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TEMPERANCE.

ADDRESS

Of the New-York Temperance Society to Grocers and Venders of Ardent Spirit.

At a time when a general effort is making in our land to wipe away the blot of intemperance, permit us in a friendly manner to suggest a few considerations to you, who form so large a class of the trading community. The duty is the more imperative, as it must be admitted that you have had a large agency in producing and perpetuating a state of things which we all deplore.

We do not approach you in the spirit of angry censure. No one has a right to use harsh censure, when we have all, directly or indirectly, contributed to the establishment of those habits in society which make the demand for liquor so extensive, and which has, perhaps, innocently led so many into that branch of business which supplies the demand. But it is time to retrace our steps.—Many of our fellow citizens have already done so; and that your duty might be set in a clear light, we take this method of suggesting the following considerations to your serious reflection.

It is not the object of this paper to array before you the mischiefs of intemperance. We have grown so familiar with the horrible features of the monster, that we survey him with indifference. The destruction of health, the loss of character, the idle habits, the consequent poverty, the accompanying vice, the breach of every relative obligation, the ruin of domestic happiness, premature death and eternal perdition, are the well known, the almost uniform attendants on the immoderate use of strong drink.—The history of millions in the grave, and ten thousands on their way thither, is proof sufficient of the danger which the moderate use of liquor will certainly entail on no small portion of society. Men may plead for its temperate use, but there is no arguing against facts. It is a fact, while human nature remains what it is, susceptible in soul and body to the influence of insidious habit, that so long as liquor is used, it will be extensively abused. Every man is liable to do so. The drunkard once drank temperately, and he continued to think himself a temperate man long after his friends knew him to be beyond recovery. Why not, then, as a step of safety to ourselves, and of benevolence to others, at once and entirely relinquish the use of ardent spirit? Nothing will be lost by such a measure. That the consumption of distilled liquors neither increases strength, nor prevents nor cures disease, might be made abundantly evident from the best medical authorities. He that would retain it because he likes it, is of all others the very man who should immediately and entirely abstain, before he is irrecoverably gone. If you do not love it, the resolution of total abstinence will be no sacrifice at all. Why not then totally abstain from that which, doing no good, exposes to a great temptation, and thus throw the whole weight of your example into the scale of sound morality?

At the same time we intreat you, by all that is sacred in conscience, patriotism, and philanthropy, not to stop here; but, by refusing to sell liquor, to refuse any longer to tempt the virtue, or to live upon the vices of your fellow men. While liquors form so important an article in every store of necessities; so long as, in some inviting form, they meet the sense, and tempt the appetite of men wherever they go, a great barrier must exist in the way of reformation. If intemperance would be criminal in yourself, is it not wrong to supply the means of inebriation to another? If a third person reap the profits of your conscientiousness, by vending the article which you refused to sell, is your obligation at all diminished by his want of principle? If it be criminal in any way to add to the amount of human misery, then is not he who multiplies the facilities of drinking criminal? If it be criminal to increase the difficulty of virtue, and spread the snare of

tempting indulgence before the eye of burning appetite, then is not he criminal to increase the sum of human crime; thou must not be who by his very business administers an article which adds fire to passion, and energy to depravity, be most deeply criminal? Good men doubtless have unthinkingly been engaged in this traffic. But with the light now pouring upon the moral sense of the community, good men cannot much longer deal in the accursed thing. Good men have even commanded slave ships; but he who should now trade in the persons and liberties of his fellow men, would be braided with an infamy indelible as that of Cain. Yet intemperance has seized on more victims, inflicted more suffering, instigated to more crime, occasioned a greater waste of life, and entailed a more deplorable bondage, than the slave-trade, with all the horrors of its burning villages, its heart-rending separations, its middle passage, its irons, and its bloody scourge, the barbarism of its shambles, and the hopelessness of its servitude. We trust in God, the time is not far distant when public sentiment, redeemed from the infatuation of custom, and purified from the degrading influence of cupidity, shall deem it no less an outrage on humanity to land upon our shores a cargo of brandy, than to discharge upon it a ship-load of famished and manacled Africans.

It is a common plea with which many quiet their consciences, that if they do not sell liquors others will. Let them: will you do wrong because others do so, or will their wrong doing justify you? The same plea has been employed to justify the slave trade, and almost every other species of iniquity. On the same principle you might retail arsenic to a man, knowing it was for the purpose of suicide, because if he could not obtain it from your shop, he would purchase it elsewhere. You ought to consider yourself, in your moral accountability, as disconnected from every other being but the supreme, at whose judgment-seat we must one day stand. Suppose yourself the only individual in this city vending to your neighbors this enemy to their peace and prosperity, you would be horror-struck at the idea of so much guilt resting upon your head alone; and yet it is not one whit diminished by fellowship in crime.

