

Temperance Column.

NEW ZEALAND CHURCH NEWS.

The suppression of intemperance in drink is admittedly a necessity of this age, and the bounden duty of every churchman and Christian. That it is the earnest desire of a very large proportion of church people to effect a modification of the drinking habits of the day, until they are reduced to a minimum of evil, may be accepted without question. But to give due effect to this desire is it necessary that these should become total abstainers from strong drink? In other words, is the practice of total abstinence the only method for destroying the evils associated with, and inseparable from, an unrestricted indulgence in spirituous liquors? The total abstainer preaches the disuse of alcoholic drinks altogether; he would banish them from the country. There are many persons, no doubt, who can go through life without the aid of stimulants, and these are wise in abstaining from them either as a matter of custom or of principle. But these people are not the whole world, and we must take the world as we find it in its myriad manifestations of human life. Experience teaches all too plainly that the great majority of people everywhere will have resort to drink of one kind or another containing more or less alcohol; and the temperance reformer must ask himself, first of all, whether it is possible to eradicate this natural desire and determination. History has failure writ large over all past attempts to do this, and present efforts in all parts of the world are not more indicative of success. Having regard, therefore, to this sorrowful fact, is it a matter for wonder that a vast body of church people cannot see their way to lend their aid to the promotion of methods which have hitherto proved futile? It is not to be assumed that total abstinence advocates have exhausted the subject of how to deal with intemperate drinkers. This has been no more finally decided than the actual year of the creation of the world. The question may be almost equally vast in its bearings, and we should be glad to see some one arise who could deal with it in a really sensible way. One significant feature of the problem was lately brought before the attention of the British Medical Association in England by Dr. Samuel Wilkes, who said:—

From inquiries I have made there can be little doubt that there is less drunkenness in wine-growing countries than in others. That, there is more drunkenness in the northern parts of Europe where spirits are taken; and a French physician informs me, from his own practical knowledge, that he has seen much more intoxication in Normandy than in the wine region of Bordeaux. If this be so, it is quite confirmatory of what Adam Smith said more than a century ago. In his *Wealth of Nations* he says: "It deserves to be remarked that, if we consult experience, the cheapness of wine seems to be a cause, not of drunkenness, but of sobriety. The inhabitants of the wine countries are in general the soberest people in Europe. . . . The idea of intoxication is not even understood by many peasants in these wine countries."

Now, how is this to be accounted

for? Is it not due to the probability that people in wine districts drink wine to quench their thirst, and that this wine is good and wholesome, contains but little alcohol, and is free from adulteration? And why should it not be so universally? May not the remedy for the evils of strong drink be the manufacture and free sale of drinks that may be termed "light,"—drinks of a low alcoholic strength,—which would satisfy without pampering the universal craving for something other than water. Light wines and ales—such as it is now impossible to procure—with an unrestricted sale, would satisfy nearly all men's thirst, and supersede the traffic in deleterious liquors. But such low-power drinks must fulfil three requirements of the ordinary consumer—they must be cheap and wholesome and palatable.



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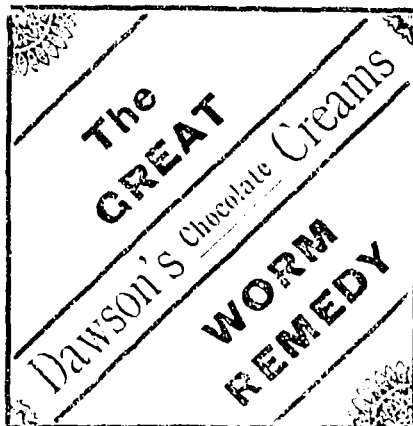
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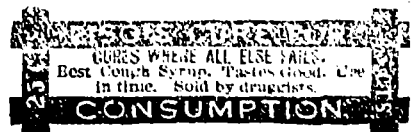
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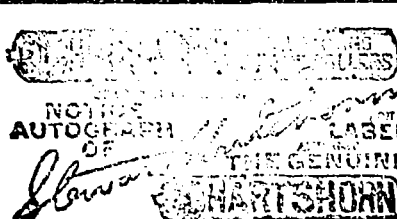
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