

THE RELATION OF THE INFLUENTIAL CLASSES OF SOCIETY TO THE TEMPERANCE REFORM.

It is the duty of the influential classes to give their countenance and aid to the temperance cause. They owe the performance of this duty to themselves. For no man, be he of high or low estate, can practice or encourage drinking, however moderately, without being in danger of becoming a drunkard. We have heretofore spoken chiefly of their influence upon others; but it is too fearfully evident that they themselves are not exempt from the curse they so strongly assist in perpetuating. Unto them is there no special privilege granted that they may indulge in temptation and in no manner be injured thereby. On the contrary, experience assures us that, in very many instances, the high and the influential have sipped too often the social bowl, and sunk to utter degradation. And why should not this be the case? Have not they the same appetites as their fellow beings? are not their opportunities of indulgence far better? does not the same rule of cause and effect govern all men? They also must find poison and death in the wine-cup; and life, from intemperance, must be alike to them a scene of ruined health, wasted talents, degradation, perhaps insanity. In sorrowful silence their fall is concealed by their friends, but if the whole truth were known, the picture of woe would embrace a member of almost every family. Many a son has caused the agony of a father, who was too well convinced that he alone was to blame. For, from the infancy of the boy, he was accustomed to consider wine-drinking as a necessary accomplishment; upon going forth into society, the intoxicating cup was given him with the sanction—almost recommendation, of his parent. From a natural and implanted prejudice, from a constant leaning upon and looking up to his father, the son's mind imperceptibly takes the tinge of his opinions and feelings, and may be moulded by him in almost any manner; too soon, then, does he obey this virtual command to go forth and be a drunkard—too soon he needs no teacher in this point of etiquette, and scorns the efforts of those who would win him from his infatuation. And hence arises this most solemn duty of giving to their children, the representatives of themselves, far different passports into life—of allowing the light of reform to have access to their hearts, ere they become wholly hardened and incorrigible.

The influential classes owe the performance of this duty to society. For, in the first place, they have no right to injure their fellow citizens by a persistence in this custom. It would be useless at this time to go into an argument upon the benefits resulting from our social connections, or upon the abstract question as to how much of his natural rights were given up by the individual, in order to secure such benefits. Sufficient to state the truism that upon his entry into society, or continuance in it, every individual virtually contracts, in consideration of the protection given to his person and property, to abstain from injuring the body politic, and to give it his support. Such duties are not and cannot all be laid down in the statute-book; yet, though less specific, they are as fully implied and equally binding as positive laws. However much men may neglect such an obligation, it ever exists, though it cannot be legally enforced. Part and parcel of it is the demand of the temperance reform to cease from further injury—to be no longer an obstacle to this scheme for the elevation of society. That her demand is founded upon truth, no one who has looked into the history of temperance movements can fail to perceive. Every one will remember with what a full tide of enthusiastic success the Washingtonian principles spread through this country. But upon a large majority of those called the influential classes, these principles did not act; coldly and unsympathizingly they held themselves aloof from any participation. Now, in such an effort as this, nothing causes so much discouragement as the withdrawal of the countenance of any portion of the community. The temperance movement is essentially one of mutual encouragement and assistance; and, like religion, requires for its promotion the temporary forgetfulness of all social ranks and divisions. At such a time, when the strong electric current of sympathy and endeavour is broken by the secession of any class, the warmth and zeal of effort is checked, and coldness and apathy ensue. The erring ones, however softened by contrition and ready to forsake the enslaving custom, when they see the number who hang back, and look with cold indifference and scorn upon the cause, are discouraged from continuing their efforts for reform. The more hardened, who from very shame might have yielded, are encouraged by this secession to persist in their evil courses. Particularly is this the case when this disconnecting class is prominent; for the more respectable a man is in other respects, the more frequently is his name cited and his example noticed. Thus, perhaps, without intending it, the influential moderate drinker, not only refuses his own name, but prevents many others from the performance of right.

Again, the influential moderate drinkers constantly keep alive in society a custom which but for them, would in a great measure cease, and die like many other kindred habits of darker times; for we cannot believe that there is sufficient fascination in the drinking of the drugged and dirty concoctions of the bar-room and groggery, to offer much temptation to the inexperienced youth. With principles not fully developed, and a will not firmly established, he comes forth and mingles in the crowd. At first view, such scenes of dissipation, accompanied as they usually are by vulgar exhibitions of the most repulsive qualities of humanity, shock the natural feelings, and do not greatly charm the mind. But in a far more potent manner the temptation presents itself. He could easily withstand the merely animal appetite, but the custom of society is quoted to him; he looks into the world of literature, and finds drinking recommended as the very source of good-fellowship, and the first glass is wreathed for him with the smiles of the fair, or the almost equally powerful gushings forth of friendship and sociality. Initiated into the vile habit, step by step he descends the scale, until he becomes a constant visitant of the haunts he once abhorred, and he falls a victim to the example of the influential classes. This is no uncommon case; it is thus the list of the drunkards is kept full, and hence we say that no one has a right to injure society by his evil example or influence.

