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Demon rum and saintly women: temperance fiction of the early nineteenth century

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Demon rum and saintly women: temperance fiction of the early nineteenth century

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

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Abstract

Although America was most famously temperate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the temperance movement was not something created by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The roots were men controlling men for economic advancement in pre-Revolutionary War America. The goal of temperance remained thus until speakers during the Second Great Awakening began preaching on the topic of temperance and calling on women to further the cause. Temperance became a woman's issue with women as the natural leaders of the movement because of the place women—as moral authorities—occupied in society. Literature written by women in the 1830s and 40s furthered the cause and helped women relate to the movement, using the accepted religious rhetoric and sentimental “womanly” emotionalism to convert new female activists. Religion empowered temperance, temperance empowered women, and women then used temperance and the new religious rhetoric to justify their cause and to further woman's entry into politics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Although America was most famously temperate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the temperance movement was not something created by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. America became interested in temperance before it even became interested in being a country.¹ Temperance became a large political movement in America as a method of keeping shop employees sober, a way for the upper classes to begin to control, to impact, to Americanize the lower—largely immigrant—classes.² German and Irish immigrants were the immigrants largely believed to over-indulge in alcohol and also the immigrants of the lowest social standing. The roots were men controlling men for economic advancement. It was an economic and political issue that could be cloaked as a moral issue, although for many the morality was arguably the only concern.

The goal of temperance remained thus until speakers during the Second Great Awakening began preaching on the topic of temperance and calling on women to further the cause. Temperance became a woman's issue with women as the natural leaders of the movement because of the place women—as moral authorities—occupied in society. Literature written by women furthered the cause and helped women relate to the movement, using the accepted religious rhetoric and sentimental “womanly” emotionalism to convert new female activists. Once this gendered idea was established, the newly-popular temperance movement even managed to change their ultimate goal

¹ Amanda Porterfield, ed. *American Religious History* (Maiden: Blackwell, 2002), 34.

² Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 55.

from abstinence from hard distilled liquor to total abstinence from all alcohol.³ With total abstinence in mind and a large following, the temperance movement eventually managed to ban alcoholic beverages in all 12 northern states. This empowerment of women also branched into abolitionist and women's rights movements, each gaining a following in the pre-Civil War time of benevolence. Religion empowered temperance, temperance empowered women, and women then used temperance and the new religious rhetoric to justify their cause and to further woman's entry into politics.

³ Charles Jewett, *A Forty Years' Fight with the Drink Demon: A History of the Temperance Reform as I Have Seen It* (New York: National Temperance Society and Publishing House, 1872), 160.

Chapter 2: Religion, Women, and the Temperance Movement in the Early 19th Century

Drinking became an American tradition and an important means of social interaction for men before America even became a country.⁴ More than anything, distilled liquor was the drink of choice. Rural Americans could grow the necessary grain and run it through the stills themselves at home, making the beverages very inexpensive. The category of “distilled liquor” includes such drinks as whiskey, rum, and gin, all alcoholic beverages that are 40 to 50 percent alcohol.⁵ Contemporary authorities estimated that colonial citizens drank an average of four gallons hard liquor per person per year, with rum being the popular drink of choice.⁶ Part of this large consumption was due to the prominence of alcohol at social functions. Clergyman Peter Cartwright recalls that families were considered “unsociable” if they did not offer sufficient quantities of alcohol at every social event, from harvest to barn-building to weddings.⁷ In this society, sufficient offerings of hard liquor could be the only way to ensure the help of neighbors at such large jobs.

In these times, attempts at temperance were largely unsuccessful because of their motives, either overt or perceived. A proposed law in 1712 forbidding just the sale of rum in taverns failed miserably because it was seen as an attempt by the clergy to control local pastimes.⁸ Whether or not this was the purpose is debatable, but the perception was enough to kill the law. Even though this was a law to merely outlaw one kind of hard

⁴ Thomas R. Pegram, Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶ Sharon V. Salinger, Taverns and Drinking in Early America, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2002),

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⁷ Ian R. Tyrrell, Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 20.

⁸ Salinger, 140.

liquor in one location, it still was widely disobeyed. This law did nothing about the purchase or consumption of alcohol in the home, which was the primary location of family drinking.

Ensuring access to the quantities demanded by the public could be guaranteed through trade and purchase or through personal manufacturing. The above estimate is only for hard liquor; it does not include “lighter” beverages like hard cider, which was also popular due to the prominence of colonists’ personal apple orchards. Farmers could easily turn their grain or produce into liquor before heading to market and liquor prices were more consistent than the prices of grain.⁹ It was also easier to take processed liquor to market, since it took up less space in a wagon and stayed fresh longer than would unprocessed grain. Alcohol that was not traded or sold, though, was generally kept for the use of the family. In home drinking, seemed to be a gendered experience with women imbibing in their domestic space and men enjoying their alcoholic beverages elsewhere.

Women were generally excluded from this tradition of public drinking because they were excluded from taverns, meaning that men drank outside the home while any drinking that women and children engaged in would be inside the home.¹⁰ Alcohol itself was believed to be beneficial to a person’s health, giving a person super strength or endurance. Historian W. J. Rorabugh was the leading authority on alcohol consumption of the time and, according to him, by the 1820s men were frequently binge drinking or drinking to the point of drunkenness.¹¹ This trend would have occurred outside the

⁹ Pegram, 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 10.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 9.

woman's domestic sphere, outside of her traditional place, but would have affected her life greatly.

The trend of public drinking also seems to be largely class-based. Taverns were separated by occupation and class, meaning that there could be one tavern in a large town just for the carpenters or the blacksmiths. As early as the eighteenth century in colonial cities, gentleman's clubs like those found in Europe were established that served only the upper-class.¹² Taverns with varying degrees of noise and disreputable behavior catered to a variable clientele. Women did not generally patronize taverns, although the lowest class of women did sometimes frequent the lowest class of tavern. Authorities recorded that only the most disruptive of taverns catered to mixed-gender and mixed-race crowds.¹³ These women could be present as either patrons, prostitutes, or both.¹⁴

Women in the early nineteenth century ideally worked within the home and concerned themselves primarily with children, living what Linda Kerber calls the life of a "Republican Mother."¹⁵ Republican Motherhood is the label Kerber applied to the idealistic role of woman as a domestic being that was in charge of the education of her children and the morality of her children and her husband. The image called for women to be self-confident and educated, pious and rational, in order to keep husbands happy and to raise intelligent children.¹⁶ Women stood as the moral authority of the domestic sphere. Their strength against sin was supposedly stronger than that of their husbands, and yet they were never to be tempted themselves. Proper women used their education

¹² Salinger, 50.

¹³ *Ibid*, 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 55.

