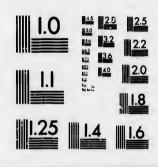


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LIQUOR TRAFFIC,

DELIVERED BY

THOS. WHITE, JR.,

AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

UNION TOTAL ABSTINENCE SOCIETY.

HELD IN

RUSSELL'S CONCERT HALL, QUEBEC,

January 9th, 1852.

Printed by order of the Committee of the Union Total
Abstinence Society.

QUEBEC:

Printed by Robert Middleton, 19, Mountain Street.

1852.

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CAN A CHRISTIAN CONSISTENTLY ENGAGE IN THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THE resolution which has been placed in my hands, and which I feel much pleasure in submitting to this meeting, reads as follows:—

"That decision being a main feature in the Temperance movement, and one which admits of no trimming, this meeting believes it to be incompatible with the christian profession to engage in the use or traffic of intoxicating liquors, such being subversive of good and derogatory to religion."

This resolution bears upon its face a startling, and perhaps some may think, over strong expression. That a large and respectable audience should be called upon to declare the business in which many of their most influential fellow citizens are engaged, to be "subversive of good and derogatory to religion," may indeed appear to be a bold request; but that it is no more than their duty as christians and as patriots, as men who have hearts to feel for the woes of suffering humanity, and who desire to escape the obnoxious cognomen of misanthropist, requires of them, it shall be my object to prove as clearly and as satisfactorily as my humble abilities will permit.

The resolution asserts it to be incompatible with the christian profession to be engaged in the liquor traffic. Were I inclined to take up the Bible, that sacred record of divine truth, and there search for passages and arguments to prove my position, the task would be by no means a difficult one, and I feel that you would not fail to be convinced, but as the hour is already advanced, and as other persons are to follow me, who, I feel confident, are much more capable of interesting you than I could possibly hope to be, I shall content myself with taking up the question upon more general grounds. The question which is suggested in the resolution is one of immense importance—one which commends itself to us as christians, and as men determined to search after sound principles, -can a christian engage in the liquor traffic? It is a question which has of late commanded a great deal of attention, though scarcely so much at the hands of professing christians, as its immense importance demands. The

advocates pro and con have culled from the same book of almighty truth, arguments to support positions as opposite as day is from night, and each have seemed perfectly satisfied with the conclusiveness of their reasoning. The one party has brought forward the marriage of Cana, the recommendation of St. Paul to Timothy, and other similar texts, while the other has reiterated the gloomy denunciation of "woe is he who putteth the cup to his neighbours lips,"—and the advice of the inspired man of old. " look thou not upon the wine when it is red, &c." But as I have said we shall be content with taking it up upon general grounds, and answer the question by asking another—can a christian consistently engage in anything upon which he cannot ask the blessing of Almighty God? and, can he, in view of the consequences that result from this traffic, in view of the degradation and misery that must inevitably accompany it, can he. I ask, enter his closet and implore the blessing of a beneficent heaven upon it?

Let us for a few moments review a few of the consequences that flow directly from the traffic in intoxicating liquors.

Look around upon society, mark especially among the annals of the poor the causes of nearly all their misery, examine the statistics of crime which are regularly furnished from our courts of justice, and what do you find to be the prime instigator to the commission of those crimes? In nine cases out of ten, you will discover that it is the rum bottle. In the city of London alone, there are from thirty to forty thousand professed thieves, eighty or one hundred thousand abandoned characters, five thousand establishments for the sale of intoxicating beverages, and, mark well this item, twenty thousand pounds sterling spent every sabbath day for liquor, in a christian city, in the capital of a country boasting of its superior civilization. In christian Scotland, things are quite as bad. In Glasgow, says Sheriff Allison, there are thirty thousand persons drunk every saturday night, and one million, two hundred thousand pounds, are spent annually for intoxicating liquors. In Ireland, poor, oppressed Ireland, in the year of the famine, when people were dying by hundreds of hunger, and the bare recital of the miseries of that dreadful time, made many a heart bleed for the woes of that afflicted country, grain sufficient to have fed six millions of people was destroyed in the breweries of Dublin, to create a deadly poison in the shape of alcohol. Was it then a famine sent from God, or was it a scarcity created by the avarice and misanthropy of the brewers of Dublin? We know it was the latter, but we need not cross the Atlantic for examples and statistics to prove the miseries consequent upon the sale and use of the intoxicating cup; alas, we have but too many examples at home. Visit the

