

An address, delivered before the Richmond and Exeter Union Society for the Promotion of Temperance : June 10, 1832 / by Charles Jewett.

Contributors

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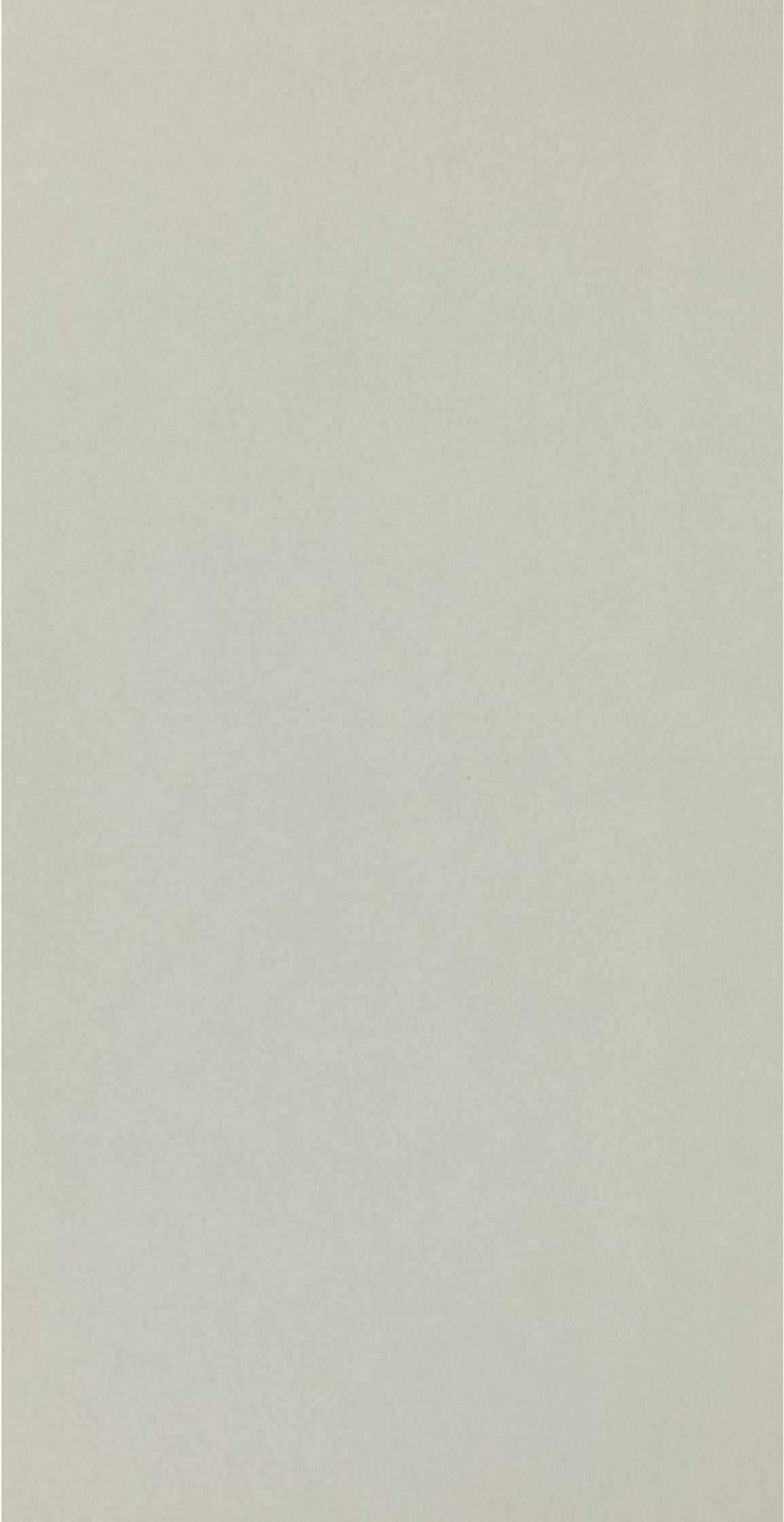
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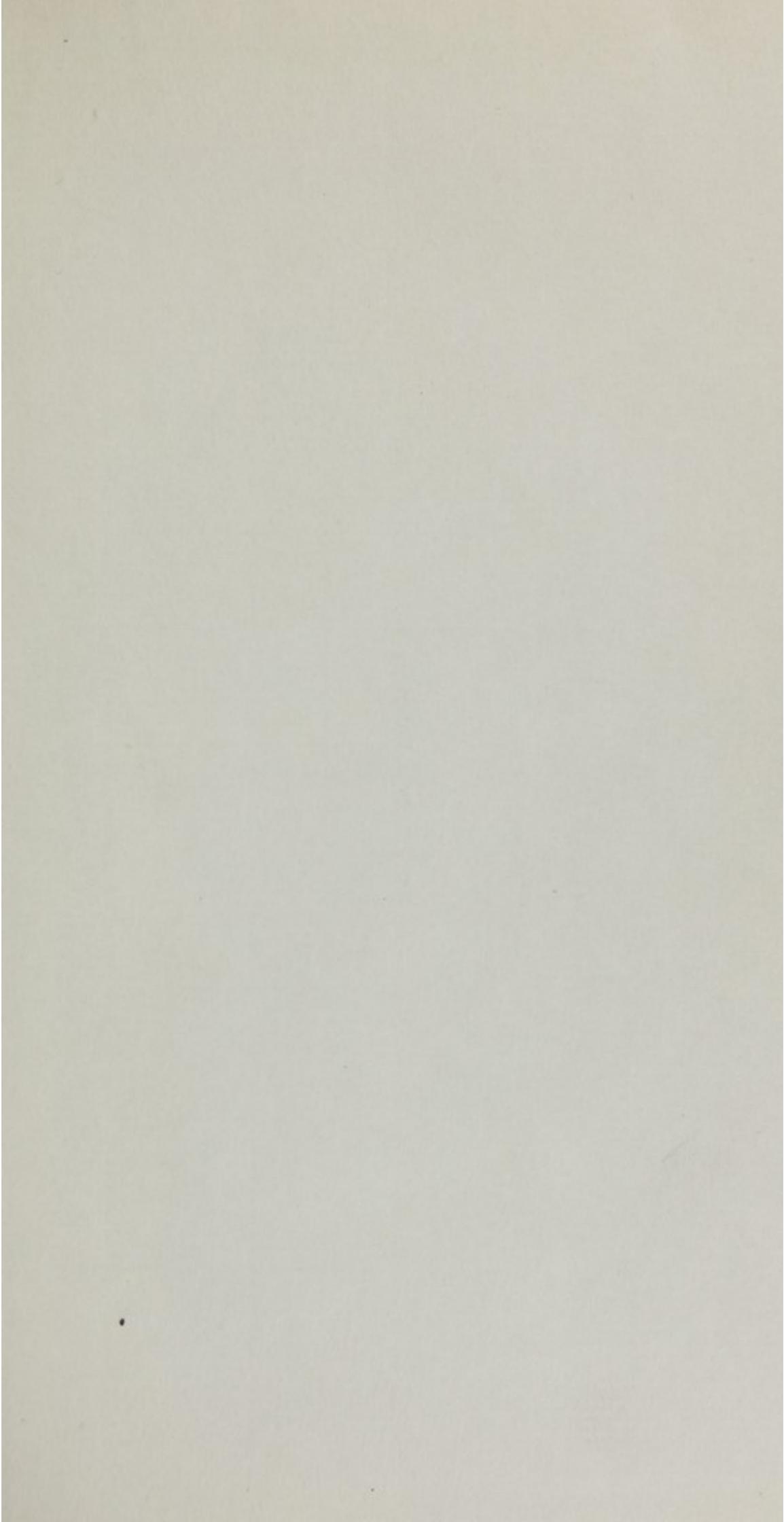
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ADDRESS BEFORE THE RICHMOND
AND EXETER UNION SOCIETY FOR
THE PROMOTION OF TEMPERANCE