It is not true, however, that men will in every case obtain elsewhere what you refuse to vend. Every distiller manufactures much in addition to what would otherwise be made, and every retailer adds to the quantity of what would otherwise be circulated. Let a distillery be established in a township, and the facility of converting grain into liquor will probably double the amount of liquor consumed. Let a dram-shop be opened in a neighbourhood, and many an additional dram will be taken, and oath uttered, and hour idly spent, by persons who would have been otherwise employed had not the temptation been brought so near. As temperate drinking can be shown to be the process, and the only one, by which the appetite is created, the man who opens his store for the sale of spirits, deliberately engages in the process of making drunkards; and the man who for any length of time has been engaged in the business, has every reason to conclude, that some are confirmed drunkards, who, but for him, would never have been such; that some are now in their grave, who, but for him might have been living, the support and comfort of their families; that some are now in the world of despair, who, but for him, might have been this day the prisoners of hope, and possibly the heirs of heaven. You may not with accuracy be able to trace the extent of mischief done, nor your share of the instrumentality in doing it; but you know that there is an awful amount of poverty, immorality, wretchedness, disease and death, which would not exist if ardent spirit was not sold, and while you sell them, you contribute all you can to that amount. How muc' of it is justly chargeable to you, will be known in that day when every secret thing shall be brought to light.

Some grocers plead that they allow of no tipping in their stores. But where is the difference between

a man's drinking there, and his carrying it home in a jug, to tittle in the presence of his family, and make his children the witnesses of his folly and guilt. On some accounts it were better that he drink in places so corrupt that they are incapable of infection. Others will not sell to a man already intoxicated, but they sell to him, when sobered, enough to make him drunk again; while another class, who will not retail to the dissolute, supply the sideboards of their regular and moral customers.—This line of business, while it has the appearance of decency, is really more pernicious than that of the noisiest grog shop in the city. The sale of liquor to the sober is as much worse, than selling it to the drunken, as the sober man is better than the drunkard. There is all the difference which exists between plunging a dagger into a corpse, and a living man. In the one case, the intoxicating draught is sold to a man who is already a drunkard, and is, to all good purpose, dead while he liveth. The affectionate husband in him is dead—his best and noblest feelings have long since expired. The kind parent, the faithful friend, the good citizen is dead. He is gone beyond the reach of further material injury, and remains but the carcass of a man. The most which your delicious potation can do, is to hurry him to the grave. Not so with the temperate man. You furnish his sideboard with the materials of temptation; you send a disguised enemy into his family circle, and ere he is aware, have struck a blow at the heart of a living man, who is at once an affectionate husband, a kind parent, a faithful friend and a good citizen. Who would have a hand in such a work, for all the money which liquor bought and sold has ever made?

You reprobate the gamester, who, having made his appeal to the love of money in the bosom of his fellow man, engages him in the absorbing uncertainties of deep play, and then wins the money which should have paid his creditors, and supported a devoted wife and helpless children. In the mean time, your appeal is made to your neighbour's love of drink; and, for the consideration of the small profit on the article supplied, you are willing to see him and his family involved in a deeper and more incurable wretchedness than ever befel a losor at the gaming table. And yet the man whom you reprobate force his neighbour into the course pursued, nor, when he was in it, cheat him of his money. And possibly he might plead, as well as you, that if he did not fall into his hands, he would have become the prey of others; and that while money was to be made, he might as well make it as leave the golden opportunity to others. You do in reality, as much as he, eat the bread of helpless children, and enrich your house with the spoils of a home—a desolated home. If this were the only way to obtain a livelihood, it were better to starve. "Wo to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam of the timber shall answer it." Hab. 2: 2, 11.

The providence of God has placed no man in such circumstances, that the commission of sin is essential to the success of his business; or if it be, that business is unlawful, and must be forthwith abandoned. If such be your case, there is no time to hesitate, whether you will sin or suffer. If thy right eye, the most important of the two most precious organs of sense offend thee, i. e. cause thee to sin, pluck it out and cast it from thee. If thy right hand, the member of your body upon which your livelihood may depend, offend thee, i. e. cause thee to sin, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is better to enter into life having one eye or one hand, rather than, having two eyes and two hands, to be cast into hell-fire. To him who has the fear of God before his eyes, there is no room to hesitate which he will prefer, the sacrifice of abandoning a sinful traffic, or the vic-