

# Great Evangelists and Temperance

By Victoria Grigg, M.A.

## VII. THOMAS CHINIQUEY

My last article in this series gave you an account of the work of the great apostle of Temperance in Ireland, Theobald Mathew, who did so much to influence Thomas Chiniquy, so that he, in his turn, became known as the apostle of Temperance in Canada. Both of these men were the means through God of inducing thousands of their fellow-men to become abstainers, and both faced intense opposition in their zeal for Christ and Temperance. We, who also face all the wiles of the devil in the cause of Temperance today, and often feel discouraged should realise that at least we have many supporters behind us. Men like Mathew and Chiniquy had to challenge wrong ideas even more strongly entrenched in ignorance than they are today.

As a child, Thomas Chiniquy was brought up in Canada in the Roman Catholic faith, but his devout parents instilled into him an intense love for the Bible. He acknowledges again and again the debt he owes his parents, particularly to his mother, who was left a widow while he was still a child. He became a priest and commenced his Temperance work while active in this capacity, but at the age of fifty, after a prolonged spiritual struggle, he left the Roman Catholic Church, and eventually became a Presbyterian minister.

While he was the Catholic chaplain to a large hospital, one of the doctors showed him at a number of autopsies the effect of alcohol on the human body, and this knowledge he used with great effect in his Temperance addresses. He said that *all the information he received from Temperance literature was nothing to what he saw for himself of the workings of alcohol in the different parts of the body.* In his own words, "Those bodies opened before me were books written by the hand of God Himself, and they spoke to me as no man could speak."

At the same time, one of his parishioners was a young married woman who became addicted to wine after taking it by doctor's orders. One day, when drunk, she took her little girl in her arms to kiss her, but dropped the child against the sharp corner of a stove. The fall caused the child's death and the poor mother, distracted with grief, died shortly after. Before her death, however, she implored Father Chiniquy to go all over Canada, and tell parents never to give their children intoxicating drinks. "Tell the French Canadians," she said, "How, on the body of my child, I have cursed that wine which has made me so wretchedly miserable and guilty." This tragic incident, which left a most profound and solemn impression was another reason for Chiniquy taking up the work for Temperance.

The parish of Beaufort, where Chiniquy began his temperance campaign, was noted for the drunkenness of its people. His work was so effective that it was not long before the seven saloons of the town were all closed, the owners taking up other occupations. In the year 1848 he succeeded in persuading some 200,000 people to take the pledge, most of these being French Catholics. His methods are very worthy of note, and an example to us of the need of equipping ourselves with all possible knowledge and facts about our cause. He determined that he would never lecture on Temperance in any place without previously enquiring from the most reliable sources about:

1. The number of deaths and accidents caused by drunkenness in the last fifteen or twenty years.
2. The number of orphans and widows made by drunkenness.
3. The number of rich families ruined and the number of poor families made poorer by the same cause.
4. The approximate sum of money expended by the people during the last twenty years.

He gives an interesting account of a three days' campaign at Longueuil, a parish of Montreal, when he spoke twice a day to crowded congregations.

"The first day, I showed how alcoholic liquors were biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder, by destroying the lungs, the brains, the liver, the nerves and muscles, the blood and the very life of man. The second day, I proved that intoxicating drinks were the most implacable and cruel enemies of the fathers, the mothers and the children of the rich and poor, of the farmers, the merchants, and the mechanics, the parish and the country. The third day I proved clearly that these intoxicating liquors were the enemy of intelligence and the soul of man, the Gospel of Christ, and of His Holy Church, the enemy of the rights of man and the laws of God." The result of this particular campaign was that 2,300 citizens of Longueuil took the pledge.

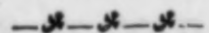
For four years, Chiniquy had given 1,800 public addresses in 200 parishes, and enrolled some 200,000 people as total abstainers. Taverns, distilleries and breweries were shut just as in Ireland during Father Mathew's campaign. In many places on the last night of the campaign, merchants brought their stocks of barrels of beer, rum, wine and spirits and set fire to them before crowds of rejoicing relatives of previous drunkards. In 1850, he was deputed by 40,000 abstainers to present a petition to the Parliament of Toronto to make the rum-sellers responsible for the families of the poor drunkards to whom they sold their poisonous drugs. When he went to pre-

sent the Bill, to his surprise, Parliament voted him £500 as a testimony of the gratitude of the people for his work in Temperance reform in Canada. Chiniquy, however, never kept any money but what he needed for his daily support, and some 70,000 dollars made up of sums presented to him by grateful parishioners was given to the poor, or some Christian or patriotic object.

The pledge he used in his great Temperance campaigns in Canada was in these words: "Adorable and dear Saviour, Jesus Christ, Who died on the Cross to take away my sins and save my guilty soul, for Thy glory, the good of my brethren and of my country, as well as for my own good, I promise, with Thy help, never to drink, or to give to anybody any intoxicating beverages except when ordered by an honest physician."

When Chiniquy left Canada for America, his Temperance work was carried on there with the same remarkable results. One of the greatest griefs he had to bear, like Father Mathew, in addition to the active opposition of many of the clergy of his church, was the conduct of priests who publicly took the pledge, and, just after the service was over, would privately break it. How solemn are the words of St. Paul, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Chiniquy continued his Temperance work after he became a Presbyterian minister, and his last visit to England was paid when he was nearly ninety years of age. In spite of his age he was vigorous and alert. How many in Canada and America rose up to call him blessed for the saving of the dear ones from the drunkard's grave, and many for the saving of themselves. His work was not undertaken without long hours of earnest prayer. Our own will never be crowned with success unless it is accompanied by the outpouring of prayer which came from Chiniquy and the others of whom I have written. Their battles were first fought on their knees.



### CIVIC RESTAURANTS BILL

By 238 votes to 185, the decision reached in December, 1946, in Standing Committee, to keep Civil Restaurants in England and Wales free from the possibility of Drink Licenses, was reversed. A three-hours' debate preceded the division. In our next issue we propose to give the gist of arguments used on both sides. In the meantime, we should realise our own imminent danger, and learn the lesson.