

LETTER

TO THE

FRIENDS OF TEMPERANCE

IN MASSACHUSETTS.

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I. "The *immoderate* use of wine," the Council hold, "is always injurious." But I regret exceedingly, that they have not marked the line between moderate and immoderate drinking, and told us what immoderate drinking is. Till they do this, multitudes of moderate drinkers, in their own estimation, will really drink *very immoderately*, and great injury will result from it to themselves, and the community.

II. The Council hold that "*wine, in its moderate use, is in no sense necessary for the young in health, and even in such use, it is always injurious to them.*" This truth, which the Council, composed in part of very eminent physicians, *do hold*, I hope will sink deep into the minds of the community. "It," they say, (wine, in its moderate use,) "*gives new force to the passions, diminishes the power of self-control, and by its exhilarating effects natural to it, invites directly to excess.*"

Speaking of a young man drinking wine, the Council say, "The balance of his powers will always be disturbed by it, and he is placed at once in circumstances hazardous alike to his moral and physical good." *This is true doctrine.* It is what the convention believed, and it was one reason which led them to recommend to all friends of temperance to renounce the use of it, that they might, in this way, set a safe and salutary example to the young; and not be instrumental, by example, of leading them to form habits which might ruin them. And it is earnestly hoped, that this consideration will lead all friends of temperance, to comply with that recommendation.

III. The Council hold that "the use of wine, is not necessary to the adult, in health, even in its moderate use." *This is also true.* And it is proved by a multitude of facts, that it is not, in such cases, *even useful*; and that when taken as a beverage, it is *hurtful*. Nor is this the case merely with persons who are in health, but in multitudes of instances, also, in which it is taken, in small quantities, as a medicine. A few of these instances of the hurtful effects of wine, when taken in moderation, out of many in my possession, I will give as a specimen of the rest. And as the pamphlet contains a letter from the Rev. Samuel Miller, D. D., Professor of Ecclesiastical

History in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, New Jersey, and I have one which more fully expresses his views, I will begin with a letter from him.

PRINCETON, JAN. 1st, 1836.

Reverend and Dear Sir :

Your communication of November 17th reached me on the 25th, and would have been acknowledged before, had not engagements, of the most urgent kind, deprived me of the requisite leisure. It gives me peculiar pleasure to comply with your request in regard to the use of *all intoxicating drinks*, because I verily believe that the well-being of society, and especially the best interest of the *rising generation*, must be considered as deeply involved in the banishment of such drinks from habitual use. You request a statement of my own experience in reference to this matter.

I was never in the *habit* of using ardent spirits ; and, during the earlier period of my life, seldom drank wine. Yet my abstinence from it, prior to the forty-third year of my age, cannot be said to have been either systematical or rigid. In that year I had a severe fit of illness, in recovering from which, the use of some sound old wine which was, providentially, within my reach, was so strikingly beneficial, that my physician advised me to continue it after my recovery ; and, indeed, expressed the opinion that I ought to take, at least, one glass, if not two, of good wine daily, to the end of life. I followed his advice for *more than sixteen years* ; I very seldom drank more than one glass, and never more than two glasses. In this moderate use, I was almost invariably regular ; and great were the pains to which I submitted, from time to time, for obtaining wine of pure and indubitable qualities, not as a matter of *luxury*, but of *health*.

During all this time my health, though not *bad*, was *delicate* ; and toward the latter part of the sixteen years just mentioned, there was every appearance that my constitution was giving way, and that a premature and feeble old age was creeping upon me. Still I had no suspicions that wine was hurting me, and only supposed that, *in spite* of its benefits, my sedentary habits were undermining my strength.

