

CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE

"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor do any thing by which thy brother is made to stumble, or to fall, or is weakened."—Rom. xiv. 21—*Macnigh's Translation.*

PLEDGE OF THE MONTREAL TEMPERANCE SOCIETY.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, DO AGREE, THAT WE WILL NOT USE INTOXICATING LIQUORS AS A BEVERAGE, NOR TRAFFIC IN THEM; THAT WE WILL NOT PROVIDE THEM AS AN ARTICLE OF ENTERTAINMENT, NOR FOR PERSONS IN OUR EMPLOYMENT; AND THAT IN ALL SUITABLE WAYS WE WILL DISCOURTEGE THEIR USE THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY

MONTREAL, JULY 15, 1845.

OBJECTIONS TO A CHRISTIAN'S JOINING TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES.

(Continued from page 203.)

"I know that individual Christians repudiate, yea shudder, at all this, [putting Temperance in the place of the Gospel]. But what matters this, so long as Societies, in which their individuality and their best energies are absorbed, thus offend. And offend thus, such Societies, employed in such a work, must. Man, as man, has never undertaken any moral work without coming into collision with the testimonies and ways of God."

[The repudiation of the language attributed to Temperance Societies does not exonerate from blame, if the main position be correct, which we think it is not. We know of no Christians whose best energies are absorbed in the Temperance cause; but we know of many professing Christians whose best energies appear to be absorbed in making or selling intoxicating drinks—for such our Tractarian appears to have no word of admonition; these with him will perhaps be lawful callings; but for a Christian to hold temperance meetings, and publish temperance papers is in his eyes a grievous sin.

In the latter clause of the sentence the ground is shifted, and it is plainly assumed that temperance societies are wholly composed of unregenerate men, and therefore must offend in attempting any moral reform. Whereas, as we have before said, the real good that is done by these societies is, we believe chiefly accomplished by the Christians found in them.]

"But I cannot admit, that the fact, that these fearful things have proceeded from Temperance Societies, is to be attributed to the circumstance of their containing unregenerate men. Christians have done, and said, and defended these things, when acting and speaking as friends of the Temperance cause. And this makes the matter sorrowful indeed. If things such as I have mentioned, proceeded only from the world, blindly seeking to regenerate itself, and make itself either fair to look on, or fit for God, they would sufficiently warn me against confederacy in that form in which they come; but when such things proceed from real Christians, men who say they know and preach the Gospel, they are mournful proofs to me of the way in which the light is lost in a wrong position; and warnings to me that we need to take great heed lest some favourite object of our own should make us unfaithful servants of God. It is possible to err very seriously through our zeal for something in itself commendable."

[Whilst the truth of the latter axiom is fully admitted, and also the fact, that even Christian totalitarians have sometimes forgotten themselves; we are still constrained to think, that Christians identifying themselves with, and promoting the Temperance cause, have been more in the path of duty than those who stood aloof. "By their fruits ye shall know them."]

"But fearful as such advocacy as that to which I have referred is, it is such advocacy only that will make "The Temperance Cause" prosper. Mark this. I believe most confidently that if false hopes and false promises (and as on God's part too) had not been held out, the Temperance mania had never spread as it has. Keep it within the narrow circle which some profess to prescribe to it, as merely a physical and social affair; and while you enforce it, preach the Gospel; and your Gospel will disgust and offend the natural heart a thousand times more than your Temperance

project will allure it. Honestly and fully tell men, that their Temperance cannot advance them one inch towards God, or towards heaven; that they are enemies still; still in peril of everlasting wrath; for that still, to be saved, they need another's blood, even Christ's, and the real spell of your "Temperance" influence is broken."

[Thus far our monitor has appeared as a kind friend, loving our object, and discharging a painful duty, in warning, us respecting our errors; but in the above paragraph something very like a cloven foot appears. The Tractarian calls the Temperance cause a mania—and of course they who support it must be mad. He also virtually affirms that it can never be successfully advocated except by falsehood. Now, in the greater part of instances, that have come under our notice, where hard names have been applied to the temperance cause, they have been used out of revenge for its interference with a beloved bottle or tankard; and though we would by no means insinuate anything of the kind in the present case; yet would we earnestly counsel our friend to examine what manner of spirit he is of.

The positive assertion in the latter clause of the sentence is completely disproved by the experience of Temperance lecturers in this province, who for the most part have taken the precise ground which is here said to break the Temperance spell, and yet have been eminently successful. Indeed we might affirm that lecturers will meet with solid success, just in proportion as they take this ground; for no other will gain the confidence of ministers and Christians generally, amongst whom the strength of the Temperance cause lies.]

"Take away, I say, the false religious value which men attach to every restraint they achieve over their lusts, or every change they make in the sins they indulge, and you take the real lever out of the hand of Temperance Societies. For, whether their advocates always perceive and act on this or no, the secret of their power lies in this, that men do attach a religious value to their Temperance. And is this wonderful to any one who knows his own heart? The innate self-righteousness of fallen human nature renders it impossible that it should be otherwise. And in days like these, when man is so pre-eminently rejoicing in himself and in his ways, and when Satan is working so successfully, in matters of religion, on man's self-confidence and self-esteem, it indeed behoves God's servants to watch, lest they be found, in any wise, floating with the current."

[It is painful to find a controversialist so given to bare assertion. The whole of the above with respect to the self-righteousness of the human race, we admit to its fullest extent but we think the secret of the power of Temperance Societies lies not so much in self-righteousness, as in proclaiming a great Christian principle, viz. self-denial for the good of others. Their real lever is truth, though no doubt in accordance with poor sinful human nature, their supporters are very liable to err.

Our opponent's strictures may, however, apply better to the Temperance Societies of some parts of Britain, where ministers and Christians generally wrapped themselves up in a mantle of fancied self-security, and Cain-like indifference to their brother's welfare, and left the whole management of the Temperance enterprise to unconverted men. Shame on such professors, say we! yet is not this just what our opponent wishes?]

"But, thirdly, I object, because another necessary result of the very constitution of Temperance Societies, is, that they confound "the flesh" and "the Spirit."

No distinction is more carefully drawn, or strongly insisted on by God, than that between *flesh* and *Spirit*. By the former I now mean unregenerate man. The New Testament distinctly affirms that no good fruit can be produced by the *flesh*—that regeneration must precede good works. Christians are said to be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" their previous existence being described by the words, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii.). And accordingly the Gospel is preached to men in the flesh, that, believing it and being regenerate, they may not only be saved from wrath, but also bring forth fruit unto holiness.