¹⁵ Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother" in Women's America: Refocusing the Past, Fifth edition. Edited by Linda K Kerber and Jane De Hart. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 89-95.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 91.

“not only for their autonomy and self-realization but also so that they could be better wives and better mothers for the next generation of virtuous republican citizens—especially sons.”¹⁷ A woman’s job was not to think of herself, but to think of her family and let someone else handle the rest. The dark side of this responsibility was that sons or husbands who were less than virtuous cast blame on their wives and mothers. To achieve the status of wife and mother was to be the dream and the goal of every American girl. Politics were not an option for proper girls.

The Kerber argument and label of “Republican Mother” is a controversial one, but even literature of the time point to this image of the suffering and powerless wife. The temperance movement used that image to further their cause by publicizing the wrongs committed on powerless women by drunkard husbands. Flyers and stories created and printed for the movement often portray the wife of a drunkard as someone without any power in the world whatsoever because her husband is not fulfilling his role as the political and economic support for the family. Since women were only supposed to engage in politics through their husbands and sons, they had little power of their own. They ideally lived a life dedicated to domestic virtue and were not at all political because politics would make them seem sexually aggressive.¹⁸ Women were to be content in their homes, allowing men to be their representatives in the public sphere. To be a woman in the public sphere was to be a lesser woman, one who was manly or too poor to have a man to take care of her. In anti-bellum America, women in the public sphere were “loose” women that were “coarse, vulgar, and disconnected from the protection of friends

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 93.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 92.

and family.”¹⁹ A woman working in the public or in the political arena was someone to be pitied or ridiculed, ideologically speaking. Good husbands did everything outside the home for women, so finding a man with whom a woman could “ ‘mould the taste, the manners, and the conduct’ of her admirers and her husband” was the ultimate goal.²⁰

In making women the head of the education and morality of a household, American society allowed for women to be very active in their churches. When the Second Great Awakening—the radical religious movement of traveling preachers that utilized language of sin and damnation to obtain converts and who managed to generalize religious teachings across denominations—swept through the northeastern seaboard between 1795-1837, women were the majority of the converts.²¹ In Utica, New York, alone between 52 and 72 percent of women, depending on the church, converted during the Second Great Awakening.²² Suddenly women were able to participate in the church community not only as wives, but as moral authorities in their own right. Women members were called upon to pray aloud and to speak during services, either to lead prayer or give testimony.²³ Women’s roles in the church expanded with the reach of the Second Great Awakening, networking women of different areas and social standings together through the influence of popular preachers like Charles Finney. It made active working outside the home acceptable, especially for those women who had yet to find their man to “mould.” Single girls could now collect money for Bibles, teach Sunday school, sew for the poor, or do missionary work without fear of ridicule or that their

¹⁹ Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 45.

²⁰ Kerber, 94.

²¹ Pegram, 17.

²² Mary P. Ryan, “A Women’s Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840” *American Quarterly*, Volume 30, Issue 5, Special Issue: Women and Religion (Winter, 1978), 603.

²³ *Ibid*, 609.

activities would make them unacceptable for marriage.²⁴ It introduced women to benevolent work, which became very powerful as America moved toward the Civil War. Single women could engage in the outward responsibilities of the church women's groups, but would remain under the influence of married or widowed women. The lines of the domestic sphere were starting to expand and become less distinct, allowing Protestant women more freedom to congregate as women.²⁵

Even while doing this holy work for a greater good, middle-class women still had to work within societal rules. Family came before work in church societies. Laws limiting women's power still applied as well. Women had to be single in order to serve as a church or organization treasurer because any money that passed through a woman's hands legally belonged to her husband, even if it was organization money.²⁶ Leaders had to be carefully selected for church women's groups if they were going to be women. Even if the church accepted the volunteering of a single woman, it was still implied that married or widowed women made the best leaders.²⁷ These limited roles allowed women to be introduced to the larger society in a welcome way that would kept them respectable.

²⁴ Anne M. Boylan, "Timid Girls, Venerable Widows and Dignified Matrons: Life Cycles Patterns Among Organized Women in New York and Boston, 1797-1840" in *American Quarterly*, Volume 38, Issue 5 (Winter 1986), 781.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 789.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 783.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 783.

Chapter 3: Influences and Literature of the Movement

Organizational activities structured through churches introduced middle-class women to the ills of society, ills that they as superior moral beings should feel obligated to right. From combating prostitution to helping widows to promoting Christianity among the Jewish populations, Protestant women were now out in the community working.²⁸ The fact that their base remained the churches saved them from much of the scorn they would have otherwise received. Churches and sermons of the Second Great Awakening not only empowered women, they introduced their particular religious beliefs into the women's and the men's society while still managing to keep the women socially acceptable.

Historians have commented on the phenomenon that seemed to span all religious movements of this time, the concept of all of these religious factions being grounded in the same religious sentiments and that all denominations of Christianity felt the need to have religion base their lives. This led to religion establishing the aforementioned social movements or preaching an obligation to them.²⁹ The interaction of religion and social action did not seem to be for the purpose of limiting civil liberties, but rather guaranteeing them. In 1829, Lyman Beecher proclaimed that “ ‘Christianity is the world's last hope for civil liberty.’ ”³⁰ The complex interaction of religion and politics in early American history could be utilized by both the religious and the politically-minded.

²⁸ Anne M. Boylan, “Women in Groups: An Analysis of Women's Benevolent Organizations in New York and Boston, 1797-1840” *The Journal of American History*, Volume 71, Issue 3 (Dec., 1984), 504.

²⁹ Rush Welter, *The Mind of America, 1820-1860*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 257.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 258.

Both of these groups, the religious and the politically-minded, felt that temperance was a key issue for the young republic. By the first decades of the 19th century, preachers were devoting their most important—and most political—days to temperance sermons. Massachusetts minister Nathaniel Bent devoted his 1842 Fourth of July sermon to the threat that intemperance posed to the republic, and he was by no means the only minister to do so.³¹ The basis of concern about intemperance from these ministers has a long Christian history, even back to the roots of most Christian dominations, with the writing of St. Augustine.

Much of this interaction between church and religion can be traced to the Augustinian concept of two worlds: the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit. To live for the flesh is to base oneself in earthly delights—what Augustine refers to as “living for the vices of the inner man”—like drinking.³² To live for the spirit, is to devote oneself to a higher purpose. Using legalities was not justification for actions to Augustine, who invokes the Epistle to the Galatians to remind his readers that laws of man and the expectations of God do not always align.³³ The Apostle Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians a catalogue of what Paul believes to be the primary sins of the flesh and, even at this early point, drunkenness is mentioned.³⁴ Participation in these flesh sins does have an effect on the spirit, causing Augustine to quote the biblical statement that “the corruptible body, indeed, weigheth down the soul.”³⁵ But because of the division between these two worlds (flesh and spirit) and the interaction between them, it is also possible to redeem the corrupted body.

