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PURE GOLD

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PROHIBITION, THE ONLY CURE.

(Read for G. W. Ross, M. P., at the meeting of the Ontario Temperance and Prohibitory League, December, 1872.)

"Intemperance is the common enemy; it attacks even persons of cultivated minds; spreads havoc widely among the multitudes of our inferior orders, and fills our workhouses and our jails. To lessen its force and contract its sphere, no pains should be spared, if we really mean to stay the progress of destitution and of crime. The philanthropist has no more sacred duty than to mitigate, if he cannot remove this enormous evil. The lawyer is imperatively bound to lend his aid when it appears manifest that no palliatives will avail."—LORD BROUGHAM.

THE evils entailed upon society by the dreadful ravages of intemperance have, for many years, been the subject of much attention by the lovers of humanity. That they are widespread in their operation, terrible in their consequences and difficult to be removed does not for a moment admit of doubt. Were they merely confined to a certain class or race, and like the malediction resting upon Canaan, limited to that race alone, they would even then be sad enough to merit our consideration, but, when we find the same evil influences permeating every stratum of society, here breathing its Upas breath and there playing its Sirens wiles irrespective of rank or dignity, age or sex, it becomes a matter of the most pressing importance, and the question forces itself irresistibly upon us. "Is there no remedy?"

In discussing the "Remedy" to the evils of intemperance, I might remark that temperance men were at a very early period divided into two classes—those whose panacea was "moral suasion" and those who believed in "Prohibition."—Between those two classes of advocates there is in reality but very little difference—the one being merely antecedent to the other, or rather a development of the other. Moral suasion is the tender blade, prohibition the full corn in the ear. To lay down certain arbitrary rules for which there is no necessity and no demand, is tyranny, but to educate a people, so that the majority will demand the overthrow of any system of abuse and enforce that demand by a prohibition of the evil is the very perfection of liberty and the perpetuation of the rights and privileges of free men. In a civilized community like ours and under representative institutions such as we enjoy, the will of the majority is law. That will matures under certain educating influences and what it may have decided as its ultimatum now it may alter or annul a few years hence. In either case

so far as the sovereignty of law is concerned there is no appeal but to the sovereign himself, and in appealing to him, either to alter his previous convictions, or extend the range of his decisions, you make use of such arguments as will, in your opinion, most readily reach his judgment. It follows then, that every appeal made to the people by the moral suasionist is so much strength added to the cause of the prohibitionist, because the public mind, that is, the mind of the sovereign, is being thus prepared for giving judicial effect to his convictions. At first we work to persuade the majority to accept certain opinions, and they then under the only principle of constitutional government recognized in this country compel the minority to observe at least, an outward compliance. That action on the part of the majority is legitimate is all but self-evident, otherwise how could society protect itself against any evil? Nor are we waiting in precedents to shew us that this is the proper course for temperance men to pursue. When Howard, the great philanthropist, was convinced that English jails were miasmatic, and that the lives of prisoners were exposed to dangers disgraceful to civilized institutions, how did he act? Did he rest satisfied with merely informing the people of England regarding the matter? No. He sought the attention of the House of Commons. He demanded protection for prisoners, and a PROHIBITION of the dangers to which they were exposed, by the majesty of the law, and it was only when he had secured this, that he considered his duty properly discharged.

In the same way, when Wilberforce felt impressed with the iniquitous character of the slave trade, when he learned that British gold was tarnished with the life blood of the captive African he remonstrated, he warned, he pleaded that the abominable traffic should be destroyed. But did he stop there? No. In language worthy of the speaker and worthy of the great principle at stake, he too caused his voice to be heard in the House of Commons, and it was not till £20,000,000 were laid on the altar of liberty that his efforts ceased. In both cases the majority being educated up to the acceptance of a great principle, by the majesty of their decree they entered obedience to their will, and prohibited the minority to oppose it.

Its being now proved that moral suasion is but a means to an end we will consider whether Prohibition, the law sought after, is calculated to produce the result desired.

