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*TWENTIETH CENTURY
BROCHURES: Number Two*

ABRAHAM
LINCOLN and
TEMPERANCE



BY D. D. THOMPSON

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The words of Mr. Lincoln always have weight. His views of the habit of drinking and of the traffic in intoxicants are worthy of the closest attention. Mr. Thompson's representation of what the great man said and thought is undoubtedly fair, and I commend this effort to bring the example and teaching of this honored American to the attention of American youth, as an excellent method of influencing young people in the right direction.

S. M. MERRILL.

Chicago, Jan. 5, 1901.

Abraham Lincoln and Temperance.

D. D. Thompson.

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THE war against the liquor traffic is not ended. There are many indications that it is about to be renewed with greater vigor than ever before. It will not end until the traffic is overthrown with all its evil influence upon individuals and the State. How soon this victory shall come no one can tell. Of one thing we may be sure, it will come through God's use of human instruments. The various religious organizations, and especially organizations of Christian young people, will be among these instruments, and many individual young men and women will have an important part to play.

There is peculiar appropriateness in Methodists, and especially Methodist young people, leading in the temperance movement; for, while there have been many eminent temperance reformers, John Wesley was the greatest, and he was the first prohibitionist. In January, 1773, Mr. Wesley, in a letter on the terrible suffering of the poor of England caused by the scarcity of provisions, wrote: "What remedy is there for this sore evil—many thousand poor

people are starving? . . . How can the price of wheat and barley be reduced? By prohibiting forever, by making a full end of that bane of health, that destroyer of strength, of life, and of virtue—distilling.”

During Wesley's lifetime, and as a result chiefly of his efforts, there was a very great decrease in the consumption of liquor. After his death his followers, in England particularly, grew so indifferent to the evils of intemperance that even their ministers were accustomed to drink liquors. But there has been a marked change in the Wesleyan Church in England in recent years. Most of its ministers are now total abstainers, while in the United States the sentiment is such that no minister can use intoxicating liquors as a beverage and remain a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

But, while the followers of John Wesley may be inspired to greater zeal for the overthrow of intemperance by his words and works, there are many upon whom no words of his or of any other religious reformer would make the slightest impression. There is, however, one name which will always command the respect of every American, even of the saloon-keeper and of those politicians who fear the political power of the saloon-keeper more than they fear the wrath of God—the name of Abraham Lincoln. This great leader was always, by word and act, a temperance man. He never used liquor in any form, and he frequently sought to persuade others not to use it. He often preached what he called a sermon to his boys. It was: “Don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, don't swear, don't gamble, don't lie, don't cheat.

Love your fellowmen and love God. Love truth, love virtue, and be happy.”

Mr. Lincoln frequently spoke to young men whom he saw were in danger from the use of liquor, and not a few, no doubt, owe their moral and perhaps spiritual salvation to his kindly words of warning. A certain well-known class leader in one of our prominent western churches relates that, after Mr. Lincoln's speech at Leavenworth, Kan., in the winter of 1859, Mr. Lincoln and friends—among whom was the narrator of the incident, then a young man—were invited to the home of Judge Delahay, where Mr. Lincoln was entertained. The refreshments included wine, of which nearly everyone except Mr. Lincoln partook. The witness adds:

The next day we escorted him back to the train, and to my dying day I shall never forget our parting. I was only twenty-two years old. Mr. Lincoln bade each one good-by, and gave each a hearty grasp of the hand. He bade me good-by last, and, as he took my hand in both of his and stood there towering above me, he looked down into my eyes with that sad, kindly look of his, and said, “My young friend, do not put an enemy in your mouth to steal away your brains.”

