

**MODERATION VS. TOTAL
ABSTINENCE;
OR, DR. CROSBY
AND HIS REVIEWERS**

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Moderation Vs. Total Abstinence; Or, Dr. Crosby and His Reviewers by Various

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A CALM VIEW OF THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION.

BY CHANCELLOR CROSBY, OF NEW YORK.

*An Address delivered in Tremont Temple, Jan. 10, 1881,
in the Boston Monday Lecture Course.*

THE object of temperance societies is to prevent drunkenness. The cardinal principle in these societies is total abstinence from all that can intoxicate. That total abstinence, if adopted by all, will prevent drunkenness no one will dispute. The object of temperance societies would be gained.

But two questions arise after contemplating these propositions: first, will this plan of total abstinence be adopted? and, secondly, ought it to be adopted? The first question is prudential, the second is moral.

THE PRUDENTIAL QUESTION.

1. Will the plan of total abstinence from all that intoxicates be received by men in general? We desire to use in all measures of reform a plan that is practicable. We cannot be satisfied with mere testimony to a theory that will be unproductive of results. Herein reform differs from religion. Religion demands adhesion to a truth stamped by the conscience, even though that truth find no other adherent. But reform lies in the domain of the expedient. It seeks to make society better, and if it cannot raise society to the highest level it will raise it as high as it can. It will not prefer to let society wallow be-

cause it cannot place it in an ideal Utopia. The most religious and conscientious man will be glad to see men leave off strife and discord, even if they do not act from the highest motives or attain to the heights of a genuine charity. His conscience will not be injured by their improved condition, however much he would like to see them still more enlightened. It is an important point to make clear to the mind this distinction between the conduct of reform and the movement of personal religion, for confusion here has led to much false action. A common argument of the radical agitator is that his conscience cannot stop short of total abstinence in the temperance question, and on that ground he will not have any affiliation with one who seeks to subdue the intemperance of the land by any other method. But his argument is a complete *non sequitur*. His conscience concerns his own personal habits. In the matter of other people's habits he is simply to do the best the circumstances allow. The conscience that prescribes his personal habits may make him long to see others like him, and may make him work to that end, but it cannot rebuke him if that end is not attained, but only an approximation is gained; nay, it should make him work for the approximation with all zeal.

Too often that which is called conscience is mere obstinacy of opinion and personal pride. A large part of the fanaticism that history records has been made in this way. Men have gone to the stake as martyrs, or sufferers for conscience' sake, when the heresy they professed never went deeper than their sentiment, and might readily have been altered by a free judgment. While this fact does not justify their persecutors or palliate their guilt, yet it certainly detracts from the merit of the martyrdom. In this matter of arresting the progress of drunkenness we may have very different views of the means to be used, and we may conscientiously adhere to our own plan of working toward the end, but we cannot *conscientiously* object to the means employed by others unless they contain an immorality. Nay, more, we *must conscientiously* wish them success.

If this principle of sympathy and co-operation on the part of *all who seek the abatement of intemperance* were once

established, we should see effects that are now thwarted by the divisions and mutual hostility of those who profess to have the same end in view. One of the reasons for this confirmed hostility of the total-abstinence advocates against the reformers who do not adopt that principle is found in the power of a false usage. I refer to the word "temperance."

MEANING OF THE WORD "TEMPERANCE."

The word has been violently wrested from its legitimate meaning. By a persistent use of a moderate word for radical measures the great unthinking public, so far as they are seekers for the common good, have been led to see in these radical measures the only path of duty. They have learned to consider all that was opposed to the party called by the name of temperance as inimical to temperance, and so have enormously swelled the radical ranks by their unenlightened adhesion. The label has been affixed to the wrong goods, and the unsuspecting purchaser has not noticed the fact. So potent has been this deception that I undertake to say that there are thousands of worthy citizens who have no other idea of the word "temperance" than that it means the total abstinence from all that can intoxicate. With such we have to begin with first principles. We have to show them that the Latin *temperantia* signifies the moral quality of moderation or discreetness, and that the English word "temperance," as used in all good standard English works, means precisely the same thing. We have to show them that the *temperate* zone does not mean a zone which totally abstains from cold or heat, but a zone that is moderate in both; that a temperate behavior is not a behavior that totally abstains from severity, but one that is steady and reasonable in its course; as Cicero says ("Fam.," 12, 27): "Est autem ita temperatis moderatisque moribus ut summa severitas summâ cum humanitate jungatur." And while quoting Cicero I may quote his definitions of temperance as given in his "De Finibus"—first, "Temperantia est moderatio cupiditatum, rationi obediens" (2, 19, 60); and, secondly, "Temperantia est quæ, in rebus aut expetendis aut fugien-