**A Letter on Temperance**

Susan B. Anthony

Rochester, August 26, 1852

DEAR Mrs. Bloomer:

... I attended the great Temperance demonstration held at Albion, July 7th, and as l took a view from a different stand point, from any of those who have heretofore described that monster gathering, I will say a few words. Messrs. Barnum, Cary and Chapin, were the speakers for the day. They talked much of the importance of carrying the Temperance question into politics, but failed to present a definite plan, by which to combine the temperance votes and secure concert of action throughout the State and country. . . .

According to long established custom, after serving strong meats to the "lords of creation," the lecturers dished up a course of what they doubtless called delicately flavored soup for the Ladies. Barnum said it was a fact, and might as well he owned up, that this nation is under petticoat government; that every married man would acknowledge it, and if there were any young men who would not now, it was only necessary for them to have one week's experience as a husband, to compel them to admit that such is indeed the fact;- all of which vulgarity could but have grated harshly upon the cars of every intelligent, right-minded woman present.

At the close of the Mass Meeting, the women, mostly Daughters of Temperance- were invited to meet at the Presbyterian Church, at 3 o'clock P.M., to listen to an address from Susan B. Anthony, of Rochester. The Church was filled, -quite a large number of men, (possessed no doubt of their full share of Mother Eve's curiosity,) were in attendance. They were reminded, that they ought highly to appreciate the privilege which woman permitted them to enjoy, - that of remaining in the house and being silent lookers on.

It was really hopeful to see those hundreds of women, with thoughtful faces- faces that spoke of disquiet within, -of souls dissatisfied, unfed, notwithstanding the soft eloquence, which had been that A.M., so bounteously lavished upon "angel woman." I talked to them in my plain way, - told them that to merely relieve the suffering wives and children of drunkards, and vainly labor to reform the drunkard was no longer to be called temperance work, and showed them that woman's temperance sentiments were not truthfully represented by man at the Ballot Box. On the whole, I am of the opinion that those women went away no better satisfied with the part that man has ever assigned to woman in this great reform, than when they came.

ln the evening, S. F. Cary, T. W. Brown, and Mr. Chapin, addressed a large audience in the Presbyterian Church. Most excellent addresses, all of them, if they had only omitted the closing paragraphs to the Ladies. Oh! l am sick and tired of the senseless, hopeless work that man points out for woman to do. Would that the women of our land would rise, en masse, and proclaim with one united voice, that they repudiate the popular doctrine that teaches them to follow in the wake of the sin and misery, degradation and woe, which man for the gratification of his cupidity, chooses to inflict upon the race, to minister to their wretched victims words of comfort, and kindly point out to them how they may again enjoy the blessings of a good conscience. Such work is vain, worse than vain;- if woman may do nothing toward removing the CAUSE of drunkenness, then is she indeed powerless- then may she well sit down, and with folded hands weep over the ills that be.

During the month of July, I spoke at Caryville, Alabama Centre, Richville, Ackron, Clarence and Williamsville. Found Unions of D. of T. in the first four villages; the one at Ackron numbers 40, and is in a very flourishing condition. The Caryville Union donated the sum of three dollars to the Treasury of the Women's State Temperance Society, and that of Ackron the liberal sum of five dollars....

At Buffalo, l called on Mrs. H. B. Williams, an active member of the "Ladies' Temperance Union." That society numbers fourteen hundred Women, and has done a great deal during the last twenty years, by way of ameliorating the condition of the wretched victims of Intemperance and its attendant vices. Mrs. W. read me a copy of a letter, which the Buffalo "Ladies' Temperance Union," sent to the Annual Meeting of the State Temperance Society, held at Syracuse in June last. It called the Temperance question home to the ballot box. The D. of T. of that City, also sent a letter to that memorable meeting, but both of those letters were, with woman's voice, suppressed by those Pharasaical Priests, who pretended to be the representatives of the State Temperance Society.

I hope you have told your readers ... of the first Women's Temperance Meeting, on the evening of the 6th [in Elmira]. Miss Clark spoke on the 7th and 9th. I again addressed the citizens of that village. The meetings were all fully attended and much interest was manifested. While stopping at the Depot, the A.M. of the 10th, a lady addressed me and said: "It is rude to thus speak to a stranger, but I want to say to you, that you have done one thing in Elmira." "And what is that?" "You have convinced me that it is proper for women to talk Temperance in public as well as in private. A gentleman told me that Miss Anthony was going to lecture on Temperance; said I, she had better be home washing dishes. He replied, 'perhaps she does not know how.' Well, said I, let her come to my house, & l will give her a few lessons...."

The women of Elmira formed a woman's temperance society, auxiliary to the State society-obtained about one hundred members, and forthwith appropriated their funds to the purchase of Temperance tracts and newspapers for gratuitous circulation.... By the way, Mrs. Bloomer, the temperance newspapers are trying to work themselves and their leaders into the belief that the position which we, as a temperance society, take, "that Confirmed Drunkenness is a just ground of Divorce," is all wrong and calculated to produce much evil in society. Now I am a firm believer in the doctrine which man is continually preaching, that woman's influence over him is all powerful; hence I argue that for man to know, that his pure minded and virtuous wife, would, should he become a confirmed Drunkard, assuredly leave him, and take with her the property and the children, it would prove a powerful incentive to a correct, consistent life. As public sentiment and the laws now arc, the vilest wretch of a husband knows that his wife will submit to live on in his companionship, rather than forsake him, and by so doing subject herself to the world's cold charity, and be robbed of her home and her children. Men may prate on, but we women are beginning to know that the life and happiness of a woman is of equal value with that of a man; and that for a woman to sacrifice her health, happiness and perchance her earthly existence in the hope of reclaiming a drunken, sensualized man, avails but little. In nine cases out of ten, if the man ever reforms, it is not until after the wife sinks into an untimely grave; or if not in her grave, is physically and mentally unnerved, and unfitted for any earthly enjoyment. . . .

During last week I visited Palmyra, Marion, Walworth, Farmington and Victor.... Auxiliary Temperance Societies have been formed in very nearly all the towns I have visited and the women are beginning to feel that they have something to do in the Temperance Cause-that woman may speak and act in public as well as in the home circle- and now is the time to in­ scribe upon our banner, "NO UNION WITH DISTILLERS, RUM­SELLERS, AND RUMDRINKERS."

Yours for Temperance without Compromise,

S. B. ANTHONY.

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