

AN ADDRESS

IN SUPPORT OF THE PRINCIPLES

OF THE

TEMPERANCE REFORMATION,

DELIVERED IN BROOKFIELD,

FEBRUARY 26, 1833.

By GEORGE R. NOYES.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BROOKFIELD :
E. MERRIAM AND CO.....PRINTERS.
1833.

ADDRESS.

THE occasion, which calls us together, my friends, awakens within us mingled emotions. It is an occasion of joy, and of sorrow. It is cause for joy that the attention of the community is in some measure aroused on the subject of the greatest scourge, that ever afflicted the world ; that, on this day, united prayers are ascending from thousands of hearts, that God would give success to the exertions which are made to stay its progress ; and that many an eloquent voice throughout our land has been lifted up in behalf of a cause far more intimately connected with the peace and prosperity of our country, than any of the great political questions, which now occupy the minds of our people, and agitate our halls of legislation.

It is cause for joy that so much has been done to banish the use of strong drink from our land ; that it would now be held a shocking and disgusting thing to see it borne round in the house of

mourning ; that it is not now reckoned fashionable or decent to urge a guest to partake of the cup of intoxication ; that, in fine, one can scarcely be seen buying it, carrying it, or using it, without some appearance of shame upon his brow. It is cause for joy, that within a few years more than fifteen hundred distilleries have been stopped ; that more than four thousand merchants have ceased to traffic in this fruitful cause of woe, disgrace, and death, and that many hundreds of drunkards have been reclaimed. It is cause for joy that hundreds of thousands have pledged themselves to its disuse ; that thousands of families are now in comfort, who but for the temperance reformation, would have been in poverty ; and that hundreds of thousands of children are now saved from the poisonous influences of their natural guardians, and from being trained up to poverty, disease and crime. It is cause for joy, in fine, that many immortal beings are now rejoicing in the hope, or fruition, of the glory of God, who but for the movement in the cause of temperance, might have been blaspheming their Maker in this world, or lifting up their eyes in torments in the regions of woe. In view of these fruits, with which it has pleased God to crown human exertion, we have reason to rejoice. In view of these fruits we have reason to say, "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us, bless his holy name !"

On the other hand, my friends, we have cause

for sorrow on such an occasion as this, that there should still remain so great a necessity for united and strenuous effort; that what has been done in the cause, is almost nothing to what remains to be done; and that the efficient friends of temperance are yet in a small minority. In fine, it is cause for sorrow that the intemperance, which has been remedied or prevented, bears scarcely any assignable proportion to that which still exists; and that this is true of our country, of our state, and of the town, in which we live. But, my friends, let the occasion of our sorrow be the occasion of our exertion; and whilst we feel that the temperance reformation is but begun, let us resolve that our exertions shall not be wanting for its completion.

My friends, I rejoice that I see so many of you present at this time. I rejoice in the opportunity of endeavoring to impart to you the strength of my convictions on this great subject. I trust that its solemn importance will be sufficient to gain your attention to it, notwithstanding its commonness. For I do not mean to attempt, by any strained effort of ingenuity, or laboured ornaments of style, or by the swollen language of exaggeration, to give to an oft-recurring subject the interest of novelty. I mean to express myself plainly, freely, and as fully as is consistent with the occasion, on the fundamental principles and measures of the temperance reformation. My aim is to extend the con-

viction of the solidity of these principles and the obligation of using these measures. Those of you, whose convictions are already as deep and as strong as my own, will hear me with patience, remembering how large a portion of the community are not yet convinced, or do not allow their convictions to affect their conduct, and do not lend the whole weight of their influence to the good cause, in which we are engaged.

As the regeneration of the world is, under God, to be brought about by the preaching of the fundamental doctrines and duties of the gospel, so that part of it, and preparation for it, which now claims our attention, is to be effected by the reiterated inculcation of the principles and measures of the temperance reformation.