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Penetentiaries, Lunatic Asylums and Common Jails of our land. and there you may be introduced to the unhappy graduates from the grog shop with their diplomas printed on their distorted features. Look back upon your own experience and I doubt much if their is a single person present in this large and respectable auditory, who cannot, among their own acquaintances, point to some one death from intemperance. I once heard a gentleman in Upper Canada, a person of the highest respectability, one whose veracity no one acquainted with him would for a moment doubt, state on the public platform, that in looking back upon his early acquaintances, four out of five had either filled drunkards' graves or were now miserable drunkards. Gen. Cary while lecturing in Toronto, stated that in looking back upon his college friends, out of a class of seventeen, two had committed murder, two had been murdered, four had filled drunkards' graves, and others were in the high road to ruin, all through the effects of the wine cup. Mr. Delavan, the well-known American Philanthropist, asserts that out of fifty young men who were in the habit of meeting at a tavern in New York, during the early part of his life, forty seven have died drunkards. These, ladies and gentlemen, are startling facts, but they are as true as they are startling. It is itiable to witness the ravages of this fearful monster in our very midst; but it is heart sickening to see professing christians dealing out the cup of destruction, and tampering with the temporal and eternal interests of their fellow men.

Can a christian engage in the liquor traffic? I have often pondered on this question, I have often wondered what sort of a prayer a christian distiller for instance would make. merchant prays for prosperous gales to guide his vessels to their destined harbour. The farmer prays for suitable weather to carry on his agricultural pursuits. And the mechanic prays for health and strength to pursue his handicraft. But what does the liquor seller pray for? How does he approach the Deity to implore a blessing on his traffic? If this respectable audience will be good enough to accompany me in imagination into the christian's distillery, we shall listen for a moment to his prayer. -" Oh Lord, I pray thee to bless my distillery. Give us a good run this year, make it bear a good bead. Stay the waves of this mighty temperance reformation from throwing odium upon my friend and coadjutor the rum-seller. Sharpen the appetites of the drunkard, and blunt his conscience. Lower the price of grain all over Canada, and raise the price of whiskey, and in all other pertinent respects, bless us oh Lord ! "-This, Mr. Chairman, I think would be about a fair prayer for a christian distiller. But, Sir, it looks like trifling with the great question

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at issue, they dare not pray, and if there is a single christian liquor seller present, I put the question to him, and I call upon him to answer it to his own conscience, as he hopes one day to answer it at the bar of God—dare you in view of the consequences that result from your soul destroying traffic, dare you I ask, enter your closet and ask the blessing of a beneficent heaven upon it?

Oh, Sir, I often think that it is a fearful thing for a christian, a man professing to be a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus; entertaining, or professing to entertain, feelings of brotherly love towards all mankind; counting all things, but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; to see such an one dealing out damnation by the hogshead, gallon or gill to his fellow man. I firmly believe that there is not a liquor seller in Quebec, who has been in the business for five years, whose hands are not stained with the blood of a murdered man.

Again, Sir, in order to keep up this traffic, one hundred thousand men have to be engaged on the malt floors of Great Britain, besides excise officers, every sabbath day. Let the thristian, mourning over the depravity of the human race, and struggling for the prevention of sabbath labour, in our governmental departments—remember, that in order to keep up this traffic, over one hundred thousand men have to be deprived of the privilege of hearing the gospel, and then let him consider seriously, whether he can lend his countenance to a business which requires such a wholesale violation of God's Holy sabbath.