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A D D R E S S .

FELLOW CITIZENS—

As our Creator has seen fit to constitute us rational, accountable, and social beings, it becomes necessary that we, as such, should from time to time make an impartial examination of the habits and customs prevalent among us, and, appealing to past experience, to our own consciences, and to the word of God for assistance in forming our judgment, endeavor to decide whether they be consistent with rationality, whether they will stand the test of our accountability to God, and whether they be the best calculated to promote our happiness as social beings, and if we find them deficient in either of those particulars, that we manifest our wisdom by a speedy reform. The subject of our inquiry at this time, is the custom of drinking ardent spirits, which from its having become almost universal through our country, and from its having been productive of fatal consequences to thousands of our countrymen, becomes an object of serious inquiry, of intense interest, to every individual here convened and throughout our country. We shall first notice some of the purposes for which it has been used. It has been used by some persons with the view of obtaining some beneficial effect which it was supposed capable of producing in the prevention of diseases to which they might be exposed; it has been used as a medicine for diseases already existing. Many have used it for the purpose of invigorating and strengthening their bodies, and thus enabling them to perform excessive labor with less fatigue and subsequent debility. But by far the most common use to which it has been applied has been to produce intoxication. It is also sometimes given to men for the purpose of preparing them for the commission of some horrid crime, to overcome their fear of consequences, to destroy their sense of right and wrong, to silence the admonitions of conscience and render them deaf to the voice of supplication, that they may

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perform the bloody act without fear, pity, or remorse of conscience.

Let us now inquire whether ardent spirits be capable of producing the beneficial effects ascribed to them, and which are thought to afford an apology for their use.

And first, is it capable of guarding us against the attack of diseases to which we may be exposed? The history of the epidemics of our own country answer no, for it is satisfactorily ascertained that they have oftener attacked and sooner proved fatal to persons who have been in the habit of drinking intoxicating liquors than to any other class of society, and in the history of the Cholera, that scourge of the human race, which has so recently visited various parts of Europe, carrying consternation and death wherever it went, its almost universal fatality among the intemperate is a striking proof of the inability of strong drink to secure us against disease.