Am I met, in the outset, by the question, why we make such a stir about this particular vice of intemperance, and why similar measures are not directed against other enormous vices, such as fraud, gambling, or other species of self-indulgence, I answer, it is because intemperance is the vice of vices. It is a crime, which includes within itself the seeds of all other crimes. It is the legitimate parent of lust, cruelty, murder, suicide, parricide, and crimes without a name. It is an evil, which, in its least aggravated forms is fruitful of pain and sorrow ; which deforms the body into hideousness ; 'which sows the heads of the young with untimely snows, and shakes the sands, which measure out

the days of the aged ;' which reduces the understanding to imbecility, drowns the conscience, quenches natural affection, converts a father into a tyrant, a mother into a demon, and home into hell. It is an evil which mortgages and alienates our farms, swallows up our substance, crowds our poor houses with paupers, tenants our prison-houses with convicts, fills our roads with wretched vagrants, and our hospitals with maniacs.

Above all, it is an evil, which destroys the soul ; which shuts out all the influences of the divine Spirit, and places the victim of it beyond the reach of recovery from guilt. Yes, intemperance destroys the soul. It is this consideration above all others, that makes the sight of the intemperate man to me inexpressibly terrible. I can look upon the human body, breathless and motionless, and quiet my painful emotions by the consideration, that it is not the immortal tenant, that it is only the clay tabernacle, which is dissolved. I can look upon one, in whom God, in his mysterious providence, has been pleased to extinguish the lamp of reason, and my pity subsides into acquiescence, when I consider that he is unconscious of his condition, and will not be held accountable for his conduct. But when I see a fellow creature, made originally a little lower than the angels, distinguished by reason, and destined to immortality, now sunk by habits of intemperance to the level of the brutal creation, dead to the sense of shame, dead to the voice of

conscience, dead to all the motives of religion, delivered over by the just judgment of God to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, my feelings are inexpressibly painful. Here is a spectacle at which I shudder. For here I see not merely the dissolution of the body, not merely the loss of the understanding;—here I witness the death of the soul.

Such, my friends, is the evil, which in my view demands extraordinary exertions, and extraordinary measures for its prevention and suppression. Let no one try to quench my zeal by asking why I do not exert myself as much against other prevailing vices. This is a vice extraordinary in its nature, and extraordinary in the extent of mischief produced by it, and therefore demands extraordinary exertions, and extraordinary measures. Rather let me hear from every mouth the inquiry, What can I do to prevent or diminish so dreadful a calamity? In view of the infinite woes of intemperance, is not this the question, that suggests itself to every one who loves his country, who loves his children, yea, who loves his own soul.

This question I propose to answer. God grant, that I may so answer it, that every one may be aroused not only to do something, but to do all in his power, to advance so glorious a cause.

1. What can I do to prevent and suppress intemperance? You can abstain from the use of ardent spirit in any quantity. In this way you can

make, or keep at least one man temperate, and in this way alone. All experience proves, that there is no safety in a moderate use of distilled spirit. It is its very nature to inflame the appetite, while it loses the power of satisfying it; so that a larger quantity becomes constantly necessary to produce the desired effect. There is no safety but in entire abstinence. Thousands have tried the experiment of a moderate use of it, and thousands have fallen victims to the destroyer. On what do you rely as a security against it? What places you so much above other men, that you suppose that you will be always victorious over that, which has proved fatal to them? Have you a sounder understanding, or greater strength of character, than the upright judges, the able lawyers, the learned divines, the skilful physicians, the eloquent orators, and the profound statesmen, who have been charmed into the jaws of this terrible enemy? Remember, my friends, that no one ever became a drunkard at once. That bloated, reeling wretch, whom you see scarcely able to reach his miserable home, to be the diabolical tormentor of his wife, and the brutal tyrant of his children, once had an eye as bright and a countenance as erect as your own. He could once look you in the face in the consciousness of virtue, and the pride of self-command. Alas! he was too confident for safety. He would not deprive himself of the liberty to take a glass with a friend. He was of opinion that a little was

useful, or at least not productive of harm. And O my friends, you now see to what this little has brought him. You now see him a bloated mass of flesh, sick of life, and afraid of death, the plague of his wife, the shame of his children, the curse of his friends, the nuisance of society, and the blasphemer of his God. There is no safety, my friends, except in total abstinence from the abominable thing.

