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INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE.

BY

EDWARD SMITH.

AN ADDRESS

TO

CHRISTIAN PROFESSORS.

BY

SAMUEL BOWLY.

LONDON:

Published by the

FRIENDS' TEMPERANCE UNION,

AND

W. TWEEDIE, 337, STRAND.

1858.

FRIENDS' TEMPERANCE UNION.

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INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE.

ADDRESSED TO MEMBERS

OF THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

BY

EDWARD SMITH.

AMONGST the varied "Talents" for which we shall have to answer in the great day of account, there is one, common to us all; for the right use of which every individual, whatever his condition in life, will be held responsible. This "talent" is the influence of our example upon those by whom we are surrounded; and each of us, either in a narrow or a wider sphere, must exert this power over others, for good or ill.

Few of us are ready to admit the extent of this influence in our own case, since the very avowal that we possess it implies a responsibility which tends to awaken the most serious reflection. Have we, my friends, duly weighed the important results which might attend the right use of this power; and are we fully alive to the urgent call upon us for its exertion, in arresting the progress of one of the greatest calamities that can afflict any nation?

There probably was never a period when efforts of a benevolent character, for the spread of education, the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, and the general relief of suffering humanity, were so numerous or so well directed as they are now. Never were the exertions to increase the comforts and elevate the character of the

working classes, by means of Education, of Savings' Banks, by Sabbath Schools, by district visiting, or sanitary improvement, so universal as at the present time. Yet, as the efforts increase, the demand for them increases with still more rapidity, until the most zealous labourers almost sink under discouragement at the prospect before them.

Let us not, however, waste our strength in idly deploring this condition of society, but closely examine whence it arises, and whether, at least, some of the causes thereof do not admit of a remedy. If, notwithstanding our prejudice to the contrary, we are obliged to admit, after a careful investigation, that by far the greater part of the vice and irreligion, the crime and wretchedness, so generally prevalent among the inhabitants of the British Isles, is distinctly traceable to the customary use of intoxicating drinks, and that the abridgments of the comfort of the lower classes chiefly arise from this baneful practice, how can we stand acquitted if we refuse to act on this conviction?

Intemperance, whether in its last stage of the uttermost degradation, or in that occasional excess which is scarcely branded as discreditable, is the crying sin of the country. It is desolating the homes of our artizans; it is keeping their children in ignorance, (for the frequenter of the beer-house cannot send his offspring even to gratuitous schools, for want of clothing); it is peopling our workhouses; it is filling our gaols; it is keeping thousands from even entering a place of worship, and, in all human probability, will consign them to an awful eternity of woe. Fearful as it may appear, in one year, in the metropolis alone, eighteen thousand two hundred and sixty-eight men, and eleven thousand six hundred and twelve women, have been in the custody of the police, for drunkenness; and a recent inquiry has established the sorrowful fact, that the cases of mere children being in habits of intoxication are very numerous. You may reply, These are no new truths; such have always been the consequences of intemperance in drinking. But, let me ask you, were these fellow-mortals always the victims of this degrading vice? They were

not born drunkards; they took this deluding beverage, to which they are now in worse than Egyptian bondage, at first in moderation. They knew not the seductive character of the liquor which at first could exhilarate them, but which in the end can scarcely give them a short respite from anguish; and, step by step, as the power of affording pleasure departed whilst the insatiate craving increased, a more and more copious draught was taken, until a diseased constitution and a mind haunted by remorse, render even existence terrible, but the prospect of death more terrible still. Oh! were it possible for one hour to witness unveiled "the horrors" of the intemperate, degraded in his own eyes, sensible that he has justly forfeited all claim to the respect of others, striving with feeble and irresolute purpose to break through those habits for which he utterly despises himself, and yet yielding to them,—this appeal to you, to come and help, would not be in vain. You would exclaim, If I could save this poor wanderer, or if I could but prevent others from following in his steps, I would not, I could not, shrink from any trifling sacrifice. Here, then, if you feel thus, is the occasion for you to put in practice your good desires. Here is the time for the employment of that one "talent" before adverted to. Here you are called on to employ the force of that example which is better than precept. You will not need to wait long for the opportunity. Occasions for indulging in stimulants are almost of hourly occurrence; and thus the love of strong drink is promoted, until moderation is fostered into over indulgence,—until this indulgence becomes habitual and daily,—and, very speedily, self-control is lost.