More than six years ago, when I was approaching my *sixtieth year*, hearing so much said about the mischiefs of stimulating drinks, and entering, as I did, with cordial zeal, into the temperance reformation, I determined to go beyond those around me, and to abstain not merely from *ardent spirits*, but make the experiment, for at least three months, what would be

the effect of an immediate and entire abstinence from wine, and all intoxicating beverage. Accordingly I broke off at once and from that day to this, have not tasted wine, excepting at the sacramental table. I have also abstained, during the same time, from cider, beer, and every species of drink stronger than water, and never set any of them on my table, unless they are called for by peculiar circumstances. The experiment had not proceeded more than a single month, before I became satisfied that my abstinence was not only distinctly, but very strikingly beneficial. I was so far from suffering any injury from the abstraction of my accustomed stimulus, that the effect was all the other way. My appetite was more uniform and healthful; my digestion decidedly improved; my strength increased; my sleep more comfortable; and all my mental exercises more clear, pleasant and successful. Instead of awakening in the morning with parched lips, and with a sense of feverish heat, such feelings were almost entirely banished; and instead of that nervous irritability which, during my indulgence in wine, was seldom wholly absent, I am now favored with a state of feeling, in this respect, very greatly improved. In short, my experience precluded all doubt, that the entire disuse of all intoxicating drinks has been connected, in my case, with benefits of the most signal kind; with much firmer health than I enjoyed twenty years ago; with more cheerful feelings; with greater alacrity of mind; and with a very sensible increase of my capacity for labor of every kind. I can never cease to be grateful that I was led to make this experiment; and think it is highly probable that if I had not adopted this course, I should not now have been in the land of the living.

I have had occasion frequently to observe that some who, like myself, drink nothing but water, are very *liberal* in their use of that element. They drink it often and largely, and especially make a very free use of it at dinner. This was once my own habit; but I became fully convinced that it was not salutary, at least to me. The truth is, since I have left off the use of all intoxicating drinks, I seldom experience the sensation of thirst. Often I do not touch a particle of any kind of drink at dinner, and even when I am overtaken with thirst, I find that, in my case, it is better slaked with a few tea-spoons full of water, taken slowly, and at several swallows, than by a whole tumbler full, or double that quantity, as many are accustomed to take—I am very confident that we may take too much even of water; and that deluging the stomach even with the most innocent fluid, tends to interfere with perfect digestion.

I feel a deep interest, my dear sir, in the reception and prevalence of these opinions. It would be well for the church and the world, if our present race of young men, especially those in our seminaries and colleges, could be prevailed upon to enter into the spirit and practice of this doctrine. How many broken constitutions; how many cases of miserable nervous debility; how many degraded characters; how many melancholy wrecks of domestic peace, and of official usefulness, would be spared, if we could make our beloved young men believe us, when we speak thus! May the Lord enlighten and counsel them in his time!

With many prayers that you and your associates may be guided and prospered in your benevolent labor,

I am, Rev. and dear sir, your friend and brother,
SAMUEL MILLER.

The next letter is from the Rev. Alonzo Potter, D. D., Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy, in Union College, Schenectady, New York.

UNION COLLEGE, Nov. 4, 1835.

Reverend and Dear Sir:

I have to acknowledge your letter of the 20th ult., in which you inquire whether I have received any special benefit from discontinuing the use of intoxicating liquors, as a beverage. I answer by stating a fact. During two years which have elapsed since I discontinued the use of wine and porter, the only intoxicating substances which I have been accustomed to take, I have improved materially in health, and have been able to make more prolonged efforts both of body and mind. We are not authorized, from any such fact, to infer that the abstinence and the improved health, stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. But when it is found, as I doubt not it will be in the course of your inquiry, that similar experiments by others have been generally, if not invariably, followed by the same results, the relation will be established, and will merit the deep regard of all young men.

It may be proper to add that this change in my habits was not induced by any hope of promoting my health—I had rather cherished the belief that some local infirmity, as well as an extreme general debility from which I sometimes suffered, might be partially relieved by the use of good wine, and, in this opinion, I found myself confirmed by the advice of judicious friends, and physicians. But it was growing more and more evident that I could not succeed in persuading others to renounce one kind