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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LIQUOR-SELLER.

[CONCLUDED.]

And here the community renews its call to accountability. It presses this heavy additional charge in the face of the liquor-seller. It charges him, not merely with a disregard of his own personal obligations, but with systematic illoyalty; with waging a constant and destructive warfare against all its dearest interests;—with besieging ever, night and day, with a frenzied army and the mightiest engine of destruction, those great interests in which all its interests are summed, and which it has ever been the sole object of its organization to promote,—"THE COMMON DEFENCE AND GENERAL WELFARE." It charges him with not only seducing multitudes to a desertion of its interests, and a disregard of the duties they owe it, in common with himself, but with arraying them in unnatural and deadly hostility; arming them with a weapon more to be dreaded than the sword, than any other except his own matchless engine of ruin,—with the fire-brand of the moral incendiary! It charges him with not only making them loungers and vagabonds, but with throwing back upon it—letting loose in its midst—a portion of them, trained to every species of lawlessness and disorder;—brawlers, and rioters, and gamblers, and pickpockets, and Jacobins, and thieves, and robbers, and murderers. It charges him with taxing it not only with the support of his paupers;—a burden which humanity assists it to bear—but with the support of his malefactors, and with the keeping up of tribunals and a police to protect it as far as possible against their outrage; with the burden of supporting, not only poor-houses and asylums, but jails and penitentiaries. It charges him with poisoning the atmosphere of public morals, in which it alone can exist in healthful vigor, as with the blast of the desert simoom! And still willing to reserve its might and majesty for a dernier necessity, and, not withstanding the multitude and magnitude of its wrongs, to meet him on the ground of entreaty and expostulation, it appeals to his patriotism, and conjures him, by the ties, the memories and associations of a common home, a common country, to desist from his treason! The appeal to his patriotism is in vain.

It raises the mantle from the wounds he has inflicted upon its body, and appeals to his HUMANITY. It points to the wretched hovel of his victim; for it is within view of every grog-shop. His eye rests upon the haggard visage of misery itself. He sees what no one else can behold without emotion; the very sight of which is sufficient to break up all the fountains of feeling, and swell to overflowing every stream of commiseration. He sees there the sorrowing, woe-striken mother, pining away in secret misery and grief, beneath the heavy hand of want, neglect, cruelty, and in view of the lowering storm of degradation and ruin, raging above, and threatening ere long to sweep before it the last vestige of her earthly hope. He sees a band of children, ragged—shivering with cold, and pinched with hunger;—their expanding minds, their immortal souls yet more neglected. The liquor-seller has taken their sustenance, despoiled their once happy home of its comforts and its joys,—and *their father is a drunkard!*—Maternal care has been diverted by spectacles of more obvious misery, or drowned in the stupefaction of broken-hearted sorrow. There is no kind hand to guide their inexperienced footsteps through the dangers and snares which surround them; no tender voice to teach their lisping accents to seek assistance!—The liquor-seller looks upon this scene, which could not fail, one would think, to touch the heart of obduracy itself; to swell the bosom of indifference with the sigh of sympathy; extort from the eye of insensibility the tear of pity. He beholds the picture, and recognizes it as one drawn to life by his own graphic art! Oh, can he behold it without pity! Can he gaze upon it without remorse!

Another scene is presented. The grating doors of a prison open, and before him stands the manacled victim of crime which would never have been committed but for his trade; and as he views him attentively, reflection calls to remembrance what the wretched outcast was, and how, and by whom, he became what he is. He beholds his erect form, bent down with irons; his eye, his visage, down-cast, indeed, but still the speaking index to an immortal soul—bearing the visible impress of an Almighty maker, an eternal destiny! And as he beholds, how truly might he exclaim—"THE WORKMANSHIP IS GOD'S;—THE WRECK IS MINE"!

He is shown to the family from whose bosom the poor wreck of humanity has been torn; smarting with wounds which cannot be healed; mourning with grief that refuses comfort. While a brother's, a sister's, a wife's heart melts with affection and pity for the loved, the lost, the ruined one, the cheek is wet with the tear of grief, crimsoned with the blush of conscious disgrace, at the very mention of his name! And his aged parents are sinking beneath the shock, too much for years and feebleness to bear, "in sorrow to the grave"! The liquor-seller is told to look!—and as he looks, and hears, "who did all this"!—conscience, with stifled voice, whispers, "THOU ART THE MAN"!

