

TEMPERANCE POLITICAL ACTION IN RELATION TO SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

MR. EDITOR,—Your issue of the 28th ult., has been forwarded to me and I wish to make a few observations on a paragraph in a well written article by "Knoxonian" under the heading, "Is it a Wise Policy," the general subject being prohibition. The writer's real question is: "Is it a wise policy to alienate friends?" And he mentions these ways in which he considers that this has been done in Canada, viz., by establishing a third party, by agitating for female suffrage, and by making the use of unfermented wine at the Lord's table a plank in the political platform.

On the first of these points I have nothing to say because I am not sufficiently acquainted with American politics to offer an opinion. But the second and third are matters on which temperance reformers may take different views without any interference with their united action for the attainment of prohibition. I certainly would protest "against saddling the temperance question with female suffrage."

On the question of communion wine, I do not see why it should enter into the movement for prohibition at all. It is not a political question, and the use of unfermented wine may be adopted and advocated by those whose convictions lead them so to do, without any disturbance of their hearty co-operation with those differing from them on this matter for any good public object. The use of this wine is steadily and, I am thankful to say, peacefully increasing amongst our various Christian denominations in England, and speaking generally, those who use it are prohibitionists, while the decided opponents of its use are for the most part anti-prohibitionists. And I do not see how it can be denied that the use, in one of the most sacred as our ordinances, of the very article, the common traffic in which we are striving to prohibit because it is proving such a curse to our population, cannot but operate as a serious hindrance to the attainment of our object.

Knoxonian says "The literature of the question would seem to show that the weight of learning and piety is against the two-wine theory." He does right to say "seem to show."

I wish to call his attention to the following facts:

1. The word "wine" never once occurs throughout the new Testament in connection with the sacrament. The only designation of the contents of the cup is "the fruit of the vine."

2. There are now, and from early times have been, communities amongst the Jews, who have carefully avoided the fermented wine in the observance of their passover feast. They have used either grape wine prepared from the grape, or raisins steeped in water. Grapes hung in the cluster in a cool and dry place keep good from the vintage to the passover and even from year to year.

3. The word wine, in our English Bible is generic, embracing the fruit of the vine, whether fermented or unfermented.

(a) The Hebrew word *tiros* denotes vine fruit as a natural production. Some years ago, I offered a sum of money to any one who should prove from the context that this word ever referred to an intoxicating beverage. The gentleman who undertook to prove it, nominated his own umpire, a lecturer in Hebrew in one of our English universities, and the decision was that Mr. — had "not proved Mr. Snow's prohibition."

(b) This word *tiros*, in common with other Hebrew words, is rendered *oinos* in the Greek Septuagint, thus proving that *oinos*, the word for "wine" in the New Testament is generic.

(c) Apart from the names of the berry, grapes and raisins, there is no word in the English Bible designating vine fruit except "wine."

The chapter of 1 Cor. xi. 21, is appealed to in support of the fermented communion wine theory, but the facts and considerations presented in the little tract which I enclose will show that this text affords no tenable argument for such theory. Its title is, "An Examination of 1 Cor. xi. 21, in reference to the question of Intoxication." London: Partridge & Co. I shall be glad to forward a copy to Knoxonian or any other of your readers who will favour me with their address.

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BURNS' ANNIVERSARIES.

MR. EDITOR,—Amid the progress of events, wise or otherwise, that have characterized our passing century, there has been at least an annual effort, more or less successful, to gradually reconstruct the character of the poet Burns by cutting off and consigning to endless oblivion his more gross and glaring infirmities, and then so stretching and spreading the mantle of charity over others as by-and-by to give him a valid claim to saintly canonization with all its kindred concomitants. In this effort "even ministers they have been kind" in days gone by and in no small number, to take a prominent if not a praiseworthy part, and even in days near by, some few straggling ones, by a little flattery and desire for a little fame, are still persuaded, annually at least, and for this end to "orate" on the character of Burns. In all this there is no little policy manifested by those who countenance and keep up such celebrations, for on the one hand if they cannot in them elevate the character of Burns, they, of necessity, lower their own, and if they can get a minister of the Gospel, and especially a D.D., by a little fawning and flattery, to laudably "orate" to them, this tends at once to quiet the conscience, gives a kind of validity to every fulsome utterance, as well as a sanction, if not a sanctity, to their hilarious convivialities.