But, says one, when a person has been for a long time exposed to cold, and become completely chilled, I know that a glass of spirits will do him good and prevent him from becoming sick in consequence of it. But, sir, let me tell you he can do nothing which is better calculated to produce the effect which he wishes to avoid, for it is not the contracting and debilitating effects of cold that we have to fear, for this of itself would injure no man if not carried to the freezing point. It is from over action that the constitution will receive injury if at all while the system is endeavoring to establish a healthy balance of the circulation. Now whatever will tend to increase the reaction of the system after exposures must increase the danger of over action and thus prove injurious, and is not ardent spirits of all other articles the best calculated to produce that effect. It is said also to be necessary in very warm weather, but by what process of reasoning its advocates come to this conclusion I am as yet unable to learn; and that an article, the stimulant qualities of which are acknowledged by all, should exert a cooling and soothing influence upon the human system when over heated and in a state of violent agitation, is contrary to reason and common sense.

But, says another, if they are useless as a preventive of disease, they are certainly necessary as a medicine. I admit that

there may be certain cases where their use may be convenient, but I will venture to assert that among the whole catalogue of diseases to which the human frame is subject, there cannot one be found in which ardent spirits in an uncombined state is indispensable. But even allowing them to be necessary as a medicine, would that afford an argument in favor of their use in a state of health? Surely not, for what has a healthy man to do with medicine?

But we pass to inquire whether it possess any strengthening or invigorating qualities which should recommend it to those whose occupations in life are such as render it necessary that they should undergo excessive labor and fatigue. On this subject authorities of high standing are at hand. Doctor Bell, one of the greatest surgeons of whom England can boast, says, "Rum, whether used habitually, moderately, or in excessive quantities, always diminishes the strength of the body and renders man more susceptible of disease, and unfit for any service in which vigor or activity is required." Dr. Rush, one of the most celebrated physicians of this country, and one whose memory ought ever to be held sacred by his countrymen as one of the signers of the declaration of our Independence, observes, "There is no nourishment in ardent spirits; the strength they produce in labor is of a transitory nature, and is always followed by a sense of weakness and fatigue." We might adduce the testimony of a multitude of others which would concur with those already quoted, but we desist, and for the benefit of certain individuals whose arrogance leads them to discard all authorities, and still maintain that the moderate use of ardent spirits is beneficial and salutary, we will endeavor to give some reasons for our opinion drawn from the operations of the animal economy; and for this purpose we will state in familiar terms that there is a self-preserving power in the human system which is ever on the alert, and busied in expelling hurtful materials from the body. Thus, when a person has by accident, in swallowing, received a small portion of some solid or liquid substance into his windpipe, where nothing but pure air ought to have admittance, the individual is immediately thrown into a violent fit of coughing, for this is the only mode by which nature is able to dislodge the injurious substance, which if left there

would produce disease and perhaps death. We see also the operation of this self-preserving principle in throwing a column of air forcibly through the nose as in sneezing to dislodge certain irritating substances which some persons are so industriously forcing into that tortured organ. Again, let a person get some irritating substance into his eye, and a sudden flow of tears announces that nature is at work to wash off the noxious particles. We see also in the moisture that constantly exudes from the skin, and in the vapour that is as constantly thrown off from the lungs, and which may be seen in a cold winter's morning in the form of a dense fog as it issues from the mouth and nose, nothing but the effort of nature to throw off liquid particles which are unnecessary, and which would prove hurtful if longer retained within the body. And now let me ask those who so strenuously contend that the use of inebriating drinks are healthy, how it happens that after having swallowed a portion of it, the self-preserving powers of the system set themselves to work, and if I may be allowed the expression, throw open every waste gate of the system to rid themselves of the poisonous article as fast as possible. That this is the case it is useless to deny, else why do we find it issuing from the lungs of the grog-drinker every moment, which we easily discover by his offensive breath. If it be that this is the healthy substance which many suppose it, then nature is altogether mistaken with regard to the qualities of that article which she is so industriously throwing off at every breath.

But I would ask those who so strenuously contend that the moderate use of ardent spirits is healthy and invigorating, how it happened that our ancestors, who made no use of them except as a medicine, lived to greater age, enjoyed better health, and were able to withstand more hardships than we their degenerated descendants. That this is the fact there can be no dispute. Cast your thoughts back to the time when our Pilgrim Fathers landed on the Plymouth rock; contemplate their situation; they have left their friends behind them and are separated from them by wide waters of the Atlantic; it is the commencement of a dreary winter; they are without habitations to shelter them from the inclemencies of the season; poorly provided with the necessaries of life; in the midst of a wilderness inhabited

only by wild and ferocious beasts and men as wild and savage as they; yet they ask not for a little rum to enable them to undergo the hardships to which such a situation exposes them. No, they met all those hardships, privations and dangers with no other stimulus than the love of *Liberty* and the pure and undefiled religion of Jesus Christ; and would to God, my Christian hearers, we sought for no other at the present day.