Mr. Lincoln was a temperance man not from an impulse due to the enthusiasm aroused by some temperance orator. His attitude was a conviction within. All the influences surrounding him in childhood and young manhood were of a character to induce him to drink. In later years, referring to the drinking customs of that period, he said:

When all such of us as have now reached the age of maturity first opened our eyes upon the stage of existence we found intoxicating liquors recognized by everybody, used by everybody, repudiated by nobody. It commonly

entered into the first draught of the infant and the last draught of the dying man. From the sideboard of the parson down to the ragged pocket of the houseless loafer it was constantly found. Physicians prescribed it in this, that, and the other disease; government provided it for soldiers and sailors; and to have a rolling or raising, a husking or "hoe-down" anywhere about, without it, was positively insufferable. So, too, it was everywhere a respectable article of manufacture and of merchandise. The making of it was regarded as an honorable livelihood, and he who could make most was the most enterprising and respectable. Large and small manufactories of it were everywhere erected, in which all the earthly goods of their owners were invested. Wagons drew it from town to town, boats bore it from clime to clime, and the winds wafted it from nation to nation; and merchants bought and sold it by wholesale and retail with precisely the same feelings on the part of the seller, buyer, and bystander as are felt at the selling and buying of plows, beef, bacon, or any other of the real necessities of life. Universal public opinion not only tolerated, but recognized and adopted, its use.

Whisky was in that period as good as money, and when Mr. Lincoln's father decided to move from Kentucky to Indiana he accepted in payment for his Kentucky farm twenty dollars in money and ten barrels of whisky worth twenty-eight dollars a barrel. Perhaps it was in the ordering of Providence that the raft on which the goods of the Lincoln family were being transported to Indiana was wrecked by the rapid current of the Ohio River and all the whisky lost. Its presence in the wretched open-faced shack which was the home of the Lincolns during their first year in Indiana might have proved a temptation to which young Lincoln would have yielded, with disaster to his own character and with fateful results to the nation.

God's prophets have been men whose char-

acters began to be molded in childhood. When he determined to deliver the children of Israel from slavery he took a young man who had spent the most of his life in the midst of royal pleasures and sensual dissipations that destroyed rather than developed nobility of character. But Moses was called to deliver Israel and to be the lawgiver of the world not because he was "the son of Pharaoh's daughter," but because during the few years his own mother as a hired servant nursed him she taught him of God and his will, and so molded his character that the after years of royal pleasure and dissipation could not change it. Luther, Wesley, Shaftesbury, and hosts of other great and good men are illustrations of the same truth, that the foundation of the character that made them great was laid in childhood. And usually the instrument used was a godly mother.

This was the case with Lincoln. His mother died when he was nine years old. Yet, after he had become President, he said of her, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother—blessings on her memory." On Sundays Mrs. Lincoln would gather her children around her and read to them the wonderful stories in the Bible and pray with them. After he had become President Mr. Lincoln said: "I remember her prayers, and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life." The Bible stories not only interested him, but they molded his intellectual, as well as moral, character. He knew the Bible almost by heart, and his political speeches and State papers abound with its words and teachings. Two of his greatest speeches are thus particu-

larly distinguished—that delivered at Springfield, Ill., June 16, 1858, accepting the Republican nomination for United States Senator, and known as the “House divided against itself” speech; and the second inaugural speech, delivered March 4, 1865, which the *London Spectator* declared to be “the noblest political document known to history.”

No reader of the Bible ever imbibed its spirit or learned the lessons it taught more thoroughly than did Lincoln. Its truths appealed to his reason, and especially to his experience. Its declarations as to the effects of strong drink were fully confirmed by the condition of those about him who used liquor. Before he had ever tasted liquor he resolved to always totally abstain from its use. This was a courageous decision to make in that day; much more so, indeed, than it would be to-day. He even refused to sell liquor in his store at New Salem, and when his partner insisted, on the plea that its sale would draw custom, he retired from the business rather than consent.

Lincoln’s unfailing practice of his temperance principles attracted attention, and when he was grown some of his associates determined to make him break his resolution. In order to get him to take at least one drink of liquor they declared that he could not lift a full barrel of whisky and take a drink out of the bunghole. Lincoln accepted the challenge, lifted the barrel above his head, took a mouthful of the liquor, and set the barrel down on the ground. At once the shout was raised, “Well, Abe, you have taken a drink of whisky for once in your life and broken your pledge!” But the sentence was

scarcely completed before he spit the liquor out of his mouth and quietly said, "And I have not done so now."

