

Teetotalers and teetotalism : a letter to the Rev. Dr. Campbell, in vindication of teetotaliam and the teetotal body from the attacks made by him and his anonymous correspondents / by Thomas Beggs.

Contributors

Beggs, Thomas, 1808-1896.
Campbell, John, 1794-1867.

Publication/Creation

London : W. Tweedie, [1854]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/dg2vp6tb>

License and attribution

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

TEETOTALERS AND TEETOTALISM.

A LETTER TO THE REV. DR. CAMPBELL,

IN VINDICATION OF TEETOTALISM AND THE TEETOTAL BODY
FROM THE ATTACKS MADE BY HIM AND HIS ANONYMOUS CORRESPONDENTS.

BY THOMAS BEGGS.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

TO THE REV. DR. CAMPBELL.

MY DEAR SIR,

You will no doubt think it strange that I should address you, and especially in this manner, upon the subject of your present quarrel with the London Temperance League. It is not my intention to undertake the defence of that body: as they have men among them quite capable of entering upon such a work, it would be impertinent for me to volunteer it. I am not a member of the League, have taken no part in its counsels, nor have I been identified in any way with it, beyond that of occasionally taking part in its meetings, when invited to do so by the Committee, and this I have done in accordance with a rule I have adopted for years, not to refuse any aid I can render to any body of Temperance Reformers who are honestly seeking to promote the cause, however I may object to their methods of management, or differ upon minor matters. Belonging to no particular Temperance organization, I refuse my aid to none. I deplore as much as you can the little extravagances into which some of the societies have fallen through zeal and inexperience, and I have sought opportunities to express to members of the League my disapproval of many of the public displays which, although they might be well meant, could not fail to make the judicious grieve. I am the last man to deprecate, or object to criticism; I use it freely, and invite it on all occasions. When I have heard others speak in tones of anger or distrust of your former animadversions, I have always vindicated your right to free speech. However I might regret the severity with which you used the rod, I felt that chastisement being deserved, many of our earnest but imprudent friends would be all the better for knowing that your eye was upon them. But I fear that in this instance you have been betrayed by your feelings into an act of injustice. You have suffered a trifling indiscretion, which would have been adequately punished by a passing criticism, to goad you into sweeping condemnation of a large body of men who had no part in that folly, or fault, whichever it may be; and you have given a sanction to attacks upon the principles of

Teetotalism, which could only be rendered respectable or dangerous by the prominence they had assigned to them in your columns. I claim the privilege of an old laborer in the cause, to defend principles to which I owe much, which have a sacred character in my eyes, and which, I trust, I shall always have the courage to uphold, however stout, influential, or numerous may be the body of assailants.

I address you with all respect. No one could rejoice more thoroughly than I did, when your name was first announced as an adherent to the Temperance cause. I hoped and expected much from your advocacy; and in this I have not been disappointed, for I know several instances of excellent men having been led to a favourable investigation of our principles from reading your articles, especially those in the *Christian Witness*. But in exact proportion to the usefulness of your former labors in the cause, will be the injury inflicted by any backward step. The inevitable result of the course you have taken in the *British Banner*, for the last few weeks, will be that of furnishing the enemies of the cause with arguments against us, and of creating divisions in the house of our friends. This gives me no ordinary pain. We have difficulties enough in the old-fashioned habits and prejudices of society to contend with, and in the apathy of the educated public, without having the additional and most unnatural one of a quarrel with a man whom we had hitherto regarded as a fast friend. Already I have heard it said by men, whose good opinion I am sure you would not willingly lose, that Dr. Campbell was seeking an occasion to separate formally and for ever from the body of Temperance men. I do not believe this; I name it only as showing one of the constructions which will be put upon the controversy into which you have thrown yourself. I shall speak with all sincerity and openness, and I can assure you that nothing but a sense of duty could have induced me to intrude upon you at all. I had at first some thoughts of seeing you privately, simply to suggest whether too much stress had not been laid upon the proceedings at Exeter Hall; but the conduct pursued in the last *Banner* renders such a course inexpedient. You have left the original field of warfare and taken up new ground. You now attack the principle upon which our movement is based. You have departed from the pledge solemnly given, when the paper was first commenced, that no anonymous correspondence was to find a place in your columns, and admitted a letter, *Hear both Sides*, which repeats all the old arguments to which we have been accustomed to listen for years. You have adopted the article by inserting it, and we must hold you responsible for it. I am not surprised that such a dull, illogical epistle should have been written, for I have been condemned to hear the same arguments, almost without variation in manner, language or style, in sermon, tract and debate, for the last fourteen years; but I am surprised that Dr. Campbell should have given currency to such lame and impotent

0:
m
4274
354
415

BARCODE ON BACK

effusions. This article becomes your own, and unfortunately will be adopted by many as a triumphant answer to the fanatical people—the teetotalers. We cannot help it. We can find, and have found, arguments as potent as science and observation can make them—we have converted or silenced every honest opponent, but we cannot find brains for those who want them, and there are few things I should regard as more hopeless than to convince a class of minds of which the writer of *Hear both Sides* is one. I regret that it should receive a borrowed weight from the Editor of the *British Banner*, and that the masculine intellect of Dr. Campbell should become sponsor for so much trash.