Need I remind you of a few of these customs? At dinner, the taking of wine with each other, as a mark of attention,—the inviting visitors, on mere calls, to do the same,—the giving of ale for occasional work or assistance,—the settlement of business at inns and public-houses, with the endless contrivance of fines and gratuities, to be paid in beer, &c., amongst the workpeople,—their "treats," their "suppers," their "footings," their "loosings," together form such a network of drinking usages around us,

that if a system had been studiously contrived to educate men for drunkards, nothing more perfect or more plausible could have been invented; and can you share in these practices and be guiltless of the consequences.

These are the plain facts of the case. By severing the connection between intoxicating liquor and civility, or business, you stay the plague at its beginning.

Now, what is the most effectual method of preventing this temptation in our houses, our manufactories, our markets? Shall we recommend that *Moderate Use*, which gives countenance to everything short of excess,—an excess discovered only by its fearful results. Shall we sow the seed, but refuse to acknowledge the fruit?—Shall we cherish the habit, but lament the consequence? Be it remembered, that *he who takes intoxicating liquors, "in moderation," walks at the edge of a precipice, and is constantly very near falling.* The principle of Moderation is daily found to be powerless, against the incessant, unwearied seductions of custom and appetite. An extraordinary emergency calls for strong measures. Put away, at once, and for ever, the evil thing from amongst you. Abstain totally from wine, from ale, and everything of the kind, unless for medicinal purposes. You will not surely plead that this is too great a sacrifice of self-gratification for the love of your neighbour. You would not hesitate if you knew that you would thereby save one single life. By this means you will aid in saving thousands. Beyond all price is the value of an immortal soul: you will, by this act of self-denial, help to remove a stumbling-block from before your brother, which hinders his soul's progress towards heaven.

Neither is this great good to be purchased by your own loss of health or strength. We have very high authority for declaring, that to persons in health, these liquors are no source of strength. Since their use depends in a great measure on the mistaken notion of their value, as a beverage, I need offer no apology for inserting the following

IMPORTANT MEDICAL TESTIMONY,

which has been signed by upwards of two thousand of the leading physicians and surgeons in the United Kingdom :—

- 1.—“ That a very large portion of human misery, including poverty, disease, and crime, is induced *by the use of alcoholic or fermented liquors as beverages.*
- 2.—“ That the *most perfect health* is compatible with Total Abstinence from all such intoxicating beverages, whether in the form of ardent spirits, or as wine, beer, ale, porter, cider, &c., &c.
- 3.—“ That persons, accustomed to such drinks, may, *with perfect safety*, discontinue them entirely, either at once, or gradually, after a short time.
- 4.—“ That *total and universal* abstinence, from alcoholic liquors and intoxicating beverages of all sorts, *would greatly contribute to the health*, the prosperity, the morality, and the happiness of the human race.”

If you are not prepared to deny all this, let me ask, Is it consistent, with a christian care over our children, our servants, and those of our household, to expose them continually to temptation, without necessity, and without advantage ?

Finally, if you cannot doubt that thousands in the world are perishing without hope, who have fallen by little and little, from the once *Moderate Use* of stimulants,—if you believe that you are accountable for, at least, some degree of influence upon others,—if you are zealous in the cause of education, solicitous for the temporal and eternal welfare of the poor around you, and would rejoice in the happiness of all your neighbours, permit me affectionately to urge the inquiry whether, under the Divine blessing, there is any single effort which you can make, so important towards attaining your object, as that of promoting Total Abstinence from the use of intoxicating beverages.

From the YEARLY MEETING'S EPISTLE. 1857.

“ This Meeting has been brought under deep concern, in view of the fearful amount of sin and misery existing in our land through the prevailing use of intoxicating liquors. We regard with cordial satisfaction the efforts of many of our members in different parts of the country, to stay the progress of this desolating scourge; and we take comfort in believing that, under the divine blessing, their labour has not been in vain. Whilst we would carefully avoid interfering in any way with the Christian liberty of our dear friends, we would encourage them seriously to consider what may be their individual duty in relation to this important subject. The more we seek to follow the example, and to be imbued with the spirit, of our blessed Redeemer, the less shall we be disposed to shrink from any course of effort or of self-denial, which a compassionate regard for the temporal and eternal well-being of those around us may call for at our hands.”

