

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

JOHN AND THOMAS,

ON

The Corn Laws, The Charter,

TEETOTALISM,

AND

The Probable Remedy for the Present Distresses.



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DIALOGUE.

T. Weel John what do you think is to come out o' thae terrible times? I believe our kintra neer saw a time like this.

J. Really they are fearfu' looking times, and I am really at a loss what to think about them, or how to propose a remedy to better them.

T. Deed John I'm truly at a loss mysel' to ken what would be the best remedy, but it is plain we would need some remedy soon, for our miseries are every day increasing, and the starvation and destitution that is amang us is alarming. Hae ye nae idea ava' what can be the cause o' a' this bankruptcy and beggary that is come amang us?

J. It is often my first thochts in the morning, and the last at night, to fin' out the origin o' a' this distress; whiles I think the Corn Bill has a great effect to hurt our trade, and I hae nae doubt but it has had a bad effect, but how far it would remedy the evil now I'm no very sure, for wi' us no takin' their Corn, they wouldna tak' our Goods, and noo baith Russia, and Prussia, and Holland, and Belgium, and France, and America, an' a', has gotten Cotton Mills, and Thread Mills, and lots o' our Mechanics, and they are quite independent o' us and our goods. I think our landholders, if they had half an e'e in their head, micht see that.

T. I dinna think ye're far wrang John, altho' I have heard some argue strictly in behalf o' the Corn Bill, and tell us if it wasna the Corn Bill our grun' wadna be sae weel cultivated, and its value wad sink in estimation, but I rather think the lads up by are feart the rents wad sink in their estimation; and is this a' the relief John—the takin' aff o' the Corn Laws—that we hae to look for, for the bettering o' our condition? if this is a' it is a very forlorn hope.

J. I hae nae doubt Thomas but there is ither causes that produce these great grievances amang us. Anither great cause, I believe, is our great National Debt, which hangs about our neck like a millstane, and I'm afraid will sink us to the hottom if the string is not cut, and what surprises me maist is to see sae little attention paid to economy, to help to pay off this debt. It is grievin' to read o' the thousands, and thousands, and hunders o' thousands, that is payt awa' every year to placemen and pensioners, for no purpose under the sun, but rank wastery; ane wad think, when they see our kintra sinkin' and sae muckle need for care, that they would be glad to adopt any plan to save us; and they ha'e a capital pattern o' cheap government laid down to them in America, whar the head o' the house costs them only £6000 instead o' £400,000, which some folk has to pay.

T. I must confess John you talk very reasonably on the subject, and if your plans could be brought to work, they micht hae a gude effect; but there is a heap o' folk thinks that if we had the Charter it would work a wonderfu' Reform amang us, and that we woald get a' our evils set to right in a short time, but I'm afraid it will not be easy gotten to mak' a trial o'.

J. I daresay there would be a change, if that could be gotten, but, as ye say, I doubt it will not be gotten in a hurry, but I should like to see't try't, and see what effect it wad hae to Reform matters; but there is ae Reform

that we a' hae in our power, and I think every living man and woman should mak' a trial o't to see what effect it wad hae, there's naebody I speak to but confesses that there is a world of evils in connection with it, and for that reason I think it is our duty to try it, and that is to abstain from all intoxicating drinks, and I cannot think that any man can be a sincere Chartist or Reformer, unless he be a Teetotaler, for the drinking o' thae drinks completely counteracts his own schemes.

T. Ah, noo John, are ye really gaun to tak a' the hair o' comfort us puir bodies hae left? if it wasna for the dribble o' dram I get noo and than, I wad sink un'er my affliction ategither; ye canna deny I'm sure but it raises the spirits and mak's us cheery mony a time, when nae ither thing will do't.

J. O yes, Thomas, I must confess it raises the spirits, and that to an awfu' degree, sometimes to 80, but next morning you will find them sink to 40, being 20 below par, and then what state do ye fin' yoursel' in? do ye fin' your purse ony benter? do ye fin' your head ony healer? your character ony better, or your conscience ony sounder, after wallowing in that sinfu' drink? I trow no, Thomas.

T. Tuts man ye're takin' the very warst look o' the thing ye can tak'; its weel enough kent there's mony a ane tak's a bit suck that disna drive themsel's to thae extremities ye talk about, our Ministers, and Elders, and Magistrates, and Councillors too; indeed, the maist o' folk that reckon themsel's upish can a' tak' their moderate dram and no rin to excess.

J. Their moderate dram! dinna tell me about moderate drams, I ken baith Ministers, and Elders, and Magistrates too, that hae gaen far a'glee wi' their moderation, but independent o' a' that, is't no a shamfu' bad example they set before workin' folk, (for poor folk maun aye be imitating the rich if they can ava) to drink thae drinks

that destroy sœ muckle o' our grain in times like this, when poor folk's starvin'; every half mutchin ye drink, Thomas, believe me or no as ye like, destroys as muckle gude good as wad mak' a comfortable meal to a gude big family, and I'm creditably informed that there is as much destroyed in one distillery every morning as wad breakfast the hale town o' Paisley.

T. Hoot, nonsense, John ye're surely gaun out o't noo thegither, I never dream't o' ony thing like that, ye wad naist fricht a body frae ever tasting a drap again; if that was the case ye wad think the hale kintra wad rise up in a mass against it, our legislators wad stop distillation, and our magistrates wad grant nae mae licenses. Hoot toot John, ye're surly far wrang.

