

CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE

DEVOTED TO

Total Abstinence, Legal Prohibition, and Social Progress.

Vol. XX.]

MONTREAL, FEBRUARY 15, 1854.

[No. 4.]

"Moral Suasion."

(A Chapter from the proof-sheets of "Minnie Hermon," by Thurlow W. Brown.)

Much has been said and written, in the course of the temperance reform about the power of moral suasion. There is a power in its tear and its tone. With kind words it appeals to the better nature and essays to win back the fallen. With a gentle voice and look it knocks at the heart of the erring, and points out a better way. It meets the prodigal with a tear, and says, "go and sin no more." In a thousand forms it finds the human heart in its wanderings and with a tear for its follies, points with a smile of hope and forgiveness back to honor and truth. The proud spirit which would sling back with scorn the hatred of a world, would melt and sway like a summer leaf at the gentle whispering of words of kindness.

Moral suasion has accomplished much in winning men from their cups—more than penal enactment, which drag the drunkard from a *legalized hell*, to incarceration or fine. It has saved many from the fang which glitters in the bubbles on the beaker's brim. Even from the midst of deepest ruin, some word or kindly deed has brought back the erring to virtue and duty. It is doing much yet, and will never fail to do much while there are hearts to love the drunkard and weep over his ruin.

There are some of our friends who avow their readiness to rely solely upon the power of moral suasion for the removal of intemperance. It seems to us a strange infatuation. Prayers, and tears, and appealing words, against an evil, impregnable in its citadels of legislation, and backed by the whole force of the government! Would the same friends content themselves with appealing to the incendiary and the murderer to spare their homes and their lives, and the torch and the knife at the same time commissioned to do the infernal work, and the hand that wielded them protected by law? What would the cold blooded butcher care for the pleading of innocence or weakness, when licensed, *for a price*, to drench the very hearth in warm blood? And would the incendiary, empowered to burn, and sustained by the so-called respectable, in the light of the kindling flame, renounce the desolating business which he had purchased of government the right to engage in?

God never designed that a wicked world should be governed by moral suasion. He himself has put on record penal enactments against sin—against vice and crime. Until human nature is utterly changed, moral suasion, as a sole-restraining power, will be impotent. All the blessed influences of the Gospel, the influences of home, friends, virtuous teachings, and the hopes of happiness and Heaven, as a motive power, will not restrain the vicious. All men are not susceptible of

moral influences. If they were, the dust of oblivion might gather upon our statutes, and not a crime should mar the harmony of the universal brotherhood of man.

Those who deal in rum, are certainly the last class which should ever utter a word about moral suasion, and claim that the temperance reform should be carried forward upon that basis alone. We could smile at the coolness of the idea but for its insulting wickedness. It comes with a bad grace in the teeth of facts, upon a record of more than twenty-five years' duration. Here, as elsewhere, moral suasion has had its effect, and men, regardless of its influences, have yielded to the light of truth, and abandoned a wickedness. And in the high noon of our reform, those who still persist against reason, right and revelation, in the business, ask the people to follow their direction in the matter, and continue a course which, up to this day, they have utterly disregarded!

With legislation against it, it requires the whole power of the temperance reform to keep its giant antagonist at bay, while in security it revels upon all which comes within its clutch. Moral suasion knows not a phase which it has not assumed in this great work. From broken altars where every domestic tie lay shivered, prayers have gone up where there was no hope but of Heaven.—Gather them from the angels' record, and a tempest of prayers would swell its note of accusing thunder. An ocean of tears has dripped its bitter way over cheeks which bloom not again. Days and years have passed by, until ages of sorrow have accumulated in judgment. Wherever the victims of the wrong have loved, and suffered, and died—a home, in the almshouse, dungeon, or on the scaffold,—the sob, the sorrow, and the wail, have appealed to the authors of all the woe, vice, and crime. Mutely, but oh! how eloquently, the cowering and ragged drunkard's child, and the pale-faced wife and mother, have presented to the dealer his cruel wickedness and their bitter wrongs!

The rumseller is not ignorant and deaf. He knows the sweep of the engine in his hands. He sees its effects, and while his own neighbors, and kindred even, are demonized and imbruted by the drug from his hands, he sends them home to wound the innocent and the helpless. Every coin he drops into his drawer, is the price of the hunger, nakedness, and degradation of those who never wronged him or his. He knows the enslaved appetite cannot turn away, and he feeds it to the death. He deliberately manufactures a kind husband and father into a devil, and a happy home into a hell, where the victim can torment his own wife and children! Entrenched with legislation, and leagued with unscrupulous demagogues, they have continued this fearful work against all the efforts of the tongue and pen. Their victims have suffered, and wept, and died, in vain. Human