A second clause in the social engagement we have adverted to, is the obligation to support this movement and give it aid and influence, because thus men are doing their part in aid of society. And the greater the benefits arising from society, the greater are the consequent obligations. Wealth, fashion, talent, religion, owe their development (almost their existence) to this social protection; and hence their more powerful duties. True, the man of wealth has obtained it by his own skill and fortune; the man of talent owes his success to his own mind; the fashionable world became so from circumstances, perhaps, of its own creating. But be it remembered that in a disorganized and anarchical state of association, no opportunity for such acquisitions would be offered. Amid the confusions of bad government, such sources of influence yield to the overshadowing power of brute strength, or military tact. Unto society, then, are men under an obligation which they can only discharge by reciprocal endeavours. And if they would long enjoy these privileges, they must come forward and assist in this temperance reform. For it is only by the suppression of this great social evil, this disorganizing element which enters into the popular head and arouses riots and mobs, that any security can be given to the body politic. The riots and excitements attendant upon our elections, and jeopardizing the purity of the ballot-box, are mainly owing to intemperance. Men are not naturally fond of confusion and tumult, and require a stimulus before their usual good will for each other can be conquered. And it behoves the influential classes to look about them, and prevent the too powerful working of these influences of disorganization. Fair as everything at present seems, and much as we may praise our country, it requires the protection of every good principle to insure its future and permanent security. In the prosecution of this experiment of self-government, in the example she affords to the world, America calls upon every citizen to lend his aid in removing from her this fearful element of destruction. For ours is a government vested in the people, directly dependent upon popular opinion, and it requires that this opinion be cool and healthy, if we would have this delicate affair of government well administered. Hence we say to all men of influence, if ye would transmit your privileges securely to your children, you must not refuse to aid and assist society in this reform.

The performance of this duty we owe to our God. Thus alone can men fulfil the main objects of their creation, and well perform their part in the great scheme of Omnipotence. This scheme is of a two-fold nature, involving, firstly, the progressive advance of human nature; and, secondly, the preparation for a future and higher state of being. To do his assigned part in each, is the privilege and duty of every man. From the creation up to the present time, step by step, sometimes checked by the opposing forces of superstition and ignorance, at times buried beneath a cloud of formalisms and priestcraft, or sunk in the sluggish slough of apathy, painfully and gradually, human civilization has ever moved slowly onward. Thus must it ever be, but it is in the power of each generation to accelerate or retard its course. Upon every age and nation, and upon every individual member of a nation, is devolved the duty of helping on the car of progress. They especially who wield the largest influence are called upon for the greatest aid. The Scriptural motto, "unto whom much is given, from him much shall be required," is, in its deepest sense, appropriate to this subject. And in no better way can it be fulfilled than by assisting a scheme which clears the head, gladdens the heart, and warms the feelings of humanity, thus opening the universal mind for the reception and proper appreciation of new and advanced

truths. With all our fancied superiority over antiquity, very much of improvement is yet needed, very much of human agony might yet be spared. Unto us the Past comes with its vast experiences and instructions, and the Future demands the improvement of them. Though no command from Heaven may be stamped upon tablets of stone, yet the reasonableness and truth of this obligation to help on every good word and work, is evident to every true soul, and consciousness attests the authority. Many of ancient prejudices and ignorances have vanished before the light of civilization, still we are bound down to a habit as pernicious as the worst of them. In our inability to imitate the Past, even in this vice, we guzzle noxious mixtures, and call them the wines of inspiration. Away with all talk about progress, until intemperance shall flee an age to which she does not lawfully belong! Let other ages point to their achievements in arts or in arms: be it the crowning glory of this century, that it purged from earth this universal poison! This is just the work for our age, a most practical and at the same time sublime work, worthy its highest efforts and noblest endeavors. And nobly can this work be accomplished, if the influential classes will but recognize their obligations and perform them—will but hearken to the voices of the Past, the Present, and the Future, calling on them to lead on in the progressive march of humanity.

And immediately connected with this part of our duty to God, is that of preparation for a higher state of being. Were this earth the theatre of our whole existence, were death the end of our being, even then it would devolve upon all to aid and assist in every true means for the attainment of present happiness to the community. Even then, we should struggle to oust an evil, through which, sin, agony, and death are largely increased, and which is the cause of so many tears. But when the truth is that this earth is the mere preparation for an eternity, how do present considerations merge themselves in this great responsibility—how do earthly influences seem only intended to produce these results. The brief journey of three score years and ten would seem far too short to allow man to fulfil the obligations due to his God, by assisting his fellow-men in their efforts, by encouraging their endeavours, by correcting their failings, in a word, by assisting and being assisted in the preparation for heaven. But such is not yet the state of society. Poor human nature has never yet arrived at such a stage of advance. But thank God, men have in this temperance reform, an opportunity to assist each other in a great degree in this preparation. By engaging in this great work, by cheering this purifier of society, by the power of a good example, much, very much, may even now be accomplished. Thus may the men of influence fulfil, in part, their obligations to their God, and lend their aid to the grand scheme of creative providence.—G. F. Noyes.

"BE A BUILDER."

(From Rev. J. T. Clarke's Charge at the Ordination of Rev. T. W. Higginson.)