³¹ *Ibid*, 261.

³² Saint Augustine, trans. by Marcus Dods, *The City of God*. (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), 441.

³³ *Ibid*, 442.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 442.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 443.

Though Augustine does not detail how this redemption could be obtained, his reasoning on this matter implies that redemption can come from removal of vice and corruption. Augustine does not believe in the possibility of an evil spirit residing in a person, stating instead that “whoever is evil is evil by vice.”³⁶ For the purposes of temperance, this means that citizens misbehave because of their vices, not because of some need to misbehave, so removing those vices from circulation would correct the problems of society. This concept makes a reappearance in the rhetoric of the Second Great Awakening, when the War of 1812 had recently threatened the country. People were told that they could eliminate whatever problems and weakness they saw in society merely by correcting their own sinful behavior, by redeeming themselves and eventually the entire country.³⁷ Applied during the Second Great Awakening and in light of the sphere theory discussed previously, the role of women within these spheres as moral authorities made this redemption largely a women’s duty. Redemption through removal of vice is therefore established as a goal in Christianity as early as the fifth century and carried through to interact with American politics through the Second Great Awakening and beyond.

The time in which much of this rhetoric of redemption appeared—during the Second Great Awakening—could not have been more suited. Work in America was shifting from the small home-centered industries of farming and business to a larger factory system. Historians have pointed out that the relaxed culture of the mid to late eighteenth century allowed people time to indulge their drinking habits without losing productivity. Barbra Leslie Epstein maintains in her book The Politics of Domesticity

³⁶ *Ibid*, 448.

³⁷ George M. Marsden, Religion and American Culture. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1990), 61.

that the idea of temperance came to be a status symbol, a goal held by the middle-class to distance themselves from the lower classes and the industrialized from the non.³⁸ A sober worker was able to produce more of a product and have that product be of a more consistent quality. Factory stores stopped carrying alcohol and factories themselves—particularly textile factories like those in Lowell, Massachusetts—instilled a temperance policy into their employees.³⁹ Textile factories like Lowell also largely employed women, so the decision to “go dry” also made the factory appear a more moral place for women to work. In dangerous places like factories, a good worker was not an intoxicated worker but a worker who was consistent and sober.

It is not surprising, then, that the Second Great Awakening as a movement carried as much financial backing as it did spiritual. Though distributed over a number of miles and parishes, it has been reported that the evangelical “empire” maintained a budget that rivaled the federal government’s, allowing it to spread influence and resources wherever the empire saw fit.⁴⁰ By funding societies and revivals, the Second Great Awakening evangelical movement was able to go beyond changing minds into changing political policy.

Many preachers of the time and of the Second Great Awakening echoed the theme of redemption and salvation of which Augustine spoke. Charles Finney, in particular, was fond of preaching to his gatherings that they were required to save their country from itself. Famous for furthering the Second Great Awakening in upstate New York, Finney advocated churches leading a revolution of sorts on this front,

³⁸ Barbara Leslie Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in the Nineteenth-Century, (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 108.

³⁹ Tyrrell, 107.

⁴⁰ Marsden, 62.

recommending that all churches of all denominations take a stand and “close their doors against all who have anything to do with the death-dealing abomination.”⁴¹ If this was done, Finney thought, then temperance would become a national success and a national policy. The same then could happen, he went on to say, with the issue of slavery.⁴² He implies that a politics of morals would save the nation.

Charles Finney often utilized morality in his sermons to talk about the grace of God and how his parishioners could best follow that grace in their own lives. According to Finney, people had free will but the protection and guidance to best serve God and themselves was up to the individuals.⁴³ There was a moral law—a rule of moral action with sanctions—meant to direct people’s free will and any violation of that law was an act of selfishness. Intemperance of any kind, to Finney, was always a “form or attribute of selfishness,” a sign of “*self-indulgence*” and weakness.⁴⁴ It was a wicked overruling of God’s will for earthly gratification and an act that prevented a person from accepting God into their lives. Intemperance was “resistance to God...[an act of] self-will.”⁴⁵ It was not enough to merely be temperate from alcohol; parishioners always had to be inwardly and outwardly restrained and help their neighbors down the right path.⁴⁶ In early-nineteenth century Protestant society, “if a Christian drank or broke the Sabbath...he weakened not only his own reputation but the awesome cause he represented.”⁴⁷ Because of this belief, it was not only important for Protestant Christians to keep themselves controlled at all times but also to help keep all their peers steadfast.

⁴¹ Welter, 335.

⁴² *Ibid*, 335.

⁴³ Reverend Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Systematic Theory (New York: Saxton & Miles, 1846), 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 333.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 332.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 335.

⁴⁷ Johnson, 112.

Believers should follow the Gospels in order to see how sinners recovered from their sinful ways back into full obedience of the moral laws.⁴⁸ In this way, Finney believed that religion had to be more than a passing “fashion” that would fade once the Second Great Awakening died down. Religion, along with its beliefs and organizations, must be a lasting commitment.⁴⁹ Women, with their high moral character and large responsibilities within the family, were appointed by Finney to transform their men into proper religious husbands.⁵⁰

Women were well-selected recipients of Finney’s message because of their position in society and in the home. Outside observers of antebellum America like Francis Grund have also recorded the assertion that American women have “calm subjugation of passion and temper” which would allow them to overcome obstacles but maintain their naturally happy and imaginative states.⁵¹ Drunk men were the natural enemies of this state, especially drunk husbands and fathers. Because of their protected place in society, it was also popular to paint women as the perpetual victims of drunken men.⁵² While this did allow activists an edge in negotiating changes in divorce laws, allowing women more control over their own married existence, it also deepened the idea of women being morally superior. Women who were victims were not those corrupted by vice, but rather those that were subjected to the vices of the corrupted.

Women of the church answered Finney’s call to organize and better themselves by bettering those around them. The enlightened churches allowed women more freedom

⁴⁸ Finney, *Systematic Theory*, 366.

⁴⁹ Reverend Charles G. Finney, *Lectures to Professing Christians*, (New York: Brick Church Chapel, 1837), 87.

⁵⁰ Johnson, 108.

⁵¹ Francis J. Grund, *The Americans and their Moral, Social, and Political Relations*, (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1968), 36.

