

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT.

NO. I.

THOSE who remember the drinking habits prevalent amongst all classes when Queen Victoria came to the throne, know that as great a moral revolution as history records has taken place during her reign. We who shared in its earlier life, who all these years have watched its progress, as we have studied its manifestations, who gave it sympathetic help, saw the seed of this movement sown in uncongenial soil, its early blades savagely attacked by the bitterest blasts of ridicule, yet developing like a huge banyan tree, spreading over the land, ever rooting itself by new stems into the ground, until now, its strength bids defiance to the tempest, its fruit is known as a healing for the nations, and its shade is a blessed protection from the fierce heat of emptation. We call the effects of the Temperance movement a moral revolution, for its motive, its methods, its victories were wholly moral. The State looked on with a stare as stony as the gaze of Memnon. Temperance workers returned the compliment in kind; the State ignored them—they ignored the State. The State was, as it yet is, a sleeping partner in every brewery, distillery, wine vaults, inn, tavern, beer house and gin palace in the realm. Legislation was all based upon this partnership, its aim being to increase the profits of the connection to facilitate the collection of liquor or revenue, to protect itself and its partners from the competition of persons who sought to import, or manufacture, or sell drink without taking the State in as a partner. The same union of interests exists in Canada. In England, however, the State was always honest in its relations to these enterprises. The Parliament of Britain is too high minded, too honorable, too patriotic, too regardful of the liberty of the people and of the claims of equal justice to split the country up like a chequer board, and declare in one square that liquor selling is a crime, and in another square a licensed trade. There is not power enough in all her armies to compel Lancashire to submit to restrictions from which Yorkshire would be free. The old land would not tolerate such contemptible double dealing and hypocrisy as is stamped upon the legislation of Canada in dealing with the liquor trade. With its right hand the Parliament of Canada hands out licenses to make and sell intoxicants, its income is very large from direct partnership with those engaged in the business, yet with the left hand it lifts the sword of the law, threatening and executing legal vengeance against certain of its citizens who carry on the same business,—the only distinction being that its partners reside in certain counties, while the objects of its wrath reside in other counties! A nation that suffers such discrimination to be made by law between its citizens, that makes geographical boundaries turn a legal right into a legal offence, that licenses and shares in the profits of a trade on this side of a fence, which on the other side of the fence it punishes as a crime,

has lost the instinct of freedom, it does not recognise the equality of all classes before the law.

Yet without touching the sphere of political agitation the temperance movement revolutionized the State. The yeast of earnest work in furthering social reform gave the impetus and the fermenting principle to those great political changes that have saved England from convulsion by giving to the people at large the privileges and rousing them to the responsibilities of free citizenship. For long, long continued centuries England had quietly borne the deprivation of franchises held in early days; it suffered a pot of beer at its mouth to choke its free voice, but as the beer pot lost its control the old spirit revived, and England when sobered demanded to be again England as of yore, no longer governed by an oligarchy but by all her sons. The yeast of moral earnestness implanted by the temperance movement stirred also into vigorous life a demand for popular education. Mechanics Institutes were mainly founded as auxiliaries to the temperance cause. Temperance meetings were schools in which the lesson of lessons was taught; they opened the eyes of the lower classes to see their deplorable ignorance, and helped them to realize the power and the charm of education. Sobered fathers pained at their own state were inspired with a passionate determination to save their children from such a shame. All over England night schools were a direct outgrowth from the temperance movement. Men of high rank, chief among whom stands in honorable fame, the late Lord Lytton, brought into this work their wisdom, their influence, their enthusiasm, and so giving to the cause of popular education a force which commanded the sympathy of governments and parliaments. In every parish, even in the remote wilds of the moorland and hill districts, some educational agency was put in operation by this temperance yeast to counteract the dread power of the beer shop. Hence village libraries, youths' clubs, working men's clubs, popular entertainments, and other remedial associations and works. The marvellous development of musical taste and its wide diffusion amongst the people which has taken place in this generation are social blessings conferred by temperance reform. In response to an invitation from the Council we had the honour to read a paper on this topic before the South Staffordshire Educational Association in 1858, in which we showed how potent an auxiliary were cheap concerts to social reform. We quoted the saying of a Navy whose idea of Heaven was, "lots 'o beer and a fiddle going," and predicted that a love of the "fiddle going," the diffusion of a love of music, would gradually make "lots 'o beer" less attractive—a prophecy fulfilled in tens of thousands of homes. On a higher plane we saw People's Colleges established by such men as Maurice and Bayley, out of which came schemes of University extension, as such magnificent institutions of learning and adorn Manchester, Birmingham, and other large

English cities. To one of these early People's Colleges the Church is indebted for one of the ablest Bishops now on the bench.

How far the moral forces of the Temperance movement were derived from the Church we have not space to discuss. The question can be asked and answered with satisfaction by those who regard religion as the fountain of all moral life. That the extravagances of language which the fanatical advocates of total abstinence indulged in, and the eccentric methods they adopted, such as Sunday demonstrations, gave righteous offence, as they still do, to all thoughtful Christians, is notorious. Wesleyan ministers generally boldly opposed the abstinence agitation. The celebrated temperance advocate, Dr. F. R. Lees, was publicly opposed in several nights' debate by the Rev. James Bromley, a Wesleyan Minister. This discussion we heard, and well remember how the whole Methodist community stood by their champion. We recall also a bitter feud which arose in an Independent or Congregational body, because the pastor stood firmly against one member whose temperance zeal outran his discretion. The great religious revival in the Church of England and the Temperance movement, which happily synchronised in their history, found each other mutually helpful, they would have been more so had total abstainers been less given to erratic ways, and more temperate and charitable in speech. The cause of religion has reaped infinite blessing from the increased sobriety and intelligence resulting from the Temperance movement, in spite of the follies of its advocates, and the antagonism too many of them seemed anxious to cultivate between the pulpit and their platform.

Well may the men of this generation honor the pioneers of this moral revolution! Well would it be if they would learn its lessons. The achievements we so briefly chronicle were, we repeat, moral victories, therein lies the secret of their strength, their stability, their fecundity. The temperance workers to whom social reforms are due that England enjoys, took as their motto, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." They sought to sway the reason, the conscience, the domestic instincts of the people on the side of reform; they converted drunkards to sobriety by the resistless power of loving persistence in their pleadings. They broke up all but universally observed habits of intemperate and untimely drinking among all classes by their eloquence, their interminable protests, their restless efforts in developing such social usages in private and public life as antagonised manners and customs which were soaked in liquor. The temperance workers were usually men of self-sacrifice. On the altar they loved hundreds have laid their talents, time, social prospects, health, and life itself as a willing, yea as a joyful sacrifice for their suffering fellow men. They sought not to coerce but to convince; they besought not the iron rule of the State but the grace of God; they have their reward in the gratitude of millions, in the conscience of noble effort,

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