I charge you again, my brother, to be a builder. You might make more noise, and acquire more notoriety, by pulling down, but you will do the most good by building up. He who criticises does but half the work; he who announces the truth does the whole. While he states the truth he also removes error. Dwell, then, in position rather than negation, for positive truth is the food of the soul. It is sometimes necessary, I know, to weed before we plant, but wherever you pull out a weed, plant a flower in its place. The pioneer with his axe is doubtless wanted, but how much more the husbandman who shall plough and sow the ground, newly opened to the light of heaven! The one is but a means, while the other is the end—the one is but the preparation for the other. Consider, then, logic as little better than a necessary evil, but the manifestation of truth the great blessing.

Strive to build up an individual religious life in all these souls, a social religious life in this whole community. To change a body of church-goers into church-members, to change hearers into doers, to cause those who now come together and sit side by side, in these pews, to come into a real communion of sympathy and co-operation, to lead them to work together in works of benevolence and charity, to seek the truth in company, helping each other into greater breadth and depth of religious insight, to inspire them with the spirit of a true Christian brotherhood—would it not be well for you to work here ten, twenty, thirty years, to accomplish such a result as this?—to build up a model-church here, not a clergy-church, but a people-church, a church of active and not nominal Christians, not professors only of religion, but practisers also? One who looks on human accomplishments, not as men, but as God and the angels' look upon them, might well be satisfied with this result of life, be his ambition ever so exalted.

OBJECTIONS TO FAMILY WORSHIP ANSWERED.

It would be more honest for people frankly to own that they have no heart for it, and that this is the real cause of their neglecting it, and not any valid objections they have against it; but since they will torture their invention to discover some pleas to excuse themselves, we must answer them.

First objection.—"I have no time, and my secular business would suffer by family religion."

Were you formed for this world only, there would be some force in the objection; but how strange does such an objection sound from the heir of eternity! What is your time given to you for? Is it not principally that you may prepare for eternity? And have you no time for the great business of your life? Why do you not plead, too, that you have no time for your daily meals? Is food more necessary for your body than religion for your soul? May you not redeem sufficient time for family worship from idle conversation, or even from your sleep? May you not order your family worship so that your domestics may attend upon it, either before they go to work or when they come to their meals?

Second objection.—"I have not ability to pray."

Did you ever hear a beggar, however ignorant, make this objection? A sense of his necessities is an unfailing fountain of his eloquence. Further, how strange does this objection sound from you! What! have you enjoyed preaching, Bibles, and good books so long, and yet do not know what to ask of God? Again, is neglecting prayer the way to qualify you to perform it?

Third objection.—"I am ashamed."

But is this shame well grounded? Are sinners ashamed to serve their Master? A little practice will easily free you from all this difficulty.

Fourth objection.—"But, alas, I know not how to begin it."

Here, indeed, the difficulty lies; but why will you not own that you were hitherto mistaken, and that you would rather reform than persist obstinately in the omission of an evident duty?

Fifth objection.—"But my family will not join in them."

How do you know? Have you tried? Are you not master of your own family? Exert that authority in this which you claim in other cases.

Sixth objection.—"But I shall be ridiculed and laughed at."

Are you more afraid of a laugh or a jeer than the displeasure of God? Would you rather please men than Him? Therefore, let God have an altar in your dwelling, and then let morning and evening prayers and praises be presented, till ye are called to worship Him in His temple above, when your prayers and praises shall be swallowed up in everlasting praise.—Samuel Davies.

THE CLIMAX OF BENEVOLENCE; OR, THE GOLDEN LADDER OF CHARITY.

(From Matmonides, after the Talmud.)

There are eight degrees or steps, says Matmonides, in the duty of charity.

The first and lowest degree is to give,—but with reluctance or regret. This is the gift of the hand, but not of the heart.

The second is, to give cheerfully, but not proportionately to the distress of the sufferer.

The third is, to give cheerfully and proportionately, but not until we are solicited.

The fourth is, to give cheerfully, proportionably, and even unsolicited; but to put it in the poor man's hand—thereby exciting in him the painful emotion of shame.

The fifth is, to give charity in such a way that the distressed may receive the bounty, and know their benefactor, without their being known to him. Such was the conduct of some of our ancestors, who used to tie up money in the hind-corners of their cloaks, so that the poor might take it unperceived.

The sixth, which rises still higher, is to know the objects of our bounty, but remain unknown to them. Such was the conduct of those of our ancestors who used to convey their charitable gifts into poor people's dwellings; taking care that their own persons and names should remain unknown.

The seventh is still more meritorious, namely, to bestow charity in such a way that the benefactor may not know the relieved objects, nor they the name of their benefactors; as was done by our charitable forefathers during the existence of the Temple. For there was in that holy building a place called the Chamber of Silence and Unostentation, wherein the good deposited secretly whatever their generous hearts suggested, and from which the most respectable poor families were maintained with equal secrecy.

Lastly, the eighth and most meritorious of all, is to anticipate charity, by preventing poverty; namely, to assist the reduced brother, either by a considerable gift, or a loan of