It is necessary, perhaps, to shew how much flame has been created by a single spark—and to explain the grounds of the quarrel. I have gathered the particulars from impartial spectators, and after all there was no such serious outrage upon propriety as your statements would lead us to infer. I make no excuse for the doggerel verses which the Committee had adopted as a fitting welcome to Mr. Gough, and it would be no apology to say that I have seen effusions quite as barren of sense and poetry, although perhaps not so defiant of the rules of grammar, adopted at religious celebrations. I dislike all processions, banners and decorations, but something must be allowed for the customs of the people. Great numbers of the temperance body have belonged to Odd-fellows, Druids and Foresters' lodges, where such paraphernalia is considered a necessary part of their anniversary proceedings. We cannot break down all these things at once in a community where pagan honours are paid at the funeral of a dead warrior, and where the first city of the world still rejoices in the idle pageantry of a Lord Mayor's show. I would that nothing worse than the flaunting of a few tawdry banners ever appeared at the public dinners and celebrations of our scientific and religious bodies. I do not defend the use of banners nor trumpets, and would never make myself a party to their being used. But a passing rebuke might have sufficed. Is it necessary to enter upon this theme week after week, in order to satisfy reasonable people of its extravagance. Of the language used at the breakfast, I can speak in no other terms than that of condemnation; but men were there who had laboured long and heartily in our cause, and who had clung to it when that cause was reviled, and maligned, and scouted in all well-to-do society. Such men generally become sensitive less of themselves than of the honor of the cause they have espoused. Surely, Dr. Campbell could have afforded to be magnanimous on such an occasion. It is not necessary to borrow the club of Hercules to crush a gnat.

But the gravaman of the charge is still behind. The meeting was not opened with prayer, and therefore it began with Atheism; and as it did not conclude with prayer, it ended with Atheism. This is a gross and insulting charge. Does the absence of formal public prayer necessarily imply

that the Divine being or his assistance are ignored. Are we to make our Temperance meetings into religious meetings, or be condemned as Atheists? It may be that many men are deterred from joining our body from this cause, but I believe that such men would find some other pretext if that was not in existence. Now, I shall not shrink from or evade the charge. I have always been and am now opposed to any form of public worship being adopted at our Temperance Meetings, except such meetings are held in places of worship and in connexion with Christian congregations; and I protest against any means being used to coerce us into a practice which experience has shown to be undesirable. I will always lift my voice against the Temperance platform being made other than neutral ground, where men of all denominations can meet to promote the common good. The question of opening our meetings with prayer is not one of to-day, but has been discussed again and again; there is no rule for or against it; and I will venture to affirm that in the majority of cases, prayer is adopted at the commencement of our meetings. I never made an objection where the feelings of the managers of the meeting were in favour of such a course, but I have during a lengthened Temperance advocacy never seen reason to alter the opinion I first adopted. I am therefore determined not to be silent when this intense sectarianism, which would carry the peculiar points of its own creed, and the ceremonies of its own form of worship, into every assembly where it enters, attacks us for the omission of public prayer. I should speak with the greatest possible deference before you on general subjects, but it is no boast when I say, that I have had much more enlarged opportunities of estimating the nature of the work in which we are engaged than you can possibly have. I am an advocate of pure and uncompromising Teetotalism, as I believe that it is the instrumentality by which we must lift up the down-trodden and debased masses of our countrymen; and I can prove by hard dry statistics, that more has been done to improve their condition by its means than by any other that have been employed during the present century. What is the great scheme of our enterprise? It is this. We have found that the drinking system is at the root of most of our social ills, that it is the parent of ignorance, the fountain of crime, disease, and uncleanness. Science and experience have shown that strong drinks, whereby we mean all liquors containing the subtle poison alcohol, are the enemies of health, and therefore their introduction into the human system is as much at variance with the laws of God as written upon the human constitution, as if arsenic, prussic acid, or any other deadly poison were taken. Besides all this, it can be shown that the drinking customs keep up, feed, and foster manifold crimes, cruelties and follies. The business of the Temperance Reformation therefore is, to teach mankind the nature and properties of intoxicating drink, and to expose the inconsistency, wickedness, and folly of the