But some have used it habitually, and died temperate and respectable men. So when a pestilence rages in a city, there are some who escape its ravages. But who would for a slight inducement voluntarily expose himself to its influence?

But suppose, my friend, that you, who have perhaps a peculiar constitution, or an uncommon degree of selfcommand, might make a moderate use of spirit with safety to yourself. Have you not, or may you not have, a family with minds and bodies less able to withstand the growth of appetite than your own? And are you not afraid that they will return with interest the habit which they have inherited or caught from you, and, by carrying to a somewhat greater extent a practice recommended by your own example, bring down your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Have none of you known, or heard of, a heart-broken father or mother, whose agony for a ruined son has been heightened by the reflection, that the practice and example, exhibited under their own roof, contributed to form the habit which brought him low?

The duty of entire abstinence from ardent spirit has another deep foundation, besides that of regard to one's own safety, or that of his relatives. A man in health cannot drink one drop of it without a criminal neglect of the duty of general benevolence ; without violating both the first and second commandment of the Christian law, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is a self-evident truth, that if there were no moderate drinkers, there would be no drunkards ; that if ardent spirit were not used, it would not be abused ; that if every one resolved to abandon it, there would be no intemperance in less than a common generation of men. He, therefore, that continues the practice, neglects to do what is in his power to remove a great calamity from the human race. He will not do his part toward the extinction of a common evil. He shows that he has less love for his Maker than he has for the indulgence of an unnatural appetite. For he that loveth God, will love the image of God in the soul of his brother, and do nothing which has a tendency to efface it. He shows that, instead of loving his neighbour as himself, he loves him less than the vile cup of intoxication. He is by his practice and example tempting his brother to his ruin. He is encouraging a habit, which is daily bringing destruction upon the bodies and souls of thousands of his fellow creatures.

Above all, every one who has any regard for the

precepts and example of Christ, should remember that there is such a duty as self-denial. He should remember who hath said, Whoso taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, cannot be my disciple. Woe to him, that causeth one of these little ones to offend! Now, does the duty of self-denial require us to sacrifice our lives, if need be, to the cause of truth and righteousness, and shall we hesitate to sacrifice a useless and pernicious indulgence, merely because it is pleasing to a vicious appetite? Do we call Him our master, who for the sake of sinful man endured hunger, thirst, and weariness, went about doing good, without a home in which to lay his head, and finally poured out his life-blood like water for our salvation, and are we not willing to make the smallest sacrifice of inclination for the benefit of our fellow-men? I say, a sacrifice of inclination. For it has been demonstrated with the exactness of science by those best acquainted with the human body, and confirmed by a cloud of witnesses of hard working men, who have renounced the use of spirit, that even when used moderately, it contributes neither to health nor strength, but rather impairs the ability to labour, and shortens the term of life.

But I think I hear some one exclaim, O yes! It will do for you sedentary men, who get your living easy, to talk in this way. You don't know how to pity us, who have to *work* for our living. To such a one I sa, Search into this matter.

Distrust my doctrine as much as you will, only inquire. Go to the most industrious men in this village; go to the hard-working men in the eastern part of the town,* who toil by night as well as by day, and who have made a fair experiment of labouring without ardent spirit, and if you find that their opinion is different from my own, I will retract my sentiments, and concede that a moderate use of strong drink is useful to labourers.

I will here take the liberty to recommend great caution in the use of spirit as a medicine. I believe that many children have been trained up to drunkenness by the frequent use of it in real or imaginary sickness. Their constitutions have been ruined, and a tendency to intemperate habits created, by taking it in connexion with opium in infancy, or as a remedy for a great variety of disorders at a more advanced age. Before you administer ardent spirit as a medicine, it is your duty to inquire, not only whether it be useful as such, but whether there be not another remedy equally efficacious, and attended with less danger to the future habits of those, to whom it is given. One practice I cannot but mention with peculiar reprobation, viz. that of giving, or taking spirit for a common cold. There is no excuse for it. There are many far better remedies, which endanger neither the body, nor the soul.