But, ladies and gentlemen, this is no new doctrine that we are propagating. Long before the temperance question was mooted in its present form-years before men had began to speak or think of the evils of intemperance, with a view to their extermination from the land by a course of total abstinence was the doctrine preached that the traffic in intoxicating liquors is morally wrong, that it is "subversive of good, and derogatory to religion." One who is universally acknowledged as one of the greatest religious reformers that has ever lived-and, who, if the spirits of the departed are permitted to review the transactions of our world, (if it were possible for a spirit enjoying the sweets of a realm of everlasting bliss, to blush) doubtless blushes at the conduct of many who dare to call themselves his followers, made it obligatory on the members of his church, that they should not engage in the traffic of intoxicating liquors, nor use them except in cases of extreme necessity. I refer to John Wesley. He understood in what relation grogselling and religion stood to one another, and he felt that while a grog-influence, pervaded the church, he could not hope for a revival of religion.

One illustration of the influence of persons engaged in this traffic. In order to be very brief we shall suppose a case. There is a poor drunkard in the city of Quebec, who has once been one of its most respectable citizens, but through the use of intoxicating liquors, he has been reduced to the very lowest depths of degradation. Feeling a deep interest in his welfare, I go to him and say-" now my dear Sir, you know that this liquor which you are drinking is doing you no good, you must see on the contrary that it is doing you a great deal of harm, your wife and family are suffering for want of food and clothing, while you are spending the money that should go to supply these wants on a useless and pernicious beverage; come, sign our pledge, and if you are but faithful to it, it will free you from the chains of appetite, and again enable you to take that stand in society to which your talents and former position entitle you." A tear starts into the poor man's eye as he remembers what he once was and what he now is, but another thought rises still higher, and looking at me he says—"Sir, I attended one of the churches of your city last Sunday, and there I saw the man who is selling me this liquor, that is making me a brute and my family beggars, taking up the collection after the sermon; go to him, Sir, if he may be a prominent christian and sell liquor, surely I may be an humble christian and drink it.' And, Mr. Chairman, is it not a plain statement of the case; these christian rum-sellers; these pious trustees of the welfare of Christ's Church upon earth, will receive money six days out of seven for damning men's souls, and on the sabbath day they have the audacity to receive it for the ostensible purpose of saving them. Consistency, thou art a jewel, but thou hast no place in the breast of a rum-selling christian.

But there may be some persons in this audience who will go away and say, we have had a speech from a young man on the relation of christians to the liquor traffic, but of course it only referred to the low groggeries, which we will readily acknowledge are a pest to society. Now, Sir, I wish to correct such an impression. Every argument that I have attempted to bring forward applies equally to the respectable dealer, as to the low groggery. The feeling seems to be too common, to regard the liquor traffic when carried on in a large grocery establishment, or within the walls of some first class hotel as at least respectable and reputable, while all, even those so engaged in it, regard the poor tavern-keeper as an outcast from respectable society.

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But, Sir, though Satan assume the character of an angel of light, he is Satan still; and though the liquor traffic may put on the garb of respectability, it is no less the liquor traffic still. There is a space in the way to ruin over which a man cannot pass, unless some respectable dealer step in and conduct him over it. A large gap is open between the respectable young man and the low groggery, which, without assistance, it is impossible for him to cross. Here then the respectable dealers step forward to do their work. By the time the course is fully commenced, and no small sum has been given for the service, another dealer, of a shade lower standing, comes forward and offers to conduct him one step further. When the poor victim needs another guide in the way to rain, the pawnbroker and the dealer of the lowest caste stand ready to conduct him still further, to finish what their more respectable coadjutors had commenced, to hurry their unfortunate victim down to the very gates of a drunkard's hell. Perhaps by this time he has become a poor homeless, houseless, wreck of humanity. He is left out in the cold over night, and his lifeless body is found by the way side by some passer by on the next morning. The once respectable young man has died the death of a beggar and his soul has passed with all its vile pollutions into the unseen realities of an awful eternity. Let me ask you, ladies and gentlemen, if this case is over drawn, no, had I the oratory of a Cicero or a Demosthenes, were all the beauties of rhetoric mine, it would fail to describe in anything like adequate terms, the misery, the degradation and death that result from this hellish traffic.