customs which sustain and encourage its use. Teetotalism is less a moral precept than a physical truth; to expound its doctrines, the divine is not so much needed as the man of science. Although it is the harbinger of other reforms, and becomes in a great many instances the pioneer of religion, it is not a religious association nor a strictly religious theme. Then why be so anxious to import religious observances into it. The cause of sanitary reform is kindred to it in its nature and results. I have given more lectures on the subject of sanitary reform, than, I believe, any man living, and have seen on my platforms clergymen and ministers of religion in greater numbers than I have ever witnessed at temperance meetings; and I never heard in any case one of them suggest the introduction of prayer. Let these men be asked, and they would tell you at once that they did not depend less upon Divine aid in every good work, because they did not choose in a mixed assembly, and on such a theme, to introduce formal prayer or thanksgiving. Why is it necessary that a temperance meeting, any more than a lecture on science at a mechanics' institution, should open with a religious service. I fear, and I speak with perfect soberness, that the form is often retained when the spirit which ought to be present is away. Piety may exist without these ostentatious displays. The mannerism of set prayers on public occasions seems to me little likely to impress the minds of the multitude with those thoughtful and reverential feelings which it is so desirable to cultivate, and I never observe the form without recalling the rebuke of the Saviour to the pharisees of old.

Why should this vexed question be so continually forced upon us. I need not remind Dr. Campbell of the discussions which agitated the friends of the Bible Society, some years ago, on this very question, of beginning their meetings with prayer, nor of the result, which was a decision to omit prayer; and this has been the invariable practice at all the Bible Society meetings I have attended. They had the same reason as we have for the omission, namely, that their society embraced Christian men of all denominations, who held very various opinions on the subject of vocal and extemporaneous prayer. Why do you not tax the leaders of the Bible Society with Atheism. The Bible Society acted wisely, and what applied to them applies equally to us. Will you tell us what New Testament precept or example we neglect by opening a Temperance Meeting without prayer?

It has been felt by the leading minds of our movement, that it was always desirable to avoid anything that would give a sectarian character to our enterprize. We have men of all denominations, and men who make no profession of religion. The attempt has been made in some quarters to introduce a test—that those admitted to membership should make a declaration of belief in Divine revelation. I object to all such tests, as destroying the character of our enterprize. Our test is the temperance pledge. We have gone with that

in our hands to the most abandoned—we have invited the habitually profligate. Our early meetings were often filled by the rabble from the pot-houses—the blasphemer—the drunkard—the dishonest. The men came to hoot us down; but many were won. The advocacy was very various: some speakers dwelt upon the loss of health and character—some upon the physical and moral degradation, and some took higher ground and brought religious arguments to bear. The teetotal societies thus formed, almost without definite plan and rule, but depending entirely upon the voluntary aid of a number of philanthropic but humble men, have been blessed to the rescue of thousands. It is our province to make men sober—to warn the sober from the dangers of strong drink. Let the religious congregations do their duty as we have humbly attempted to do ours, and they will reap where we have sown.

You have got together several complaints of other Temperance Societies besides the League, having got up indecent and immoral exhibitions to draw the multitude. Indiscriminate censure is at the best a wooden instrument, and even in the hands of Dr. Campbell it does little execution. This is a free country, and there is no law, nor have we the power, to prevent any body of men from uniting together, calling themselves a Teetotal Society, and getting up a ball. There are a great many societies in London; some thirty in Manchester, and perhaps nearly the same number in Leeds. These societies have no federal head—no central government—and all attempts to constitute one have failed, as it might, from the very nature of things, be supposed they would. Will you be good enough to inform us how we can prevent one of these little societies getting up a ball or concert? What power has any religious organization over the various little sects that cover this land? and it would be just as reasonable to hold Christianity responsible for the freaks and follies of the thousand and one sects which have sprung up in the Christian era, and which have brought a scandal upon the simple and pure faith of Jesus of Nazareth, as to hold Teetotalism responsible for the acts of all its followers. I feel ashamed that I should have to ask Dr. Campbell to reflect upon these things. But although many of the doings on these occasions are reprehensible, all are not so. Many of the fetes got up, although I never share in them, I cannot condemn. The working man deserves his holiday, and must have it; and I am a strenuous advocate for rational amusements, in order to compete with the public-house. You seem to be greatly scandalized at the idea of quoits and cricket, and of ministers of religion engaging in them. Now why should not a minister indulge in a game of cricket, it is excellent bodily exercise, and I am sure both you and myself would be better for a game once a week. It is an excellent antidote for attacks of bile, to which studious men are liable, and under which every thing they look upon appears dis-

game of cricket on the Saturday a much better preparative for his Sabbath duties, than the filthy pipe of tobacco and hot grog in which too many of them indulge; and their presence on such occasions as the one referred to, would be the best check upon any improper proceedings.

