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MONTHLY VISITOR

OF THE

MONTREAL IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

No. 9.

DECEMBER.

1847.

A NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS,

TO THE RESPECTABLE SELLERS AND MODERATE DRINKERS OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS IN THE CITY OF MONTREAL.

DEAR FRIENDS,—We embrace the present opportunity to address you, because it is usually considered a favourable time of the year for reviewing the past, and forming plans and resolutions for the future, and the prevailing feeling which actuates us in so doing being love, we trust you will not cast this paper from you as if an enemy had written it, but give it a consideration as courteous as we trust its language will be.

To DEALERS, we would suggest the following topics of reflection:—Your business has ever been considered, to say the least, one of a doubtful character. Why else is it made the subject of legal restraints more than other kinds of trade? Why else is it necessary to have enactments respecting certificates of character, licenses, and, in many places, even the hours and persons when and to whom sales may be made?

A brief review of the history of your traffic would show that it has at all times been an object of alarm to governments; that its suppression has been in many instances attempted; and that it is only finally tolerated as an evil which they are not able to prevent, every precaution being, at the same time, taken to diminish, as far as possible, its pernicious consequence.

It is often said that there is as much harm done by eating as drinking; but has the experience of nations proved that there was as much cause for anxiety and alarm in the trade of the baker and butcher as in yours? Disguise it as you may from yourselves, your traffic stands upon nearly similar ground in the western world with the opium trade in the east; and if you would shrink from the idea of supplying opium wholesale or retail to the wretched votaries of that drug, there is no good reason why you should not shrink from your own business. The

latter is consigning, at least, as many victims, in proportion to the population, to degradation, misery, and a premature grave, as the former, and it is a much more potent stimulus to crime.

You may have been ignorant of these considerations when you embarked in the business, and in this respect we feel much sympathy for you, but you cannot be wholly ignorant of them now; for, besides the mass of information and argument on this subject which the temperance societies have published and circulated, but which you may, perchance, have refused to hear or read, there have been many presentments of grand juries, many charges of judges, and many articles in the common newspapers, all bearing testimony to the same melancholy truth, that your traffic is one of the greatest evils under which society groans at the present time, and the prolific parent of at least three fourths of all the pauperism and crime around us: that you are, if we may so speak, living upon the life-blood of the public, and taxing all the rest of the community to remedy, in some little degree—by jails, police forcès, hospitals, alms-houses, &c., &c.—the evils which you are causing.

We may again advert to the oft-repeated fallacy, that there is as much harm done by eating as drinking, and ask, where the testimony of judges and magistrates, and grand juries, and committees of legislatures, can be found to the effect that three-fourths of the pauperism and crime which afflict society are caused by eating? When shall we find whole tribes of the human race swept off the face of the earth by the use of bread and meat, as has been the case by the use of fire waters. No, the fact is, the traffic in intoxicating drinks stands by itself; it is not at all like that in any other article of human consumption, unless it be, as we have before stated, opium.

But if these things be true, is it not your duty, dear friends, to abandon a traffic so pernicious to the community, and, we might also add, so dangerous to yourselves?

MODERATE DRINKERS, we would now address a word to you:—Dear friends, you perhaps think that you would not engage in a traffic of so doubtful and dangerous a kind, as the liquor trade. Nay, perhaps you join in the common cry against the multiplication of taverns and dram-shops. But remember, we beseech you, that there could be no traffic, unless there be buyers as well as sellers; and that you who buy are in one sense as much a trafficker as the vender. Let the respectable portion of the community cease to purchase, and the respectable will soon cease to sell, in which case this most injurious business would be likesome others of kindred character, placed under the ban of public opinion; and, probably, legislative prohibition. It would then be confined to secret dens of iniquity, which none but the

abandoned would frequent, instead of meeting us at every turning, as it does at present, and throwing its seductive lures openly around all classes, and almost every individual in society.

To the PHILANTHROPIST, we would say, there is much more enlightened benevolence in endeavouring to stop intemperance, than in endeavouring to remedy its effects. And that it is also much easier—for drunkenness will be arrested, if men only cease to drink; whereas, all the means and appliances in the world will not cure its effects, if it continue.

