

The Canada Citizen

AND TEMPERANCE HERALD.

A Journal devoted to the advocacy of Prohibition, and the promotion of social progress and moral Reform.

Published Every Friday by the

CITIZEN PUBLISHING COMPANY.

Office, 8 King Street East, Toronto.

Subscription, ONE DOLLAR A YEAR, strictly in advance.

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TORONTO FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28th, 1883.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

The old pernicious practice of giving strong drink to callers on the first day of the year is happily on the decline, though it has still a strong hold in some places. It would be difficult to find any other of the drinking practices of society that is fraught with more danger than this, or that has been so disastrous in its results. There are customs of barbarous nations that to our civilized tastes and habits appear disgusting and wicked in the extreme; there are customs of foreign people that appear to us very whimsical and absurd, but we doubt very much the possibility of finding among foreign nations or savage barbarians, any custom so absurd, so cruel, and so inconsistent with its professed motives, as the custom of offering friends strong drink as a token of regard. We are not now in ignorance of the nature and effects of this poisonous potion. We all know that the drinking of it by a person in health is utterly useless, and awfully dangerous; that it is neither food, drink nor tonic; that its transient excitement is in itself harmful and always followed by depression, and that it invariably has a tendency to undermine the physical health and induce weakness and disease. Worse than all it is likely to lead to a terrible moral degradation, enthrall the whole being in a terrible and disgusting bondage, smother out every spark of honor and nobility, and make a man a burden to himself, a curse to his nearest friends, a pest to society, and a disgrace to humanity. Yet when New Year's Day comes round, fair hands and winning smiles will actually tempt indiscriminately the weak and the strong, to run the risk of all this ruin, and will do all this under the guise of kindness and hospitality. Where is the heathen barbarism and folly that will compare with this?

Young men will go out upon our streets next New Year's day; some of them society's ornaments and pride; some of them main-

stays of otherwise helpless and dependent families. Gentle ladies, who, under other circumstances, would shrink from causing any pang of sorrow, will tempt these men to drink, and that drinking will bring deepest grief and keenest pain to loving hearts and happy homes. What savage cruelty could surpass this custom of civilization?

We said this practice is passing away. We fervently pray that it may soon be entirely a thing of the past, and towards the attainment of this result, and in the interests of purity, happiness, progress and peace, we earnestly plead with every lady, into whose hands this paper may fall, to banish utterly from the board of New Year's hospitality every form of intoxicating liquor.

A DISREPUTABLE BUSINESS.

The business of selling strong-drink is a disreputable business, and it ought to be disreputable; it is cruel, immoral, criminal.

Let us guard against being misunderstood. We are not discussing men, we are discussing an occupation. We are not writing about tavern-keepers, we are writing about the business they engage in. There are men selling liquor, whose heads and hearts are worthy of a better vocation, and we bear them no malice or resentment. We would fain see them in better and more useful positions. But the character of the men does not alter the nature of the business, and that business we must not be reluctant to denounce in the plainest terms.

If a tree is to be "known by its fruits" what must be the nature of the liquor-traffic? We are looking at this matter from a moral and actual point of view—not from a legal and technical one. Will not highway-robbery, burglary and murder compare favorably with it? We are not putting the case in any exaggerated form. Does the man who slyly steals a dollar from his neighbor's pocket do that neighbor as great an injury as the man who takes the dollar and in return for it supplies him with what will ruin his body and destroy his soul? Go to the heart-broken wife who sits long and late waiting for, but dreading, her husband's coming. Ask her whether she would rather, when that husband comes home, find that his week's wages had been stolen from his pocket, or that he had spent all for drink. Her prompt answer will tell you that the liquor-seller's crime is a crueller one than the highway-man's. Ask any mother and she will tell you that it would be a thousand times better that her boy should perish by the red hand of some assassin than that—a blaspheming maniac—he should die the drunkard's death. Dishonesty and violence combined cause no more real sin and sorrow than does the liquor-seller's trade. Which then is the greater crime?

Public opprobrium is slowly but surely settling down upon this accursed business. Already it is hiding itself. Other business extends its glass front, and invites public inspection, the drink-selling business skulks behind blinds and screens, and, in the more respectable hotels is consigned to some out-of-the-way and unobtrusive corner. Men are so much ashamed of selling and drinking whisky that they will not let their "deeds be manifest."

The liquor-traffic would feel still more keenly the crushing weight of well-merited public disgust and scorn were it not buttressed by two powerful "aids to respectability," or rather "reputableness." These are legislation and association. The anomalous "sanction of law" to the instigation of lawlessness is in the eyes of many people a guarantee of respectability. It ought to be the reverse. A crime that secures the sanction of legislation ought to be considered the more criminal in so doing, and the more deserving of repudiation and contempt. But what shall we say of the law that is thus prostituted to the base end of treacherously sanctioning its own most potent antagonist. Law, instituted avowedly for the protection of society, becomes the ally of the deadliest foe to society's well-being and advancement.