I turn from these matters to some of graver import. Your correspondents, like the little dogs who rush behind a hedge to bark at great ones, are right glad of the shelter of the *British Banner*, under which to throw their missiles at teetotalism. With these weak and cowardly people I have nothing to do, but must hold you accountable for the attacks you have inserted. It would be impossible to answer all the objections contained in this choice batch of epistles; for, as you know, as many blunders and misrepresentations can be crammed into a single newspaper article as would require the space of a bulky volume to correct. Many of them may be left to their own fate; some of the more prominent I have to remark upon.

There is an attempt, I observe, throughout the correspondence, to revive the stale slander which first originated with the Evangelical Alliance, that teetotalism is associated with infidelity. It would be in vain to ask men who could prefer such a charge, to show the necessary connection between one and the other. Is it infidelity to war against the drinking customs of society, to attempt to reclaim the drunkard, to warn the young and inexperienced of the dangers which lurk beneath the intoxicating draught? What is there of infidelity in all this? Do certain ministers of religion who utter this bigot cry, and who if living in a former age, would have joined in the persecution of Galileo, lighted the fires of Smithfield, or have halloed on a witch hunt.—do they mean to say that the drinking system is a religious institution, and that it is infidelity to touch it? This charge of infidelity is a gross calumny upon a body of men who are zealously and industriously seeking to uproot an evil that is more deadly in its results than any other with which we are acquainted. I ought to know something of the teetotal body, and I aver that this attempt to fasten upon them the charge of infidelity is dastardly and wicked. I know of no cause which has brought out so much disinterested labour, so many earnest, able and self-denying laborers. If you institute the search, you will find men whose talents have been nursed in teetotal societies, filling positions of usefulness and honor in the management of most of the schemes of practical benevolence which are the glory of our times; many of them laboring in Sabbath Schools, and others in the Church. Many of our distinguished men, Mr. Cobden amongst others, have borne unsolicited testimony to the value of the Temperance men in every community. Of the great numbers who have signed the pledge of course little can be known, but it is with the workers and leaders that we have now to do. Most of the Committees that I am acquainted with are composed of professing Christians;—of men who seek the sanction of New Testament principles for all their

efforts. There are (it may be assumed) men amongst us who have adopted the pledge of teetotalism, as others have put on the cloak of religion, for selfish and unworthy purposes; there are some who make no profession of religion, and some few, doubtless, who are unbelievers. What then? We cannot place a test over our portals, and enforce subscription to a religious creed. As human nature is much about the same in all communities, we have had perverse and intractable men, who have created confusion; and sometimes the management of our small societies has fallen into improper hands. But do not evils like this spring up in religious bodies. Do we never hear of dissensions among them, of separation, of public meetings to denounce and expose each other, nay, is it not a fact, that when dissensions do arise among religious sects, that they are carried on with a pertinacity and a bitterness, of which men of the world would be ashamed? Christianity must not bear the blame due only to a number of heated sectaries. If it is to be lamented that we have had mistakes and disputes among us, it is a pity that the professing Christian community do not shew us a better example, and a pity also that Dr. Campbell does not manifest in his conduct that forbearance, kindly feeling, Christian steadiness and temper, which he expects us to exercise.

I proceed now, from your attack upon the Teetotalers, to your attack upon Teetotalism itself. I am forced to one of two conclusions,—either that you never understood the principles upon which the Temperance Reformation is based, or that you have betrayed the principles. Your article “HEAR BOTH SIDES” admits of no other alternative. I am bound to justify so strong an assertion. First let me say that I honor the man who gives up what he conceives to be a good thing, and which has become a comfort and indulgence to him, in order that he may set an example to others. This is an amiable expediency, but is not a sufficient ground on which to rest a movement that aims at the destruction of our national intemperance. We have been glad of the co-operation of men who took this view, but we have felt its weakness, and ascribe to it the backslidings, which have been so very many and so lamentable, among ministers of religion. The excuse for their conduct is simply this,—they never gave time to study the principle, and therefore in an hour of weakness or sickness they flew back to the wine or beer. But this expediency was not the principle laid down by Beecher and Edwards in America, nor by the seven men of Preston who first raised the teetotal standard in this country, and which a host of medical men have in the most emphatic manner declared to be in perfect harmony with science and experience. The principle laid down was this—that alcohol, in whatever shape and under whatever disguise, is the enemy of health; and that total abstinence from all that can intoxicate is the only radical cure for intemperance. It was the strength and truth of this principle which carried the early temperance advocates through a storm and tempest of opposition, and has placed the cause

