

CURRENT TOPICS AND EVENTS.

THE CHURCH AND THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION.

THE record of the Methodist Church in relation to the temperance question, is one of proud distinction. Almost alone among the Churches of Christendom, it has been based on the principles of total abstinence. In his views on this important subject, the honoured founder of Methodism was as far in advance of his age as he was in many other respects. As long ago as 1743, when the General Rules of the Methodist Societies were formulated by John and Charles Wesley, the "buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in case of extreme necessity," was stringently prohibited. In all branches of Methodism throughout the world to the present day, this rule, with greater or less stringency of interpretation, has been adopted. The Methodist Church is thus "the only Christian church since the days of the apostles which forbade the use of spirituous liquors as a beverage, and their sale for such purpose."^{*}

The ministers and members of that Church, it is to be regretted, have not always lived up to the letter or spirit of these rules. There has been, at times, great laxity in the administration of discipline, and sometimes a tendency to recede from the advanced position of Mr. Wesley. But the great body of Methodist ministers, we hesitate not to affirm, have been true to these principles, and have both preached and practised total abstinence. They have helped very largely to educate public opinion on this important subject ; and the present aggressive temperance revival, both in Canada and the

United States, is very largely due to their influence. Methodist periodical literature has always given no uncertain sound on this subject. We have thought it, therefore, not inappropriate to discuss various aspects of the temperance question in the pages of this Magazine. We have been greatly encouraged by the warm expressions of approval that have been thus called forth, and by the demand for a pamphlet edition of those articles for circulation as temperance tracts.

We are pledged, as a Church, to battle against the evil of intemperance till it be destroyed. Year after year our Annual Conferences have unanimously passed resolutions in favour of the prohibition of the liquor traffic. The General Conference of 1874 solemnly "called upon all ministers and members of our Church to speak and act fearlessly and conscientiously in behalf of the much-needed temperance reformation," and ordered the preparation of a petition to the Governor-General and Parliament for the passage of a prohibitory liquor law. Our several Conferences have been more specific still, and by reiterated resolutions have urged upon ministers, official boards, Sunday-school authorities, and the membership generally, the formation of temperance societies in connection with each Circuit and Sunday-school, the preaching of temperance sermons, and the dissemination of sound temperance principles throughout the community.

It is upon the Christian Church, and on Christian people, that the success of the temperance reform largely depends. Would that we felt that responsibility still more solemnly. It is the mission of the Christian Church to fight against every form of sin, and no form of sin is more disastrous to the common

^{*} Rev. Henry Wheeler in *Methodist Quarterly Review* for October, 1876.