

# Canada Temperance Advocate.

*Temperance is the moderate use of things beneficial, and abstinence from things hurtful.*

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## MR. DELAVAN'S LETTER ON THE WINE QUESTION.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NEW YORK EVANGELIST.

SIRS.—The publication of the Extra, containing the substance of the Biblical arguments of "Anti-Bacchus" in respect to the use of wine as a beverage, has afforded me the sincerest pleasure. I rejoice in it, not merely because the results of the author's inquiries go to confirm the previous impressions of my own mind—impressions derived, however, rather from moral than scientific consideration—but because I see in these results gratifying evidence that the great question of the scriptural authority for the use of wine, is tending to a more definite determination. So far as I am able to sit in impartial judgment on what passes within my breast, the desire that truth may be established on this, as on every other subject of Christian morals, is paramount. Indeed, I should feel myself unworthy the advocacy of that cause to which I have strenuously devoted so many years of my life, were I not more rejoiced at the triumphs of truth, than of any particular hypothesis or measure on which my heart was set. It has long been with me a settled persuasion, that if the duty of total abstinence from ALL intoxicating drink, cannot be fairly made out from the unforced testimony of the word of God, we should cease to appeal to that authority in urging our enterprise, although we should in that case at once be left without the greatest of all sanctions to one of the best of all causes. Yet for myself, I must say that I have never feared that we should be thus deprived of the countenance of the Bible in a work which is so palpably in accordance with the whole scope of its benign teachings. And although my confidence, as to what the scripture testimony would eventually prove to be, has considerably outstripped that of many of my fellow-laborers, yet it has continually grown stronger up to the present time, when the course of physiological, critical, and historical investigation seems to be decidedly setting towards a confirmation of the same view. Still it must be admitted that the question is not yet absolutely settled, and it would be rash to prejudge its issues. Whatever be the verdict of the learned and the good, if I mistake not my own consciousness, I shall implicitly yield to it when fully ascertained.

Previous to my tour abroad, I had imbibed the strong conviction that our Saviour never made nor drank intoxicating wine. I am ready to admit that my early conclusions on this point were founded on reasonings drawn from my estimate of the character of the Saviour of the world, as the best and most benevolent of all beings, having at heart the universal interest of the human family. I found it impossible to bring my mind to think that he would make and use a beverage which, since its introduction, has spread such an amount of crime, poverty and death through this fair world. He came to save, not to destroy; and how could I believe, with my views of alcoholic wine, that he would make it or use it?

While these were my feelings, there were difficulties in the way which prevented me from resting with perfect assurance on the ground which I had taken. I was at a loss as to one or two leading matters of fact; as, for instance, whether wines, or the fruit of the vine, could be kept in an unfermented state for any length of time, and in any part of the world; as also whether they were in use, to any extent, among the Jews. I only wished to answer these questions to my satisfaction in the affirmative, to be satisfied that our Lord neither made nor drank alcoholic wine. I concluded that from this I could raise an argument which would go far to allay every scruple in the mind of every conscientious disciple of the Saviour. "If," said I, "he had the choice between making innocent and poisonous wines,

would he not rather have made the former than the latter? Would he have made that which would steal away the senses, and destroy both body and soul, when he could as easily have that which was harmless, nutritious, and palatable?" I grant that in arriving at this conclusion, I in some measure reasoned in ignorance of facts; but I was drawn to it rather than its opposite, from which my moral sense shrunk back. Being in a dilemma, I clung to that alternative which honored the Saviour's character as holy and good, rather than to that which bestowed upon him equivocal praise. With such impressions on my mind for years past, I went to Europe, and visited France and Italy, seeking for light as I travelled. The facts which I was enabled to collect in wine countries, have very much confirmed my previous views. I am able to show that the discussion in the *Temperance Intelligencer* concerning the kind of wine proper for the Eucharist, and which for a time occasioned such a sensation in the ranks of temperance men, and such an exultation in those of the enemy, was a fair and proper subject of discussion; and I now only regret the yielding to the fears of our friends, who allowed it to sleep. I am now preparing to show that the answer so triumphantly given to us, viz: "that since unfermented wines could not be had out of the countries producing them, it was impossible that the Lord's Supper could be celebrated in other countries, provided the alcoholic wine was objected to," was without foundation. This argument, so staggering at that time, has stood in the way of discussion, and has kept the honest mind from advancing in an open field of inquiry. I am willing now, as I was then, to honor the jealousy of the Christian public, who, trembling on the precincts of holy ground, were unwilling to lay a rash hand upon any thing associated with our salvation. Indeed, the very sensitiveness which they manifested on this subject then, gives me more confidence in them now, that they will come up with a noble and manly spirit to the examination of this great question, determined to apply to it all the lights and tests which modern facts, ancient history, chemistry, and sound principles of dietetics can be made to furnish.

While I was in Italy, I obtained an introduction to one of the largest wine-manufacturers there, a gentleman of undoubted credit and character, and on whose statements I feel assured the utmost reliance may be placed. By him I was instructed in the whole process of wine-making, as far as it could be done by description, and from him I obtained the following important facts:

First, that with a little care, the fruit of the vine may be kept in wine countries free from fermentation for several months, if undisturbed by transportation. Wine of this character he exhibited to me in January last, several months after the vintage.

Secondly, that the pure juice of the grape may be preserved free from fermentation for any length of time by boiling, by which the principle of fermentation is destroyed, and in this state may be shipped to any country, and in any quantity, without its ever becoming intoxicating.

Thirdly, that in wine-producing countries unfermented wine may be made any day in the year. In proof of this, the manufacturer referred to, informed me, that he then had in his loft (January) for the use of his table till the next vintage, a quantity of grapes sufficient to make one hundred gallons of wine; that grapes could always be had at any time of the year to make any desirable quantity; and that there was nothing in the way of obtaining the fruit of the vine free from fermentation, in wine countries, at any period. A large basket of grapes were sent to my lodgings, which were as delicious and looked as fresh as if recently taken from the vines, though they had been picked for months. I had also twenty gallons made to order from these grapes, which were