Scenes, such as these, to be witnessed wherever the liquor-seller is found, but which human language cannot describe, or human fancy sketch, in half the horrors of the reality, are pressed upon his view, and expostulation does its utmost. As they pass before him, he is asked, and asked to answer, as he shall answer to his bleeding country and to his God, *if his paltry gain is worth all this?* He is asked whether, at the view of what his trade has thus done, he feels no compunction; and entreated, in the name of humanity, to stay his hand, and cease from his heartless work. As cold, and callous, and unblushing as a statue, he heeds it not. The tears humanity weeps over his havoc, congeal upon him as upon an iceberg. He has no feeling, if we judge of his sympathies by his conduct, but that which thrills through his soul when his fingers gripe the price of a gill!

But let him not mistake. He is an arraigned culprit; and his conscience, and his humanity, thank God, are not the laws by which he is to be tried, or destined forever to be the arbiters of his country's peace! This parlying and entreaty have been for his own benefit; the offer of forgiveness on the easy terms of repentance and amendment. These he refuses. And now he stands before the high tribunal which is to judge him, stripped of all claims to sympathy, one of the highest grade of criminals, and most meet for the stripes of justice; a criminal, self-convicted, of the second, third, thousandth offence, and after repeated, reiterated admonition and expostulation;—not penitent and promising amendment, but hardened and persisting in his crimes, and still "breathing threatning and slaughter"! Every judgment approves, every heart assents, while every voice pronounces him GUILTY!

Let final sentence, however, be suspended, until his trial be fully ended, and the penalty due to all his crimes can be visited at once upon his guilty head.—He must answer for another, higher and heavier than ALL the rest!

IV. The business of the liquor-seller is not only of no benefit to any, and the source of all the evils enumerated, but *it has literally carried* DEATH—death in its most appalling form—*into every family in the land!*

Oh, let a fever dry up my blood, or consumption prey upon my vitals—from any other cause, let the cold sweat of death glisten upon my brow; but let me not fall a prey to a disease whose pangs, "with tripple barb, pierce soul and body both"! Let not the grave into which I sink, be wept over by friends, or pointed to by enemies, as "the grave of the drunkard"! *Yet death, in this most dreadful form, has the liquor-seller ruthlessly carried into every family in the land!* Do you ask for the evidence? It is THERE [pointing to the grave-yard hill]; and in every other grave-yard in the country; and you all know it. YES, IT IS THERE! I can point to a gentleman in this town—in this house—and not an old man, either—one whose head, indeed, is gray, but not with years—whose personal observation and knowledge enable him to enumerate **65** drunkards' graves upon that hill. Yes, the evidence is there; and there it will remain (solemn thought!) until the resurrection of the dead; until the inebriate and the liquor-seller, the poor drunkard and the drunkard maker, shall rise from the same mortal resting place, and stand together in the final judgment! Do you call, besides, for living witnesses? They are everywhere. They make up every group. They are HERE. They fill this house, and make up this assembly. Who in this house—who here or elsewhere, can say with truth, "no one in any way related to me, fills a drunkard's grave"? Who here can say it? Alas, I cannot. If any one should say so, I must have his family history from some other source, before I can believe it. Some, indeed, may have to travel farther back in the search than others; but it is undoubtedly true of all. Let any and every one here try it, harrowing and painful as must be the experiment. It is true, I repeat it, that the person is not in this house who can say with truth, "no one in any way related to me, fills a drunkard's grave"! It would *not* be true, if there had never been any liquor sellers. It is true that every family has, in some of its branches, a drunkard's grave. It would not be true, if there had never been any liquor-sellers. It is true that his traffic has continually shrouded the land in mourning; filled its streets with mourners. Oh, it is true, I repeat it, and every one knows it, that the liquor-seller's cold-blooded trade has carried death—death in its most awful form—into every family!