beyond the power of man to materially injure. This is genuine teetotalism, and I hold that no other ground is defensible. The self-denial which is involved in the doctrine of expediency, can never be required, except for a special and temporary purpose, it cannot be insisted upon as a rule of life. Prove to me that alcohol is useful, in any quantity or in any form, as an article of diet, and notwithstanding all the acknowledged evils of intemperance, I will abandon the ground I have taken and advocate the use of wine and beer. If it is a good creature of God, I cannot believe that any of the bounties of his Providence are permanently denied to us. It is because we believe alcohol to be a poison, and total abstinence to be the only cure for intemperance, that we abstain and call upon others to abstain.

In the face of that principle what becomes of your argument in the letter referred to? I have seldom seen a more complete tissue of sophistry and bad reasoning even among the opponents of teetotalism. It is a bundle of gratuitous assumptions, misconceptions, misrepresentations and fictions. I will first inform you that teetotalers are already "agreed as to what place teetotalism is to occupy." They never said that it was to be a substitute for the gospel—they said that it was a cure for a physical evil, and experience has proved it to be so. As to its taking the place of the Gospel, what in the name of common sense do you mean? We do not expect that Teetotalism will effect anything that the Gospel was intended to effect; but we do assert that it will, if tried fairly, keep a man sober. We assert besides, that the Gospel was never intended to cure disease, and that if a man takes a poison into his stomach, that the Gospel is not the appointed antidote. Suppose you were by accident to swallow a dose of arsenic, what would you do?—send for the doctor and the stomach-pump. However pious a man may be; however great, implicit, and humble his dependence upon divine aid may be, he wraps himself up in a great coat in cold weather, takes his umbrella in wet, and very properly guards against sudden changes of temperature. He knows that God has established certain laws, which are older than his written revelation, and that these laws must be obeyed, or a sure and certain punishment will follow. He does not expect if he eats too much, that his obedience to the divine law in other respects will exempt him from the inconvenience of his gluttony; and, by the same rule, if he takes sufficient wine to make him drunk, he will infallibly, notwithstanding all his piety, be drunk. The drink will, making all due allowance for difference of constitution, have the same effect upon his physical powers as it will have upon that of the vilest sinner. If this plain truth had been understood, how many once pious and excellent men would have been saved from ruin and disgrace! But they adopted your sophistry; regarded the Gospel as the safeguard against intemperance, while they continued to take strong drink, and fell the victims to a popular delusion. I hesitate not to say

that this plausible falsehood has slain its thousands. Now, all we assert is, Teetotalism will save a man from drunkenness. He may be as far from heaven as before ; he may be a liar, a thief, a swearer ; but so long as he abstains from drink he will not be a drunkard, and Teetotalism is only so far a pioneer of the Gospel, that when adopted it will leave a sober instead of a drunken population to receive the lessons of the missionary or the preacher.

With a most perverse reasoning, you insist, in the epistle we are now glancing over, that drunkenness is a moral evil, and springs, like covetousness, lying, and other vices, from man's depraved heart. Now, pardon me, drunkenness springs just as much from the depraved heart, as does the nightmare which afflicts a man after he has eaten unwholesome food, or malarious diseases which are caused by breathing a vitiated atmosphere. If you will persist in confounding things that differ, there is no hope that this question will ever be understood by you. Did you ever happen to know of a case where the depravity of the human heart made a man drunk without the agency of strong drink ? However unregenerate a man's heart may be, he will never be drunk so long as he abstains from drink. There is all the difference in the world between covetousness and drunkenness. We know that the desire to possess what it sees, is an instinct in the child ; that it will endeavour to procure the coveted object—that it will conceal or excuse its faults ; and all this, if you will, springs from the heart. Nay, you may trace as that child grows up to manhood, the tendency to commit all the crimes forbidden in the decalogue ; but do you observe any tendency to drunkenness, until that tendency is created by drink, until it is produced by artificial means. Mark the difference. The tendency to lying or theft springs, and without any external application, naturally from the heart ; you may trace its manifestations, and very properly you bring your Christian principle to correct and subdue it ; but the tendency to drunkenness is not manifested until a foreign agent is forced into the stomach, runs through the system, disturbing its healthy action, altering its condition, and finally affecting the nerves and the brain. What is drunkenness then but a physical evil—like all physical evils, lying at the root of a host of moral evils ? The appetite for strong drink is a disease, created by what it feeds on ; requiring the physician, not the parson. Drunkenness comes within the category of those “physical evils, which are,” using your own words, “within the range of man's power to alleviate, and which God has made it obligatory upon us to devise and use means for that purpose.” The appetite for strong drink is utterly incompatible with a healthy condition of body. Is it not worthy of inquiry, whether an article which, in no great quantity, will make a man drunk, ought to be taken into the human stomach at all ? Do such effects as excitement, stupor, and drunkenness indicate dietetic adaptations. I am not learned in doctrine, and I do not pretend to any critical acumen in

