The Temporance Reformation in Virginia

Lucian Minor

1850

Repository Citation
Minor, Lucian, "The Temporance Reformation in Virginia" (1850). Faculty Publications. Paper 1300.
http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs/1300

Copyright c 1850 by the authors. This article is brought to you by the William & Mary Law School Scholarship Repository.
http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs
THE TEMPERANCE REFORMATION,
IN VIRGINIA.

If one tithe is true, of what the Temperance Reformers allege, about the mischiefs that Strong Drink produces, and about the efficacy of the remedy proposed by those Reformers—we, and almost all other conductors of the Press in Christendom, have come far short of duty, in not having more frequently and more earnestly "kept before the people" a subject of very deep concern to them. However little truth may be in those allegations, the number and respectability of those who make them, and the wide interest they have long excited, in Virginia and in the United States, render them worthy of note in such a magazine as this. If the Temperance agitation were merely a morbid freak of human caprice, more irrational than the Crusades, or anti-Masonry, or Millerism; it should yet be chronicled as a remarkable phenomenon in the history of mankind. Great follies, that deeply and extensively stir men's minds, and greatly influence their conduct, may sometimes be noted for the instruction of future times, as usefully as the noblest struggles of virtuous wisdom. The profligacies of Charles the Second's reign, the judicial murders of Jeffries, the witch-burnings and Quaker-hangings of New England, and all the religious persecutions that preceded our Revolution, both in Virginia and in her sister colonies, are as full of important lessons as the Revolution itself, or the great Protestant Reformation.

Cowper calls a newspaper

A Map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns.

Surely such a map ought to present prominently a range of breakers on which, as multitudes believe (some of whom are keen, wide-viewing sailors on life's ocean), this country loses annually more than twice as many lives as, by their loss at Waterloo, clothed half Britain in mourning.* Newspapers, and bulkier periodicals too, should act as if their motto were Juvenal's well known bill of fare to his satires:

Quicquid agunt homines, quicquid agunt, timor, ira, voluptas,
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farago libelli.†

So much by way of apology for devoting a few pages to a Sketch of the Temperance Reformation in Virginia.

Before 1826, no concerted effort was made in Virginia, to diminish the evils of intemperate

* Sir Walter says in his account of the battle, that besides the wounded, fifteen thousand men slain "clothed half Britain in mourning."—Scott's Napoleon.
† Translated in the Tatler,

"Whate'er men say, or do, or think, or dream,
Our motley paper seizes for its theme."
drinking. True, a shrewd Methodist, named Micajah Pendleton, in the county of Amherst, so early as 1800, had drawn up and carried in his pocket a pledge to abstain from ardent spirits: and to this pledge he obtained some signatures. But no society was organized; no stated meetings were held; no public addresses delivered; no measures taken to collect or to publish facts about the ills which flowed from strong drink. True, also, the Legislature, in 1792, 1779, and much earlier, had passed laws, imposing a fine of eighty three cents on drunkenness; and professing the "restraint of tipping," by fines for retailing ardent spirits or wine, especially to be drank at the place where sold, without license; and the several religious denominations had rules, forbidding intemperance. Nay, a rule of John Wesley, the founder and legislator of one leading denomination, forbade his people to drink spirituous liquors unless in cases of necessity. But a fine for drunkenness was never known to be inflicted. No license was required for distilling, or for the wholesale of liquors, or for retailing such as the vendor made, or purchased from the produce of his own farm.* The liquor-traffic, with or without license, pervaded every town, hamlet, and neighborhood. Church-members, and none more than the followers of Wesley, bought, and sold, and drank strong waters, almost as freely as the world's people: and all classes of men thought themselves temperate, so long as they could walk without much staggering, and avoided blunders glaringly ridiculous, and such atrocities as beating wives.

The first attempt in this Commonwealth, at any thing like the present systematic warfare against Intemperance, was in the county of Charlotte, where John Randolph then lived, and where Patrick Henry had spent the latter years of his life. "In October, 1826, a few months after the American Temperance Society had been formed in New England, and (as a Report says, now at our elbow) before any similar institution was known to exist, by those who originated this,"—some persons met in Charlotte; organized what they called "The Virginia Temperance Society;" and adopted a constitution to which eleven subscribed their names. These eleven, who are worth naming as pioneers in a movement which was destined to enlist warm attachments, and to excite bitter hostility,—were Eli Ball, Reuben Chaney, Abner W. Clopton, Elisha Collins, John A. Davidson, Jeremiah B. Jeter, John W. Kelly, Bryan W. Lester, William Sharp, Daniel Williams, and Daniel Witt. Messrs. Clopton, Collins, Ball, Jeter, and Witt, were Baptist preachers. Mr. Clopton died in the spring of 1833: after having, by his numerous addresses and effective zeal, caused the new reformation to take root in so many parts of Virginia, that he may as justly be said to have planted it here, as St. Augustine was held to have planted Christianity in Britain.

We have no certain account of the Pledge, adopted by this early 'Virginia Temperance Society.' But if its tenor may be inferred from that of many county and local associations which that impulse prompted, in the two or three following years, it was guiltless of the ultraism now expressed by the two words "Total Abstinence." Their pledges bound members only to the moderate use of ardent spirits. At the sixth annual meeting of the State Society, it adopted a constitution, which required members to "abstain totally from drinking ardent spirit, except when necessary as a medicine; and, by example and influence, to discourage its use."

Soon after the first, Charlotte meeting, various neighborhoods in the state saw local societies arise, constructed on the same general plan: with the pledge of mere temperance; or of abstinence, only from ardent spirits. Few minds had then thought of wine, beer, cider, and other fermented drinks, as embodying either immediate harm, or remote danger. Doctor Rush, thirty years before, in his celebrated "Inquiry" on the subject of drunkenness, had denounced ardent spirits alone, as the authors of woe: and had expressly recommended the other drinks, as safe and eligible substitutes. Many great names, in Medicine, in Philosophy, and in Ethics, were on the same side: and numbers maintained, and even yet maintain, from the supposed sobriety of wine-growing countries, that the best guaranty for temperance would be to make fermented liquors the popular beverage. We have a copy of a constitution adopted by one of those local societies in 1829; probably phrased like many of the rest. After a preamble, summing up the mischiefs of Intemperance, it pledges the members, "if they drink ardent spirits at all, to a temperate use of them;"—to discountenance the use of them by their families;—not to offer them to guests, "unless propriety seem strictly to require it;—and never to solicit or importune guests or others to drink;"—on every proper occasion, to use their influence to dissuade friends and others from drinking ardent spirits;—and not to vote for, or support, any candidate for office who should, directly or indirectly, attempt to influence voters by treating with ardent spirits. Each member was to fix up a copy of the constitution in some conspicuous part of his or her dwelling; "both to remind him or herself, and to apprise visitors, of the obligation it opposes." To make

*This was so early as 1616. See 1. Hening’s Statutes at Large, p. 319.
this last duty easy, copies were printed, in a neat, legible form. The constitutions generally provided for presidents, secretaries, and managers or executive committees—for annual or monthly meetings—for the delivery of speeches—and for the collection and reporting of facts to illustrate the evils of Intemperance, and the means of counteraction.