If every 1200 of the population of the whole country have sustained a loss of 65 KILLED, within the recollection of those who are far from being its oldest citizens, besides the wounded, as many, if not more, of whom, there can scarcely be a doubt, have, within the same time, died from their wounds, with what an immense aggregate multitude of our citizens has the liquor-seller's warfare peopled "the city of the dead"! Oh, if all the blood of all the hundreds of thousands it has beyond all doubt slain, were, as Emmet told Lord Norbury, "collected together in one vast reservoir, all the liquor-sellers now in the land might swim in it"—aye, might be drowned in it!

And this charge against liquor-selling is not alone true of the past. It is emphatically true of the present; and, if something more successful than dispassionate appeals to the liquor-seller's heart and conscience do not interpose for our safety, I fear it will be true of the future. What he has ever done, he is still doing, and will continue to do, while public opinion tolerates his murderous and soul-destroying trade. There are those in this house who can count seven sudden deaths within a circle of two miles around this town in the brief space of the last two years, by the same criminal agency. All the inquests of the present Coroner of the county, have been over the bloated bodies of liquor-seller's victims. And though reduced in number since public opinion has to some extent thinned the ranks of the destroyer, and many have learned to shun him, we still see amongst us *some*, pierced through with his deadly arrow, and reeling and staggering into the dark abyss of infamy and despair! The nightly whoops and revels which disturb our own streets, but too plainly tell, that NOW,—HERE,—since maturer age has begun to shun his coils, and he has feared his occupation was gone, *thoughtless boys*, who would once have found protection in a liquor-seller's magnanimity, are tempted "like birds to the snare, not knowing it is for their life," into the road that leads "down to the chambers of death"! Instead of better, the liquor-seller (with some exceptions, it is true) is becoming more reckless and desperate in his trade, as he dreads its departure; more guilty, amid the multiplied warnings and entreaties that salute his ears, the increasing light that shines upon his havoc.

And what paliation can he offer for this highest and blackest of all his deeds, proven by evidence which comes home to every man's bosom, which challenges, every man's senses, and cannot be denied? If the time ever was when the liquor-seller might have innocently made men drunken, with the Bible on his shelf, in which he might have read, if he did not, "*wo unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and puttest thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also;*"—if he could ever have doubted that his trade took the life of his fellow beings, when he saw them falling all around him; or his own guilt, when, in addition to its warning and threatened "wo," he read, or might have read, in the same holy book, "*thou shalt not kill;*"—or the depth to which he plunged them, in the face of its explicit and awful declaration that the drunkard "*shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven:*"—if, I say, such time ever was, that time has gone by. The liquor-seller of this day, is stripped of all excuse. He works 'against light and knowledge'—"with malice aforethought." Every one that now falls into the drunkard's grave, is, beyond all peradventure, MURDERED; AND WHO ARE HIS MURDERERS? That they are an extensive clan, a numerous banditti, stationed at their individual posts throughout the land, by each one of whom it may be said that 'others dealt out the poison as well as he,'—or 'if he had not dealt it out others would'—does not alter the case.—That his infatuated victim, lured by temptations spread out before him, and blinded by the enchanter's fatal spell, rushes voluntarily into the snare, would not surely be mentioned, or thought of, in extenuation. What murderer for lucre, if the fact were so, would ever dream of finding refuge in the silly plea that his victim made no objection, but, tired of life, had even bared his bosom and invited the stab? No! Every one that now falls into the drunkard's grave, let it be proclaimed abroad as solemn truth, IS MURDERED; and who, let the inquiry float on every breeze, and sound in every ear,—who, WHO ARE HIS MURDERERS?

All, all these things has the liquor-seller done. For all these is he accountable. Where shall I find words to express his accumulated responsibility?—What numbers could estimate, what words tell, what fancy paint, the anguish of heart he has produced? Who can analyze and estimate the tear of sorrow? Who can weigh the burdens he has laid upon his country? Who, but the Almighty, can measure the temporal and eternal consequences of the millions of crimes with which he has cursed and afflicted his country and his kind! Who but is utterly confounded in the attempt to conceive what he should render, if he could, for the lives he has taken, the blood he has shed? If he has sunk *one* soul to endless perdition, who will gainsay the word of Eternal Truth, and say that the whole world, if it were his to give, would be an adequate reparation? But who can have the feeblest conception of the responsibility which ALL his victims, ruined forever by his trade, will lay to his charge in the day of judgment! When the sighs and prayers of the widow, and orphans he has made,—the record of the crimes he has produced,—the groans of the dying,—the wailings of the souls he has ruined,—the cry of the blood with which he has drenched and saturated the soil of "his own, his native land," and all amidst the brightest moral light that ever beamed upon the earth,—shall rise at once to the heavens, and 'enter the ears of the righteous God that fills them,' into what heart of man has it ever entered to conceive the retribution which Infinite Justice shall meet out, as his "just recompense of reward?"