expounding texts; but I believe the Gospel does thus much for us—that it promises divine assistance upon all proper means employed to secure proper ends. I believe that in trying to promote good drainage, an efficient water supply, and proper ventilation among the poorer classes, I am using the means most likely to subdue and prevent disease, and that in teaching men the nature and properties of intoxicating drinks, I am not only taking the most efficient means to subdue drunkenness, but I am promoting their physical and moral improvement, and acting as much under the sanction of divine promise, as the man who, feeling himself called to another department of labor in the vineyard, is speaking to their spiritual necessities.

You make some mention of the Gospel having failed, and then follows some rhapsodical nonsense about a denial of the wisdom of God. Who is guilty of such denial? Some of us believe that God must be studied in his works as well as in his word—that creation, if looked at in a humble spirit, is full of eloquent teachings. What is there of denial in all this? We observe that he has filled the earth with bounties for the use of man, and given us intelligence to discriminate for what purposes each are good: which are good for diet, which for medicine. We reject none of his gifts; we seek only to put them to their proper use. We do not eat opium nor drink alcohol because they are good creatures of God. We first ask, "Good for what?" The Gospel never has failed when applied to its proper purpose, and it could not succeed when applied to cases it was not intended to meet. That religious teaching did not succeed in arresting intemperance, need not excite surprise. The teachers mistook the cause; they preached against the effect, while they continued to recommend and use the cause—strong drink.

Drunkenness increased at one time most rapidly and alarmingly in this country, and this increase was contemporaneous with a large and unprecedented increase of the means of teaching the people. Why did not the increase of religious means check drunkenness? I will tell you. Ministers of religion preached against drunkenness and not against strong drink. They held up the wine glass, and called its contents the good creature of God, and warned the people against excess. They believed as you do, that the depravity of the heart is the cause of drunkenness. The people accepted the lesson, took the drink, and perished. The Teetotalers taught a different lesson,—they said, on the contrary, strong drink is the cause of drunkenness—strong drink is a poison, touch it not, taste it not. A very short time showed that they accomplished what the churches had not done: they reclaimed many drunkards, and the trophies of their triumphs still remain.

This was the philosophy of the Temperance Movement, taught to the people by the early advocates some fifteen years before your name was identified with it. Livesey, Teare, Lees, Grubb, Whittaker, and a host of others, took it as the

basis of their argument against the drinking system; and several old-established medical men, among whom were Higginbottom, Beaumont and Fothergill, espoused and defended it. Dr. Carpenter's Prize Essay is only a more elaborate exposition of the principles which had been made familiar to the teetotalers, from their press and platform, for above twenty years before. Who dares to say, after looking back upon the success of that teaching, a success unexampled in the history of social movements, that "it is not characterised by wisdom," that "it has not the promise of God's blessing," that "it manifests a want of faith in the power of the Gospel." I do not know that I ever met with such arrogance and presumption as this in the whole course of my temperance experience. If men will obstinately shut their eyes to the facts of history and the truths of science, let them confine their babblings within the closed doors of their own household. One would really think that you had borrowed the aid of one of the unhappy inmates of Bedlam, with whose condition and capabilities of mind you seem, from your frequent reference to them, well acquainted. Had you done so, we should have had one advantage,—there would on such a theme have been more sprightliness, although perhaps less of method, in the madness.

As to the Bible texts, all I am disposed to say is this, that in my humble judgment, the use which some men make of isolated passages of scripture, is absolutely profane; and that it does more to unsettle the minds of the people on the great verities of the Christian religion than open and avowed infidel teaching. It has been my lot to appear before the public as the advocate of many social reforms, all of them kindred in their object. In the course of my mission I have been pretty well pelted with texts, and am, therefore, used to it. I have never suffered myself to be dragged through the crooked paths of these text-mongers, nor will I waste my time in listening to their tortuous interpretations. The only question I am solicitous to answer to my own satisfaction, is this—Is the part I am about to take a right one? Having satisfied my own mind on that point, I can stand, being somewhat used to the advocacy of unpopular principles, a whole whirlwind of texts. The texts you quote have nothing to do with the matter; they are entirely beside the question. Our sole question is this:—Are intoxicating drinks good things, that is, as articles of diet, or are they not? It is purely a scientific question, and it would be just as reasonable to go to the Bible to solve a geometrical problem, as it is to go there to settle that question. It must be settled by the chemist and the physiologist.