The experiment has been fairly tried in numberless instances within a few years to ascertain which of the two would perform the most labor in a given time, say a week or a month, the man who drank spirits moderately, or he who entirely abstained. The result has, in every instance, been in favor of the one who did not use it, and there are now numbers of our larger farms and most extensive manufacturing establishments where there is not a drop of ardent spirits drank, yet there is the accustomed quantity of labor performed and in a much better manner, the laborers have better health, better morals, more enjoyment and more money, and are removed from the danger of becoming drunkards.

If I in thus estimating the advantages to be derived from the use of ardent spirits have come to different conclusions from many who have professed to examine the subject impartially, I think I can point them to the cause. When a subject of importance is to be decided, it ought to be decided according to its own intrinsic merits as ascertained by the light of reason, the weight of unimpeachable testimony and the word of God. But let me ask, is the question relative to the propriety of using or disusing intoxicating drinks decided in this manner? the observation of every man must answer no. The real merits of the case are not taken into the account, the testimony of thousands of good men are cast away as a matter of no importance, the voice of reason is unheard, the word of God is disregarded, and the question at last decided by our vitiated tastes and our depraved appetites.

Fellow citizens, is this right thus to settle a question on which the present and eternal happiness of thousands may depend? But let us notice some of the injurious effects of intemperance upon the *Moral*, *Intellectual* and *Physical* powers of man. Its effects upon the moral faculties of man is generally

first discovered in the entire destruction of those fine sensibilities of our nature which enable us to participate in the joys and sorrows of others ; for let a man be under the influence of this potent stimulus, and the accents of woe fall unheeded on his ear, his eye remains tearless although human misery in its most aggravated form be presented before him. It is only from the destruction of his sensibilities that we can account for his growing dislike of what he once loved. Is he a husband and a father, the melting accents of conjugal affection and the artless prattle of his children as they play their childish gambols about the door, or climb on his knees, are fast losing that bewitching spell by which they once bound him to his home, and the loud laugh, the obscene jest, and the echoing halloo, as they proceed from the neighboring dram-shop, when compared with the innocent and instructive conversation of his sober friends, fall like music on his ear, and he eagerly embraces the first opportunity to join his drunken and rioting companions. It destroys also his susceptibility to good impressions : hence we seldom attempt to reason with a man while under the influence of ardent spirits, and all the moralists and divines in Christendom cannot make a good impression that will be lasting on the mind of the inebriate.

He loses also his regard for truth and honesty, and it is well known that a man who has contracted a strong relish for intoxicating liquors will both lie and steal to procure it, while he would shudder at the thought of being guilty of either under any other circumstances.

But we pass to notice some of its effects upon the intellectual powers of man. On this subject, language would fail me to express the feelings of my heart, and which I doubt not have been the feelings of many others. To see that being whom the sacred word informs us was made but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honor, dragged down from the eminence on which he was originally placed, humbled in the dust and transformed into a brute by intoxication, that judgment so quick to decide, that imagination so wonderfully constituted as to be able to fly abroad while the body is at rest and visit the remotest parts of creation, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to be again present with us, that memory

so faithful to treasure up the ideas of scenes as they pass and again bring them before us for our pleasure and gratification when sickness or old age shall have prevented us from taking an active part in life, to see all these exquisitely formed faculties impaired and finally destroyed, is it not enough to produce an unconquerable hatred, an eternal abhorrence of those habits which can so debase the most ennobling powers of man? and that it does this who will venture to deny? Who is there who have not seen active, intelligent and talented young men, who bid fair to become honorable members of society, brought to the lowest pitch of degradation by this beastly vice? And let us for a moment mark the steps by which he is ruined. He is first taught a respect for ardent spirits by seeing "the decanter which contains it occupying an honorable place on the side-board", and the glasses in which it is intended to be drank arranged in genteel array by its side; and he first contracts a love for it by having it administered to him as a medicine for every trifling ailment, as though it were an universal panacea, a never failing restorative to health; or it may be from being indulged in a small portion of his father's morning glass, his noon-day dram, or his evening potation. Thus he may contract a love for it before his parents dream of danger. As he advances in life and begins to go abroad in the world, he meets with others whose age is but a few years in advance of his own, who have already made such proficiency in this school of vice as to be able to drink what is considered a genteel quantity for a beginner, without experiencing any other ill consequences from it than a disposition for sinful mirth and a desire to repeat the dose. He is invited to take a glass with them and become a man; he complies, and while under its influence is guilty of some indiscretion which reaches the ears of his parents. Their eyes are now for the first time open to his danger. They reprove him for his disorderly conduct. They warn him with parental tenderness of the danger of associating with such companions. They may even tell him of the bewitching nature of ardent spirits, and point him to this one and to that one who have been ruined by its use. He will perhaps listen to their admonitions out of respect for his parents, but when left to his own reflections he will reason thus with himself: If there were