That he voluntarily closes his eyes to these solemn truths, and *will not* see them; or steels his heart against, and will not feel them,—so far from lessening, but increases, (if it can be increased) his responsibility; so far from averting, will but hasten and aggravate the coming retribution. His attitude, indeed, is one of the most amazing recklessness. The startling FACTS upon which the high charges against him and his business are based, no one has the hardihood to deny. They stand forth to every eye, and come home to every heart, as ADMITTED TRUTH. That his business, which produces all this ruin, is not only evil, but "evil ONLY, and that continually," producing NO countervailing good upon which the slightest plea of justification could be built,—is equally undeniable; and must stand prominently forth as 'TRUTH CONFESSED.' It would, indeed, require an amount of good to result from it, at least equal to the evil, to give him any just claim to impunity, not to say justification. This no liquor-seller would have the effrontery to claim. So far from it, the utmost that the duped and doomed slaves who crowd his bar-room are usually heard to plead, is,—not that liquor-selling has not done, and is not doing, to others and to the country, all that we charge against it, for this, as matter of fact, even *they* cannot deny,—but, that "a little liquor does *them* NO HARM;" while, as to this, infinitely as it would fall short, if true, of laying the groundwork of the feeblest excuse,—a trembling hand, a bloated visage, a fatal fondness for the intoxicating draught known to all but themselves, gives the lie to their words. Scarcely an intelligent man, who does not drink himself, or is not in some way *interested* in the traffic, can be found ready to allege, at this day, that intoxicating liquors can be used as a drink, by persons in health, *without harm;* while all our learned physicians, (saving only such as come within the exceptions stated) and thousands, and hundreds of thousands who have used and abandoned the use of them, and who speak from mature *experience*, certainly the best secondary evidence on the point, overwhelm the interested and infatuated few with testimony the most unequivocal; and while NO ONE, be he a liquor-seller, or a liquor-seller's landlord, or a liquor-seller's victim, *can point out, much less prove,* ANY, EVEN THE LEAST, *positive good which results from it.* With, therefore, a responsibility of inconceivable weight and magnitude suspended over his head, the liquor-seller, when called to account, must be speechless. And yet he persists! What ingenuous man of any other calling,—every other consideration aside,—could hear charged against him or his business by *one*, only ONE, respectable man, a tithe of what is proclaimed as from the house-top against the liquor-seller, without feeling constrained to pause and examine, and have the foul aspersion wiped out, if the charge were false, or retrieve his own error, if it were true? Yet the same pigeon-hole in the office of the clerk of the court of Quarter Sessions which contains the petitions of the 33 liquor-sellers in this county for the license under which they now carry on their trade, *contains the testimony of near* **1000** *respectable citizens of the county*, [displaying before the audience the "Remonstrance" presented to the court at January Sessions 1843,] *that his business spreads abroad* "CRIME, MISERY, WANT, DISEASE, AND DEATH!" And still he goes on! Oh, by what consideration CAN he be moved? Our wonder that any one, claiming kindred with civilized men, could be induced to occupy such a position an hour, is only exceeded by our astonishment at the apparent insensibility with which many, claiming the respect of others, thus brave it out, and, in mockery of every warning and expostulation from above, around, within, smile at their prosperity, and glory in their shame. But let him not vainly suppose that his callousness can always afford him a sanctuary. Let him not fall into the fatal error of supposing that the coat of mail which now shields him from every argument and appeal to his heart and conscience, will prove equally impervious to the defensive fire of an aroused and indignant public, or the denounced and unerring maledictions of heaven. His armor, his attitude of mockery and defiance, let him know, will but tend to provoke the one, and call down upon him the other.

