

The Making of John B. Gough (1817-1886):  
Temperance Celebrity, Evangelical Pageantry, and the Conservatism  
of Popular Reform in Victorian Society

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**Abstract**

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The dissertation is partly a biography of John Bartholomew Gough, a transatlantic temperance celebrity and one of the most popular itinerant lecturers of the Victorian era. It is also a social history of Gough's supporters and opponents, an intellectual history of the friction he incited between the temperance and prohibition factions, and a cultural history of the paradoxes inherent in the popularization of evangelical temperance reform.

By focusing on the controversies surrounding Gough and through analysis of newspapers, pamphlets, memoirs, and private diaries and correspondence, the dissertation reconstructs the deepening socioeconomic and ideological fault lines that came to define the temperance movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. It re-evaluates the connections between evangelical temperance and radical reform issues, such as abolition and women's rights. It argues that Gough's rise to stardom was intertwined with the coming-of-age of the conservative evangelical mercantile class, and that the evangelical temperance ethos he championed became popular, as it

was being diluted and commodified as a marker of social respectability and detached from social and political action. The dissertation examines closely the ideological origins of the evangelical retreat from legislative prohibition in the late 1850s and illuminates, through Gough's involvement, the transatlantic reverberations of the collapse of the alliance for prohibition.

The dissertation also studies Gough as a cultural phenomenon. It investigates how and why Gough's clerical supporters tried to defend and justify his dramatic lectures while denouncing the theater. Drawing connections between the popular lecturer and the evangelical preacher, the dissertation suggests that the clergy's formulation of Gough's "anti-theatrical drama" and their obsessive defense of his authenticity signified an ambivalent acceptance of Realist theater and a deep-seated moral anxiety created by the tensions between the Puritan legacy and the new liberal theology. By tracing the (auto)biographical remaking of Gough's public image and his influence in the elocution movement after 1860, the dissertation examines the Christianization and domestication of the self-made man, the tensions between authenticity and refinement in the new elocutionary "science," and the merging of Gough and his brand of temperance advocacy into moral entertainment and the Victorian mainstream.

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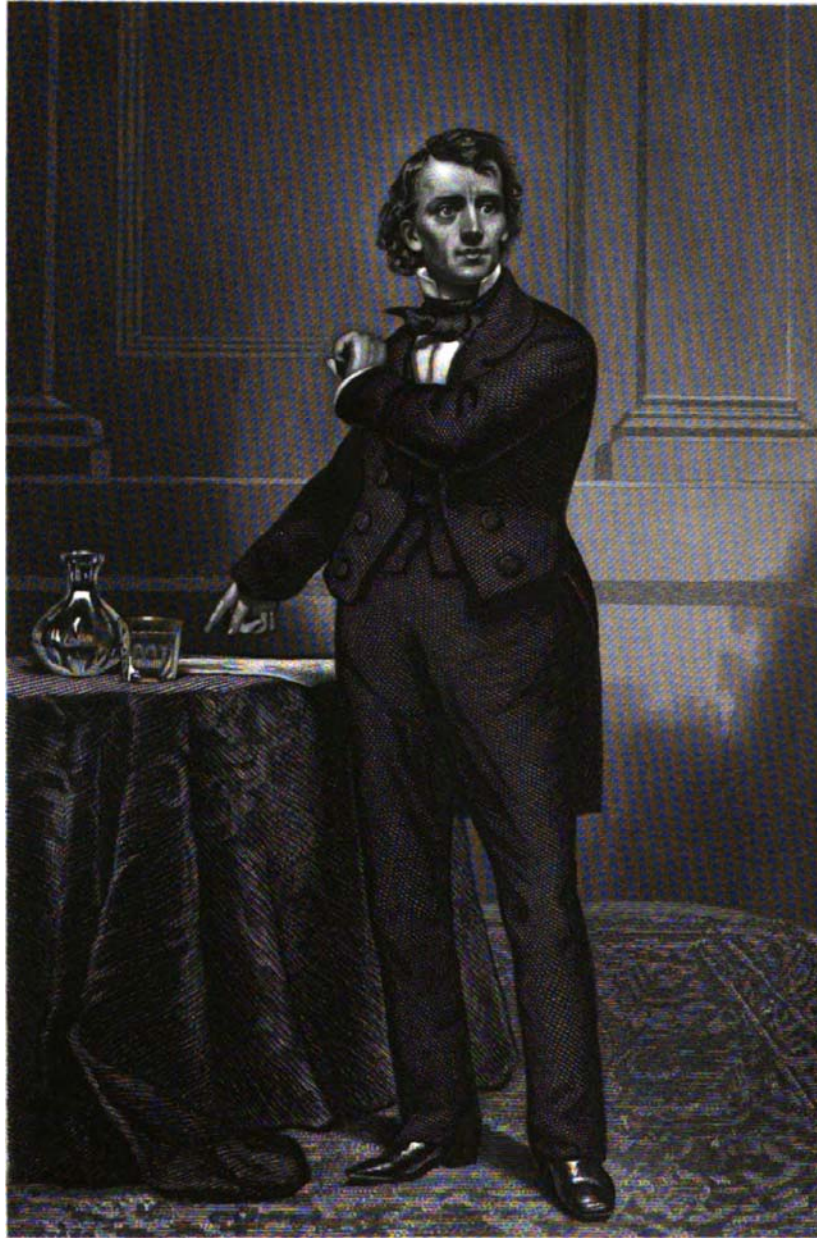
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## **For Zhu Hong**

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The dissertation feels like a start rather than a finish. The moment I thought it completed, I began to realize how much more can still be done. I could not have come so far, though, without the help and emotional support of those who kept me company along the way. Steve Nissenbaum inspired me to become a historian. He and Dona Brown have imparted in me a passion for New England history and have given me their friendship and love. Bill Rorabaugh has overseen this project from its inception and he has been there for me every step of the way. I cannot thank him enough. Kent Guy, Richard Johnson, and Yomi Braester offered encouragement and valuable advice for revision in the final phase of the writing. I wish I had time to implement all the changes they suggested. I am indebted to the American Antiquarian Society and its staff, who provided me with a research fellowship and the best research assistance I've ever known. I am grateful to the research librarians and archivists who have helped me track down Gough's correspondence, especially those who rendered their services for free, including Nan Card at the R. B. Hays Presidential Center, Olga Tsapina at the Huntington Library, and Bill Dupuis at the Boylston Historical Society. To my wife and partner, whose hard work has made my prolonged education possible and who has given me a life beyond academia, I owe too much. This dissertation is for her.



Frontispiece: John. B. Gough. Steel-plate engraving in *Platform Echoes* (1886) from a life size painting by Sir Daniel Macnee, R.S.A., presented to Mrs. Gough, May 22, 1855.



## INTRODUCTION

### **The Making of a Temperance Celebrity**

The dissertation examines the controversial life and career of John Bartholomew Gough (1817-1886), a drunkard turned teetotal lecturer who transformed and dominated the temperance platform on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gough was to the platform what Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was to the pulpit, though the boundary between the two professions was becoming increasingly porous in their lifetimes.<sup>1</sup> Gough violated every norm of stately oratory, and yet he mesmerized a new generation and a new social class of audiences with his pathos and humor. He redefined the relationship between the speaker and his audience and avoided formal logic and high-toned declamation in favor of mimicry, anecdotal illustration, and cathartic commiseration. He injected theatre and commercialism into the temperance reform, as Beecher did in the evangelical pulpit, and he had been the first to make a living and a great fortune by temperance lecturing alone, a source of contention for much of his public life.<sup>2</sup>

This is a biography of a limited scope. It focuses on selective episodes and aspects of Gough's career and relies mainly on published sources. As there is little reliable evidence to indicate that Gough had a private self independent from his public persona, this study is an

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<sup>1</sup> On Henry Ward Beecher, see the Pulitzer Prize biography by Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York, 2006) and a more interpretative work by William G. McLoughlin, *The Meaning of Henry Ward Beecher: An Essay on the Shifting Values of Mid-Victorian America, 1840-1870* (New York, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> The resemblance does not end here, either. Both Gough's and Beecher's public careers were tarnished by high-profile scandals and widely-publicized court trials, and perhaps not surprisingly, they defended each other in times of trouble.

attempt to understand the temperance celebrity from the outside in, rather than from the inside out.<sup>3</sup>

With its selective focus, the dissertation takes aim at broader social and cultural issues, which Gough illuminated by virtue of his popularity and his controversies. His rise to temperance stardom was intertwined with the coming-of-age of the evangelical middle class and with their business acumen and conservative social agenda. He had come to embody not only the evangelical temperance movement but also the hopes and fears of his evangelical followers. In this light, the dissertation is also a study of the particular social class that constituted the mainstay of Gough's fame, and it is a re-evaluation of the evangelical temperance movement, *not* at its radical fringes, but at its conservative core.

This dissertation is also transnational in scope, as Gough's popular support was not confined to a single region or nation. He made his name in the U.S., but he went on extended tours in Britain and its Canadian provinces. Though he had never visited Australia or New Zealand in person, his lectures (delivered by imitators) were received there with popular acclaim. Gough was a key figure in the international evangelical temperance alliance. This dissertation explores through him the close-knit network and the shared ideological and social agenda of conservative evangelicals in the English-speaking world.

Gough has been the bearer more often than the center of my story. The narrative of his life, as was laid out, rehashed, and fictionalized in numerous biographical accounts, does not need an extended retelling here; moreover, according to his devotees, nobody could tell a story better than he did. Rather, I have zoomed in on the stories that Gough neglected to tell, stories

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<sup>3</sup> There is little in Gough's manuscripts at the American Antiquarian Society to illuminate his inner thoughts. He often had his wife write and answer his letters, and these letters were more often than not business-like. His personal diaries were evidently composed for the public eye and were often used as an alibi against the accusers of his inconsistencies.

that would shed light on the changing social and cultural fabrics of social reform and on those who endorsed Gough by their presence on the platform and those who flocked to hear him. I have bypassed biographical details in order to focus on those episodes and aspects of Gough's career that either produced broader social impacts or resonated with popular thought and culture. I have employed a variety of historical methods and sometimes an interdisciplinary approach as dictated by the subject and by the nature of the sources. The final product, therefore, is necessarily a collection of disparate elements, of social, intellectual, theater, and book histories, which are connected by Gough's presence and involvement in the critical junctures of the temperance movement and in popular culture, rather than by a continuous biographical thread.

A recap of Gough's early life and adventures before he turned a temperance lecturer will be necessary, however, in order for us to better understand Gough and the more salient episodes and aspects of his public career.<sup>4</sup> Here, we have little to rely on except Gough's own story. His life as told by himself was a quintessential tale of the American self-made man. Born in 1817 in the small seaside village of Sandgate in Kent, England, John Bartholomew Gough was the son of a foot soldier who had served in the British Army in the Napoleonic wars. Barely able to provide for his family on his meager pension, Gough's father apprenticed him at the age of twelve to David Mannering, a neighbor and fellow member of the Methodist Society, who was about to emigrate to the United States. Gough arrived in the New York harbor with the Mannerings in August 1829 on the ship *Helen*. They traveled up the Hudson River and then on the Erie Canal,

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<sup>4</sup> The following story is based mostly on Gough's autobiographies, published first in 1845 and then revamped in 1869, and partly on the few vital records I found about him. John B. Gough, *An Autobiography* (Boston, 1845); *Autobiography and Personal Recollections of John B. Gough* (Springfield, MA; Chicago; Philadelphia, 1869).

and finally reached a farm in the village of Westmoreland near Utica.<sup>5</sup> The boom towns and villages along the newly opened canal were then abuzz with commercial activities and with news of religious awakenings. Gough had landed in the heart of the so-called “burned-over district,” the vast Western New York hinterland gripped by a groundswell of evangelical fervor. Gough soon got religion himself at a camp-meeting and became a member of the Methodist Society on probation.

But Gough was not happy with his life on the farm. Like many an apprentice of his time, he longed for the excitement of the city and a life of independence, and he resented being used as a farm hand and not being taught a trade.<sup>6</sup> Having spent two and a half years with the Mannerings, he left for New York City in December 1831, before his term of service was up. In his autobiography, Gough explained that he had written to his father and obtained his permission to strike out on his own. While it is unclear under what circumstances he took leave of the Mannerings, his early life and quarrels with them would become a sticking point later in his public career, especially after he converted to Congregationalism and began to speak ill of the family in his lectures.

Using his Methodist connections, Gough landed a job in New York City as an errand boy at the Methodist Book Concern (the publishing house of the Methodist Society) and he learned the trade of book binding. He boarded with Methodists, earned his keep from the Society, and joined the Methodist Church in Allen Street. According to his autobiography, his church was even going to sponsor him for a college education, until some “circumstances,” which Gough

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<sup>5</sup> The Mannerings’ move was by no means random but was already mapped out by previous immigrants from Kent and fellow members of the Methodist Society.

<sup>6</sup> Historian Bill Rorabaugh traces the collapse of the craft apprenticeship system in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Rorabaugh, *The Craft Apprentice: From Franklin to the Machine Age in America* (New York, 1986).

never explained, forced his separation from the church and the Book Concern. It was then, according to him, that he first became “exposed to temptation.”<sup>7</sup>

Gough’s progress down the road of dissipation was temporarily arrested, however, by the arrival of his mother and sister from England in August 1833.<sup>8</sup> But he and his sister had to bury their mother the next summer in the potter’s field, a graveyard for paupers and condemned criminals, which scene Gough immortalized in his autobiography and lectures. He soon became separated from his sister, who moved off for work. At the age of seventeen, he was on his own again.

This was, according to Gough, when his downward spiral began in earnest. Without a family or a church, he sought company among other rootless and churchless young journeymen in the city. He joined a fire engine company and a workingmen’s dramatic society. Having overcome his early scruples about the theater, he frequented the Bowery (a workingmen’s theater) and became a singer of comic songs at the Franklin Theater in Chatham Street.<sup>9</sup> Drinking was then part of the workingmen’s life and Gough drank freely. He was one of the rowdy young workmen who haunted the streets and taverns of lower Manhattan in the 1830s, anticipating the stock character of the soap-locked<sup>10</sup> Bowery Boys of the 1840s. From his arrival in late 1831 to his departure for Bristol, RI in early 1836, Gough had spent at least four years in the city and he knew the city inside out, including its popular and shady haunts.

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<sup>7</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 67.

<sup>8</sup> His father did not visit until 1847 and returned to England in 1850.

<sup>9</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 80-81. Chatham Street is, incidentally, where Gough would allegedly take the fateful cup of doctored soda water in 1845.

<sup>10</sup> A distinctive hair style of the Boys with locks of hair curled and then soaped to plaster it down against the cheek.

Gough's life between 1836 and October 1842 was characterized by habitual drunkenness and roaming between jobs, including stints in a travelling diorama company and on a fishing boat, a life which Gough would later describe as resulting from his dissipation, but which, in hindsight, was shaped to a larger extent by the uncertain economic times in the wake of the Panic of 1837. Gough married Mary Cheney, the sister of a fisherman and a Methodist, in Newbury, MA in 1838, and later they moved to Worcester, MA. On May 20, 1842, his wife died, according to Gough, due to his drunken neglect, along with a newborn infant.<sup>11</sup> Gough was again left alone and continued his binges until one day in October, when a waiter at a temperance hotel in Worcester and member of the local Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society, named Joel Stratton, tapped him on the shoulder and kindly invited him to a Washingtonian meeting.

The Washingtonians, as the voluntary teetotal society of erstwhile drunkards came to be known, had been growing rapidly in Worcester and in other towns and cities in the United States. The movement originated in Baltimore in 1840, and started as a workingmen self-help and mutual aid society. Steeped in the influence of the low-church culture, it featured rambunctious experience meetings and public rituals of pledge signing and renewal, and the Washingtonians resisted any form of coercion in reform, for drunkards or liquor sellers. Gough was welcomed into the community of his peers, and his talent as a public speaker and actor was soon discovered. He was asked to stump for the Washingtonians in the surrounding towns and hamlets in Worcester County.

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<sup>11</sup> Digitized records of John B. Gough and Mary B. Cheney's marriage (Nov. 1, 1838, Newbury, MA) and Mary Cheney Gough's death (May 20, 1842) can be found at Ancestry.com. Accessed Sept. 1, 2010. Mary Cheney may have died in labor, as it was recorded that she died "w. John B., May 20, 1842." In the autobiography, Gough did not mention his having had or expecting a baby until it died. See Gough, *An Autobiography*, 52.

Barely five months after signing his pledge, Gough had a relapse. Backsliding was common among the Washingtonians and those who repented were invariably welcomed back into the fold after re-signing the pledge. In retrospect, however, the details of Gough's first relapse in April 1843 are worth noting, as they foreshadowed the scandal that was to befall him in September 1845. On April 7, 1843, citing a headache caused by an early childhood injury to the head, Gough took the train for Boston, where few yet knew him as a temperance speaker. He ran into some old workingmen friends and went on a drinking spree lasting a week, including visiting the theater and the oyster saloon. In the meantime, he had enough of a "dry" spell to speak for a temperance society (twice) in Newburyport.<sup>12</sup> On his return to Worcester, he made a confession to his friends and was readmitted into the society upon re-signing the pledge.

Recalling his first relapse in his autobiography in 1845, Gough attributed his fall to the over-reliance on man and the absence of God in his Washingtonian reformation. By then, he had begun to speak for new audiences and new patrons – indeed, part of the moral lesson drawn from the relapse was for the reformed to “*abandon their old associates* and not place themselves *in the way of temptation*.”<sup>13</sup> A few months after his first relapse and re-signing, Gough befriended one of the most important sponsors in his early career as a temperance speaker, a retired paper and upholstery dealer and a deep-pocketed philanthropist in Boston named Moses Grant. It was through Grant and his network that Gough was first introduced to metropolitan audiences, or rather, to the New England evangelical enclaves in the coastal cities of Boston, New York,

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<sup>12</sup> See Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 147-151.

<sup>13</sup> Gough, *An Autobiography*, 83-4.

Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Gough started to acquire a wider fame and he made a point of distancing himself from the Washingtonians.<sup>14</sup>

From 1843 to 1845, Gough re-reformed himself by marrying a devout New England woman, Mary Whitcomb of Berlin, MA, and by joining the evangelical Congregational Church of Rev. Edward Norris Kirk in Roxbury. Under Moses Grant's management, he started charging admission at the door for giving his experiences, now labeled as "lectures." He turned his back on the Washingtonian anti-coercionist principle of moral suasion for all, and advocated, along the lines of his new patrons, prohibitory law for the drink makers and sellers.<sup>15</sup>

The world, for Gough, was always full of enemies, even though he was never short of "friends." In early 1845, Rev. Jesse Pound of the St. Matthews Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City accused Gough in public of slandering David Mannering, his former master.<sup>16</sup> Though the quarrel started with personal insults Gough uttered against the Mannerings in his lectures, it may not be altogether far-fetched to suggest that it had something to do with Gough's betrayal of the Methodist community, on whom he used to depend for survival, by converting to

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<sup>14</sup> More about Moses Grant and his management of Gough's lectures will be discussed in Ch. I.

<sup>15</sup> The Washingtonians themselves split into two opposing camps (as was the case in Worcester), a result of the fast growth of the movement, which had drawn in more than manual workers, but also clerks and professionals who wanted to control and reshape the movement with clerical support. Worcester became home to two competing Washingtonian societies in 1844, each publishing their own paper: the pro-legal-suasion clerics-approved *Massachusetts Cataract and Worcester County Waterfall* (which Gough sided with) and the moral-suasion-only pro-labor *Worcester Reformer and True Washingtonian*. Further evidence of the split can be found in Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (1984; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, 1986), 306-14.

<sup>16</sup> See Jesse D. Pound, ed., *The Echo of truth to the Voice of Slander; or John B. Gough's Early History* (New York, 1845). Pound was also an immigrant from Kent, England.



Congregationalism the previous year.<sup>17</sup> This, however, proved to be the least of his troubles in 1845.

Barely out of the woods, Gough landed in a bigger controversy on a visit to New York in September 1845. Knowing the city well from experience, he allegedly walked unaware into a trap set for him by the Boston rum-sellers, causing a nationally known scandal that was to shake the temperance world and reshuffle the alignment of various social forces engaged in the temperance reform. Chapter I provides a social and cultural analysis of the scandal. It traces how the scandal played out in the print media, churches, and lecture halls, and examines the class, gender, and denominational profile of Gough's supporters and opponents. I argue that Gough's scandal brought about a broader social and cultural confrontation, a confrontation that polarized the temperance community and helped consolidate the evangelical middle class. I suggest further that this tight-knit evangelical temperance community, who reinstated Gough against great odds and pushed him to greater heights of fame, did not serve as the incubator for radical abolitionists or feminists; rather, the scandal exposed the fundamentally conservative nature of the evangelically-inspired moral reform, which had shaped Gough's agenda and the Victorian mainstream.

Chapter II shifts the story to Great Britain. On July 20, 1853, Gough found himself on board the steamer *America* bound for Liverpool. This was more than a homecoming trip for him;

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<sup>17</sup> Rev. Pound used to be a circuit rider in Onondaga Ct. and knew the Mannerings personally, being an immigrant himself from Kent, England. Rev. John D. Torry, a Methodist preacher, who was also involved in the controversy, had married the Mannerings' daughter. The Methodist Church itself was divided in the mid-1840s on the issue of teetotalism and Communion wine. Rev. Pound was for moderation and using alcoholic wine in church service. See Pound, ed., *Echo*, 4 and Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, CT; London, 1979), 56-58.

he was to test his lecturing skills on the “more sophisticated” English and Scottish audiences.<sup>18</sup> From what we know, Gough’s tour was a success beyond his wildest imagination and it catapulted him into the rank of international celebrities.<sup>19</sup> Hoping to repeat his success while pocketing £2,000 per annum (approx. \$190,000 today), Gough sailed for Britain for a second time in June 1857. His second tour was, however, clouded from the beginning by a long-drawn-out controversy spanning both sides of the Atlantic, which he triggered personally by making an about-face on the issue of legal prohibition and kept up by taking a fellow temperance advocate, Frederic Richard Lees, to court for libel in London in June 1858. Chapter II looks into the intellectual history and the factional politics of moral suasion versus legislative prohibition behind the personal rivalry of Gough and Lees. It investigates why Gough had suddenly returned to the anti-coercionist “moral-suasion-only” position of the Washingtonians in 1857. I trace Gough’s change of mind to his patrons and to the upsurge of intellectual challenges posed by the London literary circle in reaction to radical prohibitionism, which had been instituted as state-wide liquor bans (known as the “Maine Law”) in the U.S. North from 1851 to 1855. I argue that 1856-58 had seen a general retreat of the British Non-Conformist evangelicals (Gough’s patrons) from political action under the pressure of respectable opinion; and that a similar change took place concurrently in the United States, accompanied by socially conservative urban revivals. Gough not only gave voice to the new conservative agenda of privatized reform based on personal and familial piety but the controversy surrounding his libel trial in London provided

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<sup>18</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 281.

<sup>19</sup> Historian Brian Harrison credited him with rejuvenating the temperance movement in Britain. See Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* (London, 1971), 145, 232, 370.

clues showing how the British temperance factionalism was transmitted to the American movement.

Gough's platform performance, which had won him an enormous following, forms the subject of Chapter III. Delving into theater studies, this chapter not only identifies the theatrical elements in Gough's unique style of oratory based on contemporary reviews, but it treats theatricality as a loaded issue and a source of public debate *in Gough's own time*. Gough's dramatic oratory was touted in the press overwhelmingly by ministers-cum-reviewers at the same time when the mainline American Protestant churches were beginning to embrace liberal (anti-Calvinist) theology and populist homiletics. The chapter draws the connections between the popular lecturer and the evangelical preacher and theologian, and analyzes how and why Gough's clerical supporters had tried to defend Gough's dramatic lectures while denouncing the theater and how they addressed the uneasy balance between sincerity and display.

