

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT.

No. 3.

THE close relation of all great movements either progressive or reactionary, to others by which they were preceded or with which they synchronised, affords materials for most instructive and interesting study to those who delight in the philosophy of history. He who knows nothing of science, looks at the stars with a barren gaze at single points of light, or constellated groups, but the astronomical student finds endless enjoyment in regarding the phenomena proclaiming the co-relations of all the heavenly orbs to each other and to the whole planetary system. So we may read history, watching with mindless interest some detail of the great drama of our race, all unconscious of the grandeur and scope of the design, hence from ignorance of the plot certain to misinterpret the portion we are observing. There is no such thing in historic life as "spontaneous generation" any more than in physical. All events are both effects and causes. Successful movements owe much to their timeliness, to the "fulness of time" having come for their advent. The Temperance Reformation was especially favored in this respect. Take, for instance, the influence of railways, which were being built throughout England when the abstinence agitation commenced in earnest. The presence of a vast army of "navvies," rough men moving from place to place as work progressed, full of the coarse animal life their calling needed, prone to the violent habits of such a class, woke up the country to the necessity of a better constabulary force to preserve law and order. We remember witnessing a terrible riot caused by a conflict between English and Irish laborers, which the military suppressed. The enforcement of laws against drunkenness now became necessary. Thus for the first time it was brought home to quiet, systematic indulgers that they were transgressors against the law, which reflection became an effective check upon excess, inasmuch as the terror of the law was in tune with common sense and conscience. But the railways gave an enormous impetus to all forms of popular agitation and propagandism. The temperance movement called out thousands of speakers, its platform was based upon testimony, upon individual experience, upon burning convictions. Night after night meetings were held wherever a room could be hired or given. Men who had never spoken save in the home or tavern, were moved to speak on the new topic,—and such speaking! Poor fellows, picked literally from the gutter, were coaxed and urged to tell of their redemption, often in words that shocked ears polite, but whose pathetic truth and soberness of fact touched the mind and heart. One such case is worth recording. We knew well a young man, who picked up a scanty living by helping tradesmen with their accounts, being too drunken to keep a situation. He always wrote with a bottle of brandy at his side. One night

he staggered into a meeting, signed the pledge while muddled with drink, *but kept it*. From being the most degraded citizen of that town he rose to be its most honored. He built up a fortune by business activity, gave immense help to temperance reform as a speaker, yet so diligently applied himself to study that he won several marks of high distinction as a scholarly antiquarian and archæologist. In our friend, Dr. ———, is epitomised the temperance reformation, had the agitation done no more than lift him to honor and fame, all its labors, all its outlays had been well spent! As one of her ablest local historians the Church of England owes Dr ——— a debt of gratitude, therefore owes much to the cause which restored him to sobriety and service. The gifts for public speaking developed by the temperance meetings brought some men into fame who took their mantles with them. Who ever remembers "John Hocking—the Blacksmith," recalls one endowed with high oratorical gifts. He oftentimes took off his coat when heated, and in his bare arms thundered along with his vigorous saxon, striking at his opponent, as though he had him on the anvil red hot, beneath a rhetorical hammer. How like a flash of light he lit up his theme by witty quaintness of speech, using illustrations so homely at times as to shock his educated hearers, but which made the masses feel the keenest delight and sympathy with one so gifted, whose words smelt of the smithy. There were giants in those days. How wasted would all these gifts and opportunities have been but for the railways! Another service of the Railways was to dissociate travelling from drinking, these hitherto having been inseparable.

We do not rank Dr. F. R. Lees, who early achieved great prominence, so highly as some do. We heard him repeatedly, but he always seemed to be reaching higher than his stature warranted. His writings did some good we hope, but great harm we know. Dr. Lees assumed the authority of a scholar ripe and rare, he gives his decisions on certain points as though he were the Final Court of Appeal of learning, when it is notorious that his scholarship was exceedingly shallow, narrow, and largely second-hand. The freedom and popularity of the Temperance platform has drawn to it not a few charlatans, who have found in the enthusiasm of temperance audiences that impulsive sympathy which disregards or refuses to believe in the ignorance of those it favors, however plainly such ignorance may be exposed. Hence, to-day, here in Canada, temperance advocates go on repeating falsehoods that were invented by audacious early advocates of total abstinence, or that were the outgrowth of the densest obtuseness of illiteracy, when those falsehoods have been stamped as such by the universal judgment of scholars. Such for instance as the mendacious notion that Wine used by Christ at Cana and at the Last Supper was not Wine.

When the temperance societies commenced to enrol members, a difficulty at once arose as to the best way of providing men accustomed

to tavern life at night with some attraction akin to this. The same difficulty was felt in the meeting rooms of friendly societies, where the beer cans circulated far too freely. Few men are able to sit, after a day's labor, until bed time without some kind of social enjoyment. Those best able to do this, the highly educated class, are usually full of evening engagements. Some of those who rarely sit alone at their own home one night a week are very glib with advice to working men and youths to cultivate home life, to make reading their leisure enjoyment, and so on and so forth. If such moralists took their own physic they might be benefitted, as our experience is, that their homes are not so very attractive to them as to make their example square with their precepts. This demand for evening enjoyment has had a remarkable effect in calling into existence multitudinous attractions, some not very wholesome, some innocent, many most healthful. One of the best known efforts in this direction was that for founding Working Men's Clubs, a movement so intimately associated with our good old friend and co-worker, the Rev. Henry Solly, whose untiring zeal is beyond praise. Our aim was to provide all that a tavern does, except the beer. The history of these clubs is a very chequered one. The effort was an experiment. We failed utterly in some places, and success in others came from our plans being modified or set aside by working men, who naturally knew more of the wants and feelings of their companions than ourselves. In one town we had a flourishing club, but it was found that beer was supplied from next door through a back window! This was stopped. Then the club collapsed, in spite of nice rooms, good billiard and bagatelle tables, music and other amusements being provided free to members. All this could not be done for charity, so our revenue was looked for from a coffee house attached to the club. But, to kill this, the beer shops commenced selling all we sold far below cost. But this battle excited general sympathy on our behalf. Even beer shop slaves were roused, as we well knew, in many cases to assert their independence by feeling that their master, the landlord, was under the ban of public condemnation. The custom, in days gone by, was to pay for rooms in taverns used by lodges and courts by copious outlay in drink. When we first exposed this folly, we were met with ominous silence in such gatherings, but the custom has now been generally abandoned. On the gravestones of many departed benefit societies might be written: "Died from excess in drink." One of the strongholds of the drinking custom was the universal rule of hotels to let rooms for meetings, rent free, for the sake of selling liquor, thus drinking became a moral duty. Another rule was to make certain accommodation very cheap, in the expectancy that wine would be bought. It was at one time regarded as very mean, almost a fraud, to dine at an inn without wine. "The good of the landlord," was a common phrase, and for the good, or gain, of the landlord, according to these old customs,

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