"But" says an objector, "would not a rigid restriction of the traffic answer equally as well?" We answer no. If the evils of temperance are commensurate with the liquor traffic (and there is no denying this) then the word "restriction" contains a refutation of the whole argument. For, certainly, to restrict an evil is not to cure it, far less to eradicate it. There may be conditions of society, in which any restriction upon the traffic would be a boon, but as an ultimatum not enough. The temperance advocates of England would, for the present, be satisfied with the Permissive Bill, not that they consider it at all a complete remedy, but they believe it to be all they can secure. It is simply a half-way measure, and they would accept it, only as such, according to the proverb that "a half loaf is better than no bread." True, every restriction upon the traffic is an advantage just as every addition to the police force of a turbulent town would be an additional guarantee of peace, but the entire removal of disquietude could only be attained by a force capable of keeping it in perfect subjection.

But is not the admission that a rigid restriction of the traffic would be beneficial begging the whole question in dispute? Is it not a fair influence that if to restrain an evil would be an advantage, to remove it entirely would be a still greater advantage? Inferentially the whole License system is an argument in favor of Prohibition. When you license Mr. A. to sell, you prohibit Mr. B. C. D. Why? Because it is in the interest of society to do so. With this admission how easy it is to show that it would be to the interest of society to prohibit Mr. A. also. Again, when you license Mr. A. to sell at all, you prohibit him selling during certain hours and days, considered legitimate in other business, and also in selling in certain places. Why? In the interests of society of course. What is that but conceding that the prohibition at those times and places is a cure for the evils of which the traffic is likely then and there to inflict. Temperance

men have therefore the internal evidences of the whole license system to justify them in assuming that the remedy they propose is the correct one.

Prohibition so far as tried has been successful. In making this assertion, I do not wish to be understood as saying that the law has been universally observed where legally enacted. No law is universally observed. What I mean is that prohibition has invariably produced the results which its advocates alleged it would produce, that is the diminution of crime and pauperism.

In the daily *Globe* of Feb. 26th, 1869, we read the following:—"The law limiting the hours of the retail liquor sellers to 7 o'clock seems to be working well, judging by the paucity of 'drunks and disorderlies' collected at the police stations on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Twenty or thirty was the usual number sent down to the jail on Sunday morning before the law was as vigorously enforced as it is at present. But now three or four is the usual number." In the *New York Tribune* of a year or two ago appeared the following report from T. T. Cortis, Esq., overseer of the poor in Vineland, West Jersey, U. S.:—

"Though we have a population of 10,000 people, for the period of six months no settler or citizen of Vineland has required relief at my hands as Overseer of the Poor. Within 70 days, there has only been one case among what we call the floating population, at the expense of \$4.

"During the entire year, there has only been one indictment, and that a trifling case of assault and battery among our colored population.

"So few are the fires in Vineland that we have no need of a Fire Department. There has only been one house burnt down in a year, and two slight fires, which were soon put out.

"We practically have no debt, and our taxes are only one per cent. on the valuation.

"The Police expenses of Vineland amount to \$75 per year, the sum paid to me; and our poor expenses a mere trifle.

"I ascribe this remarkable state of things, so nearly approaching the golden age, to the industry of our people and the absence of King Alcohol.

"Let me give you, in contrast to this, the state of things in the town from which I came, in New-England. The population of the town was 9,500—a little less than that of Vineland. It maintained forty liquor shops. These kept busy a police judge, city marshal, assistant-marshal, four night watchmen, six policemen. Fires were almost continual. That small place-maintained a paid fire department of four companies, of 40 men each, at an expense of \$3,000 per annum. I belonged to this department for six years, and the fires averaged about one every two weeks, and mostly incendiary. The support of the poor cost \$2,500 per annum. The debt of the township was \$100,000. The condition of things in this New-England town is as favorable in that country as that of many other places where liquor is sold."

In Scotland the closing of the taverns by the Forbes McKenzie Act was a decided advantage. In the seventeen largest cities of Scotland there was a reduction of crime to the extent of 29,365 cases in the three years after the passage of this Act as compared with the three years previous. The last three years of the old law sent 11,571 prisoners to the Police Court, the first three of the new 4,299. In Edinburgh according to the statement of Mr. McLaren, Provost of the city, 2,009 persons were sent to jail for Sabbath drunkenness the three years previous to the passage of the Act, and only 488 the following three years.