* In the Iron Foundry.

I have thus endeavoured to give one answer to the question, How can I promote the cause of temperance ; viz. by entire abstinence from intoxicating drink in health, and a very cautious use of it in sickness. I have endeavoured to show that this duty is required by a regard to your own personal safety, and to that of your relatives, and by the laws of common humanity, and Christian benevolence and self-denial.

When one exhibits the example of entire abstinence from the intoxicating drug, he has done much for the cause of temperance. But he has not yet done the whole of his duty. He has not done all in his power, either for his own security, or for the benefit of others.

2. Does any one ask, What more can I do? I answer, you can make a public profession and pledge that you will be governed by the principle you have adopted, by connecting yourself with a temperance society.

In this way you can fortify your resolution, and give efficacy to your example. I know that many good men, and friends of temperance, have objections to the pledge. I confess, too, that I formerly thought that more good might be done in this place, by uniting greater numbers in a society, founded on the principle of entire abstinence, but not requiring a formal pledge of its members. Whatever may have been expedient formerly, I am now convinced that, taking human nature as it is, and

I have thus endeavoured to give one answer to the question, How can I promote the cause of temperance ; viz. by entire abstinence from intoxicating drink in health, and a very cautious use of it in sickness. I have endeavoured to show that this duty is required by a regard to your own personal safety, and to that of your relatives, and by the laws of common humanity, and Christian benevolence and self-denial.

When one exhibits the example of entire abstinence from the intoxicating drug, he has done much for the cause of temperance. But he has not yet done the whole of his duty. He has not done all in his power, either for his own security, or for the benefit of others.

2. Does any one ask, What more can I do? I answer, you can make a public profession and pledge that you will be governed by the principle you have adopted, by connecting yourself with a temperance society.

In this way you can fortify your resolution, and give efficacy to your example. I know that many good men, and friends of temperance, have objections to the pledge. I confess, too, that I formerly thought that more good might be done in this place, by uniting greater numbers in a society, founded on the principle of entire abstinence, but not requiring a formal pledge of its members. Whatever may have been expedient formerly, I am now convinced that, taking human nature as it is, and

society as it is, the pledge is of fundamental importance. I ground the necessity of the pledge, in the first place, on the frailty of man and the proverbial instability of human resolutions. You say that you have long ago adopted the principle of entire abstinence, and practised upon it, and that a pledge will not make you more temperate than you are. True, and to make you temperate is not the purpose of requiring it. But will it not confirm you in the course you have chosen? Will it not fortify your resolution? Will it not be a safeguard to your principle? Is it not true, on every subject in politics or religion, that a man is more firmly bound to a resolution, and more established, in a principle, which he has publicly avowed, and pledged himself to maintain? You all know this to be the case, and many reasons may be given for it; of which the most obvious is the desire which all men have of the good opinion of their neighbours. A man who has deliberately pledged himself to a certain course of conduct knows that he will be pointed at by the community as a weak man, a changeable man, a man whose word is not to be trusted, if he violate his pledge. I admit that this regard to public sentiment is not one of the highest motives of conduct. And I trust that all will adopt the principle of entire abstinence from far higher motives, viz. the love of God and of their neighbours. But reason and revelation allow a man to fortify his highest

principles of action by inferior considerations. The Scriptures require us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and inform us that perfect love casteth out fear, and yet they address our hopes of reward and our fears of punishment ; they speak of a heaven and a hell ; and what is still more in point, they say, " If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The vital principle of piety is not left to be maintained in the soul by its own solitary meditation, and communion with God. For the maintenance of religious principle in the soul we have outward ordinances, we form ourselves into religious societies, we make a profession of our faith, and we unite at stated seasons for the public worship of God ; nor is it probable that Christian principle would survive in the world, were it not guarded and cherished by the various means, to which I have referred.