There is no exact information as to the number of Societies in Virginia, at any stage of the movement. Of rather more than a thousand in the whole Union at the close of 1829, fifty two were reported as in this state, on the principle of abstinence from ardent spirits. By that time, nearly all had adopted that principle.

To compare the progress here, with the progress elsewhere,—there were reported at the same time 62 societies in Maine, 46 in New Hampshire, 56 in Vermont, 169 in Massachusetts, three in Rhode Island, 133 in Connecticut, 300 in New York, 21 in New Jersey, 53 in Pennsylvania, one in Delaware, six in Maryland, 15 in North Carolina, 10 in South Carolina, 14 in Georgia, 8 in Alabama, 30 in Ohio, 9 in Kentucky, 5 in Tennessee, 4 in Mississippi, 13 in Indiana, one in Illinois, 3 in Michigan, and one in Missouri.

We well remember the first emotions which the commencing reform excited; if emotion is not too strong a term for the mingled apathy, decision, and contempt, with which the movement was received. The prevailing thought, among that decided minority of Virginians who bestowed a thought upon it, was, that the agitation was fanatical, and Utopian. Its movers were supposed greatly to exaggerate the evils, and greatly to overrate the proposed remedy. Even most professors of Religion, of all denominations, shared the apathy, or the contempt. The newspapers, political and religious, kept a profound silence, about a thing of so little moment. The politicians, and even the statesmen, of Virginia,—the lawyers; except a few of little eminence,—the physicians,—and men who stood high for learning and abilities in all walks of life,—looked coldly, or looked not at all, upon the attempted reformation. We recollect but one or two men conspicuous for intelligence (out of the pulpit), who, before 1830, dissented from the general opinion, or the general apathy. In 1827 or 1828, David Watson, of Louisa county, expressed a strong approval of united resolutions of abstinence, and of the associated efforts against what he deemed an enormous mischief.*

* Major Watson was a writer in Wirt's "Old Bachelor"—was an elected member of the Virginia Convention of 1829, but prevented by ill health from sitting there—and died in 1831. He is mentioned with praise in one of Mr. Wirt's lately published letters. See Mr. Kennedy's Life of Wirt. We abstain, in general, from mentioning the names of living persons.

One distinguished lawyer often quoted, approvingly, a remark he had heard made by an old farmer; that "If the Revised Code and the Bible would not keep people straight, this Temperance Society never would do it." To most minds it was incredible that any innovation was necessary, upon the time-honored usages of the country—upon the good-fellowship and hospitality, typified and promoted by the bottle: or that, if a change was needed, combined efforts and joint pledges would be effectual. "What is the use of a man's pledging himself, or signing any paper about it? or joining a society? Can't he be temperate, without all that?" These were frequent arguments. To these it was added, "I don't choose to sign away my liberty"—or, "It's giving up my independence." Many sharp sighted people saw in the thing a tendency, if not a scheme, to undermine the country's liberties. This jealousy was greatest among those who had won popularity, or hoped to win it, by treating or by convivial talents. They might well rest their resistance on a principle of self-preservation: since, if their sole path to popularity were stopped up (as this new-fangled society threatened), they could not hope for the people's favor. The makers and vendors of spirits, of course, industriously echoed all these objections.

Numbers of those who would not sign away their liberty, or give up their independence by taking the Pledge, were afterwards arrested and imprisoned for debts, or offences, caused by drink; or were stript of all their property (even to the beds on which their wives and children slept), to pay the grog-seller; or, closing a shameful life by a miserable death, left beggared widows and orphans to enjoy the fruits of such high-minded love of freedom.

Before the end of 1831, however, great changes of opinion occurred. By public addresses, by reports of committees publicly read, and by books and tracts diligently circulated; shewing, by well supported statistics, the dimensions of the evils warred against, and the efficacy of the proposed remedy;—strong, and wide impressions were made on the public mind. The facts thus developed, were indeed startling. We class them, condensed, under suitable heads.

Deaths.—The Philadelphia College of Physicians, in 1829, after a careful examination, declared that 700 deaths, in that city, in one year, resulted from the use of intoxicating liquors. The same proportion throughout the Union, would shew 56,000 deaths. The American Almanac for 1830, founding its calculation upon the Boston bills of mortality, estimates the yearly deaths from that cause in the U. S., to be from 30,000 to 40,000. An eminent Professor of a northern college in the same year,
them at from 30,000 to 50,000. Taking the low-
est of these estimates, and taking Virginia to
have contained then one-twelfth of the Ameri-
can people, she lost annually, by strong drink,
2500. If the largest number was correct, her
annual loss was 4636. The medium would be
3533.

Crime. Men most conversant with courts of
justice, testified that four-fifths of all crimes in
Virginia were traceable to strong drink: and
confirmed sir Matthew Hale's declaration, after
20 years' experience as a lawyer and judge in
our mother country,—that "if all murders, rob-
beries, riots, tumults, and other great enormi-
ties, which had been committed within those 20 years,
were divided into five parts, four of them would
be found to have resulted from Intemperance."

The Secretary of War under President Jack-
sou stated, that "of more than 1000 desertions
from the Army last year," (1830) "nearly all
were caused by drinking." A distinguished of-
licer of the Army declared, "Nearly all the trou-
ble we have with the men arises from drinking.
Probably more than five-sixths of all military
offences before our courts martial, result from
Intemperance. The Secretary of War has, in
my opinion, done incalculable good to the army,
by withholding the whiskey part of the rations."