In Chicago during the last summer the passing of the Sunday Bill was enforced reducing the number of arrests the first Sunday, from 41, the previous Sunday, to six.

In Prince Edward Co., the well known "Dunkin Bill" was adopted by quite a respectable majority two years ago. Speaking of its effect upon the habits of the people, the *Pictou Times* of April, 1870, says: "It is an undoubted fact that more drunken men were made in Pictou on one day in February than during the whole month of March. (The Bill came into operation the 1st day of March.)

The *New York World* of '71 has the following: "Since the repeal of the Metropolitan Excise Law by the Legislature of New York the number of weekly arrests for drunkenness has arisen from 1,100 to 2,137, and fights quarrels or murders are of almost hourly occurrence. There has been an average of about one murder a day from rum, in New York and vicinity for the last six months."

A prohibitory law was in force in the State of New York for one year—1846. In Ontario Co. Jail, the year before the law, the number of prisoners was 125; the year of its operation 53; the year after its repeal 132. That jail was built in 1790 and was never without a tenant till 1846,

during which year it was empty about three months.

The following statement was made by Lord Claude Hamilton, M. P., presiding at a crowded meeting of the Temperance alliance at St. James' Hall, London, in the presence of half a score of members of Parliament and a dozen reporters of the public press. His lordship is the representative of the county of Tyrone, in portion of which the liquor traffic has been prohibited. His lordship said: "I am here as representing the county (Tyrone,) to assure you that the facts stated regarding the success of the restriction there, are perfectly accurate. There is a district in that county of 61 square miles inhabited by nearly 10,000 people, having three great roads communicating with market towns, in which there are no public houses—entirely owing to the self-action of the inhabitants. The results has been that whereas those high roads were in former times constant scenes of strife and drunkenness, necessitating the presence of a very considerable number of police to be located in the district, at present there is not one policeman in that district, the poor rates are half what they were before, and all the police magistrates testify to the great absence of crime.

On the 8th of May last there came up for debate in the British House of Commons, the subject of the suppression of the liquor traffic in those parishes or localities where two thirds of the voters should decide against license. The debate ran on through the day, and was not resumed until July. The strong objection urged against the measure was that in America, and especially in Maine, prohibition had been found to be of no benefit; that liquor was sold in the Maine Law States as openly, as freely and in quantities as great as in the license states. "The United Kingdom Alliance for the Suppression of the liquor traffic," applied to Neil Dow to furnish them with certificate from official sources that would have authority and weight, to show what the facts really are.

In answer to this application Mr. Dow forwarded them: 1. A certificate from the Mayor of Portland, and all the ex-mayors, judges of municipal court, judge of the superior court of Cumberland County, clerk of the judicial Courts of Cumberland County, sheriff of the county, register, city clerk and city treasurer. 2. A certificate from the pastors of the churches to the same effect. 3. A certificate from the Convention of free Baptist Churches in Maine, in session in Portland, adopted by vote unanimously, and signed individually by many Baptist pastors from many parts of the State, all to the same effect. 4. A certificate from the overseers of the poor of Portland, to the same effect, and stating that the result of Prohibition has been most salutary and marked in diminishing poverty, pauperism and crime; in diminishing arrests for violation of law, to such an extent that there are not more in a month now than were sometimes made formerly in a day. 5. A certificate from the mayor, ex-mayors, city officials and judges of Bangor to the same effect as that of the mayor of Portland. 6. Certificate from the Mayor of Augusta, the Hon. Joshua Nye, the Secretary of State, and the Adjutant General to the same effect. 7. Certificate from Senators Hamlin and Morrill, Speaker Blaine, and the entire Congressional delegation from Maine to the same effect. 8. Certificates from Hon. Sidney Perham, Governor of Maine, to the same effect. 9. Certificate from Hon. Mr. Harlow, member of Executive Council, from Oxford County, to the same effect; and adding that he knows that county thoroughly, and that he is sure that not one gallon of liquor is now sold in that county for every barrel sold before the Main law. 10. A certificate from an Assessor of Internal Revenue—whose business is to explore the liquor traffic in Maine in the course of his official duty—that he knows the State thoroughly in every part and that the liquor traffic there has been nearly destroyed by the law; that the beer trade is not more than one per cent. of what he remembers it to have been, and the liquor trade not more than ten per cent.