⁵² S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States, 1830-1945*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 83.

and a safe space in which to use that freedom. Women could lecture in a church without repercussions by the 1840s, now that churches were seen as an extension of the traditional home, domestic sphere. More importantly, women were now able to organize themselves and band together as women.⁵³ As women working toward a common goal, society granted them some form of power over men through womanly causes. After 1830, women's societies pointed more and more often to men as the cause of the societal evils that they were fighting.⁵⁴ Men were weak and the cause of societal problems such as prostitution. The unhappy woman married to a drunkard now had groups not casting blame on her, but offering her aid. Churches became important sanctuaries where women could gather, discuss, produce, and distribute materials for their causes.⁵⁵ Churches preached temperance and the temperance movement spread the influence of the church. Since the churches were the publishers, and they had already accepted a moderate womanly role, women writers were able to publish much more readily if they wrote to help the temperance movement or any other cause.

Stories flew off the church presses for the temperance movement, distributed at church meetings and always available for the weary to seek in the church itself. The stories were initially not popular because of the writing style. Men wrote the first temperance stories, which tended to portray women as helpless victims. Stories by men were often written from the male point of view, making them inaccessible to women. Women temperance leader Amelia Bloomer reprimanded men's writings for portraying women as "weak and helpless—incapable of taking care of ourselves or keeping out of

⁵³ Boylan, "Women in Groups", 505.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 506.

⁵⁵ Carol Mattingly, ed. Water Drops From Women Writers; A Temperance Reader. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 7.

harms way.’’⁵⁶ Because of the disapproval of male authors in the temperance movement, the New York women’s temperance society began to offer “\$10 premiums” for temperance stories written by women. Premiums were awarded regardless of marital or societal standing, so they became a popular way for budding single women writers to be published and earn money for themselves.⁵⁷ Through reading and producing their own literature, women were finally able to exert some control over their own lives and gain some measure of freedom in the home, community, and church.

This freedom was given by the writings, allowing women ownership over their own actions and a purpose in life other than motherly and wifely duties. The ownership was an important factor because the rhetoric of the Second Great Awakening revival meetings made people concerned with their redemption. Redemption generally was awarded for actions and words, making the public declarations of repentance important but also making redeeming acts important.⁵⁸ To the average temperance worker—middle-class, native-born to America, white—this promise of redemption must have been tempting.⁵⁹ It also was their chance to help those less-fortunate or to spread their redemption among their own social and economic class. As women lived their middle-class lives, they were often removed from the economic areas in which they could earn a living, limited though these areas were, because of their social status. The temperance movement changed this, giving some women meaning and purpose. While it is difficult to determine how many of the temperance participants were women as many informal organizations did not keep that data and the organized groups’ data often did not survive,

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 6-7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

⁵⁸ S.J. Kleinburg, *Women in the United States, 1830-1945*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 81.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 84.

the few lists that do exist show that in antebellum America one-third to one-half of temperance members were women.⁶⁰ Surviving publications of the time also point to women's dominance of the publications for the cause. The publication of temperance stories, poems, and songs could then not only further a woman financially, it could also save her soul.

Temperance writings could also save the souls of others. While the audience for these writings can be assumed to be the public in general and the average temperance worker in particular, they could also be designed to help impressionable youth. They were integrated into Sunday school curricula.⁶¹ Many featured cautionary tales of what could come of a girl/woman who allowed her husband to fall into alcohol's trap. Stories were commonly written for women by women, serving as a warning against the evils of alcohol.⁶² The women's stories reflected their Second Great Awakening influences by using religious language and rhetoric.

The use of this language did allow women more freedom. Because of their religious basis, women were now encouraged to work outside the home and, in the cases of publication, earn their own money. Though these were women of an economic situation that their earnings might not be necessary to the family's survival—being largely middle-class—women were still earning. The temperance movement also allowed them freedom from their daily duties as mothers, at least on an individual level and in the eyes of reformer Mary C. Vaughan. Vaughan proclaimed in 1852 that women could work outside the home for a reform movement without neglecting their children in the same way that men could and that temperance was the reform that was most

⁶⁰ Tyrrell, 68.

⁶¹ Mattingly, *Water Drops*, 7.

⁶² *Ibid*, 5.

“appropriate” for this non-neglectful work.⁶³ Because of the temperance movement’s high moral and social standing as well as its connection with the church, it would not endanger a women’s reputation.

One way to keep the literature, especially the early literature, pure enough for the female mind was to talk of drunks but not directly describe them. Many novels written in the 1820s used the drinking of a man or a couple as a basis for the plot, then spent most of the novel describing the sobering and reintegration of the now-former drunks into society.⁶⁴ Further study into this theme reveals that the descriptions of drunks and their acts seem to rise with the popularity of the penny novel, which was generally quite explicit in its description of sin and debauchery.⁶⁵ Though the novels and stories were still, by accounts, acceptable reading based in Christian values, they also needed to be competitive in order to sell.

The selling of these novels was based on their ability to give hope or effectively convey a warning. The basis of these warnings or hope could differ depending on the sex they hoped to reach. In general, men and women of the nineteenth century approached religion differently. While both seem to have been concerned with sin, the type of sin differed; men in sinful acts and women in sinful nature.⁶⁶ Sinful nature, as previously discussed, could be redeemed through religious acts and good works. Women could redeem themselves by redeeming others. And because men suffered from sinful acts, the ceasing of these acts—accomplished by women’s actions—could save both the man and the woman.

⁶³ Kleinburg, 84.

⁶⁴ David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal eds, The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature, (Amhearst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 24.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 25.

⁶⁶ Epstein, 51.

Finney explored this trend of religion based on sex in his autobiography. Finney mentions twelve families that convert based on his teachings. Of these twelve families, ten of these were a wife converting and therefore saving her husband. One of the remaining two was a daughter converting her parents and the remaining was a husband converting his wife. Finney takes the time to mention that the husband's conversion of his wife was actually driven by the husband's mother.⁶⁷ In this observation, women are clearly redeeming themselves through the redemption of others.

This redemption is highly personal and, though popular, is accomplished one family at a time. The Second Great Awakening may have drawn large crowds, but its focus was on the individual. Through moral suasion, one saved person can change the thinking and the immortal future of another. It is this practice of moral suasion that fuels temperance literature.⁶⁸ The author uses all manner of moral appeals and religious tropes to persuade the audience to change their lives and the lives of those around them. The natural connection between men and women through society and the established precedent of women converting their men only facilitated this change.

The concept of women converting men is even included in contemporary feminist texts like Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Conversion meant women influencing men, women exerting their roles in a relationship to gain power where they did not have power before. In establishing her use of the word "Man" as a gender-neutral noun—based on the idea that men and women are "two halves of one thought"—Fuller

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 51.

⁶⁸ Reynolds *et al*, 65.

radically speaks of men and women as equals that are also connected.⁶⁹ This equality, though, seems to lead to different responsibilities.