Prominent among the rapidly lessening number of ministers who "orated" at last year's Burns' birthday celebration, a worthy D.D. in as far as I remember, the only one in the Province, if not in the Dominion, who did "orate," is reported in substance to have said: "The question has been asked, Was Burns a religious man? If by this is meant a firm believer in the fundamentals of Christianity, we should say, No man could be a sceptic who wrote 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and 'Man Was Made to Mourn.' But if it is meant a consistent, devout and holy man, we answer, No. He associated with men of no definite creed. He became at times degraded to the low moral level of his age, and those who ought to have been his helpers and advisers, encouraged him in so doing. The strict, unsympathetic rigorous dealings of certain religionists repelled him and made him suspicious of the sanctity of Christians. Take him as a whole, when shall Scotland or the world see his equal? Scotland, when too late, recognizes what she has lost in the death of Burns. The world breaks the hearts of its best benefactors, and thereafter builds their sepulchres, be it Burns or not." Such is the man whom the Dr., as a minister of Christ, so frequently at the festive board delights to honour, while the most noted champions of the Church, such as Luther, Calvin, Knox and Chalmers are unnoticed as if unknown.

While it savours not a little of Popery to put a man through a purifying process long after he is dead, yet the Dr. shrinks not from the Herculean task, for if Burns did not live a Christian life, wherein lies the call or the consistency of ministers of Christ "orating" at his birthday celebrations. On reading the Dr.'s definition of Burns' religion as being but a "faith without works," one well said, "Odd man! that's the Devil's religion, for none believes mair strangely in the fundamentals o' Christianity, an' yet mair strangely despises its requirements." Such was the religious life of Balaam, of Saul, of Judas, of Simon Magus, etc. All these believed, yet each one belied his belief. The evidence presented of Burns' Christianity is that "no man could be a sceptic who wrote 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and 'Man Was Made to Mourn.'" Now this goes upon the untenable assumption that no man could picture out what he himself did not profess, that no man could either by pen or pencil pourtray a good-looking or a good-living man unless he was a good-looking or a good-living man himself. It cannot be denied that a man may pourtray what he sees without him as well as what he feels within him, as is done every day in poetry and prose, nay more, how many picture out for pay, more or less graphically, what never existed, but only what they imagined. To even suppose, then, that a man could write nothing but what he realizes, is in entire variance with every-day experience. But suppose that in this case the principle held good, and there could be collected all that Burns wrote that was so unseemly and offensive as to be unfit for publication, or all those untoward prominences in his character and course of life, which his successive biographers and celebrators have all along striven so carefully to conceal and consign to oblivion, and a man manufactured therefrom alone, as the Dr. and others have done out of Burns' better qualities, each drawing a picture to suit himself and serve his purpose, the verdict in the one case would be as valid as in the other that no such man could be other than a sceptic. Each of these might be called Burns, but neither of them would be Burns. This is the reason that we have now so many Burnses, and the ground for question if we have the right one after all. This much we know, that the Burns of our day is not the Burns who well nigh a century ago, with a life's growth of his belief, as well as of the greatness of his manhood, was wont to stroll, shall I not say stagger, idly about the streets of Dumfries, shunned by respectable people, and "when any drunken fellow, possessed of a few shillings, was willing to spend them in the public house, could easily command his company." In olden time the heathen were wont to strip their deities of every infirmity, and clothe them with every perfection and then worship them. On a somewhat similar principle those birthday orators seem to act, who select their materials and manufacture their man to suit the tastes and serve the purposes of their auditors, and those ministers who are the most successful in so doing are the most highly applauded and most frequently asked to "orate" before them, while the mode each adopts and the man each produces are both intended at once to arouse and enrapt the hearers and to justify and gratify the speaker.

The statements that the "strict, etc., dealings of certain religionists repelled him and made him suspicious of the sincerity of Christians," and "he became at times degraded to the low moral level of his age, and those who ought to have been his helpers and advisers encouraged him in wrongdoing," is fraught with much significant meaning; it shows us who were blameworthy in what they did to him, while the silence of the Dr. sets Burns scot free. And what did he do for himself to nobly resist and rise above it all? The record says "he associated with men of no definite creed." All this is but in ill-accord with the opinion of one of his flatterers, who "orates" that Burns was "the chief pioneer of the more moderate and rational religious life of the people of Scotland," or of another who not less confidently and all but blasphemously says, "not Latimer, not Luther struck more telling blows against false theology than Burns." All is in ill accord with that lofty discernment, that stalwart independence, and that model manliness which is the ceaseless boast alike of his biographers and celebrators. But did not he himself, despite his defenders, do much in his life, brief though it was, to "repel" from good and "degrade" to evil, alike by his utterances and his actions, by the fostered passions of his youthful days and the cherished appetites of his maturer years?