I submit, in view of all these declarations, whether it is not quite time for intelligent men to understand the facts, and no longer to declare that the prohibition of the grog-shops results in no good; and that in Maine there is as much liquor selling, and as much drunkenness as there were in the old days of license and free rum?

These questions need no comment.—They are conclusive in demonstrating that prohibition would lessen materially, if not altogether remove the evils arising from the liquor traffic.

But, an objector urges "Would there be no illicit sale of liquor." We have no doubt of that. And even if there would be, temperance men could not justly be held responsible for that. They at least would not be the parties to violate the law. And further, the violation of any law is no evidence against its utility or its usefulness. Is not every commandment of the decalogue violated, yet, who on that account says they ought to be repealed? Does not every law in our *Statute Book* bear upon the face of it that it is expected to be violated inasmuch as it contains certain pains and penalties for infringement? The only question in connection with any law is "would its enactment accomplish the purpose for which it is designed?" Now the evidence already submitted settles this matter, and whatever difference of opinion there may be with regard to details, there can be no doubt that prohibition is a cure and the only cure for the evil of intemperance.

The duty of temperance men is evidently then to labor in the great work of preparing and educating the public mind for a prohibitory law. The time may be near or remote, it can only be accelerated by the united, earnest co-operation of the whole temperance party of the Province. God works not as man works. In 1860 slavery in the United States was rampant, and humanly speaking, capable of surviving a hundred years of the agitation of its opponents. But in the very arrogance of its power it overstepped the bounds of prudence and the whole gory fabric shivered to pieces. The very degradation to which many are now brought by intemperance, may in like manner, if properly utilized by temperance men, excite such indignation against the whole system that society, for its own preservation, must arouse to banish an evil which is fast arresting a most dangerous supremacy.

LEGISLATIVE LAUGHTER.

A PARAGRAPH having appeared in the *Mail* newspaper to the effect that the petitions presented, asking for the prohibition of the liquor traffic were received with laughter and derision by the members of the Legislature, and also stating that if the persons who signed said petitions had known of their reception in this manner they would have saved themselves the trouble, a number of our papers copied the paragraph, believing the statements contained therein to be true. Some of them not understanding fully the deep prohibition feeling which animates this country, did so, mentioning their regret for such proceedings. We hope that the expressions of opinion brought forth by Mr. Bethune's Bill, will have caused them ere this to have doffed their mourning and will have given them greater faith in the common sense and sanity of the members of the house. We express this hope coupled with another to the effect, that in future they will ere expressing their grief audibly, base it on a more reliable foundation than the one referred to. The facts of the case are, that the petitions have always been received with decorum by all with the exception of one or two which the *Mail* calls the *house* and whom it has the distinguished honor to support. By the way, how is it that these persons considered it beneath their dignity or were afraid to express their opinions on the matter when it was up for debate, or did they consider their laughter previously and their serious, in fact vinegar aspect on the occasion, as a sufficient rebuke to those intrepid persons who would so impudently give them petitions to present. We wonder if they wished to exemplify the two characters so torcibly described by Shakespeare when he says: "Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time; Some that will evermore peep through their eyes, And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper; And other of so vinegar aspect, That they'll not show their teeth in the way of a smile, Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

ONTARIO TEMPERANCE AND PROHIBITORY LEAGUE.

THE PETITIONS.

HOW have the petitions been received, favourably or unfavourably by the House of Assembly? Has a sneer of contempt sat supreme on the countenance of the both sides of the House for the time while the Prohibitory Petitions were in course of presentation? "Has a coalition taken place" for the period, on this one point, and fierce foes for once fraternized to treat the unfortunate Petitions with "demonstrations of scorn." Such is the representation positively put before the public by one reporter, who moreover reminds the "friends" that "he" warned the projectors of the scheme, to expect "little or nothing," now the misfortune is, that even, some temperance papers have quoted these miserable misrepresentations, taking them for true. Let any friend interested enough take said set of statements and place them alongside the reports given in the daily papers of last Tuesday, of the speeches on Monday evening in the House of Assembly, and if a curiosity in the shape of discrepancy does not sufficiently reward the one who takes the trouble, there must be some mistake somewhere.