The pledge is to the resolution, or the principle, of many who adopt it, what a frame is to a glass mirror, or a casket to the jewel containing it. The frame is nothing compared with the mirror ; the casket is nothing compared with the jewel. But without the frame the mirror will be broken. Without the casket, the jewel will be lost.

Why should it be thought more inconsistent with self-respect and personal freedom for one to pledge himself to abstain from that accursed thing, whose mortal taste brings woe and death in its train,

than for the legislator to promise to maintain the constitution, or a candidate for office to pledge himself to support certain principles, or a justice that he will give righteous judgment, or a witness that he will tell the whole truth, or a juryman that he will decide according to evidence.

It is then no new principle, which we adopt, when we make a public profession and pledge that we will abstain from the acknowledged cause of the greater part of the miseries, which afflict society.

It may, indeed, be said, that all our duties are included in our obligation to profess christianity and obey its precepts, and that the temperance pledge is therefore superfluous. In reply to this may be urged the extraordinary character of intemperance, requiring extraordinary measures for its suppression; and the fact, that, from various causes, the profession of the christian faith is much less common than it ought to be, and that temperance societies, may be expected to include many, who are not willing, or not qualified, to make the Christian profession.

Suppose, however, that you, who are a religious man, and a conscientious man, and a wise man, have no need of the pledge for your own security; that you think that you are strong enough in your own solitary resolution. Still you do not believe that all your neighbours and all your townsmen are pious, conscientious, and wise men. You believe that there are men weaker than yourself, who need

such a safeguard to their resolutions, who can keep an express promise better than a private purpose, and who lean upon others, look to them for example, and will not take the pledge, if you refuse it. Give, then, the influence of your example to those, who will be fortified by such an express public profession and pledge, and who may be confirmed in their principles, preserved from temptation, and shielded from the darts of ridicule, by the consciousness that they do not stand alone ; but are united with numbers of the best members of society, in the best of causes.

You all acknowledge, at least, the influence of the example of entire abstinence. But in order that your example may have influence, it must be known. In order, then, to make your principles known, make a public profession of them ; in order to make your example felt, give a public pledge that, as you abstain from the accursed thing now, you will do so forever.

If time permitted, I might offer a great many reasons for uniting in a temperance society, besides those, which relate to the requisition of a pledge. But I must leave many topics untouched. I will only refer you to the acknowledged effects of these societies in our country, and throughout the world. It is not necessary to reason on general principles. The experiment has been tried. The tree is shown to be good by its fruit. Theoretical objections have been refuted by the irresistible ev-

idence of extensive experience. Is there a man here, who will pretend that the vast change in the habits of society, which has taken place within the last ten years, would have been produced without the influence of temperance societies, on the basis on which they have generally been established? I think not. Why then should we not hope and strive to do more good by the means, which have been crowned with so much success already? Why should we not hope that a more extended union, and more active exertions, will be followed by a still more abundant harvest of good.

3. I have already occupied much of your time, but I cannot conclude without touching, in very few words, upon one more topic. I mean the traffic in ardent spirit. It is a matter of some delicacy, because, on account of the small number concerned, the speaker must appear to address particular individuals from the pulpit. The necessity of the case will, I trust, be a sufficient apology for me. With all due deference for the feelings and characters of every class of my hearers, I feel bound to express my convictions on this subject. I do believe the traffic in ardent spirits to be immoral and unchristian, neither consistent with one's duty to himself, his family, his neighbour, his country, or his God. All the considerations, adduced, in the former part of the discourse, to show the use of ardent spirit to be wrong, apply with double force to the sale of it. There cannot be a more palpable inconsistency