Women were portrayed in antebellum novels as necessary for men but not equal to them, according to Fuller. She details how poetry does not speak of women as equal beings, but often speaks of men as boys and women as nothing more than the necessary restraining agent to their development and life.⁷⁰ When women do stray from the path of good, it is because of covetous want and vanity. Fuller details how women in prison stole goods to be equal to their peers, allowed “profanation of their person” because they were unable to secure proper husbands.⁷¹ Women, though they do possess this tendency toward want and vanity, manage to overcome it when they have a man worthy of being their equal. Since society does not allow them this outward power, women overcome this tendency by embracing their natural power: moral power.

This is a theme echoed in much of the early temperance literature, the use of a woman’s moral power to overcome sin. Near the conclusion of her piece, Fuller pens a call to action for her fellow women. She urges them to throw aside the placating niceties of life given to them by men if the men are not pure and merciful. “If you have a power, it is a moral power,” she urges the reader in a sentiment seemingly straight out of the temperance movement’s calls to action.⁷² Though ideally equal, women can also use their moral power to accomplish this equality where it is lacking and to gain power in their homes and their societies. The power of women then lays in their power over men

⁶⁹ Margaret Fuller. Woman in the Nineteenth Century. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 86.

⁷² *Ibid*, 98.

and their power over sin through purity and redemption, much as Finney had claimed years before.

Temperance literature shows how blatant and accepted the connection between Second Great Awakening sermon rhetoric and the temperance movement had become. Especially indicative of this trend is the death of a baby. A newborn—the ultimate symbol of purity, innocence, and the Christian birth of the Savior—is often saved from a drunken father by the heavenly Father. In the sensational temperance writings, babies died and left their mothers alone to mourn, as the death of a baby in these stories commonly pushes the drunkard father farther into the drunkard life. Popular theory of the time also stated that drunkards would bring children predisposed to disease or vice into the world. In this way, guilt was removed from the sober mother and placed onto the drunkard father.

Women wrote stories for the temperance movement that were sentimental and melodramatic mixed with religious rhetoric. They were written for very specific purposes: to warn, to create a bond between suffering women, to recruit new temperance volunteers, and to stress the situation of women in a drinking society. It is important to point out here that temperance literature was functional literature; modern readers cannot assume that it was intended to fulfill any purpose other than to persuade women to support the cause. In this way, temperance literature follows a tradition of persuasive writing but also updates it for a modern audience. The abolitionist movement would famously persuade its largely-female audience to think of female slaves as sisters that needed protection. This was a sentiment used at the same time if not before it by the temperance movement. Though the literature lacks much of the subtlety and complexity of

canon literature of the time, temperance stories had a clear purpose. The writers of these stories may have written them to attain some financial support for themselves, they may have written them from personal experience, they may have written them to save other women the pain they themselves had endured. Though their personal motivation will likely never be known, the motivation of the publisher for publishing was obviously persuasion of the largest group possible to their cause.

Women wrote the stories specifically for women, writing them to appeal to the domestic ideology of the Republican Mother.⁷³ The stories appealed to women's more feminine virtues of sympathy and empathy. The characters and situations in the stories were numerous enough that women identified with them because many of the women had similar feelings, even if they had not been in similar situations. This created a bond between the character and the reader, one on which the reader was hopefully willing to act upon. The bond allowed the reader on some level to experience the story and "become in some measure the same person" as the character.⁷⁴ Women who hid the drinking problems within their families learned that they were not alone.

The public temperance movement, particularly the sermons and stories, made the drunk more approachable and redeemable. It made drunkards less of a mystery and more of an understandable figure that could be helped. The stories allowed temperance women to form a popular political movement without challenging their place in the world or their role in society. The movement turned the wife of the drunkard into a "patriotic heroine and war widow," giving drunkard wives—especially those who had reformed their

⁷³ Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments; Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 31.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

husbands—celebrity status in their local temperance groups.⁷⁵ Wives and children of drunkards were no longer handed blame by society but instead were offered help. Those with stories to tell could now gain financially from their suffering, either through speaking or writing. The temperance movement changed the lives of entire families with their simple stories and classless movement. Women worked together toward a common goal, with women of reformed- or non-drinkers helping those that wished to reform their own drunks.

Appealing to the public sphere through the domestic sphere was the fastest way for temperance women to enact change without becoming social outcasts. It created a culture of feminine benevolence, an ideological group of women who could conquer men's problems and deliver men back into God's grace.⁷⁶ This culture was based on common goals and experiences, whether through real or imagined suffering, which banded women together and made them less vulnerable. It was important for these stories to reach out to the most inexperienced of women in dealing with alcoholics: young women of marrying age.

Temperance literature shares many common themes, like those themes mentioned above, that would have appealed to these young women of marrying age. Through analysis of this literature, it is possible to see how temperance writers used common religious imagery to influence their target audience. Main characters tended to be female and their lives tended to be good until alcohol disrupted them. Many have children or are expecting. The stories themselves tended to be published and distributed by church presses and temperance groups. Because of the lack of stable records mentioned

⁷⁵ Isenberg, 159.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

previously and the tendency of groups to republish literature as it suited them, it is often difficult to pinpoint the origin of many stories. For the purposes of this analysis, literature has been limited to those believed to have been originally published before the Maine Laws of 1851 and originally written by women. These constraints allow a focus on the impact of women writers before temperance became a political issue on the state level. The stories analyzed here are intended to explain the impact the average temperance literature of the 1830s and 1840s would have had on their target young female audience.

The story “Emma Alton” describes the life of just such a young woman. The story was written in 1850 and told from the point of view of an old woman who witnesses Emma’s happy wedding to Reuben, then sees the defeated Emma returned “*to die!*”⁷⁷ She returns to her parents after a mere three years of being an “innocent sufferer for her husband’s vices” in a distant town.⁷⁸ Emma is married to a drunkard, a man who cannot be moved to give up drinking even after the death of his only child. Reuben eventually follows his thirst to the point of robbery and attempted murder, causing him to be imprisoned while his no-longer-young wife returns to her parents’ home to die in peace. It served as a warning to young women everywhere that they must choose their husbands wisely and not remove themselves from the protective wings of their childhood villages.

