good time was an incident at Saratoga the other day, when a Catholic priest and Unitarian minister clasped hands in the temperance work. Theologically these men were as far apart as the two poles, and they might spend a life-time bickering over the things in