AN ADDRESS
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It is now very generally admitted, that by far the largest proportion of the crime, immorality, and destitution of this country, has arisen from the almost universal habit of using, to a greater or less extent, some kind of intoxicating liquor. Any rational measure for the prevention of these enormous and wide-spread evils, must be entitled to the most serious consideration, if not the zealous support of all good men.

Cold must be the feelings, and selfish the heart, that would not rejoice in the mitigation or prevention of evils so destructive of the present enjoyment and future well-being of our fellow-creatures. There are indeed, few who do not profess an anxious desire to see these evils and sufferings removed; and many possibly suppose they have been doing their best, by occasional precept and the practice of what is termed strict moderation, to promote this most desirable object; yet such have unhappily been the ignorance and deception prevailing on this subject, that these very individuals have assisted, however unintentionally, to keep alive the evils they were anxious to destroy, by supporting the customary use of intoxicating liquors, and thus scattering the seed from which intemperance has uniformly sprung, when the soil and the circumstances have been favourable to its growth. For whilst it is self-evident on the one hand, that where there are no beverages which can intoxicate, there can be no intemperance; so on the other, the experience of this country for ages past clearly proves

that the use of such beverages has ever been productive of a fearful amount of intemperance, *for the prevention of which, every means, short of total abstinence, has signally failed.*

When, therefore, we clearly see that the general adoption of a certain custom is directly or indirectly productive of an incalculable amount of misery and vice, which would be effectually prevented by its abandonment, surely it becomes a deeply important question for every individual to decide, whether he will give the influence of *his example* to the maintenance or suppression of such a custom ; *for one or other he must necessarily do.* If he decide to uphold the custom, he may possibly be able himself to avoid the dangers and evils incident to it, but he cannot protect those who follow his example ; and the melancholy history of the past assures him, that large numbers in pursuing the same path, but having less religious principle, less moral courage, greater temptations, or stronger appetites, *will assuredly fall.*

Under such circumstances, we might reasonably expect that every benevolent individual who had the welfare of his fellow-creatures at heart, and much more, every sincere christian, would carefully inquire whether it was *necessary* for him to pursue a course, which, even if abstractedly lawful and comparatively safe to himself, had yet proved so dangerous and injurious to society at large. And if the result of an impartial trial proved, as we believe it must prove, that *it is not necessary* either for health, or strength, or true enjoyment, to pursue this course, but that another is open before him even more calculated to insure the permanent enjoyment of these blessings, yet free from the temptations and sufferings peculiar to this ; would it not become his imperative duty, by example, as well as precept, to recommend it to all around him ? Such, however, is the weakness of human nature, that the power of custom, the deceptive feelings of a vitiated appetite, or the fear of being thought singular or inhospitable, have prevented many well-disposed persons from adopting the practice of total abstinence, whose judgments have been convinced of its immense importance to the physical comfort and moral welfare of the com-

munity. We would earnestly and affectionately entreat such to bear in mind, that in addition to those who are themselves the victims of intemperate habits, there are thousands of unhappy women in this country, groaning under a cruel and oppressive bondage, and tens of thousands of unoffending children suffering from bitter privation and neglect, whose emancipation from their miserable condition will greatly depend on the part which the benevolent and christian portion of the community takes on this great question. The state of these pitiable sufferers can only be effectually improved by the recovery of those whose intemperance is the cause of their distress. But alas! how can we expect these degraded individuals to overcome the violent cravings of their appetite for strong drink, if the more intellectual and moral portion of the community, cannot or will not conquer their inclination for smaller quantities of similar stimulants? How can we expect such persons to act in defiance of the persuasion, the ridicule, and the abuse of *their* companions, if minds refined by education, and fortified by religious principle, dare not face the smiles or the jeers of their associates? How can we expect the grovelling victims of intemperance to deny themselves what may appear to them their only luxury, when the professed followers of the self-denying Jesus refuse to banish one article only from their long list of luxuries, for the sake of suffering humanity and perishing souls?