In 1860, on his return from the stormy tour in Britain, Gough embarked on a new type of lecturing, one that was not restricted to temperance advocacy and was largely made up of humorous and strange incidents culled from his overseas travels. He transformed his public image accordingly, from a reformed drunkard and a temperance crusader into a moral entertainer and Christian self-made man. With a less obtrusive agenda, he managed to have a broader appeal and win wider acclaim. His death in 1886 (of a stroke suffered while lecturing in Philadelphia at age 69) did not put an end to his fame, either. Gough lived on in hagiographies and elocution textbooks all the way to the early 1930s; his lectures were recited and re-performed in the farthest corner of the English-speaking world; and his books were translated and published in different languages.<sup>20</sup> The final chapter is essentially a history of the book that traces the

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<sup>20</sup> Including Welsh, German, French, Swedish, Finnish, and Sinhalese.

remaking of Gough's public image in print after 1860 – both by himself and by others during and beyond his lifetime. It seeks to explain the cultural forces and players that had shaped the public memories about him and the sudden demise of his fame after 1930.

Quite a few modern scholars have written about Gough before me. John W. Crowley explores the “subtle” connections between the drunkard's narrative and that of the ex-slaves by a comparative study of the autobiographies of Gough and Frederick Douglass<sup>21</sup>; Thomas August highlights the challenges the emerging oral and ritual-based narrative of the Washingtonians posed to the elite and clerical discourse ensconced in print, using Gough's autobiography as a case in point<sup>22</sup>; Graham Warder studies the commercialization of temperance reform, treating Gough's scandal and his “experiences” in general as commodities for sale in the cultural marketplace of leisure<sup>23</sup>; Amy Hughes focuses on Gough's performance of delirium tremens as theater and as a Barnumesque “freak” show, as does Warder<sup>24</sup>; Tom Wright looks into Gough's shift from a temperance advocate into something of a cultural ambassador during the American Civil War and argues for his role in strengthening the transatlantic rapport between the British and the Anglo-Americans of the northern states<sup>25</sup>; Katherine Chavigny, in her study of the historical origins of the modern addiction confession and the therapeutic mentality, explores the

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<sup>21</sup> John W. Crowley, “Slave to the Bottle: Gough's *Autobiography* and Douglass's Narrative,” in Debra J. Rosenthal and David S. Reynolds, eds., *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature* (Amherst, MA, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> Thomas August, “Temperance, Mass Culture, and the Romance of Experience,” *American Literary History* 19:2 (Summer, 2007), 297-323.

<sup>23</sup> Graham Warder, “Selling Sobriety: How Temperance Reshaped Culture in Antebellum America” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Amy Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ann Arbor, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Thomas F. Wright, “Britain on the American Popular Lecture Circuit, 1844-1865” (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2010).

Washingtonian confessional literature and how Gough adapted it, using “self-exposure” and “self-transformation” to win favor with the Victorian public<sup>26</sup>; and Sara First has examined Gough’s career in the context of the emergence of a “celebrity culture” and the birth of celebrities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup>

These works have all, directly or indirectly, informed different aspects of my dissertation, and they show the growing interest of scholars in Gough and in the popular discourse and spectacle of moral reform over the last two decades. My focus on Gough, however, has allowed me to dig deeper than anyone else into his papers and to go beyond discourse and performance analyses. I have chosen the particular episodes and aspects of Gough’s career for this study because they present unique opportunities to contextualize Gough socially, culturally, and ideologically. I have examined Gough’s popular appeal in terms of the socioeconomics of the evangelical temperance movement and the social and political agenda of his patrons and audiences; I have mined newspapers, pamphlets, memoirs, and private diaries and letters for reviews and comments about him or his lectures and have probed the divergent public reactions to his controversies. Though this dissertation is by no means a complete life and times of John B. Gough, it promises a historically accurate assessment of his place and his influence amidst a sizable segment of the transatlantic Victorian society.

It is surprising, after so much has been written about Gough, that he still remains more or less an obscure figure in our scholarly discourse on the American 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even in the modern historical accounts of the temperance movement. John W. Crowley suggests that it is

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<sup>26</sup> Katherine A. Chavigny, “American Confessions: Reformed Drunkards and the Origins of the Therapeutic Culture” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> Sara B. First, “The Mechanics of Renown; Or, the Rise of a Celebrity Culture in Early America” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2009).

largely because Gough had refused to associate himself with the anti-slavery movement (or, for that matter, women's suffrage or Prohibition). Gough appears to be no hero to modern Americans, who have long conquered their fear of alcohol, if not alcoholism itself; and they have done this, oddly, by taking Gough's advice of individualizing and medicalizing the drink problem, hence sidelining the issue. Gough is not taken seriously also because of his ambiguous moral record, and he has been ranked with P. T. Barnum as a showman *par excellence*. But the discomfiting truth is that though Gough was a polarizing figure, he was seen during his lifetime and for more than four decades after his death as a moral and cultural hero by a large number of middle-class men and women in the English-speaking world, and as far as I know, he was rarely classed with Barnum (except by his enemies) but more often with famous preachers, reformers, and orators, respected public men like Beecher, Wendell Phillips, and William Lloyd Garrison.<sup>28</sup>

In our selective memory of the past and celebration of the present, we tend to imagine that history belongs to the abolitionists, feminists, and other radical reformers; we forget that there were those and perhaps a majority of ordinary men *and* women, who viewed the "ultras" with suspicion and distaste and who felt comfortable in sponsoring or paying lip service to "conservative" (i.e. to conserve and promote social harmony) reform. They have somehow become the elephant in the room in our recent scholarly dialogues.

It would be unwise for us to laugh at Gough as a hypocrite and leave it at that. He was very much part of the Victorian popular culture and the mass market of the moral entertainment industry. He played his part well and shrewdly. Before the age of radio and television, he managed to project images and deliver messages through public speaking as well as the print

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<sup>28</sup> According to James B. Pond, owner and manager of a reputable commercial lyceum bureau, Gough ranked with Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison as one of "the triumvirate of lecture kings." Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius: Memoirs of Famous Men and Women of the Platform and Stage* (New York, 1900).

media, which appealed to a particular and sizable segment of the Victorian society. His hardcore “fans” would not have thought of him as an actor or a hypocrite. They paid the admission of 25 to 75 cents in the U.S. or 1s to 2s 6d in the U.K. to hear a Gough lecture as willingly as we do \$50 to \$300 today to attend a rock concert. It gave them an experience of communion with like-minded people, the nostalgia of being part of a community in an atomized society; it was like a camp-meeting without the peer or clerical pressure for dramatic changes in one’s life. After all, all that the lecturer demanded from his respectable audience was a spontaneous outflow of sentiments and the little ritual sacrifice of removing wine from the dinner table.

Gough and the evangelical temperance movement in the mid to late Victorian era symbolized the conundrum for a minority movement and ethos that had entered into the mainstream. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, it took a major spiritual transformation and personal courage to embrace teetotalism, which often signified an overall abstemiousness that encompassed a constellation of issues including diet and sexuality. Teetotalism had been part of the revolt against the ethos of consumption in an expanding capitalist marketplace.<sup>29</sup> But during its popularization in the 1840s and 1850s, it became singled out and externalized as a marker of middle-class respectability. It became detached from its origins in self-control, self-perfection, and anti-consumption, and in a diluted and curtailed form, it had itself become an item of consumption through popular speakers like Gough. The popular temperance movement gave Gough and his patrons a sense of complacency and self-righteousness, not to mention personal wealth, and it had also become a convenient excuse for their apathy toward radical reforms that would have upset the social order. This dissertation aims to re-evaluate the evangelical

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<sup>29</sup> See, in the case of Sylvester Graham, Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform* (Chicago, 1980), xi.

temperance movement and to advance a more sober assessment of popular reform in the Victorian era.



## CHAPTER ONE

### **The Apostasy of the Apostle: The Social History of Gough's New York Scandal, 1845-46**

“Beware! Ye guardians of public morals! We know your faults, and if ever we should engage an artist to paint them in their true colors, you’ll start back affrighted at your own pictures!”

George Washington Dixon<sup>30</sup>

#### *The Fall of the Apostle*

Mr. John B. Gough, the “new apostle of temperance,” arrived in New York City unannounced on Friday evening, September 5, 1845.<sup>31</sup> On his previous visits, he had taken the city by storm with his heartrending pleas for the drunkard and his eloquent testimony of the power of the total abstinence pledge. He was not to speak here this time, however, but as he later explained to see friends and to arrange for his winter schedule. He checked in at the Croton Hotel, one of the finest temperance establishments in the city, took afternoon tea, and went out, at around half past seven, for a leisurely stroll on Broadway. His appearance was a far cry from fourteen years earlier (late 1831), when he first arrived in the city with fifty cents in his pocket and a small trunk over his shoulder. Now in his late 20s, he had the looks of a gentleman. He wore a black dress coat and pantaloons, a black satin vest, a fashionable hat (Le Gay), and newly-footed Boston boots. He carried a gold watch and \$230 in his pocket.<sup>32</sup> Nothing about him would have betrayed his humble origin in this anonymous city. He purchased a watch-guard, stopped at the Saxton & Miles bookstore (probably to check on the sales of his popular autobiography), and

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<sup>30</sup> Cited in Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York, 1997), 107.

<sup>31</sup> “Great Mass Temperance Meeting at Faneuil Hall – Mr. Gough, the Distinguished Washingtonian,” *Boston Daily Mail*, n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 1 (1843-1845), Gough Papers (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA).

<sup>32</sup> *New York Herald*, Sept. 14, 1845.

was reported last seen looking at prints next door in front of William A. Colman's bookstore.<sup>33</sup><sup>34</sup>  
Then he went missing.<sup>35</sup>

The public did not know about Gough's disappearance until the next Friday after his friends tried and finally failed to locate him. Public notices were then posted around the city and printed in every newspaper, and a substantial cash reward was promised for his recovery. Gough's friends suspected "accident or foul play." Rumor spread of his murder and his body found in the East River. The *New York Courier and Enquirer* suggested that Gough might have ventured into the Five Points (New York's red-light district) "in search of materials and incidents for his lectures," and that he had "met with ill treatment at the hands of some of the ruffians who infest those places." Everyone seemed to be holding their breath for a horror of gothic proportions.<sup>36</sup>

But on the very next day, Gough was found at a known "house of assignation" on Walker Street, not far from the Five Points.<sup>37</sup> The temperance apostle was alive, but appeared delirious,

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<sup>33</sup> Saxton & Miles at 205 Broadway and William A. Colman's bookstore at 203 Broadway. See John Doggett, *Supplement to Doggett's New-York (City) Directory* (New York, 1845). That Saxton & Miles sold Gough's autobiography can be found in the title page of the autobiography's early editions.

<sup>34</sup> Saxton & Miles at 205 Broadway and William A. Colman's bookstore at 203 Broadway. See John Doggett, *Supplement to Doggett's New-York (City) Directory* (New York, 1845). That Saxton & Miles sold Gough's autobiography can be found in the title page of the autobiography's early editions.

<sup>35</sup> The above description is based on *New York Journal of Commerce*, Sept.13, 1845, in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2 (ca. 1845-48), p. 1, Gough Papers.

<sup>36</sup> *New York Sun*, Sept. 12. 1845; *New York Courier and Enquirer*, quoted in Rochester (NY) *Daily Democrat*, Sept.15, 1845.

<sup>37</sup> The *New York Express* reported that Gough was found "in the garret of a house of ill fame, in an alley, up in Walker Street, between Bowery and Centre." See News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 1, Gough Papers. Benjamin Goodhue, a later critic of Gough gave the location as the "rear of 113 Walker Street." See *National Police Gazette* (New York), Jan. 10, 1846.

perhaps suffering from an overdose of alcohol or opium. To make matters worse, it was George Wilkes, editor of the *National Police Gazette*, a popular scandal-mongering sheet, who had been responsible for his recovery.

The story, or rather, stories Gough later told about his disappearance was evasive and incoherent. He blamed his relapse on a plot of the Boston rum-sellers. According to him, he was met in the street by a con-man who pretended to be his old workmate. The guileless lecturer claimed that the con-man teased him about his newfound piety and fame and coaxed him into having a social drink of “soda water.” Gough was lured from the busy thoroughfares into a small shop with no name on Murray or Warren Street, which he relocated to Chatham Square in a later telling of the story. The “soda water” was drawn and Gough believed drugged, as he noticed “glances” being exchanged between his companion and the shopkeeper. In a second telling, however, he changed the story to exonerate the shopkeeper and fixed the blame on his companion, who handed him a cup “with a hand over the top” (Gough noted this detail as being not “gentlemanly”).

Despite his suspicions, Gough drained the cup and became delirious shortly thereafter. Of how he ended up in a brothel and how he passed the week there, Gough claimed to remember little.<sup>38</sup> The whole week appeared to him to be “a horrible dream – a nightmare – a something that [he] cannot describe.” He maintained that he had no sense of time and was shocked to learn how long he had been “missing.”<sup>39</sup> As for the plotting and drugging, however, he was sure

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<sup>38</sup> This is what he did remember: “When I saw a woman dressed in black, I either accosted her, or she accosted me; it is immaterial which, as I was in such a state, that I should not have waited to think who it was...” See Gough, *Autobiography* (Boston, 1847), supplement.

<sup>39</sup> Later, Gough would himself note the short-term amnesia as a symptom of madness. See John B. Gough, *Man and His Masters* (New York, 1870), 13-14: “I would say, that while it is a species of insanity, there are peculiarities about it [addiction]. I conversed with an individual who had been confined in a lunatic asylum for two years. I asked him what he remembered.

enough. Of the villain's tampering with the soda water, Gough affirmed that he was "as confident...as [he] had seen him." On the man's coming and going, Gough had an unusual sense of clarity: he averred that the man must have come into the city the same night he did, and left soon after the Friday when he was found and that the whole thing had been a setup. All in all, Gough's story was rich in sensibility, commensurate with his new social class and piety, and short on lucid facts. It was obviously made up to exonerate himself, akin to using the insanity plea, and at the same time, to discourage serious investigation.<sup>40</sup>

The scandal was a pivotal moment for Gough and for the temperance movement. This was his second time falling off the wagon. The first known relapse of his was over two years earlier, about six months after he first signed the pledge in October 1842. The circumstances of his first relapse bore a remarkable resemblance to the second. On both occasions, the lecturer wandered off, went on a binge, and turned up after some time. Both times, he cited strange sensations. The first was attributed to a head injury suffered in his childhood, and the second to a cup of soda water. For both mishaps, he blamed his old associates, presumably workingmen from whom he had risen.<sup>41</sup> The scandal of 1845 was different, however, as Gough was a different man. After re-signing his pledge, he married for a second time to a respectable though not wealthy New England woman, became a convert of the evangelical Congregational Church, and befriended prominent evangelical reformers and philanthropists. He had turned his back on Washingtonianism, the grassroots teetotal self-help movement started by independent artisans,

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'Nothing but an indistinct recollection of something, I hardly know what.' And when he was released he was astonished to find he had been there for two years."

<sup>40</sup> For a compilation of different versions of the story, see *New York Herald*, Sept. 14, 1845. The "official" statement issued by Gough was published in most papers on or around Sept. 26, 1845 and was printed as a supplement in his autobiography.

<sup>41</sup> The story of the first relapse was given in the autobiography.

which had worked miracles in converting heavy drinkers and liquor dealers (including Gough himself) to teetotalism. He now spoke mostly for respectable and paying audiences - ladies in particular, and he was frequently invited to lecture in churches. He campaigned with the evangelicals against liquor licensing, demonized the liquor dealers in keeping with the crusading spirit,<sup>42</sup> and preached the gospel of domesticity and female influence.<sup>43</sup> Gough was the biggest catch for the evangelical reformers who wanted to co-opt the grassroots temperance movement of the early 1840s and redirect its energy toward legal prohibition (in the form of “local option” laws) and religious revivals. Gough made great conquests for them in the Northeast and even in the Upper South. He had become the face of the evangelical temperance movement and the emblem for the upward mobility promised by teetotalism and piety. And now he had just become the movement’s greatest liability.

Gough’s scandal was more than just an embarrassment for the evangelical temperance party. Tens of thousands participated in the discussion of the scandal and its meaning, thanks to the extended press coverage – Gough’s scandal was easily the bestselling story of the year. The collective silence of the moral press on the details of the scandal left much room for imagination and commercial exploitation by the “unscrupulous” journalists. The desperate defense of Gough and the drugging story by the moral press sparked animated public debates over the essence of

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<sup>42</sup> Gough’s old position on the rum-seller was described as follows by the *True Washingtonian* (Portland, ME), n.d., News Clippings Folio Vol. 1, Gough Papers: “He [Gough] is a man of mind and independence enough to held on to his principles and not to veer with the breeze of the place where he is...We were highly pleased at the remarks to the youth, in which he said, never treat a rum-seller or an inebriate with disrespect- never insult them, hallo after them, or their children. Treat them kindly, if you would win them.”

<sup>43</sup> Gough was frequently invited to speak, for example, by the Boston Female Benevolent Total Abstinence Society, Harper Union, No. 11, Daughters of Temperance in New York, and by the Ladies Temperance Union of Philadelphia. Gough’s support for legal prohibition was made unmistakable at the end of the first editions of his *Autobiography* published in 1845, and the few sentences were deleted in the enlarged edition of the *Autobiography* in 1868.

manhood, the cult of sincerity, the commercialization of reform, and ultimately, the question of moral authority. This chapter traces the divergent public responses to Gough's scandal to illuminate not only the growing social and cultural chasms of the mid-Victorian urban society but also the inner divisions of the temperance movement.

### *The Web of Sympathy*

In spite of the many inconsistencies and loopholes in Gough's self-defense, a group of temperance reformers and ardent supporters of Gough rallied behind his drugging story and weaved a web of sympathy around the "victim." They closed ranks and against great odds returned Gough to the platform shortly after his fall. The wealth and social influence, which had raised Gough up and borne him over the scandal, appears to be relatively new (post-American-Revolution) in mintage and preponderantly Yankee (New-England-born) in origin. In Boston, Gough had a patron and adviser in Moses Grant, a retired paper and upholstery dealer in Boston, listed as one of the richest men in Massachusetts.<sup>44</sup> A well-known philanthropist and benefactor of the temperance movement, Grant was also known to have refused selling paper to William Lloyd Garrison, whose abolitionist paper *Liberator* he deemed "an injurious if not an incendiary sheet."<sup>45</sup>

In New York, the beleaguered lecturer found shelter and support at the homes of George Hurlbut and George Clinton Ripley, ensconced in the fashionable Brooklyn Heights. The Hurlbuts came from New London, CT. They owned the New York-based shipping firm, E. D. Hurlbut & Co., and struck gold dealing in Southern cotton. George Hurlbut was praised at his funeral for his social conservatism and his intolerance for "the radical views which are becoming

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<sup>44</sup> A. Forbes and J. W. Green, *The Rich Men of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1851), 31-2.

<sup>45</sup> See William Lloyd Garrison, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (6 vols., Boston, 1981), 6: 302.

so fashionable at the present day.”<sup>46</sup> George Clinton Ripley, who assisted Hurlbut in his effort to protect Gough, was a native of Oakham, MA and a neighbor and close friend with the Hurlbuts. He was then clerking with the New York dry goods firm, Holbrook, Nelson, & Co., and he later went on to make his fortune in the life insurance business.<sup>47</sup>

In Philadelphia, where lists of Gough supporters’ names were published, his support base proved to be solidly evangelical and bourgeois (see Appendix II). The city’s highly publicized campaign (a “Gough Festival”) to vindicate Gough’s character and welcome his return was led by evangelical ministers, especially New School Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and by men of the professions, including law, medicine, dentistry, publishing, daguerreotype, and mission/reform. Although Gough claimed limited support among the Episcopalian (two out of twenty) and the Baptist (three out of sixteen) ministers, it is noteworthy that he had none from the Old School Presbyterians, Quakers, Methodists, Unitarians, or any of the African American churches in the city. Neither did the “Proper Philadelphians” of established and wealthy families nor the temperance workingmen take part in the campaign.<sup>48</sup>

Evangelical bourgeois women were a mainstay for Gough during the scandal. In Philadelphia, in particular, the Ladies’ Temperance Union of the City and County of Philadelphia (formed in the winter of 1845 and almost named after the fallen apostle) threw their

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<sup>46</sup> Rev. William Beale Lewis, *Christ Would Have His People Where He Is: A Sermon, Preached in the Third Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, NY* (New York, 1846), 26-27.

<sup>47</sup> Ripley named his son George Hurlbut. He and George Hurlbut were both members of the Brooklyn New England Society. Elsie Ripley Clapp, granddaughter of George Ripley, remembered him fondly, many years after he died, as a supporter of the Underground Railroad and the anti-slavery movement, but this cannot be independently verified. See Sam Stack, *Elsie Ripley Clapp: Her Life and the Community School* (New York, 2004), 11.

<sup>48</sup> Based on the names published on a leaflet advertising for “The Feast of Reason” (a festival benefit for Gough) in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, Gough Papers, and *McElroy’s Philadelphia Directory* (Philadelphia, 1845-1847).

weight behind Gough and played a prominent role in the publicity stunt to reinstate him.<sup>49</sup> The officers of the society were connected to Gough's male supporters by family and social network, and evidence suggests that they had used their social network well to enlist sympathy and backing for Gough's return. Cynthia P. Collins, for example, an officer of the Ladies' Union and wife of a Yankee bookseller in Philadelphia, was the lynchpin connecting at least five members on the lists of Gough supporters.<sup>50</sup> Mrs. Harriet Probasco, a woman printer (widow) and editor of the nativist (anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, and anti-drink) magazine *American Women*, was a signer of the Ladies' Union's pro-Gough circular and a strong advocate of extending "the novel, conservative principle of female influence" to relieve American society of "anarchy, misrule, and foreign influence."<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps none was a better example of the conservative nature of Gough's public support than Rev. John Chambers, the minister of the First Independent (read, evangelical

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<sup>49</sup> "A Temperance Movement," n.d., in *New Clippings Folio Vol. 2*, p. 65, Gough Papers. They had wanted to name their society after Gough ("Gough Union"). Other examples of ladies' societies were the Boston Female Benevolent Total Abstinence Society and the Franklin Union, No. 1, and the Harper Union, No. 11, of the Daughters of Temperance in New York.

<sup>50</sup> Cynthia P. Collins was the wife of Simeon Collins, a Yankee bookseller and a public supporter of Gough's return. She was the mother of Frances Amelia Collins, who served as the corresponding secretary of the Ladies Temperance Union, and of two brothers (David and Thomas) who ran a daguerreotype studio in Philadelphia and managed to have Gough sit for a half-plate portrait at the height of the scandal (on Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, 1846). The Collins brothers were then partners (and later competitors) in the daguerreotype business with Marcus Aurelius Root, who was persuaded to join Gough's welcome-back campaign. The Collins Papers, which I have yet to consult, are held by the Clements Library of the University of Michigan. Other examples of the family ties among Gough supporters include Miss Mary Ann Rhoads, (again born in New England), who must have helped convince her brother-in-law, Edwin Booth, a broker in Philadelphia, to lend his name to the "Gough Festival," Dr. James Bryan and wife Elizabeth L. Bryan, and Miss M'Calla and her father William M'Calla.

<sup>51</sup> As quoted in Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, 2002), 218; Judith A. Hunter, "Beyond Pluralism: The Political Culture of Nativism in Philadelphia" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999), 208. Mrs. Probasco became a member of the Rosine Society (for the reclamation and reformation of "fallen women") in 1855.