Pauperism. Out of 4969 paupers in several
poor-houses of different states, 4690 were re-
duced to pauperism by intemperance, of them-
selves or of their parents: more than fifteen-
sixteenths. And all the statistics combined,
made it certain that at least nine tenths of all
paupers were made such by that cause. A me-
dium county in Virginia, in 1831, expended above
$3000 for the support of its poor. If each of
110 counties expended half as much, the aggre-
gate was $165,000; of which, nine tenths were
$148,500.

Money lost. Accurate calculators, from data
which seemed most worthy of reliance, stated
the annual expenditure upon intoxicating drinks
in the U. S. to be above $100,000,000. An At-
torney General of the U. S. estimated it at one
hundred and fifty millions. Virginia's quota of
this expenditure, supposing it only one twenti-
exth, was at least five millions of dollars; ten
times the amount of her yearly revenue. And
this did not include the loss of time, the neglect
of business, the bad bargains, the lawsuits, and
the numerous other helps to ruin, that came from
the glass.

Madness. Reports from many lunatic hospi-
tals showed that a third, and in some madhouses
more than half, of the inmates, owed their in-
sanity to strong drink.

These astounding developments could not
but arrest attention. Discount what a reasona-
ble man could, for over-coloring and exaggera-
tion, enough certainly was true to arouse thought,
and kindle in every mind at all bent on the coun-
try's good, a desire to curb such ills. It became
a leading topic of conversation. Two persons
could hardly talk together, without some refer-
ence to the Temperance Society—for censure
or for praise. It was now unusual, in many
neighborhoods, to offer the bottle to a guest. A
distinguished lawyer,* who was also a large farm-
er, and had been a prominent member of the
Legislature, was often heard to say, that the
custom, which the Temperance Societies had
made prevalent, of not offering drink to guests,
had saved him, every year, at least the amount
of his taxes; which he stated at about sixty or
seventy dollars.

There was a sensible decrease of drunken-
ness. Many drunkards, by abstaining altogether
(even though they belonged to societies pledged
only to moderation), were reclaimed. A much
larger number, it is believed, were kept from be-
ing drunkards; by avoiding what now stood
manifest as the sole passway to drunkenness—
moderate drinking. The absurdity of the mere
temperance pledge was now clear to almost
every one. Many intemperate men were among
the first to deride it, as affording them no safe-
guard: for in them, a single glass awakened a
raging desire for more, which stopped not, short
of intoxication. Their only possibility of deliv-
erance, as well as other men's only certainty of
not becoming drunkards, was in total abstinence
from all that could intoxicate. Increasing num-
bers became convinced that Doctor Johnson's
remark to Miss Hannah More was true—"Ab-
stinance is as easy, as moderation is difficult."
Besides—where was the boundary line, between
Temperance and Intemperance?

In 1830, and 1831, most of those enlisted in the
reformation were persuaded, that there was great
inconsistency, and want of wisdom, in leaving out
fermented liquors from the pledge. Chemical an-
alysis proved that Madeira, Port, and some other
wines, had 23, or 25 per cent of alcohol: fully
half as much as ordinary whiskey: while the
weaker sorts, and cider, beer, &c., contained
from six, to 15 or 18 per cent; as much as toddy,
mint-julep, and many other good drinks confess-
edly intoxicating. This was the case even when
no adulteration was practised: but the wines
commonly sold, were strengthened by large in-
usions of brandy, and polluted by unwholesome
drugs, to give them flavor and pungency. They
had thus more mischief in them than spirits had.
The poor, too, who could not afford to drink

* Archibald Bryce, of Goochland. He died in 1846.

It strengthens his testimony, that he never was a mem-
ber of any Temperance Society.
wine, exclaimed against the unfairness of requiring them to give up their beverage, whiskey, while their wealthier associates indulged themselves in wine. These considerations prevailed so far, that most societies now included wine in their pledge of abstinence. But it was not until ten years afterwards, that any save a very few could renounce all intoxicating liquors: and still longer, before they could find in their hearts expressly to forbid cider.

In 1831, the new reformation received a fresh impulse by tidings from Europe, that it was also spreading there. So early as 1829, Temperance Societies were formed in Ireland and Scotland, with above 14,000 members. The example was followed in England, by still greater numbers; and on the continent by many. British writers uttered the highest eulogies of the movement, and its American originators. One called it "a great discovery," that temperate drinkers "are the chief agents in promoting and perpetuating drunkenness:" and said that the discoverer of "this great truth" had done more for the world, than he who enriched it with the knowledge of a new continent. Temperance societies have not only made America truly the new world, but in a few months have produced an unparalleled change in many districts of the United Kingdom." Another said—"It would be ingratitude to our American friends, to throw into the shade our obligations to them for having originated this noble cause. If the names of Washington and others are deservedly dear to them for their struggles in the cause of freedom, there are other names which will descend to the latest posterity, as the deliverers of their country from a yoke far more dreadful than any foreign yoke." These praises from a different hemisphere gratified the national pride of our reformers; and heightened their confidence in the merits, and ultimate success, of their enterprise. How great must be its lustre, when the mere reflection back of that lustre, across the ocean, was so resplendent!

But still a formidable majority withheld their aid. The middle classes, always apt to be foremost in useful virtues, were the main adherents of the Temperance Reformation. The two extremes of society—the very lowest, and those who (especially in their own estimation) stood highest, agreed in disdaining the movement. Many then despised it, who, or their sons, or other near relatives, have since fallen a prey to the insidious Habit, that stealthily binds its victims with chains too fine to be seen and too light to be felt, till they are too strong to be broken.* Numerous clergymen were among these con-

* See Dr. Johnson's Vision of Theodore.
meats and drinks. At such tables toddy or wine went round: the host himself, a man of wealth and influence, kindly pitying the fanaticism of total abstinence. Since Mr. Wilberforce's day, the Episcopal clergy both in England and America, are too evangelical to copy the "soft dean" of Lord Timon's villa,

"Who never mentioned Hell to ears polite!"

but it was expecting too much of a minister, to suppose that he would refuse the glass and avow himself a coldwater man, among fashionable gentlemen and ladies, whose laugh would have been "ready chorus" to the host's sneer at such ultraworldism—a host regular in the responses at church, and contributing fifty dollars, or a hundred, yearly, towards the pastor's salary; besides dinners, presents for the parsonage-table, and countenance in society. Methodists and Baptists, and their ministers, were very differently circumstanced. Their sphere of life, commonly, was humbler. They were nearer to the lower classes, if not of them; saw much more of them: better knew of, and more sympathized with, their wants, sufferings, virtues, weaknesses, and vices. Baptist and Methodist ministers frequented such cabins, and ate, and slept in them.—entered (usually upon errands of mercy) such haunts of squalid wretchedness—looked upon such scenes of filthy, ragged vice—as the refined tastes of their more learned brethren would have revolted from in disgust. Who they were, that the woes brought by drink were most likely to touch deeply; and whose more thorough knowledge of human nature was most apt to see the best method of arresting that flood of woes; none can doubt.