“Emma Alton” also exhibits how religious rhetoric was used to convey messages strongly because the old woman narrator relates Emma’s unhappy tale using many religious terms and practices. Alcohol is described as destroying Reuben “soul and

⁷⁷ Caroline Hyde Butler (Laing), “Emma Alton” in Water Drops, 30

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 25

body” and the bar is “the *Tempter’s Hell!*”⁷⁹ The birth of their innocent child causes Reuben to cry what Emma thought to be “the tears...of repentance,” tears that turn out to be just another step toward Emma’s undoing because she believes in his ability to reform alone. This repentance is shown in the classic Christian way of Reuben falling to his knees and begging forgiveness from Emma, the moral authority over his life. But Emma and her now-dead child are not enough to keep Reuben away from alcohol. It is here in the story that the religious allusions and Christ imagery take over. Reuben finds a generous traveler, harms him for a pile of silver coins, and then leaves the presumably-dead man in a cave until the villagers discovered the man alive in the cave.⁸⁰ This story borrows heavily from Biblical Christ stories to show how much suffering even a pious young woman like Emma can endure under the sanctity of marriage. Written to spur women into action, the story is believable enough to enrage families and instill fear for daughters everywhere. Mothers must use their moral authority to protect their daughters and all Christian women must protect their Christian neighbors, whether through personal contact or political action.

The story “Tales of Truth (No. 1),” also written by a woman, contains a warning of a different sort using much the same rhetoric. Much like “Emma Alton,” this account is told by a woman removed from the drunkard situation. A woman recounts for her children the sad story of another family’s sufferings at the hands of their drunkard husband and father. The woman narrator here is not telling this story to warn her daughters away from poorly-selected mates, she tells it to show her young son George that even he is not safe from the temptations of drink. The drunk in the story does not

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 24;25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 28-29.

work, so he takes his wife's earnings in order to feed his "hellish appetites" and leaves his wife and four children impoverished.⁸¹ Echoing the religious language of other stories, the author describes the drunk man as having "the demon...within."⁸² The woman is a helpless sufferer, having lost everything including her once-loving husband to alcohol. The warning to George lies in the fact that the drunkard destroyed so completely the woman that he once loved. The narrator closes her story by telling her son to "BEWARE!"⁸³ Even he, an innocent child, is not safe from the demon rum and his mother, in true Republican Mother fashion, arms him to be a virtuous and responsible citizen that will help the temperance cause and protect women around him. She must teach him while she still has influence in his life.

The story "The Drunkard's Daughter" shares many themes with "Emma Alton," though "Drunkard's Daughter" shows the suffering of not one generation but two. Written by Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz in 1850, this story follows a young girl, Kate, as she deals with her drunken father. Kate has not yet fallen into the trap of a bad marriage, but the story implies that she will if her father is not rehabilitated. Since illness grips Kate's mother, the role of being the moral authority of the family falls to the young girl. Kate, by reading the Bible to her father "like a guiding cherub," causes her father to give up drinking. He falls into Kate's arms, crying and calling for mercy and to be saved from temptation.⁸⁴ God himself is not absent from this story: He indirectly saves Kate's father through the Bible and protects Kate and her sickly mother when their house burns down. God is repeatedly invoked by the pious Kate to protect everyone she loves; Kate calls

⁸¹ Francis Dana Gage, "Tales of Truth (No. 1)" in Water Drops, 49.

⁸² *Ibid*, 52.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 53.

⁸⁴ Caroline Lee Whiting Hentz, "The Drunkard's Daughter" in Water Drops, 103.

upon God to save her father from drink and her mother and sibling from death.⁸⁵ Since Kate is a pious believer, God answers her prayers. Salvation proves Kate's virtue and saves her from her father's follies, ensuring her a happy marriage to a loving and sober husband and the survival of Kate's baby sibling.⁸⁶ Kate has performed the most important Protestant duty by saving another Christian and therefore enhancing her own faith.

Kate has helped her father through two common myths involved in temperance work: that "God never yet tempted a man beyond his strengths" and that addiction to fermented drinks like wine and beer does not make one a drunkard.⁸⁷ This echoed the previously-mentioned belief that beverages of 40 to 50 percent alcohol were thought to be much worse than fermented drinks and highlights how these distilled drinks were originally the target of the temperance movement.⁸⁸ Drinkers could easily use the same religious rhetoric that the temperance workers used. Drinkers created the myth that they had control of their drinking because God would not give them more vice than they could handle to stop protestations from worried parties. Kate's father amends this idea at the end of the story by saying at the end of the story "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God."⁸⁹ God solves his problems, He does not cause them. As Charles Finney said above, intemperance is an act of "self-will" and not the will of God.

The second myth was more important and much harder for religious temperance workers to combat. Fermented beverages were the drink of many people in the Bible. Jesus even makes wine. Later books like Scripture Testimony Against Intoxicating

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 103-105.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 109-110.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 99; 92.

⁸⁸ Pegram, 6.

⁸⁹ Hentz, "Drunkard's Daughter", 110.

Wine, printed many years after the initial surge of interest in the temperance movement, attempts to explain how wine can be both good and evil. “Wine” replaces nine different words from the Hebrew Bible. So when the English Bible, says “wine” that could be any one of nine different Biblical wines. The wine that “caused prophets to err in judgment and priests to stumble and fall” was not the same wine as sacred communion wine.⁹⁰ This claim, however, is dependent on the reaction of people in the Bible to the wine and not dependent on any study of the actual Hebrew terms used. The author of this book was assuming that no one who read this book would actually know Biblical Hebrew, meaning that the expected audience was Christian. Through this investigation, inebriating wine was still bad and against the lessons of the Bible.

The woman in “Confessions of a Female Inebriate” learns the evils of wine the hard way. Unlike the afore-mentioned fictitious tales of drunkenness, this story is supposedly true. Confessions of reformed drinkers were growing in popularity in the 1840s. Churches and temperance groups would reform people on the understanding that they would help others once the church had helped them.⁹¹ While this story is strongly suspected to be fictional and an author cannot be pinpointed precisely, it was written to follow the testimonial tradition that inspired reform in so many. Much like the other tales, it was published to contradict a specific stereotype of drunkenness: that only the lowest of women had a drinking problem. The woman in this “testimonial” is a well-to-do mother who begins drinking at the advice of her doctor. She drinks in the socially acceptable way: in her home. While she does not fall from social grace enough to

⁹⁰ Reverend William Ritchie, Scripture Testimony Against Intoxicating Wine (New York: National Temperance Society and Publication House, 1874), 16.

⁹¹ Believed to be written by Isaac F. Shepard, “Confessions of a Female Inebriate” in Drunkard’s Progress: Narratives of Addiction, Despair, and Recovery, John W. Crowley ed, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 80-82.

become a frequenter of drinking establishments, her dependence on her wine is no less severe. Alcohol causes her to forget her social place: at one point, she speaks congenially to one of her servants and later “[falls] prostrate in the midst of the entire company” with liquor while hosting a party.⁹²

The Female Inebriate becomes the worst kind of Republican Mother by being unable to take care of her sick child while under the influence of wine. Her husband and servants trusted her with the child because of her supposed moral authority and she becomes so drunk she overdoses the child to death.⁹³ Her miseries peak when her husband decides to leave her and take their surviving child, giving her the ultimatum that he would only come back if she stopped drinking. He is still the one in control of his own destiny, unlike the victims of drunkenness in past stories, because the woman errs here. Though she has the religious and moral authority, she has no actual power in the relationship. The story is made doubly sad by the fact that the Female Inebriate has to fight alcohol as a dependent woman without someone upon whom to be dependent.