Congregational) Church of Philadelphia, who had a ubiquitous presence in the meetings of the Ladies' Temperance Union and who always spoke for the ladies in public.<sup>52</sup> An anti-Calvinist firebrand and an emotional preacher, he was a most ardent supporter of temperance and of Gough, and yet he was also a strident critic of women's rights and a die-hard defender of slavery (allegedly a friend of President James Buchanan's). He would later be remembered as having shouted down Antoinette Brown, who tried to speak at the World's Temperance Convention held in New York in 1852. His intransigence on the slavery issue and his apathy toward the Union war effort ultimately led to the split of his church and the walkout of its anti-slavery members.<sup>53</sup>

The core of Gough's social support, as brought to light by the scandal, came from a class of society characterized by Arminian piety (emphasizing moral agency and outward display of piety), social reformism expressed through conservatism (Federalist-inspired reform to restore and preserve social order), and newfound economic prosperity; they were the new elite of the American Northeast who amassed their fortune after the Revolution, as opposed to the cultured old elite of inherited wealth. While they played an important role in the temperance movement, especially in its legislative and political wing, and in other ameliorative reforms and charities, they generally avoided entanglement in abolition and women's rights, as these "radical views" were thought to endanger social peace (and were perhaps considered the idiosyncrasies of the old money). Moses Grant, for example, had repeatedly turned down the abolitionist Weston sisters'

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<sup>52</sup> He presided at every meeting of the Ladies Temperance Union. It is likely that the officers of the Ladies' Union were members of his evangelical church.

<sup>53</sup> For a biography, see Rev. Wm. Elliot Griffis, *John Chambers, Servant of God and Master of Hearts, and His Ministry in Philadelphia* (Ithaca, 1903). He was outspoken in his Arminian (anti-Calvinist) views in the Presbyterian schism (between the New School and the Old School) and had to seek ordination from the New Divinity Taylorites in New Haven. For his role in the World's Temperance Convention, see *History of Woman Suffrage*, ed., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joselyn Gage (2 vols., New York, 1881) 1: 508-509.

invitation to join the anti-slavery cause, citing his singular devotion to temperance.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, there was no reason or incentive for them to touch these issues in their times, and most of them had an invested interest in the status quo and were content with their social and political conservatism. For this very reason, none of these conservative reformers are remembered today (see Appendix I).

### *The Paper War*

To be sure, a lot of people found Gough's story hard to swallow. These included not only those who understood the workings of the New York underworld or those who spurned evangelical reform, but also the religious and the abstinent. Most talk of the scandal had probably taken place inside clubs and saloons, on street corners, or in private letters and journals. Philip Hone, the diarist, mocked Gough the "Temperance Quixote" in his diary:

He [Gough] gives but a lame account of his experiences, his persecutions, and his temptations, equal as would appear to those of St. Anthony, but it looks mightily as if this "reformed" drunkard had become *re-reformed*, and was now but little better than one of the sinful.<sup>55</sup>

Henry M. Alexander, an attorney in New York City, reported the public reaction to the scandal in a private letter to his brother-in-law Joseph Henry in Washington, D.C.:

Gough still seems to attract attention in Boston – while here [in New York], except by some of the warmest of his personal friends, he is condemned for his last fall. I am not acquainted with a man of respectability in the City who does not doubt the truth of his story... No one is a greater friend to the Temperance Cause than I am, but I

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<sup>54</sup> Caroline Weston, of the Weston-Chapman families, sponsors of Garrison, had been sending Moses Grant anti-slavery literature, and Grant adamantly refused to do more than pay lip service to the anti-slavery cause. Moses Grant to Caroline Weston, July 23, 1835; Caroline Weston to Moses Grant, Nov. 24, 1842, in Moses Grant (1785-1861) Correspondence, Manuscript Collection, Boston Public Library.

<sup>55</sup> *The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York, 1936), 746: Monday, Sept. 15 [1845] – *A Temperance Quixote*.

can't as a part of my creed swallow this story, which is so palpably against all the testimony in the case.<sup>56</sup>

Despite the prevalence of anti-Gough feelings, it was the popular penny papers and “police journals” that turned private gossips, personal gripes, and inside jokes into public protest. The attacks against Gough, in turn, gave rise to vehement responses from his friends in the press. The papers quickly split into pro and anti Gough camps. While the anti-Gough editors called his story a lie and condemned him and his supporters as hypocrites, the pro-Gough press defended Gough's innocence, urged public commiseration, and applauded his swift return.

Although the scandal took place in New York, Gough's defense team in the press was headed by the Yankees. David Hale, owner and editor of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, Gough's chosen organ in the city, was a native of Coventry, CT and then a Brooklyn resident, and he had taken over the Sabbatarian business journal from the Tappan brothers. Hale was a strict adherent to Congregationalism and a shrewd investor in real estate. He was responsible for the purchase of the New York Broadway Tabernacle, a Presbyterian free church originally built for the famous evangelist Charles G. Finney, and for turning it into a Congregational church and Gough's bully pulpit.<sup>57</sup>

Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* came from Amherst, NH, and he was a strong supporter of Gough and of the evangelical-led anti-liquor-licensing campaign. He was an all-

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<sup>56</sup> *The Papers of Joseph Henry*, ed. Marc Rothenberg, et. al. (12 vols., Washington, D.C., 1992), 6:365-366.

<sup>57</sup> For David Hale and the *Journal of Commerce*, see Joseph P. Thompson, *Memoir of David Hale* (New York, 1850), 96-107 and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland, OH, 1969), 54-55. The New York Tabernacle was Gough's “bully pulpit” in New York City. His controversial purchase and re-sale of the Tabernacle is recounted in Thompson, *Memoir*. For his role in purchasing property and organizing the Plymouth Church, see *New York Times*, Mar. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1875. Hale left behind \$75,000 to \$80,000 for his heirs when he died in 1848.

around reform enthusiast (temperance, vegetarianism, Fourierism, spiritualism, etc.) but was not fond of abolition in the 1840s and would later move gingerly toward political anti-slavery (Free Soil). In 1841, he launched the *New York Tribune* with the blessing of the Whig bosses to counteract what he saw as immoral and Democratic-leaning penny papers.<sup>58</sup>

Leander Richardson Streeter, or “Corporal Streeter,” with his newly published *Boston Daily Star*, quickly became the spokesman in Boston for Gough and his friends during the scandal. He had been a portrait painter and erstwhile editor of the Richmond (VA) *Star*.<sup>59</sup> He started the *Boston Daily Star* in October 1845, seeking a niche in an already-crowded Boston news market by branding the paper a pro-temperance (pro-legal-suasion) daily and by featuring full-length reports of lectures and sermons.<sup>60</sup> Streeter attacked Charles Francis Adams and his *Boston Daily Whig* in 1846 as “a pretended Whig” for his anti-slavery sympathies.<sup>61</sup>

Gough also had the backing of almost all the pro-legal-suasion temperance journals. Jesse W. Goodrich, native of Pittsfield, MA and known to be one of Gough’s early friends and an

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<sup>58</sup> See Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York, 1868), 136-8; Allan Nevins, “Horace Greeley,” *Dictionary of American Biography* (1931), 528-534; Mitchell Snay, *Horace Greeley and the Politics of Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lanham, MD; Plymouth, UK, 2011), Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. Greeley finally moved to all-out abolition (while vacillating on how to end the war and slavery) during the Civil War (but then the entire political landscape had been altered) and because of his public role as the outspoken editor of the *New York Tribune*, he was always associated with the left-wing Republican Party. It is ironic that he retreated in the early 1870s from Radical Reconstruction, which had become unpopular, to run for President in 1872 on the Democratic ticket. Commenting on Greeley’s inconsistencies, Mitchell Snay observes that “the Civil War raised in stark form the dilemmas of nineteenth-century liberalism.” (132)

<sup>59</sup> He was the editor of Richmond (VA) *Star*, from 1840 to ab. May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1845.

<sup>60</sup> Wesley T. Mott, “The Eloquence of Father Taylor: A Rare 1846 Eyewitness Report,” *New England Quarterly* 17 (Mar. 1997), 102-113. Mott argues that the *Star* wanted to transcend the ephemeral nature of newspapers.

<sup>61</sup> Streeter attacked Charles Francis Adams and his paper, the *Boston Daily Whig*, as “pretended Whigs,” for their anti-slavery sympathies. *New Hampshire Patriot* (Concord, NH), Oct. 29, 1846.

instrument in his reformation, edited the *Massachusetts Cataract and Worcester County Waterfall* and had led the break with the moral suasionist Washingtonian teetotalers in Worcester; Benjamin Webb Williams, born in Salem and editor of the *Taunton (MA) Dew Drop*, was actively involved in the no-license campaign and later in the agitation for passing a prohibitory “Maine Law” in Massachusetts; Rev. John Marsh, born in Wethersfield, CT and trained for the ministry at Yale under Timothy Dwight, was the long-time secretary of the evangelical-led American Temperance Union, which had tried to co-opt the Washingtonians into the legislative campaign, and he edited the New-York-based *Journal of the American Temperance Union*.

One way or another, the leading defenders of Gough in the press were implicated in his rise to fame, connected to the Yankee evangelical business community, and enthusiastic about the legislative campaign against liquor licensing. These Yankee scribes were neither naïve believers in fantastical stories nor neophytes in the business of journalism; they were experienced in news making and politicking, and they had a practical sense of the market and their audience. Supporting Gough was a strategic decision and a collective endeavor. They echoed one another and formed a coherent voice of Yankee reformers and a tight-knit community of Yankee compatriots.

In contrast, Gough’s opponents in the press were of diverse origins (though centered in New York) and were not always a cohesive lot. Leading the opposition were the printer-editors of a few popular New York papers, who defied the moral authority of the reformers. Gough met his most formidable opponents in the *New York Herald*, the city’s most-read daily paper edited by James Gordon Bennett; the *Subterranean*, an anti-Tammany workingman’s journal edited by Irish immigrant Mike Walsh; and the *National Police Gazette*, a scandal-mongering weekly edited by George Wilkes, who was the first to discover Gough’s whereabouts. The already

voluminous press about the scandal was condensed, analyzed, and circulated in a pamphlet titled *Goffiana*, which promised a full review of Gough's life and writings, and the author of the pamphlet, William Joseph Snelling, would later become the editor of the *Boston Herald* and a thorn in the side of Gough and his friends in Boston. Two of these editors, George Wilkes and William Joseph Snelling, were veterans of the risqué *Sunday Flash*, a rakish paper that promised to expose rakes and rogues. James Gordon Bennett's *Herald*, known for its caustic editorials and off-color crime and trial reports, had borne the brunt of the "moral war" launched by the respectable press to boycott and muffle the paper in the early 1840s, and it boasted the largest daily circulation in the United States. Mike Walsh was known to be the leader of a gang of Irish workingmen toughs known as the Spartan Band and an outspoken critic of reform societies.

All these were self-made men who embarked on their editorial career with little money and no ties to the Yankee business community. Two of the editors were foreign born: Bennett was Scottish and Walsh was Irish. Bennett sailed alone at the age of fourteen. Walsh left Ireland for New York with his father when he was a small boy. Snelling was born in Boston, son of an army officer and a West Point dropout, and he had an adventurous youth in the Illinois Territory as a fur trader.<sup>62</sup> Wilkes was the son of a cabinet maker and a native-born New Yorker, reared and educated in the streets, and he had intimate connections with the denizens of the New York underworld.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> In St. Louis and later in Fort Snelling, one of the military outposts (set up to protect the fur trade), located on the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers.

<sup>63</sup> For biographies on Mike Walsh, see Robert Ernst, "The One and Only Mike Walsh," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 36 (1952) and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York, 1984), 326-35; for W. J. Snelling and Geo. Wilkes, see Patricia C. Cohen, et. al., *The Flash Press: Sporting Male Weeklies in 1840s New York* (Chicago, 2008), 28-36, 41-45; for Bennett, see Isaac Clarke Pray, *Memoirs of James Gordon Bennett and His Times* (New York, 1855) and Andie Tucher, *Froth &*

These were footloose and aspiring men who traveled widely in search for employment and excitement and who could relate to Gough's workingman past better than his latter-day friends. They came of age in the rough and tumble world of men and lacked, or rather devalued, female influence in their life (Mothers, wives, and daughters were conspicuously absent in their biographies, except perhaps in their obituaries).<sup>64</sup> Each had made a name and a living for himself in the new form of popular journalism that emerged in the 1830s. They took pride in being politically independent, and boasted that their papers were not financed by any political party or interest group, but they did *not* shy away from politicking. Their editorial style was brisk and combative. Always eager to defend their honor, they readily engaged in personal invectives and each had their own scrapes with the libel law. They shared a common interest in depicting vice and often showed off populist and anti-clerical sentiments. Although they knew each other well, they did not always get along, and they competed with one another for a share in the marketplace of news and gossip. They were men of the world and believers in laissez-faire in the age of market capitalism.<sup>65</sup>

The fall of the temperance apostle presented these editors a rare opportunity to sell their papers. Their opposition to the moral press caused a backlash against the evangelical and well-to-do temperance reformers and it also gave a public voice to the shared resentment against the

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*Scum : Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the Ax Murder in America's First Mass Medium* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994).

<sup>64</sup> In many ways, their life stories mirrored Gough's except on the point of the female influence. There's a possibility that Gough had refashioned himself in that regard.

<sup>65</sup> For different analyses of the culture of the "manly men," see Cohen, et. al., *The Flash Press*, 55-76; Richard B. Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 2009), 9, 57, 60; Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, 1986); Amy S. Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm: The Volunteer Fire Department in the Nineteenth-Century City* (Princeton, 1998), 70.

temperance movement and the threat it posed to the new urban pleasure culture and to men's control over their social life. While the tension had already been there, the scandal brought it to the flash point.

Bennett championed the traditional ethic of moderation in drinking against the new doctrine of teetotalism. "[C]ommon sense and reason," according to him, dictated that we use "good wine and liquor, as it was intended to be used by its bestower, that is in moderation, and when we required it." Moderate drinkers who could "maintain their equilibrium" did not need the protection of the pledge. Drunkards, however, were "cursed with an innate appetite for stimulus of some kind." They could not be expected to "change the nature which they unfortunately are born with and probably inherit" by simply signing a pledge. "[I]f they do not indulge in liquor," he remarked: "they will in something else." The pledge of total abstinence, in his view, was unnecessary for the moderate drinker and useless for the drunkard.<sup>66</sup>

Bennett's attack was not so much noted in the moral press for its formulation of the pathological cause of drunkenness. In fact, he did not differ drastically from the teetotalers in asserting that habitual drunkenness was an incurable and possibly inheritable disease.<sup>67</sup> Neither Gough nor his teetotal friends had preached that the total abstinence pledge offered a complete and permanent cure of addiction; rather, it worked only when it was kept. They allowed for one's constitution and temperament in forming addiction and acknowledged occasional relapses as evidence of the need for perpetual vigilance.<sup>68</sup> However, the moral press faulted Bennett for his

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<sup>66</sup> *New York Herald*, Sept. 14, 1845.

<sup>67</sup> It is worth noting that Lyman Beecher advanced the same kind of fatalistic argument about the drunkards, though Beecher emphasized the moral impairment and spiritual death brought on by alcohol. See Lyman Beecher, *Six Sermons on Intemperance* (New York, 1827).

<sup>68</sup> Gough had preached that the desire may have been lying dormant but would be aroused by a single drop, and he repeatedly stated that some type of people, like him (passionate), were more



implicit rejection of the perceived danger in moderate drinking (that “requirement” inevitably became dependence) and for his denial of the general efficacy of the public ceremony of signing and keeping the pledge. While reform-minded editors like Horace Greeley argued that self-control could only come through total abstinence and would not be achieved without public testimonial, group support, and legal prohibition,<sup>69</sup> Bennett presented self-control as an entirely private affair – a question of personal resolve – and as the mastery (rather than denial) of one’s appetite. His commentary articulated the persistent popular belief in the wholesome quality of alcohol and its proper usage and reduced intemperance into an individual (rather than a social) problem.

Bennett found in the scandal a cause for moral rebellion and probably the satisfaction of moral revenge. He unleashed a torrent of invective against the moral reformers for their hypocrisy in vouching for the innocence of a fallen man. He argued that the self-styled moralists who had denounced his paper were actually the secret agent of moral corruption. They formed “an absolute party and a powerful clique in American society,” they gained a “perfect monopoly of all religion, piety, and virtue,” and they held “an iron reign of moral terror in the community.” They forced moral conformity, by making teetotalism a political and social problem and “shov[ing] it down the throats of those who ventured to oppose it.” They hired “a class of rogues” like Gough, encouraged “genteel vice and pious iniquity,” and claimed the exclusive right to “coin money, honor, and respectability by grave and pious howl and cant.” They were held together by the “mesmeric attraction of mutual support,” protected those who “belong to

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prone to excessive drinking and more likely to become “addicted” than others (the phlegmatic type).

<sup>69</sup> *New York Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1845

their class and favor their ‘cause’,” and labeled whoever opposed them as “an atheist, an infidel, and an enemy of religion.”<sup>70</sup>

Taking on the clique of moral autocrats and hypocrites, Bennett refashioned himself into a crusading “public journalist.” Gough was a “public character.” and “the public,” Bennett argued, “had a perfect right to demand all the circumstances of the case.” As a public journalist, Bennett claimed to shoulder a “solemn duty to act, in matters of public morality, like a Board of Health – to expose the danger of the spread of false principles, and to put...in quarantine, the pernicious conduct and doctrines which are ever struggling to sally forth from their hiding places, to spread moral devastation in the community.” He was to become an independent voice of public conscience, the republican critic of privilege and corruption, and the new guardian of public morality - that is, if we take his gallant speech at face value.<sup>71</sup>

But Bennett’s rhetoric was far more radical than his politics. On numerous controversial issues of the day, including temperance, slavery, labor, and the Anti-Rent protest in upstate New York, Bennett represented the status quo and resisted the radical remaking of social order.<sup>72</sup> He opposed the teetotal movement, vilified the anti-slavery advocates, and defended the landed interests of the patroons and large landholders. He was not so much resurrecting the artisan republic and its egalitarian ideals (as historian Alexander Saxton suggested)<sup>73</sup> as he was

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<sup>70</sup> *New York Herald*, Dec. 28, 1845.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Pray, *Memoirs of James Gordon Bennett* , 357-8.

<sup>73</sup> Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London and New York, 1990).

defending the “natural” progression of market capitalism and the individualistic laissez-faire approach to social problems.<sup>74</sup>

Bennett was no more disinterested in the scandal than his opponents in the press; he was concerned, first and foremost, with the sale of his paper. Historian Andie Tucher took issue with the conventional historical narrative of the development of objective news reporting in relation to the democratization of culture in the era of the penny press. She argues that antebellum culture was “not so much democratized as differentiated,” and that what distinguished the penny press was not so much the “belief in facts” or the “distrust of the reality, or objectivity, of values,”<sup>75</sup> but the journalistic shaping of “congenial” facts according to the differentiated tastes of their readers. Bennett was competing with rival journalists (like Horace Greeley of the *Tribune*) in the same marketplace for readers of similar economic standing (the “middle class”), and he found his audience among the fun-loving and voyeuristic portion of the urban middle-class readers (while Greeley had more appeal among the moralistic).<sup>76</sup> Therefore, to some degree at least, Bennett was exploiting the scandal and haranguing the moral reformers for the sake of his readers. Bennett’s diatribe reflected and articulated the profound disaffection of the fun-loving, theatre-going, and wine-bibbing urbanites with evangelical social reform. He translated the popular anti-temperance sentiment into public speech and a counterattack (versed in moral terms) against evangelical social reform.

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<sup>74</sup> Historian Andie Tucher highlighted the pecuniary aspect of Bennett’s venture. Tucher, *Froth and Scum*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York, 1978), 60.

<sup>76</sup> Tucher, *Froth and Scum*, Ch. 12.

Mike Walsh, the truculent and street-smart editor of the *Subterranean*, took the anti-reform tirade even further. If Bennett had appealed to the cigar-smoking readers in gentlemen's clubs and clerks in saloons with his moral revisionism, Walsh wrote unapologetically for the rowdy journeymen of the "Bowery B'hoy" type, and he found in the scandal another occasion to vent his anger at what he saw as the feminizing tendency of evangelical reform. Walsh regarded the "supposed virtues" of evangelical reformers – not just total abstinence from alcohol, but the entire health reform program, including vegetarianism and male continence – as "nothing but physical defects." Male passions and desires, for him, were not something to be suppressed but valorized. Gough was a great temperance lecturer *because* he had "carnal passions" and "strong desires." Most evangelical reformers, in contrast, had emasculated themselves. The "fish-blooded calves who live on bran bread and water" had no passion to begin with and no ability to speak of. Walsh essentially equated abstinence with impotence and indulgence with vigor. "Every man with fire and brains," he proclaimed: "gets Goughed once in a while."<sup>77</sup>

Walsh was not overtly hostile toward Gough until the publication of his drugging story. Walsh took offense, perhaps not so much because the story was a lie, but rather because of its lack of self-assertion. While Gough used to be one of the B'hoys ("a man," according to Walsh, "who evidently loves fun, and enjoys a joke"), he had adopted the (false) sensibility of the evangelical reformers. Gough's public statement showed an excess of refined sentiments and tears but no fire or sense of honor. Gough dared not "come out like a man" either to tell the "plain truth" or to defy the overly inquisitive to "go the devil and find out." His deliberate

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<sup>77</sup> *Subterranean* (New York, NY), Sept. 27, 1845. Walsh probably invented the term "Goughed," which became quite popular for a time, and he used it on the Hunker Democrats, as in *Subterranean*, Oct. 11, 1845.

equivocation, rather than his carousing, degraded Gough as a man in Walsh's estimation and made him a "servile, selfish, and unprincipled money-worshipping humbug."<sup>78</sup>

Walsh's editorial featured the "masculine" and oftentimes ribald urban slang of the barroom against the "feminine," polite, and sentimental pleadings of Gough and his friends.<sup>79</sup> Walsh made no attempt to "moralize" his argument; rather, he flaunted unbridled male passions and desires and was deliberately confrontational. He championed a style of manliness that was born of the urban pleasure culture, subsisting in the flash press, and marginalized (as belonging to the lower classes or race) by reformers. His unique blend of sexual virility and manly honor, to which he added his egalitarian politics, struck a chord among a group of roughneck workingmen of New York City in the 1840s, who cheered him on as he scathed and de-sexed the "milk and water men."<sup>80</sup> They chafed at the evangelical social campaign against drink, prostitution, and blood sports, which they saw as part of an increasingly alienating social order

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<sup>78</sup> *Subterranean*, Oct. 4, 1845; Kenneth S. Greenberg has accurately pinpointed male honor as not "do not tell a lie" but rather "do not suffer to be given the lie." See Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 8-9.

<sup>79</sup> For example, compare the language of *Subterranean*, Sept. 13, 1845 with that of *New York Express*, n.d., News Clipping, Folio Vol. 2, p. 6, Gough Papers.

"[I]t was ascertained that he [Gough] had been *propelling* to such an extent that he was incapable of leaving the *crib* where he got *pulverized*. The temperance men looked rather *soft* when John was discovered, though there are very few of them who would not be caught in a similar *snap* much oftener than he is, if their insignificance did not cloak them." (*Subterranean*)

"How keenly he suffered before yielding to temptation, none can tell, and least of all can we realize the terrible conflict through which his mind and judgment must have passed when fairly in the power of his enemies. The case is one to bring itself home to most men's bosoms, and families. Who of us are without frailties? Who of us, if guiltless of this one vice of intemperance, are free from all other errors of conduct- and how few of us there are, who, if not wounded in our own bosoms, can look abroad even upon those we love, who are, it may be, our kith and kin, and not see in them what we are almost eager to make a jest of, and condemn in those who to us are as strangers?" (N.Y. *Express*)

<sup>80</sup> Anon., *Sketches of the Speeches and Writings of Michael Walsh* (New York, 1843), 11.

superimposed on them. Their economic independence had been compromised by the financial meltdown of 1837, which continued well into the 40s and consolidated capital and the non-manual professions at their expense. The economic foundation and the social milieu of the manly men were being eroded, and the very existence of manly honor itself was obscured by the cult of sensibility. In opposing Gough and his friends, Walsh chose to strike a manly pose that had become not only decidedly unrespectable but deliberately subversive.