To do and say that which he believed to be right was so much the habit of Mr. Lincoln's life that he was not conscious of temptations which with many others would require great moral courage to resist, with perhaps weakness that would result in a fall. A more astute politician than Mr. Lincoln America has not produced, and a greater temptation never came to any mere politician than came to Mr. Lincoln the day after his nomination for the presidency by the Republican National Convention, which met in the "Wigwam" in Chicago, in 1860. It occurred in connection with the visit of the committee appointed by the convention to notify Mr. Lincoln of his nomination.

A number of the citizens of Springfield, knowing Mr. Lincoln's total abstinence habits and believing that he would in all probability have no liquors in the house, called upon him and suggested that perhaps some members of the committee would be in need of some refreshment, wine or other liquors. "I haven't any in the house," said Mr. Lincoln. "We will furnish them," said the visitors. "Gentlemen," replied Mr. Lincoln, "I cannot allow you to do what I will not do myself." Some Democratic citizens, however, who felt that Springfield had been honored by the nomination, sent several baskets of wine to Mr. Lincoln's house, but he returned them, thanking the senders for their intended kindness. After the formal ceremonies connected with the business of the Committee of Notification had passed Mr.

Lincoln remarked that, as an appropriate conclusion to an interview so important and interesting he supposed good manners would require that he should furnish the committee something to drink; and opening a door he called out, "Mary! Mary!" A girl responded to the call, to whom Mr. Lincoln spoke in an undertone. In a few minutes the maid entered bearing a large tray containing several glass tumblers and a large pitcher and placed it upon the center table. Mr. Lincoln then arose and, gravely addressing the distinguished gentlemen, said: "Gentlemen, we must pledge our mutual healths in the most healthy beverage God has given to man. It is the only beverage I have ever used or allowed in my family, and I cannot conscientiously depart from it on the present occasion; it is pure Adam's ale from the spring." And, taking a tumbler, he touched it to his lips and pledged them his highest respects in a cup of cold water.

A few months later Mr. Lincoln started on his journey to Washington to take his seat as President of the United States. In a number of cities his visit was honored with grand banquets, at which wine was served, but of which he never partook. On one occasion, being urged to drink a glass of wine, he replied, "For thirty years I have been a temperance man, and I am too old to change."

It is declared that actions speak louder than words. The cause of temperance would possibly have been victorious had the action of all temperance men been as consistent against the liquor traffic as their utterances have been. But when men's acts and words are in accord great

is their power. Such were Abraham Lincoln's. He not only abstained from the use of intoxicating liquors, but he was bold in publicly advocating total abstinence.

The first composition Lincoln ever wrote, at least his first production to be published, was on the foolishness of liquor-drinking, and the evils that come from the habit. He became very much interested in the Washingtonian movement which swept over the country in the early part of the century, and frequently addressed temperance meetings. On Washington's birthday, February 22, 1842, he delivered a memorable address before the Springfield Washingtonian Temperance Society, at the Second Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Ill. This address should be frequently read in our churches, Epworth Leagues, Sunday schools, and all gatherings of Christian young people. It contains these sentences, which close with a remarkable prophecy of the overthrow of intemperance:

MR. LINCOLN'S PROPHECY.

The demon of intemperance ever seems to have delighted in sucking the blood of genius and generosity. What one of us but can call to mind some relative more promising in youth than all his fellows who has fallen a sacrifice to his rapacity? He ever seems to have gone forth like the Egyptian angel of death, commissioned to slay, if not the first, the fairest born, of every family. Shall he now be arrested in his desolating career? In that arrest all can aid that will, and who shall be excused that can and will not? Far around as human breath has ever blown he keeps our fathers, our brothers, our sons, and our friends prostrate in the chains of moral death. To all the living everywhere we cry: "Come, sound the moral trump, that these may rise and stand up an exceedingly great army." "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." If the relative grandeur of

revolutions shall be estimated by the great amount of human misery they alleviate, and the small amount they inflict, then, indeed, will this be the grandest the world shall ever have seen.