The retributions of society are even now in his pursuit. The great mass begin to view the subject in its true light. The public mind is convinced; and the public heart begins to burn and throb with the conviction. "What,"—the inquiry now bursts forth in anxious astonishment,—"what could have produced—whence has come—the infatuation, the enchantment, that has so long eclipsed our reason, blinded our eyes, and stolen away our common humanity!" We reason in the same way upon no other subject. If an army of foreign mercenaries should land upon our shores, and spread abroad one hundredth part of the crime, desolation, and blood, which marks the liquor-seller's track, every eye would flash with indignation, every sword leap from its scabbard, every bayonet glisten in the sunbeam, every arm be nerved for defence. Once already the whole nation, making common cause with a few impressed seamen, engaged in a bloody war:—the liquor-seller's trade impresses more, far more, American freemen, "to prison and to death," EVERY DAY! If a banditti—if as many Indians were lurking about our mountains, and committing in our midst one half of the depradations of the thirty-three liquor-sellers in this county, they would be hunted down like wild beasts, the liquor-sellers themselves joining in the chase! The evils—burdens—strife—crime—desolation—blood-shed,—strewed around US by liquor-selling, in the light of heaven and before our very eyes, wrought by any other agency, would not be tolerated an hour! With eyes partially opened, it is utterly impossible that a thinking public can ever relapse into the marvellous lethargy from which they begin to arouse:—when, glancing at the present and the past, they are ready to exclaim in astonishment and self-reproach,

"Oh judgment, thou hast fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason!"

They not only begin to think, and think rightly. They begin to speak. They begin to act. Their thoughts and sentiments are fast assuming the nerve and muscle of determined conduct. Nearly one thousand men in this county, within a year, and they would be joined at this day by that many more, and twice that number of the female community, have spoken out in the most bold and intrepid manner, and have not hesitated to make their testimony matter of record. 13000 ladies speak out similar sentiments from the records of the criminal court of Philadelphia. The liquor-seller's petition for the removal of present restraints upon his traffic, was, but a week ago, spurned by a unanimous vote of the Senate of Pennsylvania. Everywhere the sentiment is spreading, and ripening into vigorous and effective action. The great majority of the public are banded together in one vast army, pledged, not only by example, but by an exertion of all their influence, to discourage, suppress, and banish the use of intoxicating liquors: and they begin to see that it is folly approaching madness to think of drying up the stream of pauperism, crime, and death, while the source is open. They are daily becoming more sensible of the import of their pledge, the importance of their object. Old and young, male and female, daily flock to their standard, and swell their ranks. And, with all their artillery directed toward the camp and bulwark of the destroyer, and with the grave-yards in their view, they are marching forward, animated by the same feeling which nerved and goaded the American patriots to conflict at Stony Point, the fate of their slaughtered brethren fresh in remembrance, and their watchword "remember the Paoli!"

And this sentiment must grow and ripen. It is utterly impossible that the community could slumber forever, amid the groans of its dying, over the ashes of its dead. It cannot be. Oh, it cannot be that humanity is so absolutely dethroned—so utterly deposed from her place—that we can still look coldly and complacently upon our drunkards' graves! No! Every family will begin to count "the vacant places" in their little circle. Fancy will call up in reminiscence the long forgotten images of their murdered kindred, from the dishonored grave in which the liquor-seller has laid them,—from beneath the dark pall he has spread over their tomb. The father and the mother will stand by the grave of a ruined son, and feel again the fond solicitude with which they watched his infancy, and guarded his childhood. The brother and the sister will recur to the time when he joined them in their childish sports, and read again the guileless innocence of his heart in his happy face, and view the sunlight of joy and promise that then played upon his brow. A whole family group will meet around the tomb of a father, and enter again into the holy ties, the kind offices and sympathies, which united them all in one, ere his untimely and awful end, cast upon them the inheritance of widowhood and orphanage. Every heart, musing upon severed ties and blasted hopes, and smarting afresh from wounds which had been closed, but not healed, will burn with holy indignation; and every voice will utter the purpose, and swell the sentiment, lately proclaimed by a respectable member of the bar of an adjoining county, in the State Temperance Convention—"*we have sworn unceasing hostility to liquor-selling—and we will never cease our warfare upon it, while a brother's,—a husband's,—a son's,—a father's* BLOOD, *cries from the earth!*"