George Wilkes of the *National Police Gazette* and William Joseph Snelling of *Goffiana* steered clear of the temperance issue altogether and avoided direct attacks against the principles of reform. They were not overtly subversive; rather, they claimed to be helping the temperance movement by sifting chaff from wheat, lest the movement should go down with a fallen apostle. Their target was Gough and his chief supporters – a particular faction within the temperance movement. They refused to heed Gough’s friends’ call for privacy and sympathy. Gough’s stature as a “public reformer” and “the type of the temperance movement,” according to Wilkes and Snelling, warranted their special attention and the public examination of the details in his scandal.<sup>81</sup> They did not dwell on the moral consequences and far-reaching implications of the scandal; rather, they digested the “facts” in Gough’s case for the public and ridiculed the sense of reality that was being upheld by the coterie of Gough’s friends. Their gauge of truthfulness was common sense and street knowledge. Their weapon of choice was satire. Their goal was not to conceive a moral lesson for the scandal, nor was it a fastidious adherence to truth, as it turned out, but to generate sustained public interest and to realize the full market value of Gough’s scandal.

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<sup>81</sup> *National Police Gazette*, Dec. 13, 1845. “He has been made the type of the temperance reform; an importance has been given to him; he does interest the public; he has made himself public property. There are some thousands of his fellow citizens keenly desirous of knowing all about him, and it is no more than right that they should be satisfied.”

For the curious public, Wilkes and Snelling were happy to supply the missing details of the scandal. Wilkes, being the discoverer of Gough's hiding place, may have timed his "exposure" to coincide with the publicity campaign in the moral press for Gough's return to the platform three months after the scandal. He reported that on being "surprised in his shame," Gough offered him hush money and begged the editor not to "expose" him. The villain's name was then given by Gough positively as Jonathan Williamson, which had since become Williams in the public statement; the shop where Gough drank the soda water was not some unidentifiable place on Chatham or on Warren or Murray, but the known apothecary of Thompson & Wellers on Broadway; and Gough felt the unusual exhilaration, not after, but before the villain vanished, and the latter "looked into his face with a devilish expression of exultation which he never should forget, - no, never, never should forget!" All these details Gough had later altered or omitted in his official statement. He was most evasive about Williams(on)'s appearance (despite the devilish stare) and the location of the soda shop. Wilkes sneered at the deliberate obfuscation: Gough had "forgotten everything except that which we can most distinctly prove." Moreover, he ridiculed Gough's affectation: "The mysterious, unpolished Jonathan Williams betrayed his ignorance of manners by handing a glass of soda water with raspberry syrup, to a gentleman, with his hand over the top."<sup>82</sup>

Gough's insanity defense could not stand, Wilkes and Snelling argued, for he had been seen on Saturday back in the Croton Hotel (and changed into a new suit of clothes) before he found his way back to the house on Walker Street, which Wilkes described as "most obscurely

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<sup>82</sup> *National Police Gazette*, Dec. 13, 1845.

located” and “a perfect labyrinth in its entrances and avenues.”<sup>83</sup> Gough had to be not only conscious, but adroit in negotiating the maze of side streets, back alleys, and dark passageways (Wilkes compared him to the “amorous dabsters [i.e., experts] of the Bowery or Park Row”). Gough’s doubt as to the character of the house was unwarranted, because, to Wilkes’ knowledge, no other house but a bordello would accommodate a wealthy young gentleman on a spree (and for a week) and give him access to a woman’s bedroom. “No four decent women in the Union,” Snelling argued, “would suffer themselves to be branded as harlots in the newspapers, from Maine to Florida, without applying to the law for redress.”<sup>84</sup> He charged, on the basis of Gough’s recourse to the libel law only a few months earlier (May 1845) against his slanderers, that his inaction in the present case against the editors of the *Police Gazette* (Wilkes had invited Gough to sue him) constituted evidence of his fear of investigation and hence of his guilt.

Although Wilkes and Snelling posed as detectives and crusaders for truth, it is often hard to separate their facts from fiction. They kept up readers’ interest by churning out stories of Gough’s “sordid” past. While they taxed Gough’s defenders with using “hearsay” evidence, they did not shy away themselves from printing rumors or outright fabrications. Wilkes tried to impress upon the readers that Gough was in the habit of visiting bawdy houses and he had known the ladies in the house since his early days in New York. Snelling had probably invented the story that “Jonathan Williams” was finally found in Boston, whose real name he gave as Rothe, who was an Englishman and who admitted to having met and drank brandy with Gough (“three several times”) in New York on that fateful evening. The wildest rumor circulated,

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<sup>83</sup> Wilkes, a regular visitor to brothels, claimed to have found Gough in a “back bedroom” of a “rickety rear-building” after mounting “two flights of stairs” and taking “the first passage that offered.” *National Police Gazette*, Dec. 13, 1845.

<sup>84</sup> W. J. Snelling, *Goffiana: A Review of the Life of John B. Gough* (Boston, 1846), 20.



however, was not to appear in public until 1847, when Snelling became the editor of the *Boston Herald*. In his “supplements” to Gough’s autobiography, Snelling revealed the “true” story of Gough’s past: the first woman whom Gough married in Newburyport, MA and of whose virtue he praised in his early days was a strumpet and a quadroon (being a quarter African); and Gough was drawn to alcohol not because of the “bad company” of men but because of his own miserable cuckoldry. Not only was Gough emasculated in the story, but even his whiteness was challenged.

Snelling was capable of the profane, but his observation was nonetheless keen. He knew that not all would be persuaded by a mundane test of probability, and that “there are none so hard to convince as those who are determined to resist conviction.” “Though miracles have ceased,” he observed: “faith in them has not.” Gough’s success (and the success of the temperance societies in general in the 1840s) had represented for many the sea change of public morality that would herald the Second Coming. And the reformers could not give up on Gough now, Snelling argued, “for their craft was in danger...and above all, it must be painful, it must be humiliating, to those who have been paying all but divine worship to Mr. Gough, for more than two years, to feel and to acknowledge that they have so long been the dupes and fools of a sensual, dishonest, abandoned young man.”<sup>85</sup>

Snelling touched the heart of the matter. The scandal was not just Gough’s ordeal; it had certainly put the respectability and moral leadership of the evangelical reformers on trial. The question was no longer whether the apostle had indeed fallen, but whether his friends and supporters could afford to let him fall. A sense of hesitation was palpable in the initial responses

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<sup>85</sup> Snelling, *Goffiana*, 22.

of the moral press to Gough's fantastical drugging story. David Hale of the *Journal of Commerce* set the tone for the moral press:

Evidently he (Gough) has met with sad treatment, either from himself or others. If from others, the whole affair must be probed to the bottom, and the authors of the villainy condignly punished. If from himself, his fall would seem, from the above account to have resulted from some vile admixture in the soda water, which bereft him of reason and self-control, and made him a prey to his old, but long suppressed appetite for strong drink. In either case, he is much to be pitied.

Anticipating the worst scenario, he added:

Even if he were the sole author of his misfortunes, and had fallen like Lucifer to rise no more, there would still remain this consoling fact, that a good cause does not fall with those who profess and advocate it; and above all, does not depend upon the constancy of any one individual.<sup>86</sup>

The moral press may have been predisposed to accept the drugging story and to plead for sympathy for a victim. But the extent of their faith in Gough may be measured by how much they wanted to insure themselves against Gough's apostasy and by disentangling his fate from the temperance cause – a connection that the opposition press was quick to form.

None was more guarded in their response than the *Boston Daily Mail*. "[I]t is a favorable symptom," they remarked: "that those who know him [Gough] personally the best are most ready to believe it; while those least willing to believe it, are the open and undisguised enemies of the temperance cause." But the *Mail* refused to be committed to Gough's story once and for all:

For our own part, we may say in all sincerity that we do not know what to think of it. It is hard to believe that a man would thus solemnly call on heaven to judge him as he uttered falsehood or truth, and still utter a lie- for it would constitute the rankest moral perjury. It is almost as hard to believe that any man or set of men could possess so much of the fiend, as to conspire deliberately for the downfall of a man who, in all his relations, has evinced the kindest and most forgiving spirit. These conflicts in the philosophy of morals, in making up a decision, render the case a peculiar one.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 13, 1845.

<sup>87</sup> *Boston Daily Mail*, n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 12, Gough Papers.

While the editors of the *Mail* were seemingly caught in a moral dilemma, others reacted more positively in favor of Gough. Benjamin Webb Williams, editor of the *Taunton Dew Drop*, for one, immediately expressed his faith in the drugging story and Gough's innocence: "We are aware that we differ from most persons in this vicinity in the above opinion, but we have our reasons for it, and we shall *adhere* to it until the contrary has been proved." "We do not pretend to say that there has been no reason to fear the fall of this eloquent advocate of our cause," he maintained, "but we complain of the want of charity on the part of many persons." The skeptics and the denouncers of Gough, he complained, were all "enemies to the cause; wine drinkers, brandy drinkers, apologizers for temperance [i.e. moderation], rumsellers and their supporters and coadjutors."<sup>88</sup>

The labored, circuitous, and sometimes opportunistic defense betrayed the general confusion, if not panic, within the moral press in the immediate aftermath of the scandal and the unspoken fear of Gough's apostasy. As Snelling pointed out, Gough's fame was not entirely of his own making. The moral press had exalted him and raved about his lectures. Churches had opened their doors to him. Reform societies and their leaders had embraced him as their own. Gough had drawn enormous crowds, publicity, and revenue to the cause of temperance reform. Even as they tried to disconnect Gough's fall from the temperance movement, they readily branded the skeptics and the outright disbelievers of the drugging story as "enemies to the cause." They admitted, unwittingly perhaps, that Gough's fate *was* indeed tied up with the movement and that to be anti-Gough *was* to be anti-temperance. The denial of his fall (especially the silent treatment of the obvious issue of illicit sex), despite the alleged disconnect between the

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<sup>88</sup> *Taunton (MA) Dew Drop*, n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, pp. 18, 26, Gough Papers.

individual and the cause, served to protect the reform agenda, to save the face of many, and perhaps to forestall what might trigger a general collapse of the moral and social order.

Gough's supporters dismissed the objections raised by Wilkes and Snelling as mere cavils. They argued that Gough's wavering and inconsistent statement of facts could only be taken as corroboration of his unstable state of mind. "What weight is to be attached," Leander Streeter of the *Boston Daily Star* asked: "to the wild exclamations of a man, thus fearfully prostrated in body, and wandering in mind- barely living, and incapable of intelligent thought?" To the questions about the potency of that cup of drugged soda water, David Hale answered, relying on the authority of those "versed in the arts of crime," that such drugging was not only probable, but "common." "But," he maintained: "this does not seem to us a point of vast importance, though of much interest."

The point of importance was, rather, the editorial style of the anti-Gough articles. Streeter took exception to the "spirit and temper shown" in the *Police Gazette's* "exposure," as much as their argument:

If the object be simple justice, the tone should be candid and serious. But there is a flippancy, a revolting facetiousness, and a labored dressing up of the case, that looks more like a wish to write a "taking" article, with some dash of acrimony, than any care for right and justice.

Streeter accused Wilkes of sensationalism and profiteering, although he may have been guilty of the same. He charged that Wilkes' reportage was not serious journalism and his "effort at facetiousness, which jars chillingly on the feelings" undercut the credibility of his argument.<sup>89</sup>

Streeter was alarmed, because the *Gazette* editors, and others like them, flouted the etiquette of sincerity and the ritual and discourse of sympathy, in which the moral press had

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<sup>89</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, n.d and *Boston Daily Star*, n.d., "The Case of Mr. Gough" in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, pp. 4, 23, Gough Papers.

invited/instructed the public to participate.<sup>90</sup> Not only did Wilkes and Snelling gloat over Gough's fall but they sought to enlarge upon and profit from it.<sup>91</sup> Streeter was worried about the seductive ("pornographic") influence of the counter narrative. He accused Wilkes of "feeding a diseased public taste" by printing in the same issue a woodcut of a famous murder scene with the killer (Tirrell) slashing the throat of his victim (Mrs. Bickford) with a razor. For Streeter, the key issue in the scandal was not so much a test of the probability of facts but a battle of the "better nature against the darker mistrusts and doubts of man's heart."<sup>92</sup>

A common strategy employed by the reformers in this battle over the heart was the demonization of their enemies. The *Massachusetts Temperance Standard* attributed Gough's drugging to "one of those demons in human form, that prowl about our cities to ruin and destroy their fellow-men." A poem in the *Massachusetts Cataract* described the culprit as the devil incarnate. The *Olive Branch* felt ashamed of anyone "who derides when he should pity; for he hath exchanged the sympathies of a man, for the cruel mockeries of a demon." Horace Greeley compared his rival, James Gordon Bennett, to the Faustian demon, Mephistopheles, who "cannot repress his deep and solid joy at the opportunity of giving a stab at Temperance and the general progress of Morality."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> These coagulated as the outward marks of respectability in the 1840s. Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, 1982), 153.

<sup>91</sup> They were what historian Richard Stott would call "jolly fellows" and they testified to the existence of a "jolly" culture outside the pale of the cult of sensibility. Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieu in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 2009).

<sup>92</sup> *Boston Daily Star*, n.d., "The Case of Mr. Gough," in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 23, Gough Papers.

<sup>93</sup> *Massachusetts Temperance Standard* (Boston, MA); *Massachusetts Cataract* (Worcester, MA); *Olive Branch* (Halifax, Canada); *New York Tribune* in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, pp. 1, 13, Gough Papers.

The repeated allusions to the demon or the devil cannot be taken at face value. The evangelical reformers who supported Gough were not Puritans who may have found the Devil elusive in form but substantive in its influence on the human heart. Few would come forward in public to vouch for the existence and real power of the devil in the 1840s without becoming the butt of a joke. Defending Benjamin Webb Williams, editor of the *Taunton Dew Drop* who wrote a libelous short story titled “A Dream” in a trial for libel, Henry B. Stanton, the attorney and leading reformer, insisted that the devil, demons, and the “house of human slaughter” that readers would encounter in the story were “figurative expressions” (what we would call “literary tropes”) rather than a literal description of the plaintiff’s grocery store and its occupants.<sup>94</sup> To demonize one’s enemy was less about incarnating evil than about the need to externalize and bar evil from respectable society by mid-century; it reflected the ascendance of the self and self-making (the imputation of sin onto one’s “others”) and the “moral nervousness” of the liberal humanitarians at the presence of moral corruption within.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, the demonization of Gough’s enemies served to demarcate the boundary between the adherents of the cult of sensibility and the outsiders. “Much fiendish joy and exultation has it doubtless caused in the breasts of those who watch and wait for the downfall of the reformed and the reformer, but *to us*,” the ladies of the Temperance Union of Philadelphia spoke emphatically: “it came bearing deep and heartfelt grief.” To Dr. Mosely, Gough’s physician and caregiver in Virginia whom they had never met in person, the Philadelphia ladies wrote: “but we are not strangers, for in many respects the same feelings and sympathies actuate and warm our hearts -

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<sup>94</sup> B. W. Williams, *Report of the Trial of B. W. Williams and Others* (Taunton, MA, 1846), 34.

<sup>95</sup> Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (New York, 1995), 96, 107.

those whom we mutually know and love, seem to form a connecting link between us.”<sup>96</sup>

Asserting the emotional distance between “us” and the fiendish “them,” as well as the “connecting link” between the friends of Gough, under the particular circumstances of the scandal, became a way of self-display and an opportunity to clarify one’s social and cultural identity. Gough’s scandal was, in fact, a class-defining moment wherein men and women made conscious choices and public declarations of their social belonging and cultural allegiance and when the “natural” effusion of noble sentiments became blurred with self-display. Admittedly, the Philadelphia ladies used the opportunity to ease into the public sphere (as they did in petitioning the state legislature to end liquor licensing), but it is also important that this was achieved in a way that was pre-approved and endorsed by male reformers like Rev. John Chambers and Rev. John Marsh, who held a rather constrictive view about women’s independent public role but found nothing inappropriate in the extension of their traditional moral influence.<sup>97</sup>

The “moral nervousness” of Gough’s male supporters was demonstrated nowhere more plainly

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<sup>96</sup> “John B. Gough and the Ladies,” (Boston *Daily Atlas*, n.d.) and “For the Inquirer” in News Clipping Folio Vol.2, p. 16, 68, Gough Papers.

<sup>97</sup> Mary Ryan’s work, *Women in Public*, represents the recent feminist efforts to challenge the separate spheres (public men and private women) theory and to recover the different roles that women had played in the 19<sup>th</sup> century “public sphere.” Historians Jean Gould Hales, Judith A. Hunter, and Bruce Dorsey, for example, have all emphasized the “public” value of women’s domestic virtues and suggested a connection between these socially approved civic activities of women and the latter-day political struggle for women’s suffrage and for gender equality. Though I agree fully that women (conservative or radical) had always had a voice in the public sphere, we should not mistake their presence for shared interest and agenda. Gough’s women supporters were *not* abolitionists like Maria Weston Chapman, or women’s rightists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton (and they need not be); and they went as far as they deemed appropriate for their social class and family. See Mary P. Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots* (Baltimore, 1990); Jean Gould Hales, “‘Co-Laborers in the Cause’: Women in the Antebellum Nativist Movement,” *Civil War History* 25, no. 2 (June, 1979); Judith A. Hunter, “Beyond Pluralism: The Political Culture of Nativism in Philadelphia” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999); Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, 2002).

than in the effort to foreground bourgeois women (and children) as moral pillars of society (as they were thought to be morally untainted by virtue of their being detached from the marketplace) and it was accentuated by the all-important but ever-blurry line between sincerity and hypocrisy and between the innate disposition and the outward performance of sensibility.<sup>98</sup>

### *Humbug*

Nothing could have laid bare the inherent tension in the cult of sensibility more clearly than the hoaxes inspired by the scandal. A “confession” appeared in the respectable *New York Journal of Commerce*, on Monday morning, September 22, 1845, purported to be an excerpt from the “Temperance Record Extra” (no such paper existed) containing a contrite speech Gough had made in front of a “committee of Washingtonians” on the previous Saturday in Roxbury, MA. In this “confession,” Gough exempted others from wrong-doing and admitted to having knowingly taken soda water mixed with Lucina Cordial (an alcoholic aphrodisiac) in a “little edifice” on Center and Reade “of unique construction, being made up principally of gas lights.” The drink kindled in him the “most intense desire for women and wine.” At “Lothian’s corner” (a beer parlor owned by Napier Lothian<sup>99</sup> at the corner of Center and Walker Streets), he ran into a young woman, “an acquaintance of some years’ standing,” and followed her into a house with the most charitable purpose of redeeming a “fallen sister” of hers (“although [himself] standing on the precipice that overhung the vortex”). There, he drank himself into oblivion. Gough insisted that his fall should not be attributed to the inefficacy of the pledge or concluded as the failure of the temperance movement, but should be taken as evidence of the strength of the

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<sup>98</sup> The paradox is one of the central themes of Karen Halttunen’s *Confidence Men and Painted Women* (New Haven, 1982).

<sup>99</sup> Napier Lothian was listed as owner of a “porterhouse” on 109 Walker Street in *Doggett’s New-York City Directory for 1845* (New York, 1845). He was also a conductor for the New York Brass Band.



drunkard's appetite and as a warning for all. He prayed for God's deliverance, asked for forgiveness from his Washingtonian brethrens, and closed with a vow to return to the platform to continue the fight against King Alcohol "with all my wounds and bruises upon me."<sup>100</sup>

The "confession" was followed the next day by a terse and seemingly nonchalant note from David Hale, the editor of the *New York Journal of Commerce*, who pronounced the article a "forgery" and identified its author as George Washington Dixon, the editor of a racy weekly, *New York Packet*.<sup>101</sup> But the damage was already done. The "confession" was faithfully copied by several respectable New York papers (including the *New York Express* and *Evening Post*) and quickly spread across the nation (re-printed in the *Philadelphia Gazette*, the *North American*, the *Public Ledger*, the *Hartford Times and Courant*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and the *Barre Gazette*, and the Raleigh [NC] *Register*, etc.). A few papers, according to the *Boston Daily Sun*, printed the "confession" and sold thousands of copies, *knowing* that the whole thing was a hoax.<sup>102</sup> But other editors like David Hale were obviously hoodwinked. The *New York Evening Post* lent credence to the "confession": "We believe the statement made by him is true, for the shop at which the soda water was procured, is doubtless the place where the article spoken of him [Lucina Cordial] could be obtained."<sup>103</sup> The *Barre Gazette* considered the style of the "confession" "warm and glowing."<sup>104</sup> The *Brooklyn Eagle*, who had "abstained from" comment

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<sup>100</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 22, 1845.

<sup>101</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 23, 1845.

<sup>102</sup> *Boston Daily Sun*, n.d., "Beware of Humbug 'Confessions'," in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 7, Gough Papers.

<sup>103</sup> *New York Evening Post*, Sept. 22, 1845.

<sup>104</sup> *Barre (MA) Gazette*, Sept. 26, 1845.

in order to wait for Gough's "own version of the story," printed the "confession" in full followed by approbation and forgiveness:

It [the "confession"] has the semblance of candor; and, if the facts are to be relied upon, must go far to shield Mr. Gough from the censure that might otherwise fall upon him. We all know- or can, at least, imagine- how terrible is the conflict between an inherent sense of right and the long repressed but unextinguished appetite for strong drink; and while we accord all praise to him who nobly resists the Tempter and comes off victorious at last, we should always be ready to extend the hand of charity and forgiveness to those who fall by the way, provided they manifest a sincere contrition for past errors, and a determination to avoid them in future.<sup>105</sup>

The pro-reform papers were thus deeply humiliated when the truth came out. The *Brooklyn Eagle*, forgetting their endorsement of the "confession" just a few days before, felt vindicated in their "doubts" over the article's authenticity *because of* the absence of the drugging story.<sup>106</sup>

William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the *Evening Post*, blamed his *faux pas* on his assistant who, allegedly in his absence, copied the "confession" from the *Journal of Commerce* without reading it through (But obviously, whoever reprinted the "confession" must have read the thing through and through, given the comment on Lucina Cordial). Dixon, the mastermind of the hoax, naturally bore the brunt of their anger. The *Evening Post* dubbed him "a worthless fellow who pollutes the city by his presence."<sup>107</sup> The *Christian Freeman* called him "an irredeemable scoundrel, who has been so often kicked and horsewhipped, that he was at length become as callous physically, as he long has been morally." "It is a pity," the editor lamented: "that such moral pests contrive to cheat Justice of her dues and keep themselves outside of the Penitentiary."<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Brooklyn* (NY) *Daily Eagle*, Sept. 19, 22, 1845.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1845.

<sup>107</sup> *New York Evening Post*, Sept. 23, 1845.

<sup>108</sup> *Christian Freeman* (Hartford, CT), n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 15, Gough Papers.