Who they were, that the woes brought by drink were most likely to touch deeply; and whose more thorough knowledge of human nature was most apt to see the best method of arresting that flood of woes; none can doubt.

In 1832 and 1833, no prominent occurrence connected with our subject, is to be commemorated. The progress of the reform was visible: though with occasional remissions, and even relapses, such as have repeatedly attended its course. In those years were introduced and circulated some powerful writings in its support. The Fourth Annual Report of the American Temperance Society, was one of these; a pamphlet of 110 pages, crowded with striking facts and reasonings. Some volumes of Temperance Tales, by Lucius M. Sargent, a Boston lawyer, then entered Virginia. As interesting and happily conceived narratives, at once humorous and pathetic, in a style of composition singularly racy and beautiful, they would rank among the foremost literary productions of America, had not every page displayed a moral, which the leaders of literary fashion have perseveringly discountenanced.

The Virginia Temperance Society had now transferred its annual meetings to Richmond. In February, 1834, it published an invitation to the various local societies of the State, to meet in Convention at Richmond. But the Young Men's Temperance Society of Frederick county having issued a proposal that such a convention should be held in October, at Charlottesville, this proposal was seconded by the Executive Committee of the State society.

And accordingly, the first Temperance Convention of Virginia assembled at Charlottesville, on the 30th of October, 1834; and sat three days, adjourning finally on the first of November.

In this Convention were 180 members; delegates from Temperance societies in 38 counties, all of them cis-Alleghany counties—nine lying in the great Valley, and 29 in Eastern Virginia. The nine were Alleghany, Augusta, Bath, Berkeley, Botetourt, Frederick, Hampshire, Rockingham, and Shenandoah.

Of the members, 37 were ministers of the Gospel; and 18, physicians. Several eminent men were members, who have since died: we may name Conrad Speece, D. D.; Jonathan P. Cushing, President of Hampden Sidney College; Hugh Nelson; and Thomas Walker Gilmer. The Rev. Dr. Justin Edwards of Massachusetts, one of the ablest and most un­tiring pioneers of the reformation; and Edward C. Delavan of New York, who has given many thousands of dollars, and years of patient labor to the cause; attended the Convention as invited guests.

General John H. Cocke was chosen President: and ten vice-Presidents were appointed: Hugh Nelson, Thomas W. Gilmer, Jonathan P. Cushing, Conrad Speece, Rev. Edward Wads-worth, Rev. J. B. Jeter, of Lancaster, Col. Samuel Blackwell, of Northumberland, Dr. Joseph B. Anderson of Amelia, Dr. J. W. R. Dunbar of Frederick, and Nathaniel C. Creeshaw of Hanover.

Bishop Meade, and three other members, were appointed as a "Standing Committee of Business." They reported, and the Convention adopted ten very judicious rules of proceeding. One of them limited every speech to ten minutes. Another was, that all Resolutions should first be offered to the Committee; who, if they approved, should report them to the Convention.

The Body adopted 33 Resolutions; hearing, directly or indirectly, upon the use of distilled spirits: declaring the opinion that to make, or sell them, was morally wrong—earnestly approving the stand taken by physicians in favor of the Temperance Cause, invoking the continued co-operation of the ladies in that cause—com­mending the owners and masters of ships for sailing them with no spirits on board, so that more than a thousand vessels were navigating the ocean without such liquor—pronouncing the
pledge of total abstinence from ardent spirits an indispensable feature of the temperance reform, &c., &c.

Propositions against the use of wine and other fermented drinks were offered: but were all defeated by the eloquent fears of some gifted members, lest any such declaration might weaken the supposed scriptural sanction of wine. Even a Resolution offered by a young Presbyterian clergyman,—"warmly commending the practice of those, who, as an example to the intemperate, or to obviate objections against Temperance societies, do wholly refrain from using mixed or adulterated wines as well as ardent spirits," was withdrawn, after an interesting and animated debate."

Near the close of the Convention, Dr. Edwards took his leave, in a "beautiful and affecting address." • • • • • • • "The hours we have spent among you," said he, "have been among the most interesting we have ever enjoyed. Instead of finding the good cause of Temperance merely in its inanity, we have seen decisive indications that it is advancing far toward the vigor of manhood.

"When we return, Sir, and tell what we have seen and heard, the friends of Temperance in the North will say, 'It is of God!' They will thank him and take courage. And when they are told, that in this Convention were not only young men, in all the ardor and enterprise of youth and men in middle life; but men also, venerable for age, for experience, patriotism and piety; men, whom not only Virginia, but the United States have delighted to honor; men of all Christian denominations, and of all political parties; and when we tell them that we were received with the greatest kindness and the most fraternal cordiality, and were highly honored as fellowhelpers in this great and good cause;—they will be reminded of the time when the North and the South, in the day that tried men's souls, stood side by side, and through the gracious aid of Divine Providence, were the honored instruments of achieving victories which established their country's independence; and they will be inspired with new hope, that the time is near, when the North and the South, the East and the West, shall all unite, and through the same gracious aid which was vouchsafed to their fathers, be the honored instruments of achieving a still more glorious victory—a victory over themselves; and of establishing a still more glorious Independence."

Bishop Meade replied in a very feeling manner.

* We quote from the published Proceedings of the Charlottesville Convention.