Their weapon is PUBLIC OPINION—concentrated, settled, determined, scathing, resistless;—PUBLIC OPINION, built upon facts undeniable, conclusions unquestionable, and supported, and strengthened, and cemented, by every consideration that could affect the conscience, all the tender feelings that cluster around the heart;—PUBLIC OPINION, manifested in looks, and frowns, and tears, and prayers, and and words, and actions. The remembered fate of lost kindred, ruthlessly torn from every family, while it will call for vengeance, will remind them that he who dug their graves is still abroad; and all the undying affections of the heart, in their deepest, broadest extent, and in their utmost power, will make common cause for the dead and for the living. Fancy will return from its sad and frequent visits to the tombs of the lost,—from the contemplation of their unsuspecting childhood, or unmarred youth, when all was bright before them,—to the little prattlers, the loved and artless ones, NOW AROUND US; and oh, with what deep, painful, vigilant solicitude, must it dwell upon the sealed mysteries of the future! Every heart will feel for the safety of those it loves. The many will cease to view with favor, or speak of with indifference, or treat with civility, *the places where drunkards are made.* Age, leaning upon its staff, when it sees them, will raise its feeble hand, and shake its hoary locks, in indignation and horror. The nursery will teach childhood to hate them. The mother will impress, amongst her first lessons, upon lisping infancy, and it will be the parting counsel of the dying father to his son, *to shun the liquor-seller, as one whose heartless trade it is to make merchandize of the morals, the happiness, the lives, and the souls of his kind!*—From every domestic altar, and from every temple of God the voice of prayer will rise to heaven, for protection to the fire-side and the land, against his desolations. The thick film, woven by blinding custom,—if it be Divinely ordered that truth, reason, and humanity shall prevail,—will soon be brushed entirely away; and he will stand forth in his true character, an accessary in ten thousand crimes,—his hands wet, his garments stained, with blood;—and grog-shops will be viewed, and shunned, and loathed, as "whited sepulchres, filled with rottenness and dead men's bones;"—abodes of crime, pestilence, and death;—slaughter-houses of the human species;—ante chambers of hell! And all the elements of popular opposition will gather, and concentrate, and strengthen, until, in the wild fury of the raging storm, the liquor-seller's haunted imagination will picture before him,—his knees smiting together like those of the doomed Belshazzar,—the hand-writing of condemnation, the sentence of infamy, upon the walls of his charnel house!

But what guaranty has he that the threatened judgments of God will slumber? In times of far less light, of comparative "ignorance," when, thro' some strange delusion, his trade was viewed as harmless, and its evils as unavoidable, is it not true that the visible displeasure of heaven has marked his course? If other judgments have not overtaken him, and more terrible to be looked for now and henceforth, have not the dreadful evils which his business has scattered abroad, been so over-ruled and directed, always, that they have fallen with fourfold weight on his own family and himself? Go where you please, and it will be found that there is no general rule subject to fewer exceptions. Within the limits of our own county, and within the recollection of living witnesses, while few, if any, have long entirely escaped, more than one family engaged in the liquor-trade, has been almost literally swept by it from the face of the earth, and its very name and generation almost literally blotted out! Now, when retribution so swiftly and visibly follows 'sin against light,' that a man is a drunkard almost as soon as he is tempted to taste, what multiplied horrors may the liquor-seller not justly dread being made the instrument of infliction upon his own household! And he, who, under present circumstances,—supposing him to be incapable of feeling for *others*,—will continue the traffic, and see HIS OWN CHILDREN falling victims to it in his own house—thus living upon, or at the expense of, their temporal and eternal welfare—how awfully "joined to his idols" and forsaken must he be! To such moral cannibalism, if I may venture to give it a name, the history of civilization scarcely furnishes a parallel, if it be not found in the case of the forsaken mother in the doomed city of Jerusalem, who, when its enemies had "encompassed it with armies, and digged a trench about it," and fierce famine raged within, quenched her thirst with the blood, and satisfied her hunger with the flesh, of her own infant! if more, indeed, was to be expected from her sex, let it be remembered also, before she be rashly condemned in the comparison, that she acted under the heavy pressure of "affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created until that time, neither shall be." Oh, what can he expect but "*judgment without mercy, who shows no mercy,*" EVEN TO HIS OWN OFFSPRING!—We, brethren, have bright assurance that Providence will, in some way, sooner or later, and the indications are that it will be soon, interpose Almighty power, and arrest forever this cursed traffic. THERE CAN BE NO GROG-SHOPS, WHEN MILLENIAL PEACE AND GLORY SHALL FILL THE WORLD!