It was part of the Republican Motherhood ideology that women should be completely dependent on men. If women were to remain morally superior and only have contact with the domestic sphere of life, men had to then handle all of the contact with the public sphere. The women in these stories and in real life have very little choice once they have bound their lives with that of a drunkard. Men were supposed to protect, work for, and provide for women. Because of this, a man legally owned everything that his wife might have owned before marriage or that she has acquired after the wedding. A wife’s situation in life depended on the generosity of her husband, who could dole out

⁹² *Ibid*, 72; 78 .

⁹³ *Ibid*, 74.

this wealth as he saw fit.⁹⁴ Based on the state she inhabited, a woman might be allowed to own property but not allowed to keep the profits from this property. A woman that chose an unkind husband or a drunk could easily lose everything that she had before the marriage.⁹⁵ In the story “Tales of Truth (No. 1),” the wife legally has no choice but to allow her husband to squander the money she works for. She wants to leave her drunkard husband, but is told by friends that she must not break her vows to love, honor, and obey him. She would lose everything, even her children, if she left her husband.⁹⁶ Stories like “Tales of Truth (No 1)” engage sympathy for the drunkard’s wife, hopefully prompting women to help sufferers rather than telling suffers to stay in oppressive situations. Children, like all property of marriage, belonged to the husband. Any widow with young or unmarried children had to seek legal action to become the guardian of the children she birthed.⁹⁷ No matter how irresponsible or untrustworthy the husband was, it was a wife’s job to stay with him and raise his children to the best of her abilities until she died. The stories reinforce and exemplify this point.

⁹⁴ Isenberg, 184

⁹⁵ Carol Mattingly, Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth Century Temperance Rhetoric. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 14.

⁹⁶ Gage, “Tales of Truth”, Water Drops, 49.

⁹⁷ Isenberg, 179.

Chapter 4: Band of Women, Changing the World

Women worked within the movement to change the role of wife and woman in society. But what was the lasting effect of the temperance movement? According to some estimates taken in 1848, 80 percent of those who pledged complete abstinence resumed drinking by that year.⁹⁸ The lasting effects, then, were likely not on the actual temperance of individuals. Temperance allowed outside observers, like Francis Grund quoted on page 13, to generalize about the wisdom of attempting to legislate morality. Grund, in his writing, notes of the post-temperance age that it is “impossible to make laws capable of embracing generalities, or of binding men to certain *universal* principles of morality and religion.”⁹⁹ Though history shows us that the scope of this lesson must have been limited, movements like temperance did base the lesson in experience and broadened the base of social activism.

Strong female leadership emerged from within the organizations in the form of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Amelia Bloomer and Matilda Joslyn Gage. These women used the temperance organizations as a way to advance political issues and enact legal changes. The temperance movement was working toward gaining freedom for women from men. Temperance offered experience as well as a cause able to expand the domestic sphere into politics. Women could publish stories, and eventually broader publications, and still have it be socially-acceptable.

These women began *The Lily* to publish literature and treatises for the temperance cause.¹⁰⁰ Amelia Bloomer began a temperance paper in 1842, but this paper is now not as well-known as *The Lily*. With *The Lily*'s first publication in 1849, Bloomer

⁹⁸ Reynolds *et al*, 27.

⁹⁹ Grund, 49 [emphasis original]

¹⁰⁰ Epstein, 93.

wrote an editorial urging the women reader to take control of her household because temperance allowed her to save herself and her sisters from a terrible fate. Though it might have originally focused on the issue of temperance and how to save women from intemperate husbands and fathers, *The Lily* soon expanded to the broader goal of expanding the rights of women. In fact, the most popular surviving articles relate to women's rights rather than the issue of temperance.

Publication of *The Lily* was accomplished only after Elizabeth Cady Stanton had an encounter with Charles Finney that converted not Elizabeth herself, but rather her future husband Henry B. Stanton. Finney convinced Henry to leave all other pursuits to become a minister, training which allowed Henry to become the orator that Elizabeth married.¹⁰¹ This shift would impact Elizabeth, the temperance movement, and the women's rights movement for years to come. Other women showed their commitment in other ways. Amelia Bloomer refused to drink alcohol at her own wedding, not even allowing the alcohol as part of a celebration.¹⁰² Bloomer, residing in the town of Seneca Falls that would become so important to the women's rights movement, echoed the sentiments of the place at the time. Before it could become a center for women's rights, it was a center for temperance.

Because temperance had goals like the suffrage and women's rights movements, it shared female leadership with these movements. When the male faction of the temperance movement—the Sons of Temperance—held meetings in March of 1852 and invited the female faction—the Daughters of Temperance—to come, women active in the movement like Stanton and Anthony went and tried to share their views. Little did they

¹⁰¹ Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Women's Rights Convention*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 44.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 83.

know that they had only been invited to listen, not to participate. This action supposedly prompted the Daughters of Temperance to shift their focus entirely to women's rights.¹⁰³

Not long afterwards, Antoinette Brown was shouted off the stage at the World Temperance Convention for being a woman speaking in public.¹⁰⁴ Little more than a year later, some of temperance's strongest leaders left the movement and moved on to more forthright movements for woman's rights. Many powerful men within the movement were unwilling to see or portray women as strong individuals, separate from men. Women remained weak in body and mind to some men in the movement.

Women writers of temperance fiction tried to change this image of the helpless and thoughtless woman. As stated above the first temperance fiction writers were men and did not portray women in a flattering manner so the leaders stopped publishing the writings of men and advertised for women's stories. Stories that were published after the 1830s and that still survive were not written by men. Though few of these male stories survived, the trend in male-authored stories seems to be toward male narration and male main characters. In the male-written stories, women are secondary creatures not even worthy of their own voice. Male-written stories focus on the public sphere, women's on the domestic.

The movement not only sponsored stories that portrayed women's world when the stories were written by women rather than by men, but they also granted some aspiring writers the chance to have their work published. The goal was to build the womanly self-image, to help women see themselves as fighters rather than weak sufferers of circumstance. It was because of these women writers that temperance fiction became

¹⁰³ Epstein, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Isenberg, 23.

popular. New publishers, ones that catered to a wider clientele than private temperance and church presses could, started including the stories in periodicals and gift books.¹⁰⁵ The movement branched out of the church in this way, by making their message attractive and accessible. It also took the female influence further out of the domestic sphere. The stories now could reach more people and impart a stronger image to women.

