

**THE DRINKING USAGES OF
SOCIETY; OFFICERS OF
THE MASSACHUSETTS
TEMPERANCE SOCIETY, 1868**

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The drinking usages of society; Officers of the Massachusetts temperance society, 1868 by
Various

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VARIOUS

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THE
DRINKING USAGES OF SOCIETY;

Alms
BY A. POTTER, D.D.

BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

Seventy Thousand.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY THE
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JANUARY,
1868.

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OFFICERS

OF THE

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1868.

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P R E F A C E .

THE Council of the MASSACHUSETTS TEMPERANCE SOCIETY deem it of great importance to reprint, for general circulation, the following excellent Address on the Drinking Usages of Society, by the eminent divine and philanthropist, Bishop PORTER, so well known, not only in this city, but throughout the Union. It was delivered in a sister State, before a large and highly cultivated audience; a portion of the community supposed by many to be free from the dangers which assail the poor and the imperfectly educated.

In this Address, the Bishop has conclusively, and in the most beautiful and fervid language, proved, that, in consequence of the deference paid by the rest of the community to the opinions and practices of the higher classes, the habit of self-indulgence among the latter has such a baneful influence as greatly to retard, if not altogether to stop, the progress of the Temperance Reform.

If the perusal of this admirable speech has a tendency to interest some of our distinguished fellow-citizens, whose position in society so justly commands respect, the holy cause of Temperance will receive an impetus which will at once cheer the hearts and strengthen the hands of all the laborers in this work of benevolence and humanity.

ADDRESS.

WE have assembled, ladies and gentlemen, to contribute our aid in arresting a great and crying evil. We do not aim to promote directly that temperance which forms one of the noblest and most comprehensive of the Christian virtues. Our simple object is to prevent drunkenness, with its legion of ills, by drying up the principal sources from which it flows. To one of these sources, and that the most active and powerful, I propose to ask your attention this evening. The occasion, I need not say, is a most worthy one; one that merits the warmest sympathy and support of every patriot and philanthropist, of every follower of Jesus Christ.

For what is intemperance, and what the extent and magnitude of its evils? Of these we all know something. We all know how it diseases the body; how it disturbs the equilibrium of the intellect; how it poisons the springs of generous affection in the heart, and lays a ruthless hand upon the whole moral and spiritual nature. What drunkenness does to its poor victim, and to those who are bound

to him by the closest ties, you all know. All know, did I say? Let us thank God that few of you can know, or are likely to know, the inexpressible horrors which fill the soul of the inebriate, or the gloom and anguish of heart which are the portion of his family. You know enough, however, to feel, that, where this sin enters, there a blight falls on happiness, virtue, and even hope. Look at the palpable shame and misery and guilt which collect within and about one drunkard's home; and then multiply their dreadful sum by the whole number of such homes, which, at this moment, can be found in this Christian city; and you will have an accumulation of sin and sorrow, even at your doors, which no mortal arithmetic can gauge, but which is sufficient to appal the stoutest heart, and move to sympathy the coldest charity.

But whence does this vast and hideous evil come? To you, as a jury of inquest, standing over the victims it strikes down, I appeal for a verdict according to truth and evidence. Can it be said, that they who are now cold in death, with a drunkard's shame branded on their memory, "died by visitation of God"? God sends no such curse even upon the guiltiest of his creatures. He may send pestilence and earthquake; he may send blasting and mildew; but he commissions no moral plague, like drunkenness, to carry desolation to the souls as well as bodies of men. This evil, alas! is self-invoked and self-inflicted.

And how? Do men rush deliberately, and with full purpose of heart, into such an abyss? Is there any one so lost to self-respect, to all prudence and duty, so devoid of every finer instinct and sentiment of our nature, that he can willingly sink down to the ignominy and the woe that are the drunkard's portion? I tell you nay. Every human being recoils, with involuntary horror and disgust, from the contemplation of such a fate. He shrinks from it, as he would from the foul embraces of a serpent, and feels that he would sooner sacrifice every thing than take his place beside the bloated and degraded beings who seem dead to all that is noble in our nature or hopeful in our lot. These are victims that have gone blindfold to their fate. Gentle is the declivity, smooth and noiseless the descent, which conducts them, step by step, along the treacherous way, till suddenly their feet slide, and they find themselves plunging over the awful precipice.

And what is that deceitful road? Or which is the perfidious guide who stands ever ready to turn aside the feet of the unwary traveller? Here, ladies and gentlemen, is the great question. To arrest an evil effectually, we must know its nature and cause. It is idle to lop off branches, while the trunk stands firm and full of life. It is idle to destroy noxious leaves or flowers, while the plant still pours forth its malignant humors at the root. If we would go to the bottom of this evil, if we would lay the axe to