Of our political revolution of 1776 we are all justly proud. It has given us a degree of political freedom far exceeding that of any other nations of the earth. In it the world has found a solution of the long-mooted problem as to the capability of man to govern himself. In it was the germ which has vegetated, and still is to grow and expand into the universal liberty of mankind. But with all these glorious results, past, present, and to come, it had its evils, too. It breathed forth famine, swam in blood, and rode in fire; and long, long after, the orphan's cry and the widow's wail continued to break the sad silence that ensued. These were the price, the inevitable price, paid for the blessings it bought.

Turn now to the temperance revolution. In it we shall find a stronger bondage broken, a viler slavery manumitted, a greater tyrant deposed—in it more of want supplied, more disease healed, more sorrow assuaged. By it, no orphans starving, no widows weeping; by it, none wounded in feeling, none injured in interest. Even the drammaker and dramseller will have glided into other occupations so gradually as never to have felt the change, and will stand ready to join all others in the universal song of gladness. And what a noble ally this to the cause of political freedom! With such an aid its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink in rich fruition the sorrow-quenching draughts of perfect liberty! Happy day, when—all appetites controlled, all passions subdued, all matter subjugated—mind, all-conquering mind, shall live and move, the monarch of the world! Glorious consummation! Hail, fall of fury! Reign of reason, all hail!

And when the victory shall be complete—*when there shall be neither a slave nor a drunkard on the earth*—how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those revolutions that shall have ended in that victory! How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity both the political and moral freedom of their species!

Mr. Lincoln's prophecy of the time when there should be neither a slave nor a drunkard

on the earth was made less than twenty years before the beginning of the war which within five years blotted slavery from American soil. The person may be living who in some way in the providence of God shall bring about the fulfillment of Mr. Lincoln's prophecy as to temperance, as he himself brought about its fulfillment as to slavery by his proclamation of emancipation. This may come within the next twenty years. When Mr. Lincoln uttered his prophecy in 1842 the prospects for the abolition of slavery were even less favorable than those for the early overthrow of the liquor traffic are now. But when the times are ripe history is made very rapidly. The work of years or agitation and of education culminates suddenly. This was done by the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Dred Scott, by which it was declared that a slave had no civil rights, and under which slavery was legalized, not only in the Territories, but in the free States. The decision was expected to settle the slavery question, but instead it added fuel to the flames and the fires of liberty burned more brightly.

Is the temperance movement to have its Dred Scott decision? Perhaps it will find it in the perversion of the army post exchange from what it was designed to be—a store where soldiers could purchase a variety of needful articles—into a saloon known as the “canteen,” where soldiers can be transformed into drunkards, with the result that brewers and distillers will increase their wealth and fasten the drink curse more strongly upon the people.

The establishment of the canteen or saloon in connection with the army is a danger fraught

with greater peril to the nation than any other event in connection with our career. The danger from the use of liquor is realized by every soldier, but all who drink think that they drink moderately, and hence think there is no danger in their use of liquors. But Abraham Lincoln in his warning to the young man, already quoted, declared liquor to be an enemy that would steal away the brains. For a soldier to sleep at his post of duty means death. Yet the government, by its encouragement of that which steals away the brains of its officers and men, more seriously imperils the nation than is ever done by sleeping sentinels. Clear brains may counteract the faults of sentinels, but stupefied brains only add to the confusion. So important is a perfect body considered in a soldier that the slightest physical defect, such as a broken tooth or a deformed finger, will cause the rejection of an applicant for admission to West Point. The time will come when no boy who indulges in any intoxicating liquor will be admitted to West Point, and when even moderate indulgence by any officer in the army or navy will be sufficient cause for his dismissal from the service. *And it should be a crime punishable by imprisonment to sell intoxicating liquor to anyone in the uniform of the United States army or navy.*

A serious responsibility rests upon those in authority in our government. There are thousands of fathers and mothers of soldiers whose sons have yielded to the temptations of the army canteen who will feel over their boys' return, with habits formed which may wreck their

characters forever, that the patriotism of those boys has been a curse to themselves and their loved ones, rather than a blessing to the country. The nation was horrified and indignant at the alleged mismanagement of the army which resulted in the wasting sickness and death of so many brave soldiers. But even more dreadful may be the permanent results of the deliberate establishment by official authority of the army saloon.