There are many, doubtless, who would persuade themselves that *their* example would have no influence in the matter, or at least could do nothing towards reclaiming the unhappy victims of intemperance; but, if such would consider for a moment by what means the tens of thousands *have been* reclaimed, who with their families now rejoice in the happy effects of abstinence, they would find that most of them had been induced to abandon entirely the use of their long-cherished indulgence, by the precepts and example of individuals possessing no peculiar influence, and who had *every excuse* for continuing what is termed the moderate use of stimulants, which can be offered by any who still refuse to relinquish them. If these individuals had allowed such excuses to

outweigh their christian duty or humane desire to promote the welfare of others, what would have been the condition of thousands of those who have been reclaimed, but that of miserable drunkards, or souls excluded from the kingdom of heaven? There are numbers of abstainers who probably cannot point to a single individual reclaimed through their influence *alone*, but they can gratefully rejoice over thousands reclaimed by the *united* influence of those who have pledged themselves to abstain. As this influence becomes more powerful in proportion to the numbers as well as the character of abstainers, it is clear no individual can possibly escape the responsibility of his own example, in strengthening or weakening the influence which has been the means of rescuing so many from present, if not eternal ruin.

Few will attempt to deny that the temperance movement has been the means not only of producing a great moral reformation, but under the divine blessing, of preparing the way for the reception of those influences of the Holy Spirit which have led thousands of the reclaimed to sincere and heartfelt repentance; and if "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," how ought the christian to rejoice over the numbers who have been thus brought to this happy experience, and how earnest should be his endeavours to extend that blessing to others!

We have each a duty to perform in endeavouring to promote, to the best of our ability, the present and eternal welfare of our fellowmen. And when we clearly see, that a means, however simple it may appear, has been so successful in reclaiming from vice and leading to virtue, thousands of poor drunkards, whilst thousands more are still standing as on the brink of a premature and hopeless grave, *shall we not be accountable if we refuse to make an effort to reclaim them which only requires the sacrifice of one needless luxury?*

In thus pressing this deeply interesting subject on the serious consideration of christian professors, we shall not resort to any exaggerated representations. The vice and misery occasioned by the drinking customs of our country, are written in legible cha-

acters on the poor-house, the hospital, and the gaol; nor are they less conspicuous in the dejected wife, the half-starved child, and the degraded, blaspheming, self-destroying inebriate. The benefits of total abstinence are portrayed in characters not less striking; —the happy home, the cheerful wife, the clothed and educated child, the affectionate and thriving husband, and, it may be, the converted sinner; whilst the simple yet powerful instrumentality, by which, under the divine blessing, these happy changes have been effected, is only waiting the adoption of a larger portion of the sober and the virtuous, to carry to an almost unlimited extent, this heart-cheering reformation. And can it be, that those whose religion so forcibly inculcates the duty of self-denial for the good of others, will refuse their co-operation in so good and merciful a work? Will they stand quibbling about their abstract right, or their supposed scriptural authority to indulge their inclinations, till yet more tears have been wrung from the afflicted, and yet more souls have been lost from the effects of strong drink? No! it surely can only be necessary to show them their brother's misery, and their own responsibility, and we believe the christian principles which prompt them to labour so zealously in the fields of benevolence, all over the world, will speedily induce them to exert their powerful influence, in favour of this effectual, if not only practicable means, under existing circumstances, of preventing the dreadful evils of intemperance amongst their own countrymen.

Thus far we have made our appeal on the ground of those more conspicuous effects of drinking on the one hand, and abstinence on the other, which are doubtless calculated to make the strongest impression on society at large. But there are very important grounds upon which we might well appeal to religious professors. Indeed, when we consider the tendency of exciting and stimulating drinks to strengthen the corporeal and sensual propensities of our nature, at the expense of the intellectual and spiritual character; when we see such an abundant proof of the strong hold they obtain even on the virtuous and intelligent, in the tenacity with which they cling to their use; when we calculate on the reli-

gious brightness that has been partially dimmed, on the serious impressions and religious visitations that have been weakened or dispelled by their effects; when we think of the numbers stopped in their course of danger by their abandonment; *and above all, when we reflect on the preventive influence of total abstinence on the rising generation, and on generations yet to come*; the reclamation of the present race of drunkards with all its thrilling interest, forms but a small portion indeed of the inestimable benefits which this great work is calculated to confer on the church and on the world.