The influence of these stories on America was not limited to only women and only those within the reach of the stories. Later works of greater scope and influence share common themes with this temperance literature. Rebecca Harding Davis, in her work Life in the Iron Mills, makes her characters sober people who avoid drinking. This story, written in the post Maine Laws world of 1860, mentions temperance as a way to build characters. The main female character, Deb, avoids hard alcohol. Davis uses this as a way to distinguish Deb from her neighbors who are constantly “drinking—God and the distillers only know what; with an occasional night in jail, to atone for some drunken excess.”¹⁰⁶ Deb is different than her peers because of her ability to avoid the hard liquor produced by these distillers, drinking instead the weaker ale mentioned. She also takes care of those hurt by this alcoholic vice, children like Little Janey, whom she feeds when Janey’s father is away either visiting a prison or imprisoned himself.¹⁰⁷ She also takes care of Hugh, an iron mill worker who lives nearby, by feeding him and attempting to fund his dream.¹⁰⁸ Though her actions of theft are misguided, they show that Deb is a women trying to help others and improve herself. Deb, despite her social standing as a textile mill worker, manages to distinguish herself through charity and temperance.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Rebecca Harding Davis, Life in the Iron Mills (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1998), 42.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

The same can be said about the famous characters of St. Clare and Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's work Uncle Tom's Cabin. Though it was published eight years before Davis's Life, Stowe's work still was being written and published at the height of temperance's power and popularity. St. Clare, after enduring the death of his angelic child, is killed by drunken men while trying to stop a fight.¹⁰⁹ Though St. Clare works in abolitionism rather than temperance, the theme of an angelic child dying still spurs his transformation from slave-owner to slavery-opposition. It can therefore be seen that Stowe used themes from temperance literature to build her own argument. Through his religion and his good works, Tom separates himself from evil or misguided men like Simon Legree. Legree is all that is bad in the book, a man who enjoys torture and death and who attempts to kill religion.¹¹⁰ Legree is mentioned almost at his first appearance to be "occasionally pulling away at a flask of spirit, which he kept in his pocket."¹¹¹ Though alcohol cannot be said to cause all of Legree's malicious tendencies, the fact that he drinks deepens the menace of his character. Neither Tom nor the women slaves in the book can save Legree from himself though they do try, most memorably when Cassy is able to stop Legree from beating Tom to death for refusing to renounce his religion.¹¹² As lesser citizens they band together, but are not strong enough either because there is not a great enough number or because even banded together they do not have enough power.

Groups allowed female temperance workers power to change their lives. As the temperance movement created a "culture of feminine benevolence," women now gained a network with which they could share more than just suffering and temperance stories.

¹⁰⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly, (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 454.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 482.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 489.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 540.

With the periodical publications and books, even women in places far removed from the Second Great Awakening and established churches could have access to the temperance information. If women could band together to promote temperance, they could band together to promote other reforms that would benefit their lives. It became an effective catalyst for change if women were to call up all the wrongs they had to endure because of bad husbands.¹¹³ Many temperance volunteers got their first taste of freedom with the movement. The movement gave voice and influential backing to their concerns about alcohol and the power husbands had over wives.¹¹⁴ It also allowed women a safe space to turn these concerns into political action, well within their sphere but yet still pushing into the public arena.

At the same time women were fighting for prohibition of alcohol, they began to fight for other laws that would benefit a woman's world. For example, they started to push for divorce reform on laws that would allow for a full divorce on grounds other than adultery. More common and easier to obtain at that time would be a partial divorce, an arrangement that allowed husband and wife to live apart but kept them legally married.¹¹⁵ By invoking images of women and children suffering hopelessly under a drunken tyrant, activists were able to push for marriage laws that would be more favorable to women. Leaders in the movement began to agitate for women to divorce or separate from drunken husbands.¹¹⁶ Accompanying this push was the picture of the "profoundly miserable children with dreadful prospects for their future lives," the babies born into a drunkard's

¹¹³ Isenberg, 15.

¹¹⁴ Mattingly, Well-Tempered Women, 15.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 27.

family.¹¹⁷ Women as the moral authority of society owed it to their children to prevent this kind of suffering and lack of future.

The temperance activists living in many eastern-seaboard states actually did see suffering at the hands of alcohol prevented by the law. Temperance reformers utilized local-option statutes, and some states like New York had a majority of dry towns by 1848. The country was in party-wide and national turmoil, with parties fading into and out of existence—making political affiliation to benevolence movements more tenuous—and the nation becoming increasingly divided over slavery.¹¹⁸ Temperance workers were not willing to be ignored, no matter what other issues came up. They created tough dry legislation in Maine and managed to manipulate the turmoil to get their reform passed. The Maine Law of 1851 became a yardstick for a state's commitment to the temperance issue. Laws similar to the Maine Law were passed in twelve more states by 1855, all of the states in the North.¹¹⁹ Temperance became a volatile issue in already-volatile times. Protests of those not agreeing with the Maine Laws in dry areas, especially in Maine, became increasingly violent. It was only the sudden rise of the Republican Party that calmed the temperance issue. By 1860, four of the fifteen states with the Maine Law had repealed it.¹²⁰ Once the Civil War gripped the nation, temperance was already losing ground. So much ground, in fact, that soldiers in both armies had alcohol included in their rations. By the end of the war, the exclusion of the movement from polite and acceptable society was complete. It would take decades for the movement to rejoin society and be politically popular again.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹⁸ Pegram, 38.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The religious rhetoric of the Second Great Awakening furthered and justified the temperance movement, which in turn furthered many causes for woman's rights.

Temperance expanded the woman's world in American society, giving them a voice and sense of community with other women. It grew in influence for the first fifty years of the century, allowing oppressed women hope and politically-minded women an outlet.

Suffering women now had a forum to share their pain and be understood and assisted. It made politics more accessible and even gave some women the option for a life other than just marriage by giving them a venue through which to share their writings.

Temperance also taught valuable lessons about organization to the American public. People learned the advantages of open societies, societies that met in public and did not limit membership. These societies used the authority of religion for gathering places, could include children, and could include the people they were supposedly helping.¹²¹ Early temperance societies flourished because of their ability to capitalize on the rhetoric of the Second Great Awakening as well as their ability to deepen the influence of this rhetoric beyond the church doors. An issue that began in stores and shifted to churches became a hot-button political issue. Even when the temperance issue became more national in the late nineteenth century and more successful in the early twentieth century, temperance movements still used literature themes and distribution practices that were much the same as those detailed in this work. The temperance movement of the early nineteenth century allowed later movements to be more successful. Most importantly, though, it taught lessons and empowered women to stand

¹²¹ Jewett, 155.

up for themselves and their children if they were in an unhealthy situation because they did not have to do it alone.

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