Abraham Lincoln, in closing his speech at the dedication of the Soldiers' Cemetery at Gettysburg, called upon the people to "highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Abraham Lincoln also said, "We cannot escape history." If, as a result of the use of liquor by officers or men, at some fateful moment this nation should fall, and government of the people, by the people, for the people, should perish from the earth, history would hold responsible for this calamity to the world those who had the power to prevent it by abolishing the traffic in the army, but did not use it.

Mr. Lincoln, discussing the possible downfall of the American republic, said:

At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasures of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not, by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years. At what point,

then, is this approach of danger to be expected? I answer, If it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time or die by suicide.

The danger which now seriously threatens this nation at this time is the liquor traffic; and the particular form which most seriously threatens it is the army canteen. The canteen is more to be feared than the weapons of an enemy.

History abounds in illustrations of the fatal effects of strong drink upon the fate of armies and of nations. The story of Belshazzar's feast and the fall of Babylon has been repeated many times. The Medean Empire was destroyed because of the drunkenness of a Medean commander and his troops. Alexander the Great died from the effects of a debauch, and with him the Macedonian Empire passed out of his family. There are illustrations of the evil effects of liquor also in our own history. General Prentiss is reported to have said at a public meeting in Washington during the civil war :

Rum and drunken officers have done more to defeat and demoralize our armies than all rebeldom could do—if *the appointing power had made temperance in our officers an indispensable qualification, the war would have closed long ere this.*"

To many workers and friends the future of the temperance movement is not simply dark; it is hopeless. The liquor traffic is not only strongly intrenched in America, but throughout the civilized world, and its power seems to be increasing. In a speech in 1863 Mr. Lincoln characterized intemperance as "one of the

greatest, if not the greatest, of all evils among mankind." It is so to-day. Looking at the question from a purely materialistic point of view, the situation appears to be very much as did that of the abolition movement to Frederick Douglass a few years before the war. So disheartened did Douglass become that on one occasion he declared that the friends of freedom might as well give up. Their foes were so strong and they were so weak that they could not even hope longer for success. Suddenly the clear, strong voice of Sojourner Truth, the negro prophetess, who was in the audience, rang out, with the startling question, "Frederick, is God dead?" Douglass had forgotten to take God into the account. Instantly his tone changed, and he began his onslaught upon slavery with renewed vigor.

God is not dead, and the desolating liquor traffic will yet be destroyed by his power. How it will be destroyed none of us know. We can afford to work with him in his way. The victory may come through prohibition, or local option, or moral suasion, or by some restrictive measure that may not appear to be destructive at all, as the abolition of slavery came through measures not having abolition for their object. Even Mr. Lincoln, who was open in his avowal of his anti-slavery views, repeatedly declared that his first and only purpose in waging war was to save the Union, with slavery or without it.

The final victory will be due to the cooperation of many men of many minds. We may well imitate Abraham Lincoln in the spirit of tolerance he always displayed

toward those with whom he differed in opinion. Had he been intolerant he would have been unfitted for the great task committed to him of guiding the nation through the years of the civil war. While we are unflagging and unflinching in our warfare against the liquor traffic, we should also be tolerant of those who agree with us in purpose, though they may differ in method. We may be tolerant even toward saloon keepers, many of whom are sincerely honest in their belief that their business is as legitimate and as righteous as any other business. We should show them that we hate, not themselves, but their business.

The greatest political utterance of Abraham Lincoln was his speech delivered in Cooper Institute, New York City, February 27, 1860. He closed that speech with these words: "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it." That is the highest standard for political action ever presented by a statesman of any nation. The possibility of its realization is to the professional politician what the former senator, John J. Ingalls, said the hope of the adoption of the Golden Rule as a principle of political action was—"an iridescent dream." Sometime the politicians of America will reach Mr. Lincoln's exalted standard. To act upon it to-day shrewd politicians think would be extremely foolish. But Abraham Lincoln was more than a politician, and knew that the permanent welfare of the country could not be secured by unrighteous means. Had he been a time-serving, fearful politician, having no faith in the justice and strength of his cause, he would

never have become President. His own faith inspired others. May it be an inspiration to all who seek the overthrow of the liquor traffic! Let us in our efforts against the saloon “have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.”

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