It is as surprising as it is painful to observe, that in many places, the most prominent and influential professors of religion, have been altogether indifferent respecting the abstinence cause, or have even ranked amongst its most inveterate opponents; and, notwithstanding the full display of its delightful fruits, which they dare not ascribe to human agency alone, they have still declaimed against it, as though it was really a christian virtue to avoid and denounce what God has been pleased so eminently to bless. Such inconsistencies remind us of the ministers and professors on the other side of the Atlantic, who still uphold and defend the abomination of slavery; and of those days of comparative ignorance, when eminent and pious individuals in this country, saw no impropriety in holding their fellow-men in bondage; and we trust that it will remind those who uphold the custom of drinking, which has proved far more extensively productive of human misery than negro slavery, *that good men are still liable to the errors of ignorance and prejudice, and that possibly they are now supporting a practice which the further spread of light and knowledge may induce christians generally to abandon, as incompatible with that love of our neighbour, and "good will to men," which the gospel so clearly enjoins.*

There are many well-disposed persons who appear to approve of the efforts made by the friends of abstinence, for the reformation of the intemperate, and who freely admit the incalculable benefits that would result from the entire disuse of intoxicating liquors; but who, nevertheless, oppose the attainment of this great object

by their own practice, and then coolly attempt to palliate their inconsistency by pointing out the improbability, which they themselves help to create, of ever banishing intoxicating liquors from general use. But, surely, the weakness or selfishness of others can never afford any valid excuse for our refusal to aid a work which we profess to admire and approve. It would be well, however, for such to reflect, that thousands of those who were considered to be the most hopeless and inveterate adherents to strong drink, have been already induced to abandon it, and are now training up their families without it;—that the use of intoxicating liquors has materially diminished,—the views of society have greatly changed in favour of their disuse,—and the practice of abstinence is still steadily advancing; and all this in the face of the powerful opposition exerted by ignorance, prejudice, interest, and appetite. If, then, the most difficult part of the work has been accomplished against such fearful opposition, is it unreasonable or visionary to expect that it will go on to completion, as that opposition is gradually lessened? Would that all those who profess to rejoice at the partial success of this cause, but who smile at the idea of its ever being complete, were willing to prove the sincerity of their good wishes by at least giving us the benefit of their own example! For, if we could remove from the drinking customs of our country that countenance which the example of the respectable and the virtuous affords, we should not fear the prolonged continuance of those customs, when supported only by the selfish and the sensual, the vicious and the intemperate.

We are well aware that some individuals have been prevented from adopting the practice of total abstinence only by the fear of injuring their health; they have been so long accustomed to consider a small quantity of fermented or distilled liquor absolutely necessary, or have been so often recommended to take it by medical men, that it is very difficult to receive the increasing amount of medical testimony, and personal experience, which is now obtained in favour of the entire abandonment of such liquors as a means of sustaining health and strength. We cannot but rejoice, however, at the large number of persons who have had the good sense to

bring the recommendation of medical men to the test of experience, and who have found the practice of entire abstinence, tend to the ultimate benefit of their health, although from long habit the change may have occasioned them considerable temporary inconvenience; and we trust those who may still be hesitating on this ground will soon follow so good an example, which would speedily put to flight much of the ignorance and credulity that have so long deceived both physicians and patients, as to the medical qualities of these deleterious liquors.

Whilst thus addressing our fellow-professors generally on the broad ground of christian benevolence, we would in an especial manner invite all parents seriously to consider this important subject, and to examine whether they are justified in bringing up their children to a practice, which, *without conferring upon them any benefit, is constantly occasioning the ruin of multitudes of all ranks and classes in society.* How numerous are the instances of individuals who have been ruined by the intoxicating cup, declaring that they acquired the appetite for strong drink at the table of their parents, who were, it may be, wise and virtuous and of high standing in the church; and, could they have foreseen the evil that strong drink would have occasioned to their children, would never have allowed its introduction into their families! With the appalling facts before us, that of those who have been thus trained up to the habit of using strong drink, no inconsiderable number have uniformly been injured thereby, and many ruined for time and for eternity; and knowing that similar effects will continue to result from this practice, ought we not at once to abandon it?

In conclusion, we entreat all those who have not yet relinquished the use of intoxicating liquor, to yield to our appeal. It is a small sacrifice to demand for such a deeply important end. We ask it on behalf of the poor degraded victims of intemperance, who may yet be reclaimed by such assistance; we ask it on behalf of their afflicted wives and little ones; we ask it for the sake of the virtue, the morality, the prosperity, and the happiness of our beloved country; and we hope we shall not ask in vain.