There are a few other things I have to notice, as to matters of fact: you say, "The position assumed, that these beverages are seldom or never beneficial, and contain no nourishment—though supported by respectable testimony—is yet by equally respectable testimony contradicted." That is not true, it is the very opposite of the truth. You are

well acquainted with the Medical Testimony to which Mr. Dunlop devoted so much labor. There are 2000 names, comprising some of the most eminent of the profession, declaring that alcoholic drinks are not only not useful, but injurious to men in health, and that the practice of total abstinence may be adopted with advantage. There is Dr. Carpenter's Essay, now a standard work, into which he has thrown the fruits of great study and research, and the acquisitions of many years of acute observation and inquiry; and during the whole history of the Temperance Reformation we have not had one work nor one single testimony from any medical man whose reputation would give him weight or authority, impugning the correctness of the views enunciated in the medical certificate and the *Prize Essay*. We have the positive testimony of above 2000 of the principal medical men, with not one single testimony against us of the least weight. I assert again, that science and experience are in our favor.

You are equally unfortunate in your other "*facts*." Of the "universal and increasing drunkenness" of America I am not able to speak—but I do know something of Ireland. It is very true that much of the work of Father Mathew has fallen away, as might reasonably be expected from a movement conducted with so much enthusiasm and among converts who took the pledge without any sound knowledge on the subject, but it is not true "that the drinking is even worse than when the population was two millions larger." I have been only recently looking at the returns of the consumption of intoxicating drinks in the three kingdoms, and it is most satisfactory to state, that there is a decrease, and that very considerable, in all parts of the kingdom. The facts, it is true, are frightful as to Scotland; but what were they before the Temperance Reformation began?—very greatly worse. Scotland, as well as Ireland and England, has felt, and still feels, the blessing of the teetotal work. Her position is one of promise—her career one of progress. So far from that "glorious nation, the model state of Christendom going down,"—she is going up. It would be instructive if you would inform us at what period of her history Scotland is supposed to realize this ludicrously hyperbolical description, and when her sun began to set. The dream of her past greatness is just as unsubstantial as the representation of her present decline. If we are to measure things by their actual value, I should say that Scotland stands higher than ever she did, and that her future is brighter than ever it was before. It is consoling to find, however, that the condition of England is hopeful. It is indeed, to a much larger extent than your feeble and reluctant admission would imply. Will you come to the test? I think I can give you such facts to show the hopeful condition of our country and the glorious promise that lies before us as would for ever dispel the morbid visions in which you indulge. I can show you something of what teetotalism has done, and enough to prove that its work has

been blessed in an extraordinary degree. What you mean by attempts to renovate man I do not pretend to understand; but that we live in an age of remarkable progress, which progress has been aided in no mean degree by teetotalism, I will undertake to prove.

I have again to remark upon the charge of atheism. In some town, which is not named, it is stated by a writer who dares not give his name, I forget, it has Dr. Campbell's authority, the whole body of atheists or seculars, are teetotalers to a man, and it is your opinion that the spread of teetotalism has been coincident with that of atheism, and is almost entirely confined to their ranks; and in another part of the article this opinion is given as a fact, that "atheism has rapidly increased, and principally in the ranks of teetotalism." Never was there any thing more atrocious. Whose reputation can be safe if attacks like these, unsupported by any evidence, are to find a place in our religious periodicals. Name the town—give us the facts—let us have the statistics. I believe it to be true that a scepticism—not atheism, for I have rarely found such a thing—infinately more insidious and dangerous than the unblushing infidelity of Taylor or Carlile, is on the increase in this country. I have no doubt of it from the immense number of ably written works which circulate, suggesting doubts and explaining away the truths of christianity, and which spread among our young men to an extent that I fear you do not fully estimate, and it would be well for the churches to measure the advances of this secularism. But it is an impudent slander to say that it is principally found in the ranks of teetotalism. Teetotalism has no more to do with it than it has to do with the revolution in China. I have known some few attempts to introduce discussions of this kind among our societies, but they were frowned down by the old teetotalers. The spread of infidelity may be coincident with the spread of teetotalism—but it is not a consequence of it—and if you will give us the means of verifying the facts, I have no hesitation in saying, that we shall find your assumptions as far from the truth as the reports of the Leeds meeting. I refer to this case incidentally, to show the unfairness with which you have acted. You inserted two letters from an anonymous correspondent at Leeds, and suppressed a part of the letter that was sent to you by my friend, Mr. John Andrew, which bore his signature, and which was intended to correct that anonymous correspondent's misrepresentations. I know Mr. Andrew to be incapable of trickery or misrepresentation, and this only shows the eagerness with which you caught at any trifle that could for the moment be converted into a missile against our society.