Dixon was a man of many talents and many (including legal) troubles. He was an early black minstrel, a popular comic (“buffo”) singer-orator and songwriter, and editor of several short-lived weekly papers (including the *Polyanthos*) of dubious reputation. He also dabbled in animal magnetism, spiritualism, and performed such (Sam-Patch-style) feats as power-walking sixty miles between Philadelphia and Trenton in twelve hours or pacing on a board non-stop for sixty hours. He had been arraigned multiple times on forgery and libel charges and had managed to clear himself every time until 1839, when under clouded circumstances he pled guilty to a charge of libel against an Episcopal minister (of the latter’s sexual transgression) and spent six months in the state penitentiary on Blackwell’s Island. Frequently sued in court or assaulted on streets, Dixon was ever ready to defend himself with his pen (or his gun).<sup>109</sup>

To the bombardment of the moral press, Dixon responded slyly that in committing the forgery he was merely answering the request of Gough’s friends to “create a sympathy among the *friends* as well as the *foes* of Temperance.” He claimed to be impervious to the personal attacks of the moral press and confident in his superior prowess:

The abuse heaped upon us by two or three hair-brained paper-stainers of the press bounds off like hail pelting on a zinc roof; we shall, ere long, send their chicken home to roost, the fighting fowls will have their spurs on. So be prepared, both great and small, Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, little dogs and all.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Dixon belonged to the same class of satirical writers as Snelling and Wilkes, and his life and career showed many surprising resemblances to Gough’s. Gough was also a gifted singer and orator, a prankster, and was said to have played black minstrel. Dixon responded to attempts at whipping him in the street by carrying a gun with him and standing boldly up to the challenge. For his colorful life, see Patricia C. Cohen, *The Flash Press*, 37-40, 113-114, and Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge, England and New York, NY, 1997), 137.

<sup>110</sup> *New York Packet*, n.d., “Gough Confession” in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 7, Gough Papers.

For a professional prankster, forgery was his stock-in-trade, but this time he succeeded to a greater extent than he had expected or perhaps realized. His prank fooled pro-Gough editors (and presumably some readers) and made them the butt of a national joke. The unthinking acceptance of the “confession” showed their eagerness, if not their naïveté, to embrace any story from Gough, provided that it was endowed with “proper” sentiments and moral lessons (and that it stopped short of illicit sex). Above all, the “credibility” of the forgery, with its “semblance” of “warmth” and “candor,” brought into focus the formulaic quality of the sentimental discourse and the disconnect between the outward form of sincerity and inner virtue. The “confession” touched a raw nerve, highlighting the inherent contradictions within the cult of sincerity.

The prank also had unintended consequences for the reform community. It was no coincidence that Gough dated his “official” statement Monday, September 22, the day when the “confession” first appeared in the *Journal of Commerce*. In fact, it was probably the forged “confession” that had prompted the preparation and release of Gough’s “official” statement. Ironically, it was the forged “confession” rather than the “official” statement that had turned public opinion within the reform circles decidedly in favor of Gough. If the pro-reform press had been somewhat hesitant in backing Gough initially, they now came to realize the urgency of decided action and a united front in regulating public discourse. Dixon’s forgery and their fumbling over it made it all the more imperative for them to stick with Gough and his “official” statement. More papers now openly endorsed the drugging story than ever, especially those who had been duped into publishing the forgery. The “confession,” in effect, helped rally the pro-temperance press and their readers.

Yet a greater portion of the readers of the “confession” must have had a good laugh over the hoax with Dixon. The readers of the *New York Packet* certainly could not have been fooled

by the joke. They knew what Lucina Cordial was and they saw it advertised for sale in the *Packet* (to be obtained at Dixon's office). The "confession" was a clever ad for Dixon's aphrodisiac, which knowledge was also the key (at least one of the many) to unravel the hoax. The readers "in the know" laughed at Dixon's jabs at Gough's stagey mannerism,<sup>111</sup> his affectation and hypocritical speech, as intended by Dixon. Then they probably had a second laugh over those who had fallen for the hoax. The "humbug" was intended to deceive as well as to amuse, depending on the audience; it was meant to separate sheep from goats.

A more elaborate hoax was circulated, shortly after Gough was found, in the form of a pamphlet published and "copyrighted" in New York by Lewis C. Donald (pseud.), purporting to be a "minute and authentic account" of Gough's sojourn in Walker Street. With much gravity, the author explained that he knew the "moral responsibility" of releasing such an account and he only did it after he had "gained the confidence" of the women in his interview and made sure that their story was worthy of "implicit confidence." To show his objectivity, he claimed to have published the account "without comment" and he left it to the reader "to decide whether it is just and proper for these facts to be made known."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Dixon borrowed the language of sensational journalistic reports about Gough's lectures: "Indeed, (said the speaker, much affected and leaning against the wall,) *I am not well!* [No language could convey to the reader an idea of the tone in which these last words were uttered, nor of the thrilling effect that they had upon his auditors.]" See Gough's "Confession" in *New York Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 22, 1845.

<sup>112</sup> Anon., *A Minute and Authentic Narrative of the Conduct and Conversation of John B. Gough, During Each Day of His Late Absence, as Related by the Inmates of the House at Which He Stopped* (New York, 1845), 3. The publisher threatened to prosecute violation of his copyright owing to the "pain and expense" involved in collecting the facts, but his name and the copyright itself were most likely a hoax. I have gone through the publisher records at the AAS and searched in newspapers and city directories and censuses without finding a match. It is unclear how many editions the pamphlet had gone through, but it evidently had made wide circulation and was for sale in major cities on the eastern seaboard. The *Baltimore Daily Courant* reported it for sale in the city, in *News Clippings Folio* Vol. 2, p. 15, Gough Papers. Princeton Library has a copy, as well as the New York Historical Society (owned by C. A. Morse).

The account appears to be in keeping with the report in the moral press that denied sexual indiscretion in the affair by “ascertaining” the innocent character of the house (that it was occupied by seamstresses, not prostitutes).<sup>113</sup> In his interview with the women, the author claimed to have seen nothing “unbecoming.” They were all honest and decent women. A middle-aged widow kept the house with her eight-year old daughter and had two female boarders, who worked as seamstresses.<sup>114</sup> The house itself was “neat and orderly” and nothing like a low bordello. Gough was well treated by the women in the account. Though by turns cheerful and melancholy during his stay, Gough was always courteous, kind, and generous with all. It appears at first glance that the author of the pamphlet had sided with the moral press and had cleared Gough of the most egregious crime of sexual misconduct. At least, that is what Cyrus E. Morse, one of Gough’s close associates, had allegedly been led to believe.

But like Dixon’s “confession,” the “minute and authentic” account was an elaborate confidence game. Having reassured the reader by disclaiming illicit sex, the author turned around to give incriminating details, showing day by day that Gough was conscious and sensible. He knew he was in Walker Street and was in control of himself, except over brandy and oysters. This was a direct refutation of Gough’s insanity defense. On a closer look, the narrative was full of sly sarcasm and mockery beneath the tone of gravity and objectivity. True to his mission as a

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<sup>113</sup> *New York Journal of Commerce*, Sept. 16, 1845: “The house in Walker Street, where he was found, was visited on Saturday by two of his friends, accompanied by Mr. Hays. It is a small house, and occupied by a woman of middle age and two young women. They were occupied with their needles, and their appearance indicated that they were accustomed to be so occupied”; a report to that effect was also read at the Massachusetts State Temperance Convention in 1845. See *Massachusetts Temperance Standard*, n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 6, Gough Papers.

<sup>114</sup> They were a young widow “of handsome form and features, whose countenance, though naturally mild and pleasant, often wears an air of engaging sadness,” and an orphan girl “of modest manners and retired disposition, and whose history is of intense interest.” See *A Minute and Authentic Narrative*, 4.

reformer, Gough repeatedly urged piety and total abstinence on the women during his stay, while drinking brandy at intervals. He was “cut to the heart” when his exhortation was not heeded. Praising Croton water as the “best drink in the world,” he threw up after drinking it. Speaking of temperance lectures, Gough opined that they “should not be delivered for money but that they should be free for all both rich and poor,” while it was pointed out that his last lecture at the Tabernacle charged 50 cents per head at the door. He was tearful when speaking about poor orphans and abused wives, lamenting the hardship boys underwent at the House of Refuge (chaired, incidentally, by his sponsor Moses Grant) for “having their hair cropped” (Gough was famous for his long flowing hair). He displayed his magnanimity, which bordered on extravagance, by frequently bestowing gifts of two to five dollars on the women in exchange for favors and paying generously for his room and board. He showered kindness on a kitten in the house, feeding it oysters and paying 50 cents for its board, and he made a humanitarian speech on the occasion against the mistreatment of “dumb animals.” He was careful about personal hygiene (repeatedly saying that “he was accustomed to bathe every day”) and when asked when he bathed last, he recalled that it was on Saturday when he went back to his hotel to change his clothes (thus giving the lie to his story that he was confined to the house from Friday till he was found).<sup>115</sup>

The account may have cleared Gough of one charge (that of sexual misdemeanor)<sup>116</sup> but landed him squarely in another (that of deceit and fraud). It was serious and objective on the surface, but sly and pungent underneath. It was a cleverly-concealed satire of not only Gough

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Even this is doubtful in the end, considering that the household arrangement (with an elder woman keeping a house of several single young women) was rather common for a house of assignation, and seamstress was often used as a cover for prostitution.

and his sponsors, but the entire evangelical humanitarian enterprise (temperance, anti-animal-cruelty, orphan care, etc.) and urban improvement projects (such as the Croton Aqueduct). Moreover, it mocked bourgeois sensibility and lifestyle, which Gough feigned to adopt (piety and personal hygiene being marks of respectability), and it criticized police rascality (in their stealing the money Gough gave the young widow).

The “confession” and the “minute and authentic” account were both great humbugs that created the illusion of authenticity by *imitating* the respectable language and sentiments and by playing with taboos. Students of P. T. Barnum the showman and his curious exhibitions tend to emphasize the “therapeutic” values of illusion and the “democratic” (and even modernizing) potentials of the audience’s play with fraud. Neil Harris argues that the Barnumesque humbugs catered to Jacksonian Americans’ interest in figuring out the operation of things including the getting-up of hoaxes, and that Barnum’s exhibits provided “harmless pleasure” (a diversion from more egregious sins) and vindicated the persistence of confidence in a market society. James W. Cook suggests that playing with fraud entailed a “democratic duty of judgment” and gave a “democratic delight of choice” and a “democratic satisfaction of participating in public life.” He even argues that commercial humbugs trained people in a modern and “sophisticated” consumer mentality - that they learned to evaluate not only the moral but the pecuniary (i.e. entertaining) value of the show.<sup>117</sup>

The humbugs over Gough’s scandal were somewhat different. They were certainly not very therapeutic: the humbugs caused discomfort and embarrassment among the reformers. They gave every reader an opportunity to make up their mind about the authenticity of the publication

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<sup>117</sup> Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Boston, 1973), Chapters 3 and 8; James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 76.



and about the scandal, though not every reader was equally well-informed about the operations of the New York underworld. The “democratic” choice brought on public humiliation for some and irrepressible mirth for others, and it did not so much acculturate people to a democratic consumer culture, but separated and differentiated them according to their inclination and social background. In other words, the humbugs concerning moral reform were more than commercial entertainment. They became politicized. They subverted the humanitarian discourse, confused moral judgment, and gave vent to (indirectly perhaps) the populist resentment against evangelical reform.

Some scholars argue that moral ambiguity helped explain Gough’s appeal, and that Gough was, in essence, another Barnum or Barnumesque exhibit.<sup>118</sup> This is true to a certain degree, especially in the immediate aftermath of the scandal, when people crowded temperance lectures to hear Gough defend himself. But we should not confuse temporary effect with original intent. Gough was not *supposed* to be Barnum (at least not in the 1840s). Sincerity, not profit, was believed to be the foundation of the moral enterprise and the prerequisite of temperance advocacy. Gough’s special power in moving his audience was owing to his “realistic” portrayal of the devastating effects of drinking and the “natural” effusion of “unaffected” emotions (see Ch. III), to his giving certainty and hope of reformation, rather than leaving his audience to doubts and guesses.

Gough’s friends and supporters surely did not revel in the kind of “marketing opportunity” the scandal created; rather, they were deeply anxious and alarmed *because* the humbugs showed plainly that sincerity could be faked and would be believed. Their

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<sup>118</sup> For example, Graham Warder, “Selling Sobriety: How Temperance Reshaped Culture in Antebellum America,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2000) and Amy Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ann Arbor, 2012).

defensiveness on the subject and their unity of action in endorsing the “official statement” vis-à-vis the “confession” reflected a heightened sense of moral nervousness and vulnerability and represented an effort to shore up the sincerity of reform and reformers rather than to turn the controversy into profit. And yet their endeavor was no doubt complicated by their adoption of new Barnumesque measures in sustaining and furthering the temperance enterprise financially, and their trouble was compounded by the criticism issuing from within the temperance and religious communities.

#### *A War inside the Temperance Party*

“There bids fair to be considerable of a war among the friends and foes of John B. Gough, in the temperance party, on the matter of personal credibility,” the Worcester (MA) *Palladium* observed, “the last performer on the Anti-Gough side of the house, is a Mr. Goodhue.”<sup>119</sup> Benjamin S. Goodhue was a varnish maker from Massachusetts and a part-time temperance lecturer. He used to share a platform with Gough, but did not become a professional lecturer like the latter. Like many locally-based Washingtonian speakers, he spoke in his spare time and mostly to local audiences in the vicinity.<sup>120</sup> Until Gough’s scandal, his name was perhaps not known beyond a few coastal towns of Connecticut, where he had moved with his family in or around 1844. In a way, the scandal gave him a chance to bid for national fame. Like many anonymous protesters against Gough’s comeback, Goodhue was not convinced by Gough’s drugging story, but unlike others and probably against the advice of his wife, he chose to launch

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<sup>119</sup> Worcester (MA) *Palladium* quoted in Barre (MA) *Patriot*, Jan. 23, 1846.

<sup>120</sup> It is not clear if Goodhue had always spoken free of charge, but he did not charge anything for his speech about Gough’s scandal at the Universalist meeting house, even though his public letter against Gough was being sold at the door.

an open attack using his real name and gave the lie direct to Gough and his friends, and he picked no less a paper to do this than the *National Police Gazette*.<sup>121</sup>

On January 17, 1846, a lengthy letter from Goodhue was published in the *Police Gazette*, accusing Gough and his friends of lying and committing fraud. Goodhue's main charges were three: Firstly, he testified to having caught Gough drinking brandy (which Gough later claimed to be a phial of prescribed medicine) when they were lecturing in Charlton, MA in April 1843. Secondly, he accused Gough's close associates of doctoring the report on the scandal, which was delivered at the Washingtonian Temperance Convention in Worcester on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1845, presumably, to preempt any discussion of illicit sex.<sup>122</sup> Lastly, he claimed to have conducted an independent investigation with James Stockwell, owner of the temperance restaurant the Croton Lunch and member of the local Sons of Temperance in New York City, and they ascertained Gough's sanity during his stay, his return to the Croton Hotel on Saturday, and his long history of acquaintance with the keeper of the house in Walker Street.<sup>123</sup>

The Goodhue letter was diligently circulated. It was copied into other papers and printed separately for sale (reportedly being sold at a Goodhue lecture in New York). It was sent to

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<sup>121</sup> See Mrs. Goodhue's reply to Gough's letter of inquiry, in *Boston Daily Star*, Jan. 10, 1846. It would have been difficult for the opponents of Gough to find mainstream temperance papers willing to publish their attacks, and they had to turn to the popular press.

<sup>122</sup> Apparently, Dr. A. Hunting was delegated by Gough's friends to give a report at the Convention. Cyrus E. Morse, Gough's agent, had put together a report that he hoped to get George Hurlbut, the president of the Brooklyn City Temperance Society, to sign. But Hurlbut (along with George C. Ripley) may have stopped short of denying the well-known character of the house, and he wrote up a separate, scaled-back statement. But then at the convention, the reports were condensed, combined, and read as one, and of course, all C. E. Morse, Hurlbut, and Ripley were named as authors in support of the drugging story and the innocent character of the house.

<sup>123</sup> They learned from the hotel clerk that Gough had returned to the Croton Hotel on Saturday night, as shown by his signature at sign-in, and that Gough was conscious during his stay and went out to get brandy for himself. *National Police Gazette* (New York, NY), Jan. 17, 1846.

ministers to influence their minds against Gough, creating obstacles for Gough's return in a number of towns. Rev. W. of Flushing, for instance, had requested "some setting right about the matter" before he lent Gough his pulpit.<sup>124</sup>

In New York, the Goodhue letter prompted nothing short of an open rebellion in the temperance ranks. Prompted by the letter, dozens of Washingtonians, Sons of Temperance, and Rechabites put down their names on cards of protest published in the *New York True Sun* and openly broke ties with Gough and his friends. The temperance societies were divided against themselves. Shortly after Peter MacDonald, the president of the Total Abstinence Caledonian B. Society, published a protest on behalf of the society against Gough, William Tovee,<sup>125</sup> the second vice president (a furniture seller and later a professional host of commercial boxing matches), came out to defend Gough and claimed to speak for "the majority of the society." Indignant temperance men made their way into the New York Tabernacle packed with Gough supporters for his much-anticipated return speech (though the meeting was announced for ex-Mayor James Harper by the Daughters of Temperance), and they started hissing the lecturer when he rose to speak and continued to do so amid his fans' applauses, creating much vexation for Gough and his friends (When Gough pleaded for a "fair field" and "honest men to deal with," one protester shouted back: "How about Goodhue?").<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Reported by Rev. Ezra Ely of Philadelphia, in unknown paper, "Gough Meeting," News Clippings Vol. 2, p. 50, Gough Papers, and also in Octavo Volume 10 "Record J. B. G.," entry dated Jan 20, 1846, Gough Papers.

<sup>125</sup> In Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting In America* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), 273-4.

<sup>126</sup> *New York True Sun*, Jan. 20, 27, 28, 29, 1846; *New York Express*, n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 44, Gough Papers.

James Burnett, editor of the Rechabite journal, *Crystal Fount*, chided the protest for being “out of place.” The publication of the cards of protest, he opined, “had a tendency to create a riot and disturbance.” The hissers did not show deference to ex-Mayor Harper, when his very name used for the meeting “should have been enough in itself to forbid any attempt at discord or a breach of the peace.” They were, according to him, “individuals of the baser sort.”<sup>127</sup>

But the protesters were definitely not the tavern crowd. They were made up of leaders and members of the local temperance fraternal societies, and the hissing was reportedly led by Burnett’s fellow teetotal Rechabites, one of whom was said to be the chief ruler of a Rechabite tent (i.e. a ward society) in the city.<sup>128</sup> They were the middling sorts. Of all the protestors whose occupations could be ascertained, the majority was mechanics and shopkeepers (see Appendix II). Printers and carpenters (each at 11% of the total number of protesters) headed the list (trailed by bookbinders at 8%). There were two physicians and both were practitioners of unconventional medicine.<sup>129</sup> The printers and physicians held leadership positions in local societies. Abraham D. Wilson, a medical school graduate and an early convert to homeopathy, was the president of the Marshall Total Abstinence Society.<sup>130</sup> Salmon Bronson, a Thomsonian physician, was the secretary of the Catherine Street T. A. Association. Adam C. Flanagan, the president of the Prospect Temperance Society, was a printer by trade. Same was Peter McDonald, the president

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<sup>127</sup> The Independent Order of Rechabites started as a workingman mutual assistance teetotal society in England in 1835. See *Crystal Fount and Rechabite Recorder* (New York), Jan. 24, 1846.

<sup>128</sup> Possibly Edward M. Osborn, the chief ruler of the Marine Tent in New York City.

<sup>129</sup> In contrast, we know that the conventional medical establishment in Philadelphia supported Gough.

<sup>130</sup> Incidentally, Wilson lived and practiced at 42 Walker Street, not far from 113 Walker Street, where Gough was found. *Doggett’s New-York Directory for 1845* (New York, 1845).

of the T. A. Caledonian B Society. Both Wilson and Flanagan (as well as James Stockwell, the keeper of the Croton Lunch) united with other mechanics *and* the evangelical bourgeois men (Anson G. Phelps, John Marsh, David M. Reese, John W. Leavitt, and Horace Greeley) in shoring up support for a local licensing bill, and it would seem that not all anti-Gough protestors were averse to closing taverns by limiting or stopping liquor licensing.<sup>131</sup> Although moral suasion versus legal prohibition had become a constant source of friction within the temperance party by the mid-1840s, it was probably not the only or even the most important issue for the anti-Gough faction. Rather, it was the new economics of the temperance movement and the professionalization of temperance lecturing that had drawn the most fire.<sup>132</sup>

In a widely circulated public letter (first published in the *New England Washingtonian* and the *Boston Times*), Simon P. Hanscom,<sup>133</sup> a Washingtonian lecturer and a printer by trade, protested against the secrecy and suspense surrounding Gough's much-anticipated return to the Boston stage (the plan was to smuggle him into a temperance meeting without public notice).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> To be passed in the New York state legislature (except for New York City) in September 1845.

<sup>132</sup> Names and occupations discussed are based on *New York True Sun*, Jan. 20, 27, 28, 29, 1846, federal census records, and city directories.

<sup>133</sup> Hanscom was an ardent abolitionist. He later became associated with the Free Soil paper, the *Commonwealth*, and at the beginning of the Civil War, became a D.C. correspondent for the *New York Herald*, and later editor of the *National Republican* (Washington, DC) and an avid newsman and a lobbyist. For his biographical information, see George Adams, *Boston Directory* (Boston, 1851); Anon., *Boston Slave Riot and Trial of Anthony Burns* (Boston, 1854), 40; Benjamin Perley Poore, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis*, (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1886) 2:194; Noah Brooks and Michael Burlingame, *Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks* (Baltimore, 1998), 245.

<sup>134</sup> See *Boston Times*, Dec. 6, 1845; *New England Washingtonian* (Boston), Nov. 28, 1846. The clue for the authorship of the Hanscom letter (which was published anonymously) is in *New England Washingtonian*, n.d., "Letter From Fall River," News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 71-2, Gough Papers. Although no one claimed responsibility for it, Gough's return was clearly planned and staged with care. No advertisement was given in advance for the lecture, and no official date

Gough's friends were being deliberately evasive about the exact date of the lecturer's reappearance and when asked, a "gentleman" advised the inquirer to attend "every meeting" of the society in order to hear Gough. "Are the public not to know when Mr. G. makes his appearance?" Hanscom objected, "Or are the public, who are anxious to witness 'his first appearance,' to be gulled by impressions of this kind in order that the pockets of certain individuals may be filled, under that stereotyped garb of '6 1-4 or 12 1-2 cents in aid of the cause?'" If Gough was afraid to lecture in public "duly noticed" as before, Hanscom insisted, he should "go to work at his trade, and spend what spare time he has, like other reformed men, in doing good in this city and vicinity, or any other place where he may in such case take up his abode." He must no longer "traverse this country over at the rate of ten, twenty, and twenty-five dollars per night and expenses." "[I]f he intends charging 'admission fees,' to the rum portion of the community, to reform them," Hanscom averred, "he may rest assured that such 'gaming' won't 'go down.'" As proof of Gough's complicity in the pay scheme, Hanscom published a letter written on behalf of the lecturer to the Fall River (MA) Washingtonian Society, which demanded as the lecturer's terms of engagement his "usual fee" (which in 1843 was \$8 per lecture, in 1844, \$10, and in 1845 could be anywhere from \$15 to \$25 per lecture) as well as the travel expenses for his entourage.<sup>135</sup>

Hanscom's letter brought up at least two sensitive issues central to the development of professional temperance lecturing: the institution of the "pay meeting," which charged standard

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was set – probably for fear of organized opposition. Gough sneaked into an ongoing temperance meeting held at Faneuil Hall on Thursday night, December 4, 1845 and was "loudly called for and urged to speak." See "John B. Gough," News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 18, Gough Papers.

