

THE
CANADA TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE.

TEMPERANCE IS THE MODERATE USE OF THINGS BENEFICIAL, AND ABSTINENCE FROM THINGS HURTFUL.

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Selected Articles.

Extract from the Speech of Mr. Buckingham on the Extent, Causes and Effects of Drunkenness, delivered in the House of Commons, on Tuesday, June 3, 1834.

Of the fact of the increase of drunkenness among the labouring classes of the country, I think there will be no doubt. But if there should, a reference to the reports of the police cases, published in any town of the United Kingdom, will be more than sufficient to remove such doubts; and if to this be added the evidence furnished by the records of our criminal courts of session or assize, and by the coroners' inquests, hospital returns, and other public documents, accessible to all, the most irresistible proof will be produced to show that intemperance, like a mighty and destroying flood, is fast overwhelming the land. I content myself with two short extracts of evidence on this subject from very different quarters, which I have selected from a mass of others, because they are the shortest and the most recent; not written to serve any special purpose; and above all question as to their authenticity. The first is from the latest official Report of the Middlesex Lunatic Asylum, at Hanwell, as published in the *Times* of the present month. It is as follows:—

"GIN-DRINKING.—The seventy-six deaths which have occurred in the year, have been, with the exception of those who have died from advanced age, principally caused by the disease of the brain, of the lungs, and the complaints brought on by those deadly potions of ardent spirits in which the lower classes seem more than ever to indulge. In a very great number of the recent cases, both amongst men and women, the insanity is caused entirely by spirit-drinking. This may, in some measure, be attributed to the young not being taught to consider the practice disgraceful, and to their being tempted, by the gorgeous splendour of the present gin-mansions, to begin a habit which they never would have commenced had they been obliged to steal, fearful of being observed, into the obscurity of the former dram-shops."

The second document to which I beg to draw the special attention of the House, is one of the most appalling, perhaps, that the history of intemperance has ever produced. It is a report of the number of men, women, and children, who entered within a given time, 14 of the principal gin-shops in

London, and its suburbs;—of which there are two in Whitechapel; 3 at Mile End; 1 in East Smithfield; 1 in the Borough; 1 in Old Street; 2 in Holborn; 1 in Bloomsbury; and 3 in Westminster. From these tabular statements I make only the following selections:

At the principal gin-shop in Holborn, there entered on the Monday, 2880 men, 1855 women, and 289 children, making a total of 5024 human beings in one single day; and in the whole week 16,998 persons had visited this single house. At the principal gin-shop in Whitechapel, this had even been exceeded; for there had entered at this house on the Monday, no less than 3146 men, 2189 women, and 686 children, making a total of 6021 in a single day; and in the course of the week, the numbers amounted to 17,403. The grand total for one week only in the 14 houses selected, the names of which I have seen, and the localities of which I have myself inspected, amount to no less a number than 269,437, divided in the following proportions—namely, 142,453 men, 108,593 women, and 18,391 children—the women and children united, nearly equalling the men; and often surpassing them in the grossness and depravity of their demeanour! Alas! Sir, is it England of which we are speaking—the land of the lovely and the brave—the seat of the sciences and the arts—the school of morality and religion: or are those attributes of excellence ascribed to us in mockery, in order to heighten our sense of sorrow and of shame? Yes! in a country second to none in wealth—in intelligence—in power—and I will add, too, in general purity of conduct and character—there yet remains this deadly plague-spot, which I call upon the members of this House to assist, to the utmost of their abilities, in endeavouring to wipe away. If this almost inconceivable amount of degradation is produced by 14 houses only in this metropolis, what must be the mass of vice and immorality engendered by the thousands of other houses of the same class, though of inferior magnitude, which rear their decorated fronts in every street and avenue, whichever way we turn, though, like the whitened sepulchres of old, they are, without, all gorgeousness and splendour—within, all rottenness

and death; and if the waste, disease, and crime, produced by intoxication in London alone be thus enormous, what must be the aggregate amount of each in all the other towns and districts of England? The sum is so fearful that I shrink appalled from its bare contemplation. (Hear, hear.)

If we turn to Scotland, the prospect is quite as discouraging. From a letter, dated Edinburgh, April, 1834, written by an eminent resident of that city, Dr. Greville, I extract only the following passage:—

"I have been this day in the City Chambers, and have ascertained from the official records, that in the Royalty, (or city,) there were issued for the years 1833-4, no less than 736 licences. The Royalty contains 55,232 souls, and 11,046 families; this is, therefore, a license to every fifteenth family. The whole population of Edinburgh, and its suburbs, is about 166,000; but beyond the Royalty, the licenses are mixed up with those of the county, and it is not so easy to obtain a distinct account of them. This, however, is well known, that three years ago, there were only 1700 licenses in the whole of this district; so that the increase in that short space of time is enormous."

If we ask whether Ireland is affected with this deadly plague as well as Scotland and England, the answer must, unfortunately, be in the affirmative. In Dublin, and in Cork, the increased consumption of ardent spirits, and the consequent increase of disease and crime, is undeniable; and testimonies might be multiplied on this subject to any required extent. But to take the north of Ireland, rather than the south, for an example, as the north is universally admitted to be in a higher state of order, and peace and comfort, than the south, I quote a single passage from a report drawn up by the Rev. John Edgar, Divinity Professor, in the Royal College of Belfast, dated in January of the present year, in which he says,—

"The demand for spiritous liquors is so universal, that spirit shops in the town of Ulster average 16, 18, and even 30, to one baker's shop; and in some villages, every shop is a spirit shop. In one town, containing only 800 houses, there are no less than 88 spirit shops. The fruit of all this exhibits itself every where in the destruction of property, and peace, and health, and life, and happiness; in the increase of crime, the injury of the best interests of individuals, of families, and of the community at large."

In the central parts of England, in the great manufacturing towns of Manchester,