

THE CANADA Temperance Advocate.

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

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Selected Articles.

A Complete View of the Principles and Objects of Temperance Societies.

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[Continued from our last.]

The use of wine being recognised in Scripture gives no warrant whatever for the use of every substance possessing intoxicating properties. No wise man would attempt to argue that because wine, in a weak state, may be used in small quantities, on certain occasions, without injury, therefore the daily use of strong wines is safe, and therefore it is right and salutary to bring into common use any intoxicating substance, whatever be the violence of its intoxicating powers. The use of wine furnishes no warrant for the use of distilled spirits. No revelation from God, no dictate of common sense, ever pronounced them to be a proper substitute. That they have been substituted is a melancholy truth; that they should be, is a pernicious error, whose fatal consequences have invaded the peace of almost every family.

These positions would hold good were wine nothing more than diluted ardent spirits; for in the weakness of the intoxicating material there would be comparative safety. The use of vitriol and water, as a safe medicine, would furnish no warrant for drinking vitriol. But wine is not diluted ardent spirit. It is a distinct substance, which holds ardent spirit in chemical solution with other ingredients, by which the dangerous properties of the ardent spirit are partly neutralised.

The argument for the ordinary use of opium is stronger than for that of ardent spirits, since the former is a production of nature, the latter of art; and since, on account of the one affecting the imagination chiefly, the other the passions, a community would be safer with opium in common use than with ardent spirits. But who, in the present state of Christian society, would advocate the moderate use of opium?

In looking, however, to medical works, we find ardent spirits and opium classed under the same head, as possessing exact-

ly similar properties. They are both narcotics, possessing, according to the meaning of the name, a stupifying, deadening influence. They are both, in the literal sense of the word, *poisons*. Ardent spirits may not kill as quickly, when taken habitually, as arsenic, but they will as surely; and the few exceptions, which lay the foundation of the drunkard's silly jests about *slow poison*, afford no more warrant for habitual use than the resuscitation of a man who had been an hour under water would sanction a repetition of the experiment. Every habitual drinker of ardent spirits, with his eyes open to the consequences, is as really and truly a suicide as he who seeks a desperate escape from conscience upon the nearest tree, or in the neighbouring pool. But, unfortunately, from the very nature of ardent spirits, a ruinous deception has been practised upon the world.

It is acknowledged, with respect to ardent spirit, as with respect to opium, that, if taken in large quantities, it produces immediately such a stupifying effect as to destroy life. Of this effect the newspapers furnish us with many examples. A wretched man, not long since, in my own neighbourhood, after having drunk a quantity of ardent spirits from a jar presented to him by a foolish friend, walked about a quarter of a mile, fell upon the road, and never rose.

It has not been observed, however, that, in another respect, ardent spirits and opium are similar in their effects. If taken diluted, or in small quantities, both produce their deadening, stupifying effect indirectly: first, an excitement is produced, and that is succeeded by languor. This languor all spirit-drinkers have felt, but they have attributed it to the spirits *dying* within them, instead of considering it to be the proper and natural effect of the stupifying narcotic. Against this effect of ardent spirits even the stomach-pump is too frequently unavailing; and multitudes, in a state of insensibility, pass off from a world which they have disgraced to a world where drunkards and murderers shall have the same portion. Of the fatal effects of this poisonous influence of ardent

spirits, produced indirectly, a multitude of examples might be produced.

I put, then, to the good sense and Christian feeling of the public, whether they should consider that a good and wholesome article for every day use which is actually set down in medical works as a poison—which possesses the same properties as opium—and whose direct or indirect stupifying effects every man that uses it feels? The highest medical authorities have published their conviction, “that the moderate use of ardent spirits is exclusively the cause of many diseases; and that a variety of others might be easily removed, if they were not rendered incurable by the same cause.” It is now before the world, as the recorded opinion of men standing at the head of the medical profession, “that ardent spirits should be renounced by all persons in health as most noxious superfluities;” and this is the substance which is in common use at our tables, and presented to all our friends as the common mark of hospitality! Is it fair, I ask, to press such an article on your friend, your servant, your child, to assure him that a little of it will do him no harm, and to consider that he does not properly estimate your kindness if he refuses?

In suffering distilled spirits to be used at all, as an ordinary drink, the world has been the subject of a deception whose consequences will be felt in the lowest hell. When first invented, they were used as a medicine; and in that character alone they are safe. One object of Temperance Societies is to restore them to the guardianship of the physician, from which they should never have been suffered to escape: for, till that be effected, all coercive measures, all laws, and imposition of duties to prevent drunkenness, will be, to a melancholy extent, unavailing. Until the capital error be rectified, of allowing ardent spirits to escape from their proper place, we talk, and preach, and write, in a great degree in vain. Temperance Societies begin at the right end in the work of reformation; they do not, like others, practise the absurdity, first, of taking for granted that ardent spirits are a good and wholesome beverage, an actual necessary of life, espec-