really so much danger of persons becoming drunkards from drinking a little, would my parents dare to make that constant use of it which they do? no, it is only an argument made use of to frighten me from innocent enjoyment. Thus we see how their example destroys the effect of their admonitions, and encourages him to proceed. He does so, and although his progress may be slow at first on account of some fears and misgivings which may arise when he sees examples of the misery which this habit has brought upon others, yet when age has removed the restraints of parental authority, and he comes to act for himself, he goes onward with rapid strides to destruction, and soon, very soon, his blotched and bloated countenance, his trembling hand, his faltering and unsteady step, and in short, the rapid failure of all his powers both of body and mind announce to those round him that to him the final catastrophe is at hand. He is seized with some slight illness from which a temperate man of good constitution would have but little to fear, but it is more than his shattered frame can endure; he totters for a moment upon the brink of that awful precipice over which he is suspended, he looks back upon a life misspent, and the remembrance of all his high handed transgressions rush like an overwhelming flood on his mind, and give him a foretaste of the miseries of the damned; with gloomy forebodings he looks into eternity, and in utter hopelessness and despair he makes his last awful plunge and is lost forever. Where now are the long cherished hopes of his fond father? Where are the cheering anticipations of his affectionate mother? Alas! they are buried with him in his untimely grave; they have lived long enough to see that son on whom they doated with all a parent's fondness, become a loathsome drunkard, a miserable outcast from human society, yea, even set apart from the common sympathies of mankind, they have seen him brought to disgrace, to infamy, and to death, by this ruinous custom; and now let me ask what additional evil is necessary to bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? This is no description of imaginary evils, no picture of the fancy—it is a plain, unvarnished tale of truth, a description of a horrid tragedy too often acted among us to the very life. That an article of so much power should produce very marked effects upon the hu-

man body might be rationally anticipated, and we find it to be the case. Its first effects are generally seen in a disordered state of the stomach. If any person would wish to know how this is produced, he may form a very good idea of its first effects by holding a quantity of it in his mouth a short time, and I would advise every man who indulges in the use of it to try this simple experiment if he can long enough resist his inclination to swallow it. If retained for a few moments within the mouth, it will corrugate all the parts with which it comes in contact, produce an increased degree of heat, and render it insensible to the presence of ordinary stimuli. Now this is exactly the first effect which it produces when taken into the stomach, and these effects, if often repeated, frequently produce a change of structure in that organ; change of structure also frequently takes place in the liver and other important organs. Inflammation of the internal organs, with such peculiar modifications as renders the ordinary mode of treatment for similar diseases, produced by other causes, entirely inapplicable, is also a common consequence, and these are among the most intractable diseases with which the physician has to contend. If he adopt a reducing plan of treatment for the removal of the complaint, he has the mortification of finding the constitution of his patient sinking faster than the disease, and he is obliged to desist. If he adopt a different and more tonic plan of treatment, he will find the disease gaining strength faster than the constitution, and he is at last forced by sad necessity to be an idle spectator of mischief which he may deplore but cannot remedy. It would require a volume to describe the numerous diseases which the physician frequently meets with as a consequence of intemperance.

There is one effect which it sometimes produces which I cannot pass without noticing, and that is its tendency to produce corpulency in some persons. This, however, is mostly confined to those whose circumstances in life enable them to pamper their appetites with high seasoned and stimulating food as their desire for more simple nourishment declines. But let no one be deceived by this specious appearance, and led to believe the individual in good health, notwithstanding his corpulency, *for secret mischief works within*, and the lapse of a

few years will show you that instead of being in health he was but

“ A bloated mass of rank unwieldy woe.”

If the evils of intemperance were confined to their guilty authors, they would be comparatively trifling to what they now are, but oh, how many innocent hearts must bleed in consequence of the misconduct of one. I might go on to describe the misery which the drunkard entails upon his family and relations, but time would fail me to enumerate them all, and unfortunately they are too well known to need any description. The vice has become so common that scarce a family can be found who have not suffered from it in some of its branches, and to describe the poverty, the misery, the crimes, and the deaths that have been caused by it, would present a catalogue of evils enough to appal the stoutest heart, and cause any man not destitute of all regard for himself and love to mankind or the fear of God, to dash from his lips the poisonous draught.

But perhaps you may say, we know all this, and should be glad to see intemperance with all its kindred vices swept from our land, but what can be done to effect this? The answer is ready—entire abstinence on the part of every temperate man is *all* that is necessary, and what objection can there be to a remedy so simple and yet so effectual? If you were asked to do that which must injure your property, your health, or subject you to any real inconveniences, there might be reason for objection. But in this case you are asked to save your property, your character, your health and your life, and is it a hard thing to comply with such a request? You are solicited to discontinue the use of an article entirely useless to any man in a state of health. I know very well that there will be some who will still plead that it does them good; but where one will do it from a real conviction that this is the case, ninety-nine will use that plea as a cloak to cover up the love of it and shield them from the merited disgrace of being considered a slave to their appetites.