The resolution also adverts to the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage. Now, Sir, if the arguments which I have used are sound, and it is inconsistent for a christian to be engaged in the liquor traffic, is it not quite as inconsistent for a christian to support that traffic? and does not every christian who partakes of the intoxicating cup, directly add his mite towards the maintenance of the foul iniquity?

But, Sir, if it is bad and sinful for the humble man to be found engaged in, or encouraging this traffic, how much more is it for the ambassador of God to be found nourishing the monster in the very midst of his church. Ah! how many a young man can date his fall from that time when his clergyman offered him the glass of wine. How many a parent can look back to a ruined son—whose ruin has been caused by the remarks of a minister of the gospel in favor of the moderate use of intoxicating liquors. Many examples might be given of the pernicious effects of the influence exerted by wine drinking clergymen—but as the hour is advanced, I shall content myself with giving but one.—There

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was a temperance meeting in a small village of the United States, and among the speakers was a Reverend gentleman, who, it seems, was unfortunately in favor of the "take-a-little pledge." In the course of his remarks he quoted scripture very largely in favor of his particular view. He shewed how the prophets of old, and the kings and princes of Israel drank wine. He adverted to the Saviour course, and in his anxiety to prove his position, almost went so far as to say, that the Saviour was an habitual wine-bibber. He quoted St. Paul's advice to Timothy and concluded by saying that he thought a little wine never did any person any harm, and he was of opinion that in many instances it did them good. When he resumed his seat, an old man whose hoary locks and bent form, shewed that he had well nigh lived his three score years and ten, stood up and in a clear determined voice said-"Mr. President, I once knew a young man who was a teetotaler and promised well for the future, he attended a temperance meeting and there heard a clergyman. for whom he had the greatest respect, and in whose good sense and sound judgment he placed most implicit confidence, enunciate just such sentiments as we have now listened to. Feeling that his friend must be right he abandoned the total abstinence principle, and in two years afterwards was laid in a drunkard's grave." The old man's utterance became choked, the big tears chased each other down his furrowed cheeks, when, making an effort he added, "that young man, Mr. President, was my son, and the clergyman was the reverend gentleman who has just sat down." Would to God, sir, that this were a solitary case. It is out of the power of any minister to say what his influence may be; his position causes him to be looked up to as an exemplar; his opinions are respected, and in most instances parents are willing that they should be adopted by their children. They should, therefore, be careful that their influence be not exerted in behalf of the enemy of souls. Methinks the office of a christian minister is such, that heaven should smile upon his every act; but, Sir, I firmly believe that the whole conclave of hell, with all its host of damned victims, resounds with an infernal laugh every time a minister of the gospel raises the wine cup to his lips.

In dealing with this question, ladies and gentlemen, I have used strong language, perhaps some may say too strong, but decision in the temperance movement is a principle that admits of no trimming. Our fellow men are drifting down the blood stain torrent into the ocean of intemperance, whose briny waters are composed of human tears; their winds the sighs of those made miserable and wretched through the inebriation of husbands, fathers and sons. Their billows, ever tossing, are overhung with

black and lowering clouds, illuminated only by the lightning's vivid flash, while hoarse thunders reverberate over the wide and desolate waste. Eugulphed in this dreary ocean, the wretched drunkard is buffeted hither and thither at the mercy of its angry waves, now tossed on jagged rocks bruised and bleeding-then eugulphed in raging whirlpools to suffocating depths; anon, like the worthless weed, cast high into the darkened heavens, only to fall again and be tossed about on water which cannot rest. We wish to rescue him, but while the cause of his misery is nourished in our churches, we feel that we have small prospect of success. It becomes us, therefore, fearlessly to expose the iniquity of the hydra-headed monster; too long have we dealt calmly with this subject, we have minced the matter, times without number, from the apprehension that bold and maked truth might offend some of our own friends. But the sacrifice is too great, immortal souls are at stake, and we have determined to use a vulgar phrase, to take the "bull by the horns," and with your assistance we liope soon to see the last grog-shop swept from off our fair land, the last distillery fire put out, and we shall then raise the joyful shout of "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will among men."

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