<sup>135</sup> Gough, of course, denied any knowledge of the letter, and J. H. Tallman submitted a letter to *New England Washingtonian* in November 1846, confirming that those demands were authorized by Gough and Moses Grant. See *Boston Times*, Dec. 6, 1845.

admission fees (6 ¼, 12 ½, 25, or 50 cents) at the door, and the soaring pay of a few star temperance lecturers. Hanscom believed that charging admission fees for temperance meetings (versus in-meeting collection and voluntary contribution) turned reform into a money-making scheme, and worse, that the Boston temperance leaders appeared to be cashing in on the public curiosity created by Gough's scandal. He argued that pay meetings would turn away the very people they hoped to reform. He called into question Gough's exorbitant terms and the emerging national temperance circuit that enabled full-time lecturers like Gough to make a living. In essence, Hanscom was contesting the departure of temperance lecturing from its local and voluntary origins and its assimilation into the professional "public lecturing system" in the mid-1840s.<sup>136</sup>

The rise of John B. Gough as a star speaker for the temperance movement was a central story in the professionalization of temperance lecturing. Gough and his advisors (especially Moses Grant, the leading organizer and financier for the Boston temperance movement) were among the first to implement admission charges at temperance meetings, and Gough commanded the highest pay of all temperance lecturers and enjoyed the widest fame.<sup>137</sup> Admittedly, the incipient commercialism and the trappings of stardom were not unquestioned before in the temperance movement, nor were Gough and his friends unaware of their vulnerable moral

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<sup>136</sup> On the "public lecturing system," see Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 66:4 (March 1980), pp. 791-809.

<sup>137</sup> The first pay meeting I found was called by Moses Grant for Gough on the Christmas Evening of 1843. See *Boston Daily Atlas*, Dec. 25, 1843. The earliest ads for pay meetings can be traced back to Moses Grant and the Boston Total Abstinence Society (later the Massachusetts State Temperance Society) under his charge; Gough's lecture fee was \$8 dollars per night in 1843, and it became \$25 in 1845. See News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 68, "Pay of Temperance Lecturer," Gough Papers.



position, but the scandal brought these issues into the limelight and made the lecturer's pay an attendant issue with his integrity.<sup>138</sup>

While Gough and his friends had turned a deaf ear to the attacks against their business practice, the scandal forced them to respond and to defend and justify the new developments in temperance lecturing. Benjamin W. Williams, Gough's loyal supporter and editor of the *Taunton Dew Drop*, felt compelled to explain, in response to Hanscom's letter, that the recent compulsory payment of ten cents at the door of the Spring Street Church for Gough's comeback lecture was meant to cancel a debt incurred by "a few individuals," who had previously been "responsible for the use of the church at different times for lectures." "The cause of temperance," he argued, "cannot, in any place, be successfully prosecuted without funds."<sup>139</sup> The exasperated Norfolk (VA) *Daily Courier* contended, over a chorus of objections to Gough's visit after the scandal, that the lecturer "CHARGES NOTHING for his services" and that an admission fee was imposed to support the local temperance society, since its previous calls for help and subscription had been "neglected" by the public.<sup>140</sup> In the wake of the scandal, Jesse W. Goodrich of the *Massachusetts Cataract* had to defend charging admission at the door, as against the traditional practice of "passing the hat." He declared both ways of fundraising "perfectly voluntary." "[T]he only difference," according to him, lay "in the proceeds, - the former being generally of silver, and the latter, to a much greater extent, of the works of 'Alexander the

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<sup>138</sup> See the earlier questioning of Gough's admission fees, and also Gough's earlier scruples against lecturing with admission fees and his vulnerable moments, in Lynn (MA) *Washingtonian*, n.d.; *Olive Branch* (Halifax, Canada), n.d., "Letter to the Editor of the O. Branch"; and *New England Washingtonian* (Boston, MA), n.d., in News Clippings Folio Vol. 1, Gough Papers.

<sup>139</sup> "Mr. Gough in Taunton," ca. Dec. 1845, News Clippings Folio Vol. 1, p. 22, Gough Papers.

<sup>140</sup> "Mr. Gough – Temperance – Objections," ca. Mar.-April 1846, News Clippings Folio Vol. 1, p. 59, Gough Papers.

Coppersmith.” He knew that a ticket collection at the door would come from “those optionally entering the Hall” and would turn away the opponents of orthodox religion and reform. The real difference that an admission fee made was that between a self-selected audience and a mixed crowd.<sup>141</sup>

To the repeated challenges against the lecturer’s pay after the scandal, Gough’s friends and supporters responded with grand temperance festivals and benefits and a national subscription drive for a “Gough Fund” of \$20,000 in late 1846 to early 1847. They insisted that Gough’s ability and his influence for moral reform should be commensurate with his pay. “If there is any labor which deserves a fair remuneration,” they argued, “it is that which is devoted to the cause of humanity and morals.”<sup>142</sup> Gough liked to think of his pay as gratuities voluntarily given by his appreciative audience, rather than standard fees.<sup>143</sup> His friends insisted that he did not solicit pay (in most cases, they did it for him<sup>144</sup>), but his audience owed something to him and they paid the admissions in order to “evince their respect for his character and zeal, and their

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<sup>141</sup> “John B. Gough in Worcester,” *Massachusetts Cataract* (Worcester, MA), Dec. 24, 1845, News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 38, Gough Papers.

<sup>142</sup> “The Gough Fund,” News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 82; and “The Gough Fund: A Proposition to the American People,” p. 84, Gough Papers.

<sup>143</sup> In reply to Hanscom’s letter, Gough declared at a meeting held in Fall River that “he did not set a price for his labors, but left it with those among whom he labored to give him what they saw fit.” See “Letter from Fall River,” News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 72, Gough Papers.

<sup>144</sup> Earlier, Moses Grant set the terms of pay for Gough at 8 dollars, but it increased rapidly. His friends believed that he should be able to lay up \$1,000 a year, and his friend, John H. Cocke in Virginia, decided that \$100 a week should be his minimum charge of each county (“the friends of the cause could not consent to anything below \$100”) and it should be given “without regard to any solicitation, whatever, on his part.”

desire to advance his personal fortunes.” And if Gough was to be faulted for his receiving pay, it seemed that those who freely gave it to him would also come in for a share of the blame.<sup>145</sup>

The defense of admission charges and Gough’s pay was not only an attempt to shore up Gough’s reputation at his most vulnerable moment, but it reflected deeper changes in the temperance reform. The institution of pay meetings was indicative of the shifting target of evangelical reform. Goodrich and other defenders of pay meetings were obviously not very keen on getting the temperance message through to all but only to those who were already predisposed to reform and willing and able to pay. They *understood* that a small admission charge would likely turn away those who were indifferent or opposed to the temperance reform - they would “regret” it but accept it as fact. The objection to admission fees was believed to be but a “paltry excuse” for refusing to support the cause. They did not allow for financial difficulty (of the impoverished drunkard, for instance) or ideological opposition. All criticism was written off, especially in the aftermath of the scandal, as spite against the cause and all critics were “croakers,” “faultfinders,” or “moderate or immoderate drinkers.”<sup>146</sup>

The financial need often cited by temperance leaders in justifying pay meetings owed less to the inadequacy of voluntary contribution than to the growing appetite of an expanded and

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<sup>145</sup> Leaflet for the “Gough Festival” (excerpt from the *New York Courier and Enquirer*), News Clippings, Folio Vol. 2, p. 77: “He deserves well at their hands, and we hope he will not find them ungrateful” and *Taunton* (MA) *Dew Drop*, News Clippings, Folio Vol. 2, p. 71: “He was paid well, but was it *his* fault? We understood at the time, that the money was raised for him, and if there is blame to be attached to any one we are ready to bear our share of it.” Gough Papers.

<sup>146</sup> Worcester (MA) *Cataract*, Dec. 24, 1845. Norfolk (VA) *Daily Courier*, “the mouth of the ox shall not be muzzled that treadth out the corn,” in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 59, Gough Papers. The financial need often cited by temperance leaders in justifying pay meetings owed less to the inadequacy of voluntary contribution than to the growing appetite of an expanded and institutionalized temperance movement at mid-century. The proceeds from a well-managed and well-attended course of lectures would result in a surplus for the salaries of directors, secretaries, and agents and other various expenses of the society. In Gough and popular lecturers like him, the temperance leaders had found an ally and a means to finance the movement.

institutionalized temperance movement at mid-century. The proceeds from a well-managed and well-attended course of lectures would result in a surplus for the salaries of directors, secretaries, and agents and other various expenses of the society. In Gough and popular lecturers like him, the temperance leaders had found an ally and a means to finance the movement.

To be sure, Gough's temperance opponents were not opposed to rewarding temperance lecturers per se, but they contested the amount of pay and the new "business model" of the temperance movement, using the scandal as an occasion for public debate. Citing the vast gap in the pay of different temperance lecturers, they argued that instead of producing surpluses, star lecturers drained community resources and impoverished other lesser known (but "honest and devoted") speakers for the cause, and that the enthusiasm created by itinerant star speakers quickly dissipated, to be replaced by lethargy and indifference.<sup>147</sup> They believed that every moral reformer should be "worthy of his hire" and was entitled to a "comfortable support,"<sup>148</sup> but both the amount of Gough's pay (at \$100 per week in 1846) and the practice of selling tickets had overstepped the boundary between benevolent reform and commercial enterprise and made him liable to charges of mercenary motive and insincerity. Labor in the cause of benevolent reform, however valuable it was to society, should not be rewarded "on the commercial principle."<sup>149</sup>

Gough's friends clearly had a different idea about what a "fair remuneration" should be for a moral reformer. They reaffirmed the compatibility of advancing a moral cause and

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<sup>147</sup> News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 68, "Pay of Temperance Lecturer," Gough Papers.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, "Every laborer is worthy of his hire, and from three to five dollars is little enough to pay a man for lecturing one evening upon the subject of Temperance. Any thing over five dollars is too much, and only tempts unprincipled and selfish men to advocate temperance for the sake of the money, and anything under three dollars is too little, and only serves to keep competent men out of the field, for the want of proper and justifiable remuneration."

<sup>149</sup> News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 95, Gough Papers.

increasing material wealth, and yet they also tried to remove the taint of money-making by dissociating the lecturer's pay from the admission ticket (indeed, the creation of the "Gough Fund" was supposed to obviate the need of charging admissions) and to re-conceptualize what appeared to be a market relationship in terms of gift-giving (describing Gough's money as a free and voluntary gift from "the public"). In this light, the admission ticket became more than a monetary contribution to the cause; it was a vote of confidence in its spokesman. Those who chose to pay to hear Gough had *bought* into his rising stock of fame and became *invested* in his present fall and his future career.<sup>150</sup>

### *Sectarian Controversy*

Gough's scandal caused mixed responses in church circles. With a majority of the evangelicals of the orthodox churches (New School Presbyterians and evangelical Congregationalists) on Gough's side, members and ministers of non-orthodox denominations and non-evangelical persuasions kept their silence. But some did venture to speak out against Gough and his allies. Curiously, they appeared to be more concerned than the protesting mechanics about upholding the "true" Washingtonian principle of moral suasion and maintaining the non-sectarian character of reform. While they shared the antipathy toward the commercialization of temperance lecturing, they directed public attention to the men behind the curtain and to the audience in the pit, and they demanded public rethinking of the "new measures" that carried over from Finneyite revivals to moral reform.

George Gibbs Channing, a younger brother of Rev. William Ellery Channing and the editor of the Unitarian denominational paper *Christian World*, earned himself strong disapprobation by publishing a long anti-Gough epistle in his paper. The correspondent

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<sup>150</sup> We will discuss how Gough transformed these "gifts" for a moral reformer into the legitimate earnings of a self-made man in Ch. IV.

attributed Gough's apostasy to his abandonment of the Washingtonian brotherhood and his betrayal of the "true" Washingtonian principle of moral suasion only for "that division of the reform which is seeking moral conquests by the iron power of Law." He suggested that the lecturer's fall was not entirely "by his own weight." It was also owing to the "injudicious kindness of his later friends," ambitious moral reformers, who clung onto Gough's popularity and exploited his histrionic talent in hope of producing immediate victories.<sup>151</sup> Gough's friends depended too much on him and kept him "in the continued and morbid excitement of perpetual public display." They forgot about his past that "when but a boy he was the *dramatis personae* of our 'Lion Theatre'." They "unconsciously" re-made his life "a spectacle, in which he was to bear the only, the single part," replacing one kind of stimulant (alcohol) for the drunkard with another (excitement of the stage). To counteract the adverse effects of recent reform measures, the writer advocated a strict separation of moral reform and legal action and recommended the reformed drunkard's "retirement" from public life and engagement in "physical labor" (instead of pledge-signing) as the "true and only remedy" for addiction.<sup>152</sup>

Rev. Leonard Withington, minister of the First Congregational Church in Newbury, raised a storm by airing his view (under the initials of L. W.) of the scandal in the *Newburyport Daily Herald* (Five years before this, he authored a pamphlet attacking the Arminian tendency of the "new measures" employed in the temperance movement, including the vogue of pledge-signing

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<sup>151</sup> It was with him "the tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune." *Christian World* (Boston, MA), Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1845.

<sup>152</sup> *Christian World* (Boston, MA), Sept. 20, 1845.

and prohibitive legislation).<sup>153</sup> Rev. Withington objected to the recruitment of ex-drunkards as temperance advocates and pointed to the underlying problem of public taste.

After all the protestations which have been made that a good cause ought not to suffer from the frailty of its advocates, I am afraid, that when such doubtful measures are countenanced, that neither the men employing such dangerous tools nor the credulous public who listen to them, are wholly innocent.

The lecturer's audience was as complicit in the sensationalization of temperance lecturing as were his employers. The popularity of the theatrical style of reformed drunkards was due to "a morbid taste that waits to be moved by such eloquence." "[W]e have listened to the former abominations of reformed drunkards, until we can relish no other eloquence." The public's eagerness to hear sensational stories, in other words, helped elevate reformed drunkards like Gough as public speakers, whose backsliding jeopardized the cause and more than erased whatever temporary effect they created.<sup>154</sup>

In a way, rationalist clergymen like Withington may have felt threatened by sensational lecturers, who (along with the emotional preachers) competed with them for the public ear and for moral influence. He voiced his concern through the mouth of a young minister, who was reportedly "discouraged" in his preaching because he had no past sins to fall back on. Rev. Withington expressed his "perplexity" about morality in the era of the Market Revolution. "But in this age," he lamented, not without bitterness, "nothing is more unpopular than past virtue."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Leonard Withington, *A Review of the Late Temperance Movement in Massachusetts* (Boston, 1840). He criticized the Arminian tendency of pledge-signing and voluntary association, the politicization of moral reform, and the infeasibility of enforcing any kind of prohibitive law. He enjoined readers to follow their heads, not their hearts, and to use reason.

<sup>154</sup> Newburyport (MA) *Daily Herald*, October 8, 1845. Withington disparaged the use of "thrilling facts" in 1840 - that they could only "operate among women and men like women, who confound pathos with argument and means with ends." Withington, *A Review of the Late Temperance Movement*, 22-23

<sup>155</sup> Newburyport (MA) *Daily Herald*, October 8, 1845.

Rev. Thomas Whittemore, editor of the *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine*, along with a few other Universalists, joined the fray with a series of articles decrying the evangelical orthodox Church's overbearing influence in moral reform and their abduction of a non-sectarian movement for denominational indoctrination. Whittemore had repeatedly taken the orthodox churches to task for their quest for popular and emotional religion at the expense of theological consistency and rational understanding.<sup>156</sup> He now took aim at their control over popular reform and he pointed up the rapport that existed between Gough and the orthodox evangelicals. They had "courted and flattered" him and "had done all in their power to identify his popularity with their sect and make it as subservient as possible to the promotion thereof." Gough's joining the Mount Vernon Congregational Church, on the other hand, became for him "a passport to the favor of all the orthodox clergy, editors, correspondents, and in fact of all the people of that faith in our country." orthodox ministers had given him "direction and counsel" and favored his meetings with their endorsement and opening prayers, and Gough always remembered to adorn his discourse with "orthodox sentiments" by preaching "endless misery" and "endless death" for the drunkard – a doctrine the Universalists found objectionable for encouraging irrational fear and morbid sentimentality. Whittemore chafed at the orthodox churches' cover-up of Gough's scandal, especially the circular issued by his church, which glossed over the suspicious circumstances in the scandal and endorsed the drugging story. "Orthodoxy... is like charity," Whittemore remarked scornfully: "it covers a multitude of sins."<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ann Lee Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America, 1770-1880* (Oxford and New York, 2001), 58-60.

<sup>157</sup> *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine* (Boston, MA), Nov. 20, 1845; Dec. 20, 1845; Feb. 28, 1846.



By and large, the orthodox evangelicals justified the “new measures” in popular reform on religious grounds and embraced reformed drunkards as legitimate exhorters for the temperance cause. To the attacks of the rationalists, they responded with a vehement (if not always reasonable) defense. For the editor of the temperance journal Gardiner (NH) *Fountain*, Gough’s word was “above suspicion” because of his avowed dependence on God<sup>158</sup> and the “Christian pathos” of his lectures, and it was for this reason, the editor argued, that the Universalists (in *Gospel Banner*, for example) chose to oppose the lecturer.<sup>159</sup> Rev. Daniel P. Pike, the evangelical preacher of the Christian Church (Congregational) in Newburyport, MA, sought (in vain) to extinguish Rev. Leonard Withington’s argument with emotional pleas and denials, dismissing the latter’s conclusions as absurd and his motive as anti-temperance.<sup>160</sup>

Rev. Stephen Farley<sup>161</sup> of Amesbury, MA fared better as a polemicist. He faulted Rev. Leonard Withington for his self-righteousness and elitism.<sup>162</sup> The high-minded clergy who refused to accept reformed drunkards as equals and lay exhorters because of their past debaucheries, according to Farley, were guilty of the sin of pride. Virtue, for him, lay not so much in the passive state of the absence of vice (a clean slate), but in the active denial of one’s

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<sup>158</sup> The editor reported that Gough had told him in person that “he never rose to speak without deeply feeling his dependence on God.” See Gardiner (NH) *Fountain*, in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 14, Gough Papers.

<sup>159</sup> “Gough was too good a man, and too religious for him, hence his gross opposition to him.” See Gardiner (NH) *Fountain*, in News Clippings Folio Vol. 2, p. 14, Gough Papers.

<sup>160</sup> Newburyport (MA) *Daily Herald*, Oct. 11, 1845.

<sup>161</sup> Rev. Farley had been ordained a Congregational minister in Claremont, NH in 1806, but quit his church in 1819. Rev. Russell Streeter, father of the pro-Gough editor of the *Boston Daily Star* Leander R. Streeter and a Universalist clergyman, criticized Farley’s pamphlet *A Solemn Protest against Universal Salvation* (Concord, NH, 1816) as a “hopeless attempt to straddle Calvinism and a kind of works righteousness.” Bressler, *The Universalist Movement in America*, 58

<sup>162</sup> And he criticized Rev. Pike for his “snapping, snarling and bitter spirit.”

sinful inclination. And it was just as difficult for clergymen “sequestered” from the “common pursuits of business” to overcome intellectual “pride, spleen and a desire for distinction” as it was for laymen to “conquer their love of riches, pleasure or honor.” Rev. Farley insisted on “the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness of sins” as “the fundamental principle of the Gospel of Christ” and also as the “foundation” of moral reform. Forgiveness and restoration should be granted to reformed drunkards as well as to all penitent sinners. “Among Christians,” Rev. Farley concluded: “there should be no unpardonable sins.”<sup>163</sup>

Lucian Minor of Louisa County, VA, a Whig and a prohibitionist,<sup>164</sup> took this liberal view of sin and moral reformation even further. “Many of the most effective preachers of the country,” he argued: “were once sad, dissipated dogs,” and “they owed to their previous enormities most of their effectiveness as preachers.” He romanticized the character of the drunkard and portrayed him as “the victim of his own kindly impulses, and unsuspecting nature.” The drunkard was often “of a more generous heart, of nicer sensibilities...and of a superior intellect.” The reformed drunkard was “a far more effective champion against intemperance, than a man of but equal talents, who has no bitter memories of his own shame to animate his appeals.” “Reasoning,” “statistics” and “eloquence” all appeared “tame and vapid when compared with the soul that breathes and burns through the reformed man’s natural touches and living delineations.” Gough’s scandal in no way diminished his effectiveness but “add[ed] one more – a most signal

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<sup>163</sup> Newburyport (MA) *Daily Herald*, Dec. 20, 1845.

<sup>164</sup> Most likely Lucian Minor, the commonwealth attorney for Louisa County, VA and author of a prohibitionist tract titled *Reasons for Abolishing the Liquor Traffic: Addressed to the People of Virginia* (Richmond, VA, 1853), which had a sale of 30,000.

one – to his previous list of bitter and instructive experiences; fitting him better than ever to warn against the touch or taste of aught alcoholic, or of aught in which alcohol may be hidden.”<sup>165</sup>

The defense of moral sensationalism and the new “philosophy of reformation”<sup>166</sup> embodied in the human agency of repentance and forgiveness formed a direct contrast with the rationalists who were suspicious of dramatic reformation and lay exhortation and (justifiably) skeptical toward sensational discourse. At issue was not just the drunkard’s character but the ideology and vision of reform advocacy and evangelical pulpit. Farley represented the egalitarian and perfectionist impulse in evangelical reform:

[T]he only proper question in regard to a lecturer or a preacher is, not what he once was, but what he now is. If he now be a true temperance man, a pious man, and possess the requisite knowledge and gifts to deliver instructive and interesting lectures or sermons, it is fitting and proper that he should be encouraged.<sup>167</sup>

In essence, Farley undermined the profession and authority of the learned clergy. His new lecturer/preacher found his qualifications *not* in scholarly erudition or a spotless record but in sincerity and piety and the (natural) ability to interest and instruct his audience. Evangelical reformers embraced sensational story-telling/acting (which Gough specialized in) and hoped to use it as the vehicle of popular reform.<sup>168</sup>

The rationalists could not easily escape the accusation of elitism. By excoriating lay exhortation and drawing distinctions between moral and legal action, they betrayed their suspicion of social mobility created by popular reform. But they were certainly right in

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<sup>165</sup> Richmond (VA) *Whig*, “Mr. Gough – Objection to Reformed Drunkards as Temperance Lecturers,” in *News Clippings Folio* Vol. 2, pp. 53-4, Gough Papers.

<sup>166</sup> Stephen Farley in Newburyport (MA) *Daily Herald*, Dec. 20, 1845.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> We will examine the connections between Gough’s lecturing and popular preaching more closely in Ch. III.

criticizing sensationalism in reform, as the qualifications for reform advocacy drifted away from the first principle of sincerity and piety to become solely dependent on the ability to attract and interest crowds. As the temperance movement was being popularized, it was becoming more and more indistinguishable from the commercially-oriented show business.

### *The Cultural Politics of Temperance and Self-Making*

Gough's scandal was not a comic sideshow but a main act (albeit one without a hero) in the schism of the temperance movement at mid-century. It brought to light the class and sectarian issues besetting what appears to be a broad-based movement and stripped Gough's popular support to its core – the mercantile bourgeois men and women and the socially conservative evangelical reformers. That some (like Horace Greely) moved cautiously from the middle-of-the-road Whiggism in the 1840s to embrace the more radical anti-slavery politics in the Republican Party does not mean that others or most (like Rev. John Chambers) had taken the same step.

