

long ministered to its perversion, after a long time come the symptoms of a cure—a healthy reaction in favour of the established and unquenchable laws that govern the stream of life. Viewed in this light, the institution of the Rechabites is indicative of the agency of the *vis medicatrix*—a favourable appearance, which evinces the commencement and progress of a restorative process. Whatever be the description of means, and the designations of the various Societies that hold out the prospect of this remedial change, they are phenomena in the existing state of society that cannot but be profoundly interesting. The shallow and unthinking only will be disposed to confound them with the quack expedients often so confidently advanced for the regeneration of society—expedients that usually run in the teeth of nature, and though prompted by benevolent motives not unfrequently subvertive of those divine laws, without which mankind must disband and live like the beasts. These however are means that remand suffering humanity to nature, and may calculate upon her concurrence and support. It is their object to make her law known, and make her voice be heard. Nor is the interesting character of these means destroyed, while it is admitted that they may fall short of an absolute victory over the evil they assail. This is a circumstance which attaches to all human institutions. If the evil in question be materially reduced—if the manners and opinions of society be so modified as to secure the advancement of the remedial process, to send it on its way rejoicing, diffusing health, and strength, and happiness in its path, the means by which this happy progress is maintained, if justifiable in principle and innocently administered, deserve the praise and support of all that have a just title to the name of man.

Such is the light in which Temperance Societies in general, but emphatically the Independent Order of Rechabites, ought to be contemplated. They are benevolent in their aim, and coincide in their object with the law of God, both as exhibited in nature, and declared by revelation. The object, then, is good; let us look to the nature of the means, and to the detail of regulations by which it is sought to work it out. The Independent Order of Rechabites is called a secret society, and is so called because the members of it have adopted measures for their own good order, which are not publicly made known. The secrecy consists in this; it does not consist in the measures which they use for the advocacy and advancement of the cause they have undertaken to promote. The nature of the case renders it necessary that their measures to this end be open and public, inasmuch as their rational arguments, their demonstrations of its utility, and happiness, and duty, together with just representations of the intolerable and acknowledged evils of intemperance, are the only weapons by which they can hope for a successful issue to their moral contest. Their object is understood, their means of accomplishing it are known, and nothing remains unknown that infringes upon the right of others, or disturbs the order of society—nothing that falls under the animadversion of the magistrate, or can be cause of complaint to any member of the community. What rational objection, then, can any one have to offer as to the matter of secrecy—no rational objection; none but the infinitely absurd objection that might be offered to any private council, or private party or club, or even a private family. There are material advantages, however, as to order and efficiency, that arise from the adoption of private regulations. The members of the Order are thereby united more closely—the bond of duty is made clearer—the bond of interest is made stronger, and a foundation is laid for a mutual respect and regard among a number of persons, who, having a great selected end in view, live according to the convictions they express, and unite with the purest benevolence of purpose in recommending to others a rule of life which they believe to be good. As to the matter of temperance, the difference between the Rechabites and other Temperance Societies seems to consist in this, that the former have introduced into their system principles of government and order that have a far more powerful influence both upon individual members and the general operations of the body, than other Temperance Societies have. They have the advantage, therefore, of having their operations regulated by some additional oversight and authority. They may therefore be expected to proceed more deliberately and systematically. This is true, that obedience to the regulations prescribed is voluntary. The sense of duty and love of order, as well as a degree even of temporal interest, are appealed to, in order to secure acquiescence in them. All these may no doubt fail, but under the circumstances there is no element omitted which can be brought to bear upon the good government of the body, nor could anything additional be desired, unless it be the deepening of

a persuasion that ought to be constantly present in every association of the kind—the persuasion that a ready and unhesitating obedience to the rules of the Order, and the exclusion of all that is extraneous to them, constitute the pillar of strength upon which the association rests. The thirst of legislating is always a proof of weakness—it is a sure sign of the dissolution of every association in which it prevails. It roots up all confidence, and eventually destroys all consistence and order. It is to be ascribed to this, as by far the chief cause, that many excellent institutions, after a short-lived existence, vanish. In order to secure confidence and efficiency, there can be nothing more requisite than uniformity of operation, and the assurance of stability; but where one thing is done to-day, and another thing to-morrow, and private regulations made to supersede the general rules, this is an infallible sign of a dissolving and expiring body. There is, however, a provision in the institution of the Rechabites against this source of weakness; and so important is this part of its interior policy, that it can never be too constantly referred to, nor too solemnly enforced.

There is another point to which it seems proper to advert. The objection is not unfrequently made that Rechabite and other Temperance Societies are a sort of unwarrantable usurpation of the province of Christianity, as if they impudently pretended to be a substitute for it, and that their efforts in some manner may be unfavourable to it. If this objection were valid, it would, indeed, be a serious one; but it is hardly possible to suppose it could ever be seriously offered. The pointing the finger to those who compose the Independent Order of Rechabites, is the refutation of the objection. It needs no other refutation, because there stands the body of evidence sufficient to confound all the supposals and conjectures that can be made, to shew that the consequences have been constantly found to be the reverse of those apprehended. If every Rechabite were brought to the bar and tried one after another, and if upon trial it were clearly ascertained that he was a more regular member of the Church, or a more devoted attendant upon religious services, the objection would be made appear to be a very lame one; and such exactly it is found to be in point of fact—an objection where all existing evidence contradicts the truth of it, and proves it to be nonsense. The objection, then, must come with a bad grace from those who seek to build up the Church of Christ, when they object to a means of accomplishing the very object they desire, unless they can shew that the means employed is erroneous in principle, and unjustifiable. It is very commonly said, if on the principles of the gospel temperance cannot be maintained and promoted in human society, nothing else will avail to do it. This is another assertion in the face of experience. The fact is, that in a great many cases where the precepts and doctrines of the truth in Christ do not reach home to the individual, and subject him to their authority, there are other means that do; where they cannot prevent men from committing acts of violence or theft, may not the laws of the land do so, the disgrace of detection, and the fear of punishment? In the matter of temperance, as in all things else, some motives may prevail, where others prove ineffectual; and with regard to the Order of Rechabites in particular, where the highest Christian motives combine with the principle of honour—with benevolence, and prudence, and self-preservation—with the restraints and obligations peculiarly fitted to govern and impress the members of the Order, it is impossible but that its interior regulations must exert an influence far beyond that of any other system, whose discipline has not a special reference to the object in question; and so, in fact, are they found to do. The circumstance of Christians of all denominations—of persons even who make no religious profession—being admitted into the Order, and to a participation of its advantages, precludes the possibility of its assuming a religious authority, or of its being justly regarded in that light.

One of the leading objects of the Rechabites, is to promote the cause of temperance, and with this view there is exacted from every member a total abstinence from all that can intoxicate, with but two specific cases of exception—viz., when used at the communion, and when prescribed by a physician. This practical recommendation of the rule is of great value. It demonstrates how easily and safely the use of intoxicating liquors can be dispensed with. It proves them to be necessary for neither health of body, nor soundness of mind, and holds out living examples of the beneficial effects of habitual sobriety and self-command; so that the very life of a Rechabite exerts a valuable practical influence. In addition to this, it is the duty of the Order to accumulate and convey information on the subject of tempe-