But, says a respectable man, who considers himself a temperate man, although he takes his glass as regularly as he does his meals, “ I am guilty of no excesses, I can take care of myself, what have you to do with me? your business is with the

intemperate; go and reform the drunkard if you wish to do good." But, let me ask, how shall I do it? Shall I go and tell him that this expensive habit if persisted in will eventually destroy his property and make him an object of charity, and that himself and family must shortly become the tenants of an alms-house? What cares he for all that, he has taken his glass and feels rich. Shall I go and tell him that in continuing this vice he will lose the affection and esteem of his acquaintances and friends, and even of his own family, and shortly he will know what it is to be destitute of a friend to sympathise with him in distress, or to assist him in time of trouble? He heeds it not—he has taken his glass, and he feels perfectly independent of all mankind. Shall I tell him that this course of conduct is calculated to destroy his health, to bring on a train of loathsome diseases, and finally bring him to a premature grave; what will be his answer? Why, it does him good, and he feels better. Shall I tell him that it will weaken his intellect and finally destroy those wonderful powers of mind which were created for noble purposes? He will think me much mistaken, for he has drained his bottle to the very dregs, and fancies he knows more than all about him. Finally, shall I go and tell him that happiness awaits the virtuous and temperate, and that the intemperate will meet the just reward of their vices beyond the grave? It will be of no avail; the glories of Heaven could not tempt him to relinquish his bottle, nor the terrors of a never ending Hell deter him from gratifying his appetite.

It is then with the temperate that we have to do, and we plead with you by all that is dear to you in life, and by all that is solemn in the retribution of Eternity, no longer to advocate this cause, no longer let your influence be felt in favor of temperate use of ardent spirits, for here is the bottom of the mischief, here is the starting point from which all sinful expenditures of time and property, the diseases, crimes and deaths originate which we have to lament.

And to those who are engaged in the baneful traffic of purchasing and distributing among their fellow men this destructive article, let me observe, have you ever seriously reflected upon that passage of scripture, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink!" And who are those agents to whom that woe

is denounced if you are not of the number? It is an established principle that a man ought never to engage in any business upon which he dare not ask the blessing of God. And now let me ask you if, when you receive almost the last sixpence which a needy family can produce from some of its members, perhaps from some little boy or girl shivering with the winter's cold, or blistered by the rays of the summer's sun, as they find their way through its tattered garments, and while you deliberately turn your faucet to draw for a drunken father his accustomed quart, can you lift up your heart to God and crave his blessing upon such a calling? No, you dare not; you would fear the vengeance of an insulted God against such high handed wickedness and such daring impiety. But you may excuse yourself by saying you do not sell to the drunkard; no, it is not for your interest to do it, but you may have sold to him while he was a temperate man; he may have been educated in the school of drunkenness at your counter, but when he had squandered his property and could no longer meet his payments, your conscience became exceedingly tender, and when the poor besotted victim of intemperance begs of you to trust but one glass to satisfy his insatiate longings, you can vociferate in loud and determined tone, *you shall not have it*, and the poor wretch as he turns disappointed and unsatisfied away, mutters his curses against you as one of the prime authors of his destruction.

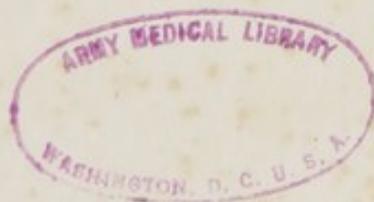
Yes, I repeat it, it is the distribution of spirituous liquors among the temperate and that temperate use of it as it is called, and for which so many plead, that is the foundation of all the mischief. We therefore entreat you to abstain altogether from the use of an article which does no good, but which is the source of infinite mischief. Come up to the only safe principle of entire abstinence; enrol your names with the benevolent and good; let your whole influence be exerted in favor of this cause, and contribute your share to guard yourselves, your families and your country from the evils of intemperance.

Christians, the followers of him who while on earth went about doing good, permit me to address a few words to you. Are you sensible of the awful and solemn responsibilities that rest upon you that you should let your light shine before men? Do you not pray, let thy kingdom come, but can you expect