From the National Intelligencer.

CLAY'S LETTER AGAINST THE ANNEXATION OF TEXAS.

RALEIGH, *April* 17, 1844.

Gentlemen:—Subsequent to my departure from Ashland, in December last I received various communications from popular assemblages and private individuals, requesting an expression of my opinion upon the question of the Annexation of Texas to the United States. I have forborne to reply to them, because it was not very convenient, during the progress of my journey, to do so, and for other reasons. I did not think it proper, unnecessarily, to introduce at present a new element among the other exciting subjects which agitate and engross the public mind. The rejection of the overture of Texas, some years ago, to become annxed to the United States, had met with general acquiescence. Nothing had since occurred materially to vary the question. I had seen no evidence of a desire being entertained on the part of any considerable portion of the American people, that Texas should become an integral part of the United States.—During my sojourn in New Orleans, I had indeed, been greatly surprised by information which I received from Texas, that, in the course of last fall, a voluntary overture had proceeded from the Executive of the United States to the authorities of Texas to conclude a treaty of Annexation; and that, in order to overcome the repugnance felt by any of them to a negotiation upon the subject, strong and as I believe, erroneous representations had been made to them of a state of opinion in the Senate of the United States favorable to the ratification of such a treaty. Accordingly to these representations, it had been ascertained that a number of Senators, varying from thirty-five to forty-two' where ready to sanction such a treaty. I was aware, too, that holders of Texas lands and Texas scrip, and speculators in them, were actively engaged in promoting the object of annexation. Still I did not believe that any Executive of the United States would venture upon so grave and momentous a proceeding, not only without any general manifestation of public opinion in favor of it, but in direct opposition to strong and decided expressions of public disapprobation. But it appears that I was mistaken. To the astonishment of the whole nation, we are informed that a treaty of annexation has been actually concluded, and is to be submitted to the Senate for its consideration. The motives of my silence, therefore no longer remain, and I feel it to be my duty to present an exposition of my views and opinions upon the question, for what they may be worth to the public consideration. I adopt this method as being more convenient than several replies to the respective communications which I have received.

I regret that I have not the advantage of a view of the treaty itself; so as to enable me to adapt an expression of my opinion to the actual conditions and stipulations which it contains. Not possessing that opportunity, I am constrained to treat the question according to what I presume to be the terms of the treaty. If, without the loss of national character, without the hazard of foreign war, with the general concurrence of the nation, without any danger to the integrity of the Union, and without giving an unreasonable price for Texas, the question of annexation were presented, it would appear in quite a different light from that in which, I apprehend, it is now to pe regarded.

The United States acquired a title to Texas, extending, as I believe, to the Rio del Norte, by the treaty of Louisiana. They ceded and relinquished that title to Spain by the treaty of 1819, by which the Sabine was substituted for the Rio del Norte as our western boundary. This treaty was negotiated under the Administration of Mr. Monroe, and with the concurrence of his Cabinet, of which Messrs. Crawford, Calhoun, and Wirt, being a majority, all Southern gentlemen composed a part. When the treaty was laid before the House of Representatives, being a member of that body, I expressed the opinion, which I then entertained, and still hold, that Texas was sacrificed to the acquisition of Florida. We wanted Florida; but I thought it must, from its position, inevitably fall in our possession; that the point of a few years, sooner or later, was of no sort of consequence, and that in giving five millions of dollars and Texas for it, we gave more than a just equivalent. But if we made a great sacrifice in the surrender of Texas, we ought to take care not to make too great sacrifice in the attempt to reacquire it.