The significance of the scandal lay not so much in Gough's fall and his lying about it, both of which he was capable of, but in the fact that moral (and probably otherwise sincere) men and women defended the lie and were willing to stake their reputation upon it. We do not know the individual considerations behind each person's choice to support Gough, but we do know that the moral reformers and the moral press took the scandal seriously, and many struggled, wavered, but were finally forced (partly due to the moral disarray caused by the "humbugs," and partly due to their allegiance to the prohibitionist agenda) to endorse the drugging story (some of Gough's prohibitionist allies during the scandal would live to regret their decision in the late 1850s). The scandal presented a moral dilemma (and a great show) where it became necessary to commit fraud (or to commit oneself to a lie) in order to uphold the sincerity and truth of reform and the semblance of moral order.

We also know that many more did *not* buy Gough's fantastical story, and the effort to reinstate Gough as a temperance lecturer despite his fall alienated a good number of people who were otherwise supportive of the temperance reform. The disbelievers and skeptics included both friends and enemies of reform, and they came from different walks of life: the commercial press, the workingmen temperance societies, and the theologically conservative (anti-evangelical) ministry.

The scandal was a focal point of the class, cultural, and sectarian conflicts in mid-Victorian American society, and incidentally, the public debate over it defies our notion that the central tension in the class politics of reform was a dichotomy of social control versus self-control. It was in the commercial press that the anti-temperance and anti-reform men gathered their forces and marshaled their arguments. Some (like Wilkes and Snelling) challenged Gough's veracity and marketed the "true" stories of the scandal as commodity; others (like Bennett and Walsh) tried to overthrow the temperance movement altogether by invoking anti-authoritarian and populist speech against moral reformers and by characterizing teetotalism as a delusion or disease. The scandal brought about a confrontation within the temperance movement between the lower middle class (of small shopkeepers and independent artisans) and the new mercantile bourgeoisie. They did not so much differ over the goal of reform or even the means (social control through legislation or self-control by moral suasion) to achieve it, but they disagreed over how to run temperance societies (on a voluntary or a commercial principle).<sup>169</sup> The scandal reenacted a religious controversy over the "new measures" of evangelicalism. The rationalist editors and theologians lamented the triumph of moral sensationalism and the elevation of lay exhorters for sensational effect. They worried, surprisingly more than the teetotal artisans, about

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<sup>169</sup> The politics of moral suasion versus legal suasion will be discussed in the next chapter.

the separation of moral reform from politicking (of moral suasion and legal suasion) and about the growing influence of the evangelical orthodox churches in politics.

The public campaign to reinstate Gough after the scandal showed the business acumen and the resolve and unity of his bourgeois supporters.<sup>170</sup> It was an affirmation of the business management, the political turn toward legislative prohibition, and the “new measures” of the temperance movement, and it vindicated the bourgeois model of self-making (reconciling uneasily business, wealth, piety, and morality) as embodied in Gough. But the success of the campaign was also limited (to a particular class of society). Gough’s audience became increasingly respectable and uniformly bourgeois (with bourgeois women replacing the workingmen as the new impetus of the temperance movement). The lecturer found no one to contend with on the principle of teetotalism among his paying audience, but was reaffirming a broadly-accepted standard of enlightened and respectable behavior through his enactment of “real-life” stories, and he told his audience to find the roots of poverty and crime in irreligion (or non-orthodox religion), in drinking, and in the licensed “rum business” and the nefarious influence of the rum-sellers, who, incidentally, had conspired to drug him and to bring him down with their cause.

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<sup>170</sup> The alliance for legislative action, which returned Gough to the platform in 1845, would come apart in the mid-to-late 1850s. See Ch. II.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **“St. Bartholomew” on Trial: *Gough v. Lees* (1858) and the Transatlantic Temperance Schism**

Let our sacred cause be as free as possible from cant and sham of every kind – and from what, in your country, is called *Barnumizing*. St. Beauve says of the Parisians, they are *saved* by the Theatre and the Stage. Now I don’t believe in dramatic-salvation; - on the contrary, I believe that it is a species of social-Opium, giving rise to alternations of excitement and stupidity.

Frederic Richard Lees, *The History of A Blunder* (1857)<sup>171</sup>

By the mid-1850s, John B. Gough had, by all appearances, put the scandal behind him. He seldom had to refer to the incident and had quietly (in 1853) taken his statement about the scandal out of his bestselling autobiography.<sup>172</sup> He had become a household name in the English-speaking Atlantic world. Not only was he welcomed in the Canadian provinces, his first visit to London as an “American” temperance lecturer in 1853 touched off a general temperance revival in the British Isles (see fig. 1).<sup>173</sup> So popular was he in Britain (his six-week tour in 1853 had been extended into two years) that by the time he returned to America in 1855, he was already engaged by the London Temperance League for another round of tour to begin in 1857 for three years on the terms of £ 2,000 per annum or ten guineas per lecture.

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<sup>171</sup> Frederic Richard Lees, *The History of a Blunder: A Letter to John Bartholomew Gough* (n.p., 1857), 9.

<sup>172</sup> More about this in Ch. IV.

<sup>173</sup> Brian Harrison credited him with rejuvenating the National Temperance League. Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians* (London, 1971), 145, 232, 370.



Fig. 1. Procession of the London Temperance League in Honor of Gough, London, 1853

Source: *Illustrated London News*, Sept. 17, 1853

### *The “Dead Letter”*

On March 23, 1857, writing to an agent of the National (previously London) Temperance League in anticipation of his second British tour, Gough bemoaned the “depressed state” of the temperance cause in America and called the prohibitory Maine Law “a dead letter everywhere.”<sup>174</sup> “[M]ore liquor sold than I ever knew before in Massachusetts,” he complained, “and in other States it is about as bad.” Never selling himself short, the lecturer expressed regret for having to leave shortly for the British Isles. “I never had so many and so earnest applications for labour (in America),” he wrote, “and the field is truly ready – not for the sickle, but for steady

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<sup>174</sup> The Maine liquor law was passed under the aegis of Neal Dow in Maine in 1851.



persevering tillage, but we shall leave our dear home in July with the expectation of labouring with you...for the next three years.”<sup>175</sup>

Upon the letter’s arrival in London, it was immediately published in the *Weekly Record*, the organ of the National Temperance League – just a few days before the anticipated landing of Neal Dow, the father of the Maine Law, in Liverpool. The letter caused a general uproar in the temperance community and particularly upset the British prohibitionists of the United Kingdom Alliance, who had sponsored Dow’s visit. Although such grim reports about the American Maine Law were not unheard of in the British press, the source of the report took many, including the visiting Neal Dow, by surprise.<sup>176</sup> Gough’s bleak report was a godsend for the anti-prohibitionists. The letter was picked up by the *London Times* and from there was copied by the provincial papers. It was said that the “dead letter,” as it soon came to be known, was being placarded in beer shops and gin palaces.<sup>177</sup>

To be sure, Gough did not write expressly for the benefit of the publicans. In self-defense, Gough argued that in another letter, which he claimed to have sent concurrently to J. S. Marr, secretary of the Scottish Temperance League (the Glasgow counterpart of the London-based National Temperance League), he had laid out the reasons for his conclusion. He explained that the Maine Law was “premature” and its enforcement lacked public support. The Maine Law had received legislative approval as the result of political maneuvering and trickery. The

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<sup>175</sup> *Weekly Record* (London), Apr. 11, 1857. Reprinted in *London Times*, Apr. 18, 1857. Only excerpts of the original letter were published. In the second half of the excerpts, Gough sang the praises of the *Weekly Record* (that “it is capital” and that “we need just such a journal here”) and alluded to Dow’s prospective visit to England (that Dow could “tell better than any other man the state of the Maine-Law movement here, and the cause of the present universal failure of the law to produce the desired results”).

<sup>176</sup> *Alliance Weekly News* (Manchester, England), Apr. 23, 1857.

<sup>177</sup> *Christian News* (Edinburgh), May 9, 1857.

prohibitionists neglected to “ensure its success by infusing a thorough temperance sentiment into the minds of all classes,” and such a sentiment, based on “personal abstinence,” must precede the implementation of any prohibitive measure. He suggested further that the political agitation over slavery extension had eclipsed the popular appeal of the Maine Law.<sup>178</sup> The “dead letter” was meant to be taken as a cautionary tale for the United Kingdom Alliance (U.K.A.) and its go-ahead prohibitionist leaders, and it closely adhered to the “moral suasion” agenda of the Leagues, which had but recently abjured political agitation. The bone of contention here was not the necessity of moral suasion, which both camps agreed upon, but the desirability of immediate prohibition.

The Alliance men felt, justifiably, that the timing of the letter’s publication was intended to create obstacles for Dow’s visit and to sabotage their effort to introduce a Maine-Law-style prohibitory bill in Parliament. They suspected, not without reason, that the “dead letter” was being “fished-for” and that the masterminds behind the whole scheme were a few officers of the Leagues, who had drawn up lucrative contracts with Gough and who were becoming openly hostile toward the Alliance and prohibition.<sup>179</sup>

Gough was charged with inconsistency and mercenary motives. Indeed, the Alliance people did not have to look very far to find evidence of Gough’s pro-law sentiments.<sup>180</sup> He managed to survive his 1845 scandal owing to the support of the legal suasionists. He came out

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<sup>178</sup> *Weekly Record* (London), Apr. 25, 1857.

<sup>179</sup> Lees, *The History of a Blunder* (n.p., 1857), 24.

<sup>180</sup> *Christian News* (Edinburgh), July 11, 1857. The editor, John Kirk, listed Gough’s prior speeches in favor of the Maine Law.

as a strong defender of the Maine Law in 1853-55 during his first British tour.<sup>181</sup> In Boston in May 1856, he pointed up the futility of moral suasion in effecting a general temperance reformation: it was as if to “try to storm Gibraltar with a pop-gun; to shoot a gun off moderately; or to make Brooks [the man who caned Charles Sumner on the House floor] of South Carolina a *decent man*.”<sup>182</sup> In his farewell speech at the Mechanics’ Hall in Worcester, MA right before his departure, Gough was reported to have announced that he was going to Britain a second time to preach the same principle of total annihilation of the liquor traffic as he had been doing in America.<sup>183</sup> The “dead letter” was not a reflection long pondered upon, but was a deliberate Gough maneuver to ingratiate himself with his patrons.

The “dead letter” was surely not the first sign of trouble in the relationship between the United Kingdom Alliance and the Leagues. Thomas Knox, the president of the Edinburgh Total Abstinence Society and vice-president of the Scottish Temperance League, had already declared war on the political policy and advocacy of the United Kingdom Alliance in an Edinburgh paper, the Glasgow *Commonwealth* in late 1856. He was held responsible for having triggered a riot in

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<sup>181</sup> In a volume of lectures delivered by Gough during his first British tour and published in London in 1854 (by William Tweedie, the same person who later published the “dead letter”), the lecturer was recorded to have personally defended the Maine Law and the British campaign against the liquor traffic. He made emotional appeals to his London audience to “wage war against the traffic...to annihilation” against the assertion that the times was “not ripe for the law.” He was forthcoming about the limits of moral suasion, which he thought powerless against “a man who has no moral principle,” and he urged that “the devil must sometimes be rooted out by main force...[before] you can turn round and use moral suasion.” John B. Gough, *Oration, Delivered on Various Occasions* (London, 1854), 217, 221, 222-223.

<sup>182</sup> *The Congregationalist* (Boston, MA), May 30, 1856. The speech was reprinted in the *Weekly Record*, a few months before the “dead letter” made its debut. See *Christian News* (Edinburgh), July 11, 1857. “Some said it was political capital he [Gough] wished, but he threw the assertion back in their faces; he should as soon think of making political capital out of what religion he had... It was time to express ourselves – and every citizen could express himself at the ballot-box.”

<sup>183</sup> Worcester (MA) *Daily Transcript*, July 10, 1857.

Edinburgh by university students against prohibitionists in January 1857. Gough's letter was rather the last straw in a long and multifaceted controversy dating back to at least 1855, and it finally broke the back of the already strained temperance alliance between go-ahead political prohibitionists and the more timid and half-hearted "moral suasion" evangelicals.<sup>184</sup> By casting his lot with the evangelical moral suasionists (ironic since he had turned his back on the Washingtonian moral suasionists by 1845), Gough stoked the fire of factionalism and enmity in the temperance movement again at mid-century. The prospect of his second tour was clouded, even before he stepped on British soil.

Every political struggle has a personal side to it. The "dead letter" controversy pitted leading prohibitionists against Gough and his friends in the Leagues, who smeared each other's character as well as their policy. The skirmishes quickly turned vicious and centered on the rivalry of Gough and Dr. Frederic Richard Lees (1815-1896), an advocate of prohibition and a seasoned lecturer for the Alliance, who had strong Chartist and abolitionist sympathies (his father was a wool-comber turned schoolmaster in Leeds and a Radical in favor of Parliamentary reform and universal manhood suffrage).<sup>185</sup> Trained in the law, Lees emphasized reason and spoke to the head, rather than to the heart. His speech and writing style was often dry and methodical. He dealt in statistics, theories (philosophical or biblical), and logic – almost Gough's opposite. He did not have strong church affiliations, but was religious nonetheless. He had a

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<sup>184</sup> See Peter Turner Winskill, *The Temperance Movement and Its Workers* (4 vols., London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dublin, 1891-2), 3:90-92; also *London Times*, Mar. 2, 1857. Thomas Knox had published a series of letters critical of the U.K.A. policy in the *Glasgow Commonwealth* (ed. Robert Rae, secretary of the Scottish Temperance League) in 1856 under the pen name "Auld Reekie."

<sup>185</sup> The honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy was allegedly conferred upon him on Aug. 15, 1842 by the University of Giessen (Germany) for his refutation of Owenite socialism and his contribution on the study of Bible Wines. See Frederic Arnold Lees, *Dr. Frederic Richard Lees, F.S.A. Edin.: A Biography* (London, 1904), 45-46. But this has not been independently verified.

broad range of interests that included transcendentalism, Fourierism, and animal magnetism. He promoted workingmen cooperatives in order to compete with capital in the free market, but attacked Owenism and later socialism for its anti-intuitional and anti-religious tendencies.<sup>186</sup> In early 1858, Gough and his friends would initiate legal proceedings at the Court of Exchequer in London against Lees, the spokesman for the prohibition cause, for spreading “rumors” of Gough’s alleged opium-eating habit. Although the widely reported temperance libel trial was decided for Gough in the end, it by no means settled the score with Lees and the prohibitionists, but only deepened the rift of the temperance movement on both sides of the Atlantic.

Looking back on the temperance controversy, Lees regretted the “[b]itterness, violence, and the exposure of internal dissensions in law-courts.” But “as far as it was a question of honest conviction, and not of institutional jealousy, personal ambition, or self-seeking,” he concluded, “the division was clearly inevitable.”<sup>187</sup> To understand the nature of the “inevitable” split as made public by *Gough v. Lees*, it will be necessary for us to delve deeper into the public discourse surrounding temperance and prohibition at mid-century and to discover the cultural forces that informed the “convictions” of the diverging wings of temperance reform. There was a long and somewhat convoluted prequel where Lees had played a far more important part than

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<sup>186</sup> Frederic Arnold Lees, *Dr. Frederic Richard Lees, F.S.A. Edin.: A Biography* (London, 1904); J. A. Pitney, “Frederic Richard Lees: The Teetotal Philosopher” (Master’s thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1970); Frederic Richard Lees, *Owenism Dissected* (Leeds, England, 1838). From 1845 to 1849, Lees was the editor of the magazine *Truth-Seeker* (London) that promised “a catholic review of literature, philosophy, and religion.”

<sup>187</sup> Frederic Richard Lees, “A Chapter of Temperance History,” 3, in Lees, *Life and How to Renew It* (London, 1871).

Gough<sup>188</sup>, which laid the ground for the final and almost anti-climatic act of the confrontation of two of the movement's most iconic spokesmen in 1858.

*The Prequel: Science, Gospel, and Moral Philosophy*

The split of the temperance movement into moral suasion and prohibitionist camps at mid-century has always been understood as a difference in appearance rather than of substance. To historian Brian Harrison, it was a disagreement in the “degree and timing of control.”<sup>189</sup> But a closer look at the disputes that culminated in *Gough v. Lees* reveals that strong political pressures and ideological differences informed the temperance schism. Moreover, while Gough's turnabout is understandable, the reasons for the evangelical retreat from prohibition at mid-century have been less explored. After all, they had been a mainstay in the prohibitionist movement up to at least the mid-1850s.

The debate over moral suasion versus prohibition at mid-century was by no means a tempest in a teapot. It was of British origin, to be sure, but had transatlantic reverberations. The personal conflicts between Gough and Lees certainly drew great publicity to the debate in 1857-8, but the enactment of the Maine Law in the northern states in the U.S. in the early '50s and the concurrent campaigns for such a law in Britain and its Canadian provinces had long been a cause for concern for the British wine-drinking elite. By the mid-1850s, they had begun to marshal arguments against the scientific, biblical, and philosophical foundations of the prohibitionist movement, selecting as their organ respectable literary and political review magazines, such as the *Westminster Review* (London), *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and the *Saturday Review*

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<sup>188</sup> Gough was nonetheless aware of the temperance debate and the key points on each side. He did not, however, make any original contributions to it, as Lees did.

<sup>189</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 214

(London).<sup>190</sup> Though the teetotal argument against the use of alcoholic wine in Communion had been repeatedly assailed by the religious orthodoxy, physiology and political economy (or moral economy) had long been utilized by the teetotaler theorists to promote the prohibitionist agenda.<sup>191</sup>

Therefore, counter-arguments in these realms, coupled with exhortations on the virtues of voluntarism and moral suasion, were applauded by the wine-drinkers, especially when they were delivered by the ablest pens of the London literary circle such as the critic George Henry Lewes and the philosopher John Stuart Mill.<sup>192</sup> The British and American prohibitionists responded in kind by publishing their responses in tracts or temperance journals. This debate that took place in selective circles warrants our serious attention not only for its own sake as intellectual history, but also for its fallout and broader social impact. In fact, there is strong indication that the attacks by the literary elite and the rallying of respectable opinion against teetotalism and prohibition had exerted enough pressure on the half-hearted evangelical supporters of prohibition that they

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<sup>190</sup> In contrast, the American literary and intellectual elite generally eschewed serious discussions of the drink issue (for lack of a public forum?) or only insinuated it in fiction or verse.

<sup>191</sup> See Lees, *An Argument for the Legislative Prohibition of the Liquor Traffic* (London, 1857), 18, and *Essays Historical and Critical on the Temperance Question* (London, 1853), 97, 208. Lees had used Benthamite political economy ("The sole object of Government ought to be the greatest happiness of the greatest possible number of the community") and John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* to defend teetotalism and prohibition.

<sup>192</sup> There have been few in-depth studies of the readership of the British literary and political review magazines. The standard source is Alvar Ellegård, "The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain: II. Directory," *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971). Some have described journals such as the *Westminster* or the *Blackwood's* as "middle-class" reads. But as we know, the "middle class" in Britain (as in America) has become less uniform and more stratified in recent historical studies, ranging from bankers and large estate owners of non-aristocratic origin to shopkeepers and printers on the Strand. We can be sure, however, that these journals had a very selective readership (upper-middle) and that it would have been unlikely to find working-class beer-drinkers poring over the *Westminster Review*. See Fionnuala Dillane, "'The Character of Editress': Marian Evans at the Westminster Review, 1851-54," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 30:2 (Fall 2011), 269-290.

not only ensconced themselves on the safer ground of moral suasion, which the literary elite also approved, but they turned around and attacked prohibitionism. In this intellectual-turned-factional conflict, *Gough v. Lees* was but the tip of the iceberg.

### *Physiology*

By the time George Henry Lewes reviewed Jacob Moleschott, a Dutch physiologist trained at Heidelberg, in the *Westminster*, the infusion of German chemistry marked by the translation of Justus von Liebig's *Animal Chemistry* in 1842 had already transformed the study of physiology in Britain.<sup>193</sup> Lewes, a known literary critic and bohemian, who had just returned from a continental sojourn (with his mistress, Marian Evans, alias George Eliot<sup>194</sup>), was a new convert to the German school of chemical physiology. He had only recently become enamored with science while researching a biography of Goethe.<sup>195</sup>

Lewes' review, titled "The Physiological Errors of Teetotalism," caught public attention instantly, as it bluntly critiqued the physiological magnum opus of the teetotal physician, William Benjamin Carpenter, and boldly defended the much-assailed character of alcohol and of its moderate usage, using the latest theories of chemical-physiology. Frederic Richard Lees, who was called upon to make a rebuttal against Lewes in 1855, conceded the article's shock value (if

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<sup>193</sup> "The Physiological Errors of Teetotalism," *Westminster Review* 64, no. 125 (July, 1855), 94-124. The article was published anonymously, but was later attributed to Lewes. Justus von Liebig, *Animal Chemistry, Or Organic Chemistry in Its Applications to Physiology and Pathology*, trans. William Gregory (London, 1842).

<sup>194</sup> Marian Evans had secretly edited the *Westminster Review* for three years between 1851 and 1854 for the nominal editor John Chapman. She might have been responsible for the publication of Lewes's anti-teetotal article. Her own anti-evangelist review appeared in the next issue of *Westminster* (Oct. 1855).

<sup>195</sup> For a biography of Lewes, see Rosemary Ashton, *G. H. Lewes, A Life* (Oxford, 1991).



not its theoretical validity) as part of the “scientific *stampede*” that shook the confidence of many teetotalers.<sup>196</sup>

Lewes belittled teetotal physiology for its crude “argument from excess.” He blamed Dr. Carpenter and the teetotal advocates for using cases of excessive drinking to prejudice people against moderate usage. While the “alcohol-is-poison” argument of some radical teetotalers might be effective scare tactics for the drunkards and the impressionable “poorer classes,” Lewes maintained that it was “worthless” as science and “impertinent” to the readers of the *Westminster Review*, most of whom he believed were sensible and moderate (wine) drinkers.<sup>197</sup> But despite Lewes’s pretense of intellectual high ground, the disparity of his and the teetotaler’s physiology were *not* so much a stark contrast between science and pseudoscience (or between a newer and older theory, for that matter); rather, it represented diverging trends and emphases in mid-Victorian understandings of physiology, which were *both* informed by the German chemist Justus von Liebig’s theorization of the roles of food and tissues in the human organism.

By 1855, Liebig’s landmark work, translated as *Animal Chemistry*, which for the first time gave chemistry a significant role in the study of human physiology, had been out for more than a decade.<sup>198</sup> It was no news to the teetotaler theorists that Liebig divided food into two distinct types by its purpose, that of the tissue-making or “plastic” sort and that of the heat-making or “respiratory” kind. Nor were they oblivious to Liebig’s theorization of the chemical

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<sup>196</sup> Frederic Richard Lees, “The New Discoveries on the Action of Alcohol,” *Meliora* 4, no.13 (1862): 42.

<sup>197</sup> G. W. Lewes, “The Physiological Errors of Teetotalism,” *Westminster Review* (new series) 8, no. 1 (July, 1855): 96-97, 100.