To the PATRIOT, we would say, if you wish to introduce general education—to reduce pauperism to its minimum point—to suppress crime; and to develop the energies of the people—an essential element to success on all these desirable objects, is to banish intemperance; and the only way to do this, is to abolish the drinking customs and usages, out of which intemperance is constantly produced.

To the CHRISTIAN, we would appeal in this matter most earnestly. To whom can we look for an example of self-denial, for the good of others, if not to you? “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth” was the declaration of one whose authority, we are all willing to admit. Does not the same principle apply in the case before us? Let every Christian say: “If intoxicating drinks make my brother to offend, I will drink none while the world standeth.” And do they not make your brother to offend? Look either at the church, or the world, and answer this question? Besides, they may not stop with your brother—they may, if you go on to use them, make you to offend also. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall.”

But it is not only as a preventive measure that the Temperance reformation commends itself to the Christian—it comes directly in aid of all other good efforts. Do you wish to educate poor children, in Sabbath or day schools? What deprives them of the clothing necessary to attend, but the drinking habits of their parents? If you would distribute tracts, scriptures, &c., what causes them, in many instances, to be totally disregarded, but intemperance? Nay, if you would send the Gospel to the heathen, what meets you there with more deadly antagonism than the liquors sent by your own countrymen, and the drinking habits of those who call themselves Christians. Once more: Why are all religious societies, and most churches labouring under a load of debt, and scarcely able to meet current expenses, without attempting to extend their operations, to meet the wants of a perishing world? Is not a solution of this extraordinary anomaly to be found in the drinking habits of Christians. There is much more spent in the useless and pernicious custom of using intoxicating drinks by the professing Christians of Britain, than all that they give for the support of churches, schools, missions and Bible and tract societies, put together. If, then, we wish to see these incalculably important institutions adequately supported, let us unite to banish intoxicating drinks.

We would add a word to those who are verging upon habits of intemperance. Dear friends, go no nearer the precipice that yawns.

before you, nor even try to continue in your present proximity; retreat as fast and as far from it as you can, and the Lord will bless those who obey his command—to shun even the appearance of evil. Above all, be on your guard at this season of the year. Your best friends will beset you on all hands with temptations to lead you to ruin; the customs of society will almost coerce you to comply with them; do not allow yourselves to be overcome; take a manly stand against them; no longer follow a multitude to do evil; shun that which the word of God declares to be a mocker; and which, at the last, bites like a serpent. Many, in former years, have stood firm in their determination to resist the temptation of strong drink, for, it may be, several months; but when Christmas or New-Year's-day came, they have gone back, like the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire; and their last state was worse than the first.

The remedy to which we call your attention is simple, safe, pleasant, and efficacious. It is so simple, that all can follow it without expense either of money, time, or labour—so safe, that none are injured by it—so pleasant, that all who try it say, they are happier than they were before—so efficacious, that none who follow it are in any danger of the disease. If Cholera were among us, carrying off as many victims as drunkenness, and a remedy so simple, safe, pleasant, and perfectly efficacious, were found for it—would not all hasten to avail themselves of that remedy? Where is the difference in the present case, unless it be, that the disease of which we now speak, involves moral, as well as physical evil, whilst the Cholera only involves the latter?

Finally, intemperance is sweeping over society like a great flood, bearing thousands, and tens of thousands to destruction; all are more or less embarked on the flood, and in danger, proportionally great; except those who abstain wholly from intoxicating drinks. If all would abstain, society would at once be free from the evil; and if only a single family abstain, that family is free. Let us then pray and labour for the general abolition of drinking usages; but let us not wait for all men to act before we do; let us save ourselves from the evils attending drinking in the first place, and that will be one of the best and most effectual ways of influencing others to do the same.

Let us just add one word more, whatever you do, do it in the strength of the Lord.

Signed on behalf of the Committee of the Montreal Temperance Society.

JOHN DOUGALL, *President.*

Montreal, 27th December, 1847.

THE TEMPERANCE HALL, ST. MAURICE STREET,

IS now Opened for PUBLIC TEMPERANCE MEETINGS, which will be held every THURSDAY EVENING.

The Pledge-Book of the Society will be found on these occasions for Signature.

J. C. BECKET, PRINTER, ST. PAUL STREET, MONTREAL.

ABOLISHED
SIGNATURES