My opinion of the inexpediency of the treaty of 1819 did not prevail. The country and Congress were satisfied with it, appopriations were made to carry it into effect, the line of the Sabine was recognised by us as our boundary, in negotiations both with Spain and Mexico, after Mexico became independent, and measures have been in actual progress to mark the line, from the Sabine to Red River, and thence to the Pacific ocean. We have thus fairly alienated our title to Texas, by solemn national compacts, to the fulfillment of which we stand bound by good faith and national honor. It is, therefore, perfectly idle and rediculous, if not dishonorable to talk of resuming our title to Texas, as if we had never parted with it. We can no more do that than Spain can resume Florida, France Louisiana, or Great Britain the thirteen colonies, now composing a part of the United States.

During the administration of Mr. Adams, Mr. Poinsett, Minister of the United States at Mexico, was instructed by me, with the President's authority, to propose a re-purchase of Texas; but he forbore even to make an overture for that purpose.—upon his return to the United States, he informed me, at New Orleans, that his reason for not making it was, that he knew the purchase was wholly impracticable, and that he was persuaded that, if he made the overture, it would have no other effect than to aggravate irritations, already existing, upon matters of difference between the two countries.

The events which have since transpired in Texas are well known. She revolted against the Government of Mexico, flew to arms, and finally fought and won the memorable battle of San Jacinto, annihilating a Mexican army, and making a captive of the Mexican President. The signal success of that Revolution was greatly aided, if not wholly achieved by citizens of the United States who had migrated to Texas. These succors if they could not always be prevented by the Government of the United States, were furnished in a manner and to an extent which brought upon us some national reproach in the eyes of an impartial world. And, in my opinion, they impose on us the obligation of scrupulously avoiding the imputation of having instigated and aided the Revolution with the ultimate view of territorial aggrandizement. After the battle of San Jacinto, the United States recognized the independence of Texas, in conformity with the principle and practice which have always prevailed in their councils of recognizing the Government "*de facto*," without regarding the question of *de jure*. That recognition did not affect or impair the rights of Mexico, or change the relations which existed between her and Texas. She, on the contrary, has preserved all her rights, and has continued to assert, and so far as I know yet asserts, to reduce Texas to obedience, as a part of the Republic of Mexico. According to the late intelligence, it is probable that she has agreed upon a temporary suspension of hostilities; but, if that has been done, I presume it is with the purpose, upon the termination of the armistice, of renewing the war, and enforcing her rights, as she considers them.

This narrative shows the present actual condition of Texas, so far as I have information about it. If it be correct, Mexico has not abandoned, but perseveres in the assertion of her rights by actual force of arms, which, if suspended, are intended to be renewed. Under these circumstance, if the Government of the United States were to acquire Texas, it would acquire along with it all the incumbrances which Texas is under, and among them the actual or suspended war between Mexico and Texas. Of that consequence there cannot be a doubt. Annexation and war with Mexico are identical. Now, for one, I am not certainly willing to involve this country in a foreign war for the object of acquiring Texas. I know there are those who regard such a war with indifference and as a trifling affair, on account of the weakness of Mexico, and her inability to inflict serious injury upon this country. But I do not look upon it thus lightly. I regard all wars as great calamities, to be avoded, if possible, and honorable peace as the wisest and truest policy of this country. What the United States most need are union, peace and patience.—Nor do I think that the weakness of a Power should form a motive in any case, for inducing us to engage in or depricate the evils of war. Honor and good faith and justice are equally due from this country towards the weak as towards the strong.—And, if an act of injustice were to be perpetrated towards any Power, it would be more compatible with the dignity of the nation, and, in my judgment, less dishonorable, to inflict on a powerful instead of a weak foreign nation. But are we perfectly sure that we should be free from injury in a state of war with Mexico? Have we any security that countless numbers of foreign vessels, under the authority and flag of Mexico, would not prey upon our defenceless commerce in the Mexican gulf, on the Pacific ocean, and on every other sea and ocean?—What commerce, on the other hand, does Mexico offer as an indemnity for our losses, to the gallantry and enterprise of our countrymen! This view of the subject supposes that the war would be confined to the United States and Mexico as the only belligerents. But have we any certain guaranty that Mexico would attain no allies among the great European Powers? Suppose any such Powers,