I have done with the letters. I have a little more to say in relation to your views on teetotal effort. Since you have advocated our cause, until now, I have observed only one drawback. You have assumed a patronizing tone, and Mr.

Cassell was perfectly right—you “have treated us as if we were a parcel of children,” not sparing the rod, but on all available occasions laying it on pretty thick. Whether we have improved under the skelping you have given us is very doubtful, and perhaps a milder treatment might have been more efficacious. We perhaps need a schoolmaster, but I may suggest that Dr. Campbell might have assumed the birch sceptre with a little more modesty, and have used it with a little more discretion. We were rather old scholars when you took us in hand. We had the growth of fifteen years, we had worked the cause in the face of open violence and covert sneers, and we had worked it up to a triumphant position. It was no holiday pastime when I commenced the work in 1838. I met with enough to shew me what had to be endured by the first voluntary missionaries who went out unpaid, and to a great extent unsupported, except by the desire to do good. I feel that we can never sufficiently honor the humble men who went out to begin this good work. Many of them were redeemed from the slavery of strong drink. Their language and style of address offended the polite, but they spoke hard truths that went right home to the hearts of the multitude. There was no reward for them but the consciousness of doing good and the good-will of their fellow-laborers. Their advocacy has often given offence to the fastidious; but I, for one, will not stand by and see these men, many of whom are still laboring usefully with us, brow-beaten and insulted.

Your quarrel with us has been this:—that we have not conducted the movement in a manner likely to secure the co-operation of godly people. You are imperfectly acquainted with our history, or with the working of our organizations, or you would have known that very great efforts have been made to obtain the support of professing Christians, and that great court has been paid to ministers. It was assumed that as intemperance did more to keep men from places of worship, to encourage sabbath-breaking, to enthrall them in sin and ignorance, and unfit their minds for the truths of religion, than all other causes combined; therefore it was the duty of the churches to use every means to remove this obstacle. There is no question that it was the duty of the professing community to endeavour to remove such a source of immorality and crime. The Teetotalers, therefore, laboured much to enlist ministers and congregations. I confess, that I never concurred in this policy; partly because established sects have never taken up any cause that had so much of a secular element in it; and I felt that it was much better for us to appeal to the popular mind—to all men—making no selection in favour of any denomination or class. I have said, let us have faith in our work, let us regard it as our own; let us go on steadily, perseveringly, using every legitimate argument, and the good men of all sects and parties will come to us in due time. A different policy has been adopted, and no means have been left

untried that were likely to secure the co-operation of professing Christians. When did you hear of a minister being otherwise than courteously treated and well received on a Temperance platform? Again, I hold that our advocacy both in tract, publication, and lecture or speech, has been generally of such a character as wise men, who see the importance of adapting means to ends, can approve. Of course there are exceptions, but we must not be judged by these exceptions.

I have felt in these unworthy squabbles something for the honor of Teetotalism. I should be sorry to lose your powerful aid, but I must say that I do not wish to retain it at the price we have to pay for it. Your retirement may be attended with some temporary injury to the cause, but we shall survive that. That cause is safe, if it be true; if it be not true, no honest man will wish it to live. But it is true, and will live. Total abstinence has become the habit of hundreds of thousands of men, its arguments have become incorporated with the literature of the country, and its own literature has obtained an immense and permanent circulation. We have no fears. I do not believe that your name, useful as it is, is necessary to our existence; and I may further say, that I do not believe that your most deadly hostility could do the cause so much injury as the course you have adopted in the last few numbers of the *British Banner*.

I am indignant at your insulting menace. Are we now to be told that we are indebted to the tenderness of Dr. Campbell—that we are not blown before the four winds of heaven. After having braved so much, is it come to this? You have done your worst, and we can calmly await any further attempt. As to the principle, we know that to be as impregnable as truth itself. We know our weak points—we are like all human instruments, full of infirmities; but I believe when we are cast up, that the great weakness of our movement will be found in having men amongst us who have not the courage to act up to their convictions. Men who, like yourself, stand faltering between their convenience and their duty, and who, having given in their adhesion are ashamed of their new associates—shrink from the opposition with which the practice is met in good society, and therefore feel it necessary to be always scolding and rating us as a sort of apology for belonging to us. That among all our weaknesses will be found to be the weakest part of all.

Yours most truly,

THOMAS BEGGS.

37, Southampton Street, Strand,
London.