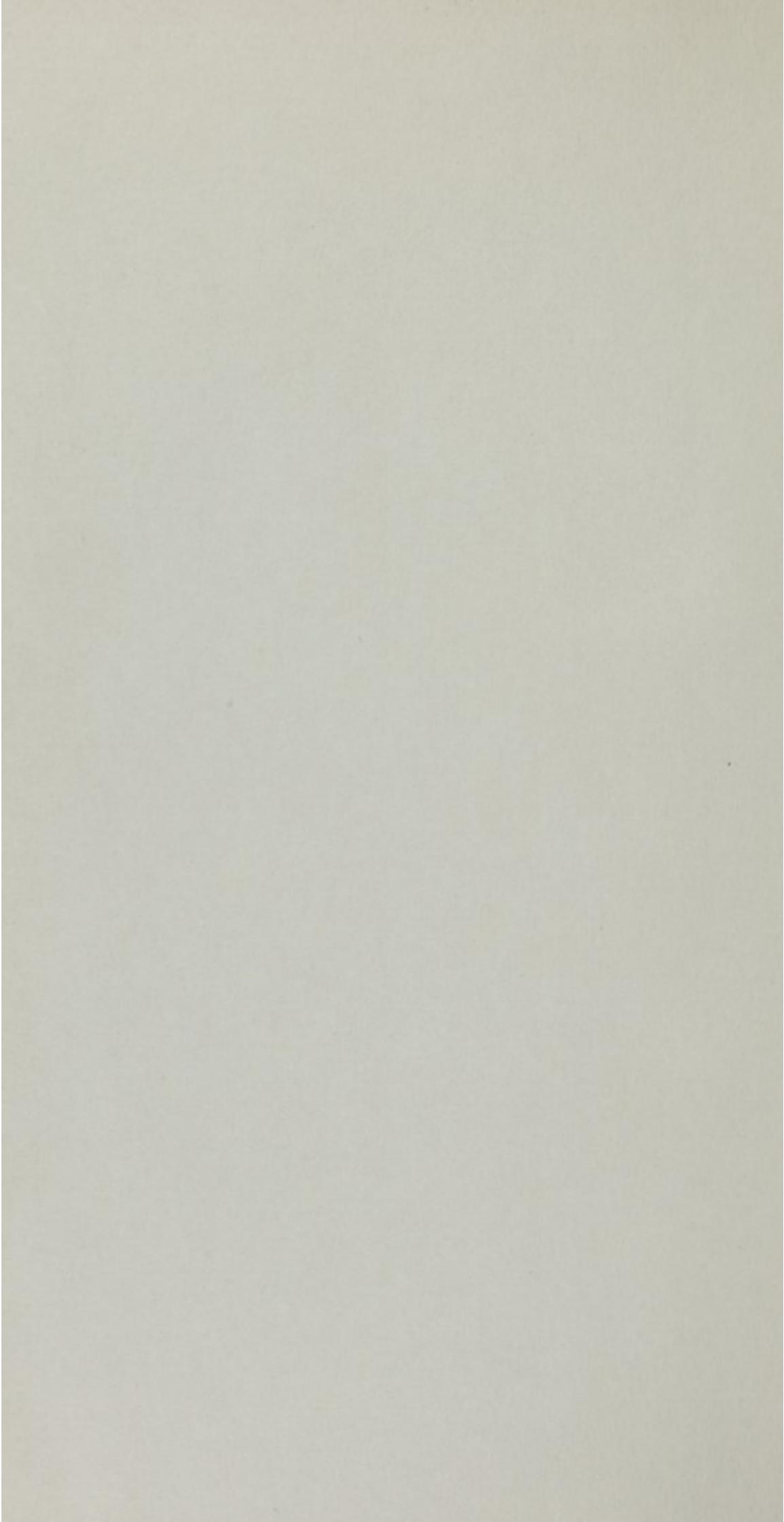
an answer to your prayers while you are standing idle spectators of the mischief which intemperance produces? You have seen property sinfully expended, health wantonly sacrificed, character totally destroyed, and life eventually lost, and what have you done to prevent it? Yea more, you have seen the moral sensibilities of many men destroyed, and thus their reformation rendered almost an impossibility. You have even seen the church of God polluted by intemperate members who have become intemperate, and that too notwithstanding they had formed the resolution never to drink otherwise than temperately. And will you still plead for that very temperate use which has drawn them into sin and finally destroyed them? You have seen the Sabbath, which we are commanded to keep holy, wantonly broken by parties of drunken, rioting and disorderly persons, who would not have collected had it not been for the love of rum which has drawn them together; and would you by your example contribute to the repetition of such offences? You may assert that it does not, that you are the friend of temperance; but we demand the proof of that assertion, give us that proof in your conduct and it shall suffice. But while with facts before your eyes of the extent of moral evil and wretchedness which intemperance produces, and the entire failure of all other plans which human ingenuity can devise to check its progress but the principle of entire abstinence, if you stop short of this principle and withhold your assent from it, the world needs further proof of your assertion, and the real friends of temperance have as yet no sure pledge of your friendship or your co-operation.