than is exhibited by one who professes to discountenance the use of it, and yet is engaged in the sale of it. For such a person practically declares, declares by his conduct in keeping it for sale, that it is right to use it, and he affords every facility for the use of it. Whatever may be the language of his lips, he does countenance the use of spirit by his example and his exertions. He does practically invite his fellow citizens to the use of that which he knows will do them no good, and which he has every reason to believe will contribute to their injury, their ruin, their damnation. He is engaged in a business which annually causes more misery and death than the traffic in human flesh. His gain, as truly as that of the slave-dealer, is the price of blood. And I defy any man to defend the traffic in ardent spirit by a single argument, which will not apply in substance to the slave trade, or to some other employments too infamous to be named. I know that the traffic is tolerated by law, and has been by public sentiment. So in past times have been many other practices, which are now universally abhorred. But now we have the light, it is our duty to walk in it, lest we fall into condemnation. "The times of ignorance God winked at, but now doth he command every man to repent." Many who are engaged in the traffic in spirit, have not so good an apology for their occupation, as had the Athenian idolaters, who made silver shrines for the goddess Diana. They cannot even say, "Sirs, by

this craft we have our wealth." The traders in almost every village might give it up with only a small sacrifice of present profit ; for which sacrifice they would soon find a recompence in the increased ability of purchasers ; to say nothing of the reward of a good conscience, and the value of an approving mind.

I have thus endeavoured, my friends, to enforce the fundamental principles of the temperance reformation, and thus to point out the means, by which every one of you may advance the glorious cause. You may do it by exhibiting the example of entire abstinence from intoxicating drink ; by your authority in your family ; by your exertions to obtain and diffuse information on the subject ; by making the profession and giving the pledge contained in the constitutions of our temperance societies, and by renouncing the business of supplying the instrument of intoxication to those, who will use it.

I ask of you a serious consideration of the subject. More especially I call upon the friends of abstinence to consider the importance of taking a more decided, public, and united stand against the evil. Stay no longer upon the middle wall of partition, unwilling to speak or to act with firmness, undecided in regard to your duty and taking no pains to ascertain it, more afraid to do right, than the lovers of strong drink to do wrong. Let the

conscious possession of ability or influence be regarded as the call of God to you for its exertion.

You say that you do encourage the cause in some measure by your own abstinence. But you do not give to it the whole of your influence. You do not put forth the whole of your strength. Many are deterred from connecting themselves with temperance societies, because you stand aloof from them, if you do not deride and oppose them. Depend upon it, my friends, that if upon any considerations of policy, popularity, or selfishness of any kind, you continue to withhold any exertions or influence, which it is in your power to exert in favour of so great a cause, you will not be held guiltless in the day when the secrets of the heart shall be laid open. I call upon you as patriots, as philanthropists, as accountable beings, as Christians, to stand forth, and give the whole weight of your influence to the cause of humanity, of virtue, of your country, and of your God.

I call upon you, young men, to come forward, and set your faces against an enemy, which has brought foul dishonour, and awful destruction upon so many of your companions in age, companions, perhaps, in honourable ambition, and worthy resolutions. Virtue never appears so lovely as when clothed in the garments of youth. If you, who are at that period of life, when passion is strong and temptation powerful, are seen arming your-

selves against the deadly foe to your welfare and honour, and uniting your forces on the principle of total abstinence, much, very much, may be expected from your example. The more advanced in years will count it shame to be surpassed by you in the peculiar virtues of age. They will not suffer their grey hairs to be dishonoured by self-indulgence, while the crown of wisdom rests upon the heads of the young.

One word more to the members of the temperance societies, and I will close. Let us remember, my friends, that our societies will accomplish more by exemplary purity and prudent energy, than by mere amount of numbers. Let us remember that one transgressor destroyeth much good. Let us, therefore, exercise discretion in regard to the age and character of those, whom we urge to take the pledge. Let us press none to join us, until they sit down and count the cost. And let all our efforts be accompanied with meekness, humility, and charity. Let us manifest our zeal, not by boisterous denunciations of those who feel the importance of the subject less strongly than ourselves, but by the gentle arts of argument and persuasion; by gathering and diffusing light. Let us endeavour to strengthen our influence by attending to every part of our temper and behaviour, and make the spirit of self-denial conspicuous in the whole tenor of our lives. While we bear our united testimony against

one debasing vice, the parent of shame, disease, and woe, let us not be subject to the reproach of reserving to ourselves the more malignant vices of the heart, which deserve equally the reprobation of men, and incur as surely the just displeasure of God.