Under one of the 33 Resolutions, the president and three other members were appointed as a Committee to prepare an Address to the People of Virginia. This was done, soon after the adjournment of the Convention; and the Address was published, with the Proceedings. After a strong array of facts and reasonings to show the necessity of reform in the country's drinking habits, it presents some of the results, thus far, of the United Efforts and Resolves against alcoholic liquors. "Seven thousand associations, comprising twelve hundred and fifty thousand members, pledged to entire abstinence from ardent spirit, have been formed in the United States. More than three thousand distilleries have been discontinued. Seven thousand merchants and dealers, chiefly from conscientious motives, have ceased to sell spirits. Ten thousand drunkards, in five years, have ceased to drink intoxicating liquors. More than a thousand vessels navigate the seas, with no ardent spirit on board: and so conducive is this found, to their safety from shipwreck, (of which drunkenness is confessedly the most frequent cause,) that Insurance Companies offer to deduct five per cent from the premium of insurance, on such vessels. The reformation has flown, most rapidly, to every quarter of the globe. Europe, Asia, New Holland, Middle and Southern Africa, are beginning to ply this mighty engine of social purification. In the British Empire alone, 150,000 persons have taken the Temperance Pledge. To our country all these nations own themselves indebted for this great moral invention: and meet it is that the bond which re-kindled the long smothered flame of constitutional liberty, should have originated also the means of rescuing that flame from the dark and loathsome vapor which so lately threatened its extinguishment."

A short time before the meeting of the Convention in Charlottesville a newspaper, called "The Temperance Pioneer," had been established in Winchester by the Young Men's Temperance Society of Frederick. During the Convention, this paper was transferred to the Executive Committee of the State Society, who transferred its publication to Richmond, and new-named it "The Southern Temperance Star." It was published monthly, in eight quarto pages, through the year 1835; and then ceased. It contained many things of great pith; but was edited and printed so slovenly a manner as to produce little effect.

On the 24th of February 1835, the Virginia Temperance Society held, at the Capitol, in Richmond, its eighth annual meeting. From estimates founded upon reports then made, there were said to be 35,000 members of Temperance Societies in the State. Authentic accounts were
given, of many distilleries and liquor-stores discontinued, through the workings of conscience or from the decrease of profits.

In this year, Virginia received statements from England, of a striking character. The British House of Commons appointed a committee in 1834, "to inquire into the extent, causes, and consequences of drunkenness; and whether the Legislature could prevent the continuance and spread of so great an evil;" with power to send for persons and papers. The committee sat three weeks; drew from numerous persons answers to above 4000 questions; and made a long and able Report, with the evidence on which it was founded. The Report and evidence were published. One fact which it stated, particularly struck observant minds here: That the yearly expenditure in Great Britain, upon intoxicating drinks, was fifty millions of pounds sterling; or 210 millions of dollars. This gave entire credibility to the estimate for the U. S., of 150 millions of dollars. The populations of the two countries were then nearly equal. And if Virginia's quota of the national outlay was but one thirtieth—that was five millions.

Six District Temperance Conventions were held in 1835, under recommendations of the State Society; at Warrenton, Charlotte Court-House, the Brick Church in King & Queen, Staunton, Martinsburg, and Tazewell Court House; numerously attended by auditors and members. Among the members were many able and distinguished men.

A Congressional Temperance Society had been formed at Washington in 1833; and Legislative Temperance Societies in many of the states. But no such step was taken in Virginia, till 1841. The members of our Legislature adhered to the ancient usage of keeping a bottle, or a case of bottles, in their rooms.

From the commencement of the reformation in Virginia, many had strenuously objected to the union of females in the pledge. "Were ladies to be suspected of intemperance?"—it was asked; "suspected of being in danger of drunkenness?"—The chivalry of some men rose to the height of declaring that they would knock any man down, who should invite their wives or daughters to sign. To the objections it was answered, that females, were very far the heaviest sufferers from intemperance; by the neglect, unkindness, and cruelty of those to whom they clung most confidingly; and by countless forms of mortification and shame; that women were therefore the most deeply interested in the reform; that their influence, in whatever concerned domestic or social habits, or the kindly affections, was irresistible; and their influence could in no way be so efficient, as by their uniting in this work. A lawyer at the Charlottesville Convention (as was said in that Body's Address), had stated that in six years of his practice, he had been engaged in eleven cases of complaints prosecuted by wives against their husbands, for personal violence; in ten of which, the violence was proved to have occurred when the husbands were drunk. The objection, after growing more and more faint for some years, nearly ceased to be heard; and as many females, as males, became members of Temperance Societies.

From the close of 1835 until 1841, the agitation was languid, and not remarkably successful. As many, probably, renounced or violated the pledge, sometimes relapsing into drunkenness,—as were added to the ranks of Total-Abstinence. The sellers of drink often exulted in the alleged decline of Temperance; carefully explaining, however, that they meant only the Societies; and professing themselves warm friends of what they considered as Temperance. In 1840, the decline of Temperance was obvious; and was caused mainly by the introduction of a cant phrase, "Hard Cider," into the Presidential contest of that year. "Hard Cider" was the slang name for all, even the strongest liquors; and was quaffed very profusely.

In 1841, Virginia felt the power of a new phasis of the reform; which began in Baltimore. Six men, long addicted to excessive drinking, were one day induced to take a pledge of abstinence from all that could intoxicate. Delighted with their new liberty, and some of them possessing good powers of speech, they addressed crowds, not only at regular Temperance meetings, but in the streets; nay, traversed the country, and other states, to proclaim the horrors of strong drink, and the freedom and happiness of perfect temperance. In 1841, and early in 1842, some of these men, or of their disciples (reformed drunkards), entered Virginia; and spoke in many counties and towns, with prodigious power and success. Two, named David Pollard and --- Wright, (mechanics), spoke to vast assemblies in Richmond and many other places. Wright was comparatively cultivated; of winning voice and manner. Pollard was unlettered and unpolished; and, by the rough, deep cuts he gave, reminded us of John Randolph's likening Ben Hardin to "a kitchen knife, whetted on a brick-bat." Both portrayed in such life-like colors the miseries of drunkenness, the practices which lead to it, the perfect safety and superior charms of cold-water, the artifices of liquor-dealers to ensnare the temperate or draw back the reclaimed, the crimes and woes which the traffic occasions, and its black criminality,—that multitudes were pleased, convinced, and fired.
No ten other meu, it is believed, had induced so many to sign the pledge, or so many dealers to renounce the traffic. They were sometimes roughly used, however, by men whom their ridicule or their graphic descriptions exasperated. Pollard was assaulted by a man in Buckingham, who took offence at some of the orator's remarks. And Wright, by a liquor seller in King William or King & Queen, was attacked in the church pulpit where he was speaking, and pulled from it.