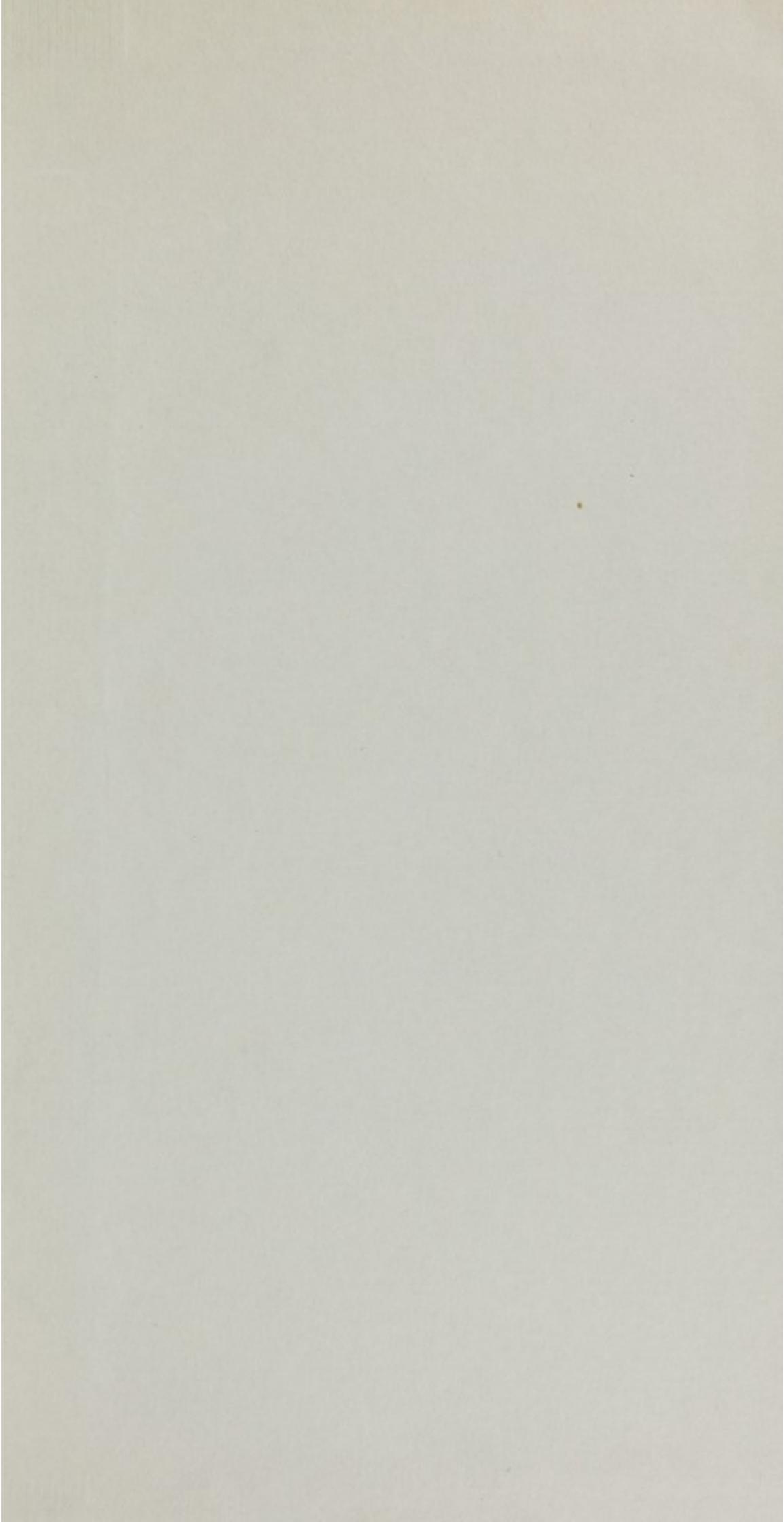
Oh, how much reason has the church of God to lament that she has ever for a moment nourished within her bosom the viper of intemperance which has so often stung her to the quick. Who can tell the extent of the evils which the influence of one intemperate professor may produce? And how much reason have we to fear for the interest of a church the care of which is committed to an intemperate minister,

“ While at the very altar’s horns he stands,
And breaks and blesses with polluted hands.”



To the members of this society I would observe, your cause is good, for it aims at the best interests of mankind, and it will prosper. It is at this moment rapidly progressing, and its steady progress is already hailed by thousands of its friends as a sure pledge of its ultimate success. But do not think although you have escaped from this whirlpool which is yearly drawing in its thousands and dragging them down to disgrace and death, although you are delivered from this worse than Egyptian bondage, and have been enabled to declare yourselves independent of ardent spirits, that you have done all which duty demands. For although the ranks of the intemperate are thinned daily by death and frequently by desertion, while there are licensed schools established all around us to educate new recruits to fill the vacancies, your work is not done, you have yet much to do, and I exhort you to be persevering, to be untiring in your efforts to promote the welfare of this cause, and not suffer the scoffs and sneers of a drunken rabble to deter you from prosecuting your endeavors to do away the evils of intemperance, nor the low whispering of those who cherish a secret love for intoxicating drinks, and who yet from the growing popularity of your cause, and their regard for their own reputation, dare not openly oppose you to hinder you from doing your duty. Discountenance its use whenever you meet with it, meet the evil on the very threshold by opposing that temperate use as it is called, which is the source and fountain of all this mischief. Go on and acquit yourselves manfully, and receive for your reward the luxury of doing good.





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