J. No, tweel awat Thomas, I'm nane wrang, for if there was nane o' the drunkard's drink drucken, every inhabitant in Scotland might hae sax pound o' bread every week they hinna, and that's but ae portion o' the evil that springs frae that curse; look to the misery and madness, the woes and wretchedness, that it produces; we're tax'd to a pretty degree even noo to support prisons like bastiles, whereas if we wad a' drap drinking, a three-storey house wad ha'd a' the criminals in a kintra side.

T. Altho' there a wheen fools that mak' themsel's idiots wi' drinkin', we're no a' to be blamed wi't; there's mony decent respectable minister and magistrate baith that tak' their dram, and disna fill themsel's fou, and if folk wad only imitate their example there wad be nae great fear o' gaun wrang.

J. Ah, Thomas, Thomas, but it is a bad example Scripture aye approves o' them that tak' nae drink, and could gie ye plenty o' instances o't if you and I had time; and to finish the whole story, it declares to you, in Habakuk, in plain terms no to be misunderstood, "Woe to him that giveth his neighbour drink." The beginning

to drink is something like beginning to smoke or snuff; it is fun at first, but truly it often grows earnest, as we more a time see; and I think, for my part, its far better to let it alane a' thegither; and I think it is the duty of every patriot and every Christian to give no countenance to these vile things; and every man that drinks intoxicating liquor is only assisting to support 40,000 men who break every Lord's day, by destroying the bounties of Providence, and converting them into a most destructive and pernicious drink. And I think that a man that would not give the use o' a thing that is baith useless and unnecessary for the sake o' his suffering fellow creatures, is nae man ava.

T. Ye really gang a great length wi' your teetotalism; ye seem to think it will be a general salve for a' the distresses and sufferings with which we are afflicted; but I doubt, John, tho' we were a' teetotlars the nicht, it wad be better our condition a bawbee, in the present awfu' state o' things; we're gae an' weel teetotal'd the noo, and the sair against our wills.

J. Nae thanks to you for that kin' o' teetotalism, that's no the genuine principle; besides, I am sure, if we were a' pledged, and sterling to the cause, we wad soon see a different state o' things, for I am quite convinced it wad be a general salve for a' our distresses. In the first place it would prevent 45 millions bushels of good grain from being destroyed every year, which would have a great tendency to cheapen our food, enabling us to manufacture our goods at a cheaper rate, and to cope with other nations, and completely put a check to the evil workings of the Corn Bill; and besides all this, the miseries arising from crimes, the misfortunes and calamities, the lunacy arising from suicide, the Sabbath desecration and a thousand other evils would almost entirely vanish from among us.

T. Really John, ye seem to hae't a' by the back, and I must confess, there's a good deal o' truth in what ye

ay; but what wad become o' our puir revenue if we were a' to drap drinking, there wad be a bonny cry out then, for we hae facht enough to get the win' rais'd as it

J. Weel Thomas, to be plain wi' you, I think the King is quite blin' on that subject; I ken vera weel we hae great revenue aff drink, nae less than 16 millions, but folk never think o' the frightsome expense that thae liquors bring on us, mair I believe, than a' they produce. See the tremendous Jails, Hospitals, and Asylums we hae to support; see the Judges, the Sheriffs, the Fiscals, and the awful army o' Policemen we hae to pay; see the Criminals we hae to feed; the host o' Witnesses and Lawyers which must be paid for prosecutions and trials; and the enormous sums levied from us in the character of Rogue Money and Prison Money; see the thousands paid for support of our criminal Colonies, for Freight of Vessels to send them to these Colonies no less than 86000 being paid last year for that purpose;—then say whether or not our country is benefited by the revenue produced from these destructive drinks.

T. I really must confess, John, you have almost made me a Total Abstainer, and I do now consider it my duty to give nae langer ony countenance to thae vile drinks; but I think we hae rather gaen aff the point a wee; we were talking about dull trade, and the causes o't: ye surely dinna think that drinking has been the cause o' sae mony bankruptcies amang us, to crack our credit, derange our business, and cause sic an unparallelled stagnation o' trade.

J. Deed Thomas, I dinna think we were the least aff the point about the cause o' our dull trade, for I hinna the least doubt in my mind, but drinking is the cause o' a' this wretchedness we're labouring under; for, independent o' the great sums o' money squandered awa' on guzzling, and drinking, and gambling, which sums nicht hae

keppit mony a Back Bill, I hae nae doubt but mony ane o' thae Win' Bills were drawn and accepted under the influence o' the Bowl; and I am quite satisfied that if our trading men had been teetotalers for ten years back there would neither have been dull trade nor bankruptcies amang us; and our present sufferings are only a just judgment for a' our sinfu' drinkings and horrid abominations that spring from that source; and so wide is the evil effects of the drinking system, that it has seized upon almost every fibre of commerce, and so long as Alcoholic drinks are encouraged and countenanced by the upper ranks of society, and by our Ministers and Magistrates I never expect to see things much better, for all classes sink under its demoralizing influence. Our Cabinet Ministers, our Pulpit Ministers, our highest gifted Literary Men, down to our humblest Artisans, all have suffered, all have gone astray through strong drink. I wish you a good night, Thomas—I hope you'll go to-morrow and sign the Pledge, and I trust we'll soon see better times.

T. Good night John.