In 1841 and '2, we believe, a Legislative Temperance Society was formed; but not many of the Legislature joined it; and it has long been unheard of.

In 1844, a Temperance Convention was held in Richmond; of which Governor McDowell was President; opening the session with an address of rarely surpassed force and beauty. He must be mentioned, as the only Governor of Virginia, who, while he filled the office, has had the moral courage to avow total-abstinence, and steadily to banish wine, and all other intoxicating drinks, from his sideboard and table.

In 1844, and again in 1845, a great sensation was produced in the state by the public addresses of John B. Gough; a young Englishman whom his father, (an old soldier and a Chelsea pensioner) had sent to America at the age of 12. After great and not unfruitful struggles for a livelihood in New York, he was joined by his mother and sister. In a few years, the mother died, the sister married, and John fell into habits of deep intoxication. By the kindness of some persons in Massachusetts, he was reclaimed; and became a travelling speaker upon Intemperance. The expressiveness of his gestures, the richness of his imagination, his thorough knowledge of human nature and life, his ready flow of the happiest language, in a sweet and distinct voice, his boundless command over the tears and the laughter of his auditors, and his power, all together, to convince, delight, and persuade,—make him, in our thoughts, the most eloquent man we have ever heard; though we listened to all the best speeches in the Virginia Convention of 1829, and have heard in Congress the (reputably) best speakers now in America. Several others more impartial than we, have pronounced the same judgment.

Mr. Gough wrought mighty effects on the public mind; yet an offset to them was, that his unapproachable eloquence disheartened and silenced other speakers; who mortifyingly contrasted their own best efforts with his. And it was difficult to hear them with much relish, soon after having heard Gough.

The year 1843 witnessed the introduction into Virginia of another new form of the Temperance movement; the most striking and efficient form yet devised. We mean the organization of Sons of Temperance.

The plan was formed by sixteen gentlemen in the city of New York, in September 1842; aiming to bind men by a closer tie, and to enlist their interests and affections more warmly, than the former association had done. The plan was, to have in villages and neighborhoods, local societies called Divisions (subordinate Divisions), meeting once a week. Delegates from these, meeting once in three months, form, in each state, a Grand Division, which has legislative and judicial control over the subordinate Divisions; and is itself controlled by the National Division, composed of Delegates from the various Grand Divisions, and meeting once a year. The National Division is the supreme legislature of the whole system for the United States; prescribes constitutions for the Grand and subordinate Divisions (which may make By-Laws not inconsistent with the constitutions; and decides, by appeal, all controversies in or between the Divisions.

A Son of Temperance is pledged not to "make, buy, sell, or use as a beverage, any spirituous or malt liquors, wine, or cider;" a pledge taken with such solemnities, accompanied by a ceremonial so impressive and affecting, that he who could violate it, would on very slight temptation commit perjury; and would scarcely be worthy of belief, on his oath, in a court.

The "Son" has other inducements to keep the pledge more faithfully than the takers of the old pledge. The intercourse at the weekly meetings, is kindly and endearing; calculated to attract and engage. The secrecy enjoined as to the passwords and proceedings, has an indefinable charm. The provisions made for his nursing and pecuniary aid in sickness, and if he dies, for the expenses of his burial and the rearing of his children; appeal to his self-love, and teach him that his little initiation fee and weekly contributions are but paid into a sort of savings' bank, or mutual-assistance fund, out of which he will draw, if he need it, much more than he pays in.

A volume of kindness is implied in one of the questions which the presiding officer is required to ask at every meeting—"Is any of the brethren sick, or in distress?"

The order of the Sons of Temperance began in Virginia, by the opening of "Washington Division" in Norfolk, in April 1843. "Howard Division," in Portsmouth, followed, in May. "We had," says an accurate narrator, "many difficulties to encounter, and many hostile prejudices to remove. Nearly two years elapsed before the sixth Division was chartered."* This

* Evans' Digest, and History of the Sons of Temp.
was "Charity Division," in Staunton; instituted in 1845. Conjointly with Marshall Division, of Harrisonburg, it celebrated the Fourth of July of that year, by a public meeting in Staunton, at which an Address of great ability was delivered by Mr. Pike Powers. Every succeeding year saw the Order multiply; until the Divisions in Virginia are now about 350; comprising about 15,500 members. The Divisions are named sometimes from their place of meeting; sometimes after great men of the country; sometimes after men or principles conspicuous in this or some other walk of beneficence. Thus, there are Divisions named "Howard,"—"Father Matthew,"—"Abner Clopton,"—"Holcombe,"—"Rechabite,"—"Good Samaritan,"—"Harmony," &c., &c.

This institution has produced great effects. It has attracted, and kept firm, those whom the old, usual rule could not attract, or hold; giving strength for self-preservation, to weaklings who were perpetually falling under temptation; and has thus reclaimed hundreds of intemperate men, and broken up not a few drinking houses and distilleries. But its attractions have so much drawn off the regards of its members from the old societies, that most of these have been dissolved; leaving that great number of people who will not or cannot join the "Sons," no longer covered by the panoply of a pledge. To recover this lost ground, some Divisions have sent out to them speaking men, to hold meetings and deliver speeches throughout their counties or towns; so as to keep the public attention awake to the evils of intemperance.

Females, and boys, not being admissible among the "Sons," a sisterhood has been formed called "The Daughters of Temperance;" and a junior fraternity called "The Cadets of Temperance." Cadets may be boys from ten to eighteen years old. Their local societies are called Sections. Several of these exist in Virginia; filled with zealous and energetic young warriors against the common enemy. We know of no "Sisters of Temperance" in the State, except a division in Richmond.

The traffic in drinks that cause drunkenness, has been little affected by Virginia legislation. In 1832, a law was passed forbidding anyone to retail spirits or wine at his store or grocery, unless the county court should certify that the place was one "fit and convenient to the neighborhood" for such sale, and that the applicant was of good character. What should constitute "fitness and convenience," whether it should be the neighborhood's loving liquor so much, that a great deal could be sold there,—or its being so temperate that even a grog-shop in its midst could not corrupt its morals—was left to the court's conjecture. The luminaries of the Bench varied greatly in their interpretations; but nearly all applications for the certificate were granted. In a few counties, the courts in some years held that there was no place fit and convenient; of course rejecting all applications. This statute gave place on the 1st of July 1850, to one which empowers the court to decide, on a view of all circumstances, whether the license shall be granted or not.