This did he while he lived, and since he died has he not been and still is the means, more or less direct, of "repelling from good, and "degrading" to evil, an untold number which can never be known till "the day shall declare it?" while from his birth to his burial, from that day to this, I have yet failed to find the record of his ever having led a single soul to the Saviour. Still the "orating" Dr., roused into rapture, selects his material, constructs his effigy, writes under it, "This 's Burns," and exultingly exclaims amid the plaudits of the people, "Eureka! Eureka! when shall Scotland or the world see his equal?" And he then winds up with the woeful accusation that "the world breaks the hearts of its best benefactors, and thereafter builds their sepulchres."

But seriously, wherein lies the call or the consistency, to say nothing worse, of a minister belonging to a church so specially down on drunkenness, its devices and debasements as ours, to stand up one day before an audience, year after year to celebrate the birth-day of him who embodied and exhibited his belief in the principles but not the practices of Christianity; and on another, to proclaim the purity and power of Him who was "holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners." On one day, and at the festive board, to laud almost as high as language will carry, one who in living out his belief becomes a sad, a self-ruined wreck; and on another, at the sacramental table, and with the sacred symbols of the sacrifice in his hands, to commemorate the undying love of One who so loved us as to "offer himself without spot to God for us." Besides, the minister is specially expected in connection with those very universal celebrations to do what he can to create, so to speak, an atmosphere consistent with each, and each to be in keeping with the character and permeated with the spirit of the individual so celebrated. Could any minister of Jesus Christ conceive of him acting such a double part, or commending such a course to others, and would the doctor have thought all the more of him had he done so? Or could he conceive even of Paul, though "the least of all saints," and becoming "all things to all men," or any of the other apostles doing so? True it may be contended that specially in our day "the truth makes free" and "that where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." But there is a freedom that truth neither creates nor countenances, and there is a liberty which the spirit both censures and condemns, and need it be said that in Burns' celebrations "another spirit" predominates? I am not so familiar with the life of Burns as to say aught of his ordinary church attendance, or how long, if ever, he was a member of any church. In short, after all the fulsome and elaborate eulogies with which the poet's flattering ministerial partisans have sought to array and exhibit him, to conceal, if not cancel his follies, would he have been received and retained by any of them as a church member, or would they have commended his example to those who were already communicants? Yet such is the man some ministers of Christ still "delight to honour" and justify it by the exclamation, "When shall the world see his equal?" A man, the longer he lived, the lower he sank and sank others with him, till shunned by the respectable, he sought for, and was sought by, convivial companions, became a confirmed debauchee, a regular sot, a self-ruined wreck, that did not "live out half his days." Yet, after all and despite all, I suppose that even his Christian celebrators will still exultantly say or sing, "A man's a man for a' that." Allow me then instead to commend to them the lofty resolve of Paul, "I magnify mine office," and still more, to hear and to heed the injunction of his Master, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

I regard it as a very hopeful sign that I failed to find another cleric in our Province, and recollect of only one other in the Dominion who "orated" at Burns' last birthday. If others, I would only say by a modified quotation, "If true 'tis pity and pity 'tis if true." This cleric differs somewhat from the doctor by saying, "Orators now sink the man in the past, and only did their best to show the excellency of his verse. The frail man, with all his faults and follies, should be forgotten as speedily as possible, and be remembered by his immortal work, and as a living force in society on the side of manliness, truth, and righteousness." This last statement, however, is more than questionable and must be taken *cum grano salis*.

That Burns was greatly gifted none will deny, but "all gifts are not graces" and do not always constitute great men. For power possessed, whether of mind, muscle, or money, if wantonly wasted, or even worse, as is often the case, will never produce greatness. A man may be able clearly to discern, yet not desire the good, as even a heathen poet has said: "I see and approve the good, yet I follow the evil," and further, if true as one of our own poets has said: "The good alone are great;" and if man's chief end is to glorify God, to benefit man, we see in what true greatness consists. True, Burns was a great genius, but if genius is to be admired, if not adored, irrespective of its operations and issues, then in this Satan himself has the pre-eminence, and he too is a most "firm believer in the fundamentals of Christianity," a believer in the principles but not the practices of religion. It has always been a mystery to me how Burns could be such a great "living force" in society on the side of manliness and its concomitants, and yet be so signally feeble in regard to himself. It is often assumed and asserted, said, but not shown, that "he was the greatest of all Scotchmen. As each decade has passed, his power has grown, and the people have been translating his high and noble thought and sentiment into political life. His songs are a priceless heritage of the Scottish people. Their influence has been great on British literature, and powerful beyond estimate on the national life. That in point of intellect, in right feeling, in honesty of pur-