In 1840, the first accounts came hither of Father Matthew's great successes in persuading the people of Ireland to abjure whiskey. In two years more, we heard of his having administered the pledge (of abstinence from all intoxicating liquors) to five millions and a half, of his 8,000,000 countrymen. This truly great man, on a tour through the United States, spent a few days last winter in Richmond; preaching on a Sunday in the Roman Catholic Chapel, and speaking twice on temperance in the same building. The church, as a spirited sketch of him says in one of our newspapers, was "crowded to bursting." The same paper says, "no public honors were shown him in Richmond. For his own sake we do not regret it at all. To men like him, nothing can be more disagreeable than pageants and the accompanying palaver. But for our own sake, we are sorry that no offer of them, at least, was attempted."*

In 1846, a General Temperance Assembly for the State, was organized in Richmond, and adopted a constitution, which, if published, has never met our eyes. It convened again in 1847: adopting, on each occasion, salutary resolutions and measures, which failed of much effect for want of publicity, and through the smallness of the numbers present. In December 1848, its third meeting took place; when, among other resolves, it requested its President to prepare a Memorial to the Legislature, praying that at the next general elections, the proper officers might be required to take the sense of the voters on a distinct poll, upon the question, whether the sale of intoxicating liquors should continue to be licensed by law, or not? and that if a majority should be against the licensing system, in the whole state, or in any counties or towns, such laws might be passed as would become the wisdom, dignity, and virtue of Virginia, and of her Legislature.

The Memorial was prepared, presented to the House of Delegates, and referred to a committee; which reported against the prayer—and the House concurred in the Report. Some extracts which we are able to give from the Memorial, shew it to be not altogether unreasonable:

* Richmond Examiner, of Dec. 28, 1849.
"Taking the lowest estimates that any careful
and rational enquirer can make, of the mischiefs
which come from the use of such liquors, they
call for remedy more powerfully than any other
mischiefs against which the Virginia Legislature
has ever striven; nay, more powerfully than
most of the grievances which have roused na-
tions to revolt and to revolution, or have caused
cruel rulers to be branded by History as tyrants
and monsters.

"The 'Bloody Mary' of England, whose in-
famy is immortal for her butcheries of those who
would not conform to her opinions in Religion,
put to death, in her reign of four years, but 288
persons.

"Charles the First was warred against, de-
throned, and beheaded by his people, for oppres-
sions which produced not a single death* (so far
as History shows) before the sword of civil war
was openly drawn; and produced pecuniary ex-
tactions to the amount probably of not half a mil-
ion of dollars.

"The Revolution of 1688 was occasioned by
acts of tyranny, which looked, indeed, to despot-
ism, and involved judicial murders, as well as
intolerable fetters upon Religious freedom; but
the murders exceeded not a few hundreds; and
the restraints upon Religion had not practically
carried wretchedness into any great number of
English families.

"The American Revolution, so justly begun,
and so gloriously achieved, had yet no bloodshed,
nor any large amount of moneyed exaction, for
its cause. Till the fight at Lexington, not a hu-
man being perished illegally by the hands of the
English King or his myrmidons. And the un-
constitutional taxation which his Parliament prac-
tised or attempted, was in itself utterly trivial;
meriting and meeting resistance, only because of
the principle it involved. But because it did in-
volve the germ of tyranny, our ancestors arose
and shook off the British yok: by a war of seven
years.

"The wrongs which have recently made the
people of France and other European nations
rise and overturn thrones that seemed immova-
ble; convulsing that continent with struggles be-
deled by the friends of Liberty every where with
painful hope; were even less than the wrongs
which brought Charles the First to the scaffold,
or which drove James the Second a fugitive for
life, from his kingdom.

"We pray you now to compare with these
historical causes of agitation and revolt, the
evils which strong drink inflicts upon this coun-
try."

*This is a mistake. His tyranny caused the death of
Sir John Elliot, by an illegal imprisonment in the Tower.

Then, after speaking of the deaths and the
money expended, the Memorial proceeds—
"We should less grieve for this expenditure, if
it merely produced no good; if it only fell idle
and useless upon the ground. But we know from
bitter experience and the universal testimony of
observant men, that (besides the deaths) one
third of the lunacy, four-fifths of the crime, and
nine tenths of the pauperism, which fill our bed-
lams, prisons, and poor-houses, are the fearful
fruits of that expenditure; the dread harvest
from that seeding. There is hardly a family in
Virginia but may mourn one or more of its mem-
bers, as having fallen a prey to intemperate
drink."

"Thus it is seen, that those evils which have
most loudly called upon the wise and good for
cure—those grievances which have the most
deeply stung the patriot's heart, and most po-
tently nerv'd his arm—are equalled, if not
surpassed, by the mischiefs that come of strong
drink."

"There can be no good reason why a thing so
fruitful of evils should receive more favor from
your Honorable Body, than other things incom-
parably less mischievous. A baker or butcher,
selling unwholesome bread or meat, is punisha-
ble by law. An apothecary, selling poison to a
man who he had reason to believe would swal-
low it, would be viewed with detestation, if not
treated as a murderer: nor would the poison's
being slow, or likely to produce only madness,
much mitigate his guilt. Usury, the crediting of
college-students, and the carrying of concealed
weapons, are forbidden: so are gaming, the sale
of lottery tickets, betting on elections, and even
playing at any game whatever (except a few
privileged ones) though no bet be made. Yet
the mischief done by any of these practices, if
they were totally unchecked by law, never could
come nearer to the mischiefs done by strong
drink, than a mote comes to a beam in magni-
tude.

"No one denies, that the use of intoxicating
liquors occasions many crimes. There are few
places where they have long been vended that
have not been the seats or sources of thefts, vi-
olent and perilous assaults, murders, suicides, or
death from intoxication; all traceable to those
places. Surely no human reason can justify the
licensing of a traffic which undeniably causes
these crimes and calamities. Where is the dif-
ference, we respectfully ask, between licensing
crimes themselves, and licensing the trade which generates them?"

Yet, though the facts we have stated, and of which we eagerly court from you the most searching investigation, would seem to require a prayer for the immediate abolition of all licenses for the sale of commodities so variously baleful; that is not our prayer. We do not desire the adoption of that measure, unless the people will it. When the day comes—as come it will, and come it must—for correcting in our laws the enormous inconsistency of prohibiting the sale of goods to a student on credit, or the carrying of a pistol in one's pocket, yet of permitting a traffic out of which grow more robberies, murders, and crimes and vices of every kind, than from all other causes united,—we desire to have Public Opinion sustaining the Legislature. And of this our confidence is sure: resting upon our belief in the purity and intelligence which fit our people for self-govern ment, and self-protection.

Then follows the prayer, that the opinions of the voters may be taken, on the question of license or no license.

At the preceding session of the Legislature, a petition from a few citizens of Fluvanna had prayed that the same question, as to that county alone, might be submitted to its voters; and had been rejected.

These refusals of the government, even to have the sense of the people taken upon such a question,—are perhaps palliated, slightly, by the fact that no large portions of the People themselves have shewn a wish to be heard upon the question. But it would be greatly underrating their virtue and shrewdness to doubt, that whenever their voices shall be heard, their representatives will be seen to have lagged behind Public Opinion on this subject, as far as the British House of Lords did about the Reform of Parliament, for many years before 1832. It is hardly possible to ascertain the wishes of the Virginia People upon the license question, except by an uttering of them at the polls, under the direction of Law: so dispersedly do they live—so variously occupied are their time and thoughts by busy avocations—and such is the want of leisure, wealth, and concert among those who feel deeply enough on the subject, to circulate petitions among all the voters.

It is worthy of note, that the two Petitions hitherto presented have asked a far less decided step than would seem justified by the facts they affirm. There is a scale of measures, each milder than its predecessor: 1. To forbid positively, the sale of intoxicating liquors. 2. To take the sense of the voters upon the question, whether the sale shall be forbidden or not? 3. Not to prohibit, but merely to forbear licensing, the sale; leaving it to men's consciences, and to Public Opinion; and disclaiming to swell the Treasury by a tax upon grog-shops, any more than by a tax on brothels, or on all crimes. 4. To take the sense of the voters upon the question, whether the sale shall be licensed, or not; this last, and mildest course, was prayed for by the Petitioners. Perhaps such moderation was most wise: though, to a plain mind, it savours of over-caution. Doubless at no distant day it will be remembered with wonder and shame, that Virginia, in this middle of the nineteenth Century, not only forebore to punish, but positively sanctioned a traffic in crime, misery, and human blood.

With some detached incidents and developments of the Temperance Reformation, we shall close this sketch.

Members of several, if not of all churches, in Virginia, are allowed, without forfeiting membership, to sell intoxicating drinks by wholesale; and, we believe, by retail. The Baptist church about three years ago was agitated by a discussion, whether abstinence from both the use and the traffic should be insisted upon. It was variously decided by various congregations: some being content with the moderate use, and the sale according to law; and others requiring their members to abstain from both. But in no instance, that we remember, was any distinction made by the disputants or the churches between drinking and selling liquor. Those who allowed the former, allowed the latter also. The utter disparity of the two acts, appears totally to have escaped the notice of all.

Many signal exhibitions have been made, of the effects wrought in drunkards, and upon their homes, by reformation. The bloated, reeling rot, whose breath and person reeked with putrid fumes,—whose return home was dreadful,—whose ragged and wretched wife shrank from his embrace, and whose little children ran trembling from his presence,—whose dwelling and all his possessions, gave token of ruin,—has full often been seen to regain the firm step, erect port, and proper form of manhood; to be clad always in neat attire; to free himself from debt; to labor steadily at his calling; and to return, when his work was done, to a home redeemed from all discomfort, where smiling faces and glad hearts welcomed and blessed him.

Sellers of liquor have been known to disregard and to spurn the entreaties of wives, not to furnish more drink to their drunken husbands. Such a case occurred with one dear to us: a wife, who went in agony, to a grocery, where her husband had lain drunk for days; and supplicated the keeper to let the unhappy man have
no more liquor. She was repelled with a rough refusal of her prayer.

Heartlessness, not less strange, has often been shown by near relations, one to another. Men have persisted in selling liquor, when habits of drunkenness were visible in their own sons; who have quaffed absolute ruin from the casks and bottles of their father. We know a merchant, wealthy and deemed respectable, in a neighboring county, who yet continues the traffic, though one of his sons has died a drunkard, another has become frequently drunk, one of his brothers-in-law has died of drink, another, with two of his young sons, is often madly drunk, and a young son of a sister-in-law has from his boyhood been frequently so.

Brothers, nay, fathers, who have seen a brother or a son gliding into the habit of intemperance, and who were urged to take, themselves, the pledge of abstinence as a reasonably sure means of inducing the imperilled brother or son to abstain also; have refused; and, by the glass on their tables, and by persisting, themselves, in its enjoyment, have sped the weak one to his destruction. Sad examples of this kind have occurred in the highest circles of Virginia society. As to banishing the bottle from their houses, and refusing to partake of it any where, in order to aid the salvation of friends, or of friends' children,—that is thought by many in those high circles, to be a romantic folly. So, doubtless, thinks a fond mother, whose entertainments are graced with wine and stronger potations, and one of whose sons (a talented young man) is now a frequent drunkard. The effect of strong drink, in deadening all the best chords of human feeling, and in promoting outrage, tempts us to think, that Anacreon meant to brand it, and not money, as the mainspring of evil:

\[
\text{Día τουτόν οὐκ αὖσλος,} \\
\text{Día τοῦτον οὐ τοιχές.} \\
\text{Πόλεμοι, φάνει δὲ αὐτον.} \\
\text{Τὸ ὅ χειρον, ἐλληπέθα} \\
\text{Día τοῦτον τίς φίλουντες.}\]

We said in the beginning, that if a tithe is true of what is alleged about the mischiefs of Intemperance, and the efficacy of the proposed reme-

* Which a writer in the Richmond Examiner has translated thus:

"On all the kindliest scenes of life,  
It sheds disasters, tears, and strife:  
Deadens and chills fraternal breasts,  
Sires of parental love divests;  
Points the assassin's deadly steel,  
And maddens War's demoniac reel.  
Ah, yes! and worst of all, 'tis this  
That mars the heaven of wedded bliss;  
Prompts man to act a wolfish part,  
And break fond woman's trusting heart!"