<sup>198</sup> Herbert S. Klickstein counts 2 editions published in England, 3 in America, 3 in Germany up to 1847. See Herbert S. Klickstein, “Charles Caldwell and the Controversy in America over Liebig’s ‘Animal Chemistry’,” *Chymia* 4 (1953), 129, n. 2.

action in the respiratory process. The teetotal philosophers imbibed Liebig's theories. Lees, for example, followed *Animal Chemistry* almost to the letter, when he posited life and health as a state of "*balance* or harmony of the conflicting powers" of the vital and the chemical principles. (The "vital" power was thought to be an immaterial and intrinsic force of the living human tissues, inspired by an act or design of God, as opposed to the material and external force of the chemical reaction.) However, Lees regarded the vital principle as the superior and as the "higher life," which Liebig did not specify in his original treatise. The vital force inherent in the living tissues was not only the sole source of animation for Lees, but it "regulates, modifies, and controls mere chemical agencies."<sup>199</sup> Chemistry had its proper place for the teetotalers akin to a "furnace" (or a garbage incinerator). The human tissues, after (and *only* after) expending their vital power, became "effete" and lost their resistance to oxygen and its chemical agency. The effete tissues were then "burned" in the "furnace" of arterial blood (with oxygen), making it "venous" to discharge carbon dioxide and to be recharged with oxygen in the respiratory process. This flameless "combustion" created heat (a by-product, more or less, for the teetotalers) necessary for the normal function of vital organs. Essentially, the chemical principle was, for the teetotalers, a process of waste disposal and recycle (incidentally, showcasing God's perfect design), but it did not by itself create nervo-muscular force.<sup>200</sup>

Lewes had a completely different assessment of the relative importance of the two principles. He built on Liebig's theories, but adhered more closely to the Dutch physiologist Jacob Moleschott's more advanced and controversial materialism, whose works would not be

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<sup>199</sup> Frederic Richard Lees, *Scientific Teetotalism: Appendices to the Illustrated History of Alcohol* (London, 1843), viii.

<sup>200</sup> See W. B. Carpenter, *The Physiology of Temperance and Total Abstinence* (London, 1853), 16-17.

translated into English until 1856.<sup>201</sup> Lewes argued that the chemical action was capable of producing both heat *and* force, and that respiratory food (which could combine chemically with oxygen without being vitalized as tissues) was in fact predominant in the human diet (“five times the weight” of the plastic or tissue-forming kind). Instead of a garbage incinerator, Lewes envisioned the chemical principle as somewhat similar to the workings of a steam engine in the human body. For it to be operational, the human steam engine must need a constant supply of fuel, which could be furnished either by respiratory food or by the sacrifice of nervo-muscular tissues. In other words, the human engine would consume its own body as an alternative fuel in the absence of more combustible fuel foods.<sup>202</sup> In contrast to the teetotalers, Lewes made scant references to the vital force of human tissues (except that the proper functioning of the vital processes must need the animal heat produced by chemical combustion), and he was drawing attention entirely to the chemical-physiological action as the dominant principle of animated beings.

The different emphases on the vital versus the chemical action of life informed the debate over the role of alcohol in the human circulating system. For the teetotalers, alcohol was poisonous. It was found, through physiological experiments, to remain intact in the system, in whatever amount taken, without contributing to the vital principle of forming tissues.<sup>203</sup> The arrival of chemical-physiology may have altered the teetotal theory on the action of alcohol, but

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<sup>201</sup> For Jacob Moleschott, see Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht, Holland; Boston, MA, 1977), Ch. IV.

<sup>202</sup> Lewes, “The Physiological Errors of Teetotalism,” 102-3. Compare Lees’s assertion of the plastic to respiratory food ratio of 4 to 3. Lees, *Scientific Teetotalism*, x.

<sup>203</sup> See, for example, Dr. William Beaumont’s experiment on an injured soldier St. Martin, in Beaumont, *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice, and the Physiology of Digestion* (Edinburgh, 1838). Cited in Lees, *Scientific Teetotalism*.

did not change the final verdict. If alcohol was easily combustible with oxygen in the blood, the teetotalers argued, it would “retard” the waste disposal or the “change of matter” process by “robbing the blood of oxygen” and thus keeping dead tissues (which was meant to be burned) from being decomposed and removed. The accumulation of effete matter, in turn, put a stop to “the nourishment of the body,” preventing the formation of new living tissues and arresting digestion and all other normal vital functions of life.<sup>204</sup>

Lewes reached an opposite conclusion based on the combustibility of alcohol. Because of its “digestibility” (swiftly entering the blood) and “greater affinity for oxygen,” alcohol made for a superior fuel or respiratory food. Following Moleschott (*Lehre der Nahrungsmittel*), Lewes argued that alcohol was a “savings-bank” (“*Sparbüchse*” or piggy bank) of the tissues. By “offering itself as fuel” in the first place, it obviated the need for consuming living tissues and thus saved them for the future. “If Alcohol prevents a certain quantity of effete tissue from being burned and carried away,” Lewes retorted, “it also prevents a certain quantity of living tissue from becoming effete.”<sup>205</sup>

Teetotalers, however, refused to believe that the combustion of alcohol had no bearings on the tissues. Dr. Carpenter, for one, insisted that alcohol was a stimulant and that like all other stimulants, it temporarily excited the nervous system, which he believed led to “a more rapid metamorphosis of its substance.” In other words, alcohol did not save the nerve tissues, but increased their rate of consumption. All this generated “no real increase to the strength,” but

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<sup>204</sup> Lees, *Scientific Teetotalism*, xi., and Lees, “Controversy with G. H. Lewes [1855],” in *The Selected Works of Dr. F. R. Lees* (10 vols., London, 1886), 6:209.

<sup>205</sup> Lewes, “The Physiological Errors of Teetotalism,” 109, 111.

(according to Lees) “dulled” muscular actions of the body and brought on premature prostration and debility.<sup>206</sup>

Taking the teetotal argument head-on, Lewes argued that alcohol was a “positive nutriment” and that it “evolves force in its combustion.” Even if the combustion might result in the greater consumption of tissue, alcohol in itself contributed substantially to the real increase of strength. And “this evolution of [chemical] force, which is at the expense of Alcohol,” according to Lewes, “is a substitute for the [vital] force which would otherwise be evolved at the expense of tissue.”<sup>207</sup> Lewes did not spell out the full implications of his theory (perhaps on purpose), but he was essentially arguing that the chemical action (the artificial force generated by alcohol) was capable of replacing (and obviating) the vital function – he was but a short step away from Moleschott’s full-fledged materialism (fully explored in the latter’s controversial treatise *Der Kreislauf des Lebens*, which Lewes had also read and cited).

Therefore, the physiological debate over alcohol was about partisanship as well as metaphysics. Lewes and his chemistry-focused argument presented a challenge to the teetotal physiology, but more importantly, to vitalism and the conception of a natural or Providential order of things that many (not just teetotalers) still held dear.<sup>208</sup> At the same time, each side enlisted organic chemistry for their own purposes, and neither seemed (yet) to have gained the

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 112

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 107, 111, 112. Lewes even suggested the possible tissue-forming/nutritive value of alcohol, which he predicted was likely to be borne out by new discoveries in organic chemistry.

<sup>208</sup> For vitalism and Liebig, see Otto Sonntag, “Religion and Science in the Thought of Liebig,” *The Journal of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry* 24:3 (Nov. 1977), 159-169.

upper hand on scientific grounds.<sup>209</sup> But Lewes managed to bring the prestige of the *Westminster Review* and the ingrained prejudice of the British elite to bear upon the teetotal physicians and ministers, who formed part of the middle-class leadership of the temperance movement. And much to Lees's regret, they buckled under the pressure by 1857.<sup>210</sup>

### *Bible Wines*

On the biblical question, the prohibitionists were up against entrenched church traditions and the orthodox reading of the Bible in favor of liturgical wine-drinking and legitimate social use.<sup>211</sup>

Lees argued that temperance was primarily “a physical and social question” and alcohol was “dietetically *bad*.” The duty of teetotalism evolved from “experimental and social facts” and was based on “the firm ground of common conscience and reason”; it did not need to proceed from a biblical text. The natural law, which was also a divine law, was sufficient to justify teetotalism, and the Book of Nature contained truth of equal validity and authority as the Book of Revelation. It was “a degrading superstition,” Lees maintained, to distrust common sense and reason (“natural and reasonable evidence”) and to seek answers in the Bible at every turn.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Indeed, *Westminster Review* would publish an article in 1862, renouncing Lewes's views. Anon., “Alcohol: What Becomes of It in the Living Body,” *Westminster Review* (new series) 19, no. 1 (Jan., 1861), 33-56.

<sup>210</sup> The London Temperance League (which later became the National Temperance League) actually invited Lees to give a public lecture to refute Lewes's article in 1853, but they turned away from the debate in 1856-7. Lees lamented the modifications Dr. Carpenter and others made to their physiological theories after the publication of Lewes's article. See F. R. Lees, “The New Discoveries on the Action of Alcohol,” 42.

<sup>211</sup> Often justified by the words of Jesus at the Last Supper and his performance of the miracle in the wedding at Cana.

<sup>212</sup> F. R. Lees, “A Criticism: What is the True Relation of the Bible to the Temperance Question?” in Lees, *Essays Historical and Critical* (London, 1853), 202-204.

But Lees did not go as far as to claim that there could be a separate or a higher truth revealed by science, which was not covered in the Scriptures. For him, Truth (always with a capital “T”) was self-evident, unitary, and absolute, and science and Scripture would always harmonize and reveal the same “objective” truth.<sup>213</sup> The Bible was “but a book,” but it was also “the *medium* of a Revelation of inspired and inspiring Truth to the World.” On the one hand, it must be studied, just like any other book, with “the application of various principles and processes of criticism to *interpret* its true sense.”<sup>214</sup> On the other, whenever an interpretation of the Book was shown to be contradictory with science or reason, the contradiction could not possibly have any bearing on the validity of the Revelation itself, and it must necessarily be the result of a human error in interpretation, either biblical or scientific. For Lees, “God *can not* contradict himself. He may be the author of a progressive revelation, but not of a contradictory one. He may give at first a feeble light...but he cannot deceive.”<sup>215</sup> Therefore, the Inspired Truth was infallible and prophetic, though gradually revealed through the medium of the Bible. On questions such as teetotalism, the Bible could be shown to have “anticipated...the fullest witness of Science,” and have “exhausted the teachings of human history.”<sup>216</sup> Lees’s work as a temperance “harmonist” was thus to seek a more accurate interpretation of the Bible teachings on wine (through philology) to show the consistency between scientific teetotalism and the Bible.

Lees’s belief in the harmony of science and Scripture occupied a middle ground between Biblicism and scientific materialism. He showed confidence in the advancement of modern

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<sup>213</sup> F. R. Lees and Dawson Burns, *The Temperance Bible Commentary* (1868; 6<sup>th</sup> Eng. ed., London, 1894), xiii.

<sup>214</sup> Lees, *Essays Historical and Critical*, xi, 202.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>216</sup> Lees and Burns, *The Temperance Bible Commentary*, xxviii.

science and simultaneously in the progressive revelation of divine truth to keep up with the times. Lees's study of the Hebrew terms translated as wine in the Bible appears to be scientific in its emphasis on linguistic and historical context ("to interpret the writers in the sense of their own age, not of ours").<sup>217</sup> But taken as a whole, his new exegeses were hardly objective and sometimes obviously teleological. His premise combined the physiological thesis that alcohol was poisonous for the human system with the Enlightenment faith that the Savior could not possibly have taught the use of a poison with evil influence on the body and the mind, to form a circular argument at times, especially in his treatment of the New Testament.

Lees's radical (if logically flawed) biblical argument not only challenged the church establishment, but his insistence on the consistency of the Old and the New Testament also went against the evangelical mainstream. He objected to the evangelical view of the Old Testament as "of an older and lesser dispensation." He took issue with evangelicals' skirting of the wine issue in the New Testament. He was dissatisfied with the evangelical mode of persuasion that derived specific moral duties from a general command (such as "Thou Shalt Not Kill," or "Love thy Neighbours as Thyself.").<sup>218</sup> He was not exactly anti-clerical, but he was for thoroughgoing reform and favored an assertive and innovative church leadership, and a ministry not weighed down by church dogma or the tradition-bound congregation. The radical prohibitionists led by Lees were asking for a total reform of church practices and Bible reading in keeping with

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<sup>217</sup> This shows the influence of 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment biblical scholars, Jean Alphonse Turrenti and Johann August Ernesti. For Turrenti and Ernesti, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Glimour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville, TN and New York, NY, 1972), 58-61. Also for a discussion of the theologians in the context of the Bible debate over slavery, see Robert Bruce Mullin, "biblical Critics and the Battle over Slavery," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61: 2 (May 1983): 210-226.

<sup>218</sup> Lees, *Essays Historical and Critical*, 81, 203-206.



advanced teetotalism. They argued for a teetotal Communion and even a teetotal Bible, a demand that most church leaders, including the evangelically-inclined, were not prepared to meet.<sup>219</sup>

### *Theories of Morals and of Government*

As the push for legislative prohibition was slowly gathering momentum, the anti-teetotal forces were rallying around a few prominent public men, notably Lord (Edward John) Stanley and John Stuart Mill. Lord Stanley, M.P. and President of the Board of Trade under Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, engaged in a debate in a series of correspondence with Samuel Pope, the honorable secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance over the ethical and political bases for the Maine Law, which was published by the London *Times* in October 1856.<sup>220</sup> Lees continued that debate with John Stuart Mill, after the spokesman for the Liberal thought echoed and elaborated Lord Stanley's anti-prohibitionist arguments in his famous essay *On Liberty*.

In attacking prohibition, the "Liberal" (or rather, libertarian, in the modern sense) critics articulated a moral and political theory that elevated the sovereignty of the individual over that of the state or society and defined morality as primarily a personal, rather than a political or social, matter. They were concerned about not only the resurgence of a totalitarian state, but also the emerging threat of social and political democracy. It was in the individual that they believed that the hopes of social and political reform could be realized. In essence, their ideology precluded and was defined against collective social and political action. Social reform, for them, followed

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<sup>219</sup> Lees also suggested a philological and philosophical reexamination of the Bible on the issue of slavery (parallel to wine), distinguishing man's law from God's sanction and correcting mistranslations of "servant" as "slave." See Lees, *The Temperance Bible Commentary*, 379.

<sup>220</sup> See London *Times*, Oct. 2, 1856.

after the slow change of individual behavior and conviction, and individual reform in the aggregate must precede political action in the form of legislation.<sup>221</sup>

The *Westminster Review* argued that the increasing scale of social dependence and organization of the modern era, paradoxically, threw the individual “more and more back on himself” and taught him to cultivate his inner self (“to explore the recesses of his heart, and to realize the existence of his own personality”). One could find in himself “a boundless sphere entirely his own, a dominion which he seizes on with eagerness, a throne of which he proclaims himself the lawful occupant.” In contrast to the vicissitudes of the external world one had little power over, he assumed absolute sovereignty over the personal “dominion” and perfect control of his own faculties. While the individual “lessen[ed]” in his connection with the external world, his inner self became “infinitely greater” - “the consciousness of the value of his inner-life colours every relation he fills, and every expression of his mind.”<sup>222</sup> Sobriety was but one of the many conscious choices the exalted individual made for himself in accordance with his inner conviction; and by inference, those who got drunk or who fell for temptations *chose* to do so, when they could have refrained.

In this mindset, no laws should be allowed to supersede the right of personal choice and any preventive measure must necessarily lead to moral debility. Prohibition was considered worse than drunkenness. It was “a subtle poison,” which accustomed people to relying on “external enactments,” thus “sapped the very foundations of right, and destroyed the springs of

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<sup>221</sup> This is different from the individualism born of evangelicalism – personal accountability to God and spiritual independence and equality often in opposition to the mundane social hierarchy of gender and race. This is individualism from a position of power, or elite (and masculine) individualism.

<sup>222</sup> Anon., “Drunkenness Not Curable by Legislation,” *Westminster Review* (new series) 8, no. 2 (Oct. 1855), 475-6.

all moral action.”<sup>223</sup> Some argued further that man must not do away with vice, as “[t]emptation must exist before virtue can have its being.” Prohibition, by hindering one from vice, “equally prevents him from attaining to virtue.” “Human reason” and “human volition” were “divinely bestowed gifts, intended to be duly exercised in the acceptance or rejection of both good and evil.” In the same way that the forbidden fruit was left within the reach of Adam and Eve, “no external obstacle” must be placed “in the way of disobedience.”<sup>224</sup>

John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*, which appeared in 1859,<sup>225</sup> partly in response to the U.K.A. campaign for pushing a local-option bill (the Permissive Bill) through Parliament, provided a synthesis of Liberal attacks against the political philosophy of prohibition. He contended that the prohibitionist argument of “social rights” (which, as he saw it, “ascribes to all mankind a vested interest in each other’s moral, intellectual, and even physical perfection”) could be easily abused to justify the enforcement of social conformity. He was particularly worried about the “ascendant” middle class and the possible achievement of a middle-class majority in Parliament, which would, following the American example, impose their ascetic social and cultural values on the nation through such legislations as the Maine Law.<sup>226</sup>

He recognized not only the existence of an autonomous domain of individual conscience, but also a large realm of freedom for one’s private habit or conduct. Among such “self-

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 480. The Liberals here turned the tables on the teetotalers, who argued that alcohol was poison.

<sup>224</sup> *National Magazine* 2, no. 11 (Sep. 1857), 327-8.

<sup>225</sup> Though published after the *Gough v. Lees* (1858), John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* and Frederic Richard Lees’s responses to it are being discussed here because their (opposing) treatments of the drink question were in essence a follow-up and an elaboration of the relatively short Stanley-Pope debate that took place in the columns of the *London Times* in October 1856.

<sup>226</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J. M. Robson (33 vols., Toronto, 1963-), 18: 286-8.

regarding” acts or habits ranked the drinking of “fermented liquors” (Mill did not mention distilled liquor), which he defended as an individual liberty that the state had no business meddling with. Although the Maine Law, which prohibited sales alone, did not violate individual liberty directly, Mill argued that it amounted to an interdict on personal use, because it severely restricted public access. Mill defended the right to drink and to have access to drink, not the unrestricted right to sell. It was the liberty of the consumers – not the sellers – that he insisted on protecting. The only legitimate purpose of legislation, he claimed, was to prevent personal conduct from injuring others or the society at large.<sup>227</sup> It followed that no one should be legally punished for being drunk or be prevented from getting drunk, provided that in so doing he hurt no one but himself.

Together, Mill and other Liberal critics of prohibition laid the theoretical foundation for the ideology of individualism, which militated against collective and legislative solutions to social problems. Indeed, they hardly saw drunkenness as a social problem, in which all had a “vested interest.” They tended to individualize and privatize the issue and the solution. Mill opposed any regulation aimed at influencing personal behavior (taxation being the only legitimate purpose of legislation) and he believed in the efficacy of early education, which was capable of shaping “rational conduct in life” and would obviate both legal punishment and moral censure.<sup>228</sup> And he would have agreed with the *National Magazine*, which maintained that

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<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 288, 297-9. In *On Liberty*, Mill argued that no regulatory measure regarding alcohol was legitimate and that licensing would only be justified on the grounds of taxation. BUT, as a reviewer of *On Liberty* (possibly F. R. Lees) pointed out *Meliora*, 2 (1860), 91 that Mill was supportive of regulatory measures in his earlier essay, *Political Economy*, where he implied that taxation can be used to contain the tendencies of excess.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

“moral and spiritual restraints were alone deemed worthy of a morally and spiritually endowed being by his Creator.”<sup>229</sup>

The reform of the drunkard “must be in the man himself,” the *Saturday Review* argued, “and what is true of the individual will be found equally true of a class or a nation.” Different from America, it was suggested that in England, social vices “can only be remedied by private enterprise.”<sup>230</sup> The *Westminster Review* proposed unrestricted licensing for all, beer *and* liquor sellers, at an increased fee and let the market do the work of elimination (The Beer Act of 1830 had set a precedent, and Gladstone’s measure to reduce import duties on wine in 1860 shared the same philosophy), while holding the publicans “pecuniarily answerable for all misconduct.” Other than the market, people must rely on “the slow march of moral improvement” and avoid “legislative short-cuts.”<sup>231</sup>

It would be a mistake, as historian Brian Harrison pointed out, to see the philosophical debate between the Liberals and the prohibitionists as a conflict between free traders and regulators.<sup>232</sup> Many prohibitionists (including Lees) were followers of Adam Smith in areas other than the traffic in alcohol (or slaves and opium). But this in no way discounts the fundamental moral and political disagreements between the two classes of people.

The two sides had irreconcilable differences over their perception of the drinking issue and the role of the state. The radical prohibitionists like Lees were invariably believers in the

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<sup>229</sup> *National Magazine* 2, no. 11 (Sep. 1857), 327-8.

<sup>230</sup> Anon., “The Maine Liquor Law,” *Saturday Review* 2, no. 50 (Oct. 11, 1856): 524-5.

<sup>231</sup> Anon., “Drunkenness Not Curable by Legislation,” *Westminster Review*, 483-4, 488.

<sup>232</sup> Brian Harrison, “State Intervention and Moral Reform,” in Patricia Hollis, ed., *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England* (London, 1974). Brian Harrison cautions us against this tendency by researching their stance on other social issues. And he sees the prohibitionists as part of the constituencies for the Liberal Party.

poisonous nature of alcohol and the divine injunction against the use of intoxicating drinks, whereas few Liberal philosophers deigned to make themselves acquainted with the teetotal literature. Where the Liberals saw personal liberty and self-regarding acts, the prohibitionists beheld social costs and social obligation. Contrary to the Liberal thinkers, the prohibitionists considered the unrestricted access to alcohol, rather than its overuse, as the root problem. It was the supply, they argued, that created the demand for alcohol in the first place.<sup>233</sup> Barring the commercial production and sales of liquor (as against the home brew or private imports<sup>234</sup>) was for them the most effective way of curbing the supply. The prohibitionist goal was not to end drinking once and for all, but to withdraw state sanction from a trade, which appeared to them to be productive of social evils, and to create a safe environment for moral reform. It was not for the sake of the drunkards who could not control themselves that the prohibitionists asked the sacrifice of the many (contrary to the moral suasionists); they argued that it was rather for the benefit of all, either directly by preserving the health of body and mind or indirectly through lowering crime rates and poor taxes.

There were fundamental ideological differences between the radical prohibitionists and the ultra-Liberals. The prohibitionists conceptualized personal liberty and its relationship to law differently. Lees saw liberty NOT as an inherent freedom from obligations, but as an acquired power.<sup>235</sup> The addition to one's power (which he defined as liberty) occurred at the expense of

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<sup>233</sup> *Christian News* (Edinburgh), Aug. 15, 1857, "Fundamental Principles."

<sup>234</sup> This became the basis of attacks against prohibitionists by the Liberals who accused them of making class legislation and by the moral suasionists for their doctrinal inconsistency. Both charges are unfair, as neither reflected the real intention of the prohibitionists. The toleration of home-brewing and imports was more of a tactical expedient.

<sup>235</sup> In fact he distinguished the two words, freedom and liberty. See Lees's review of *On Liberty*, "Relations of Liberty to the Temperance Question," *Meliora* 2, no. 8 (Jan. 1860), 345.

others (reflecting more or less a Hobbesian view). He argued that it was a historical “accident” that liberty had been obtained “by battling against unjust governments,” which prejudiced the public mind against law and state in general. Individual liberty should not, he argued, be defined against government or its incidental (though inevitable) power of coercion; rather, in the making of just laws, it was combined, equalized, and augmented for the benefit of all.<sup>236</sup> Law did not abridge personal liberty but defined and expressed individual liberty in the aggregate.

The prohibitionists believed in the broader obligations of the state in shaping social morality and enforcing moral laws.<sup>237</sup> The government was not to be “mere policeman and tax-collector” (as the Liberals contended); rather, it should be a “moral power” and should exercise its moral influence through law-making. It should intervene (as in the act of abolishing drink selling) to promote the “natural”<sup>238</sup> development of the “higher powers” of man, to enlarge “all our most valuable secular liberties,” and to curb the freedom leading to the “lower and baser appetites of our being.”<sup>239</sup> Instead of leaving moral matters to the church or the school, the prohibitionists expected the government to provide moral leadership and moral sanction. They valued the “declarative,” as much as the “coercive” power of law. What they envisioned was not a welfare state, but a righteous and assertive government.

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<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 345, 347.

<sup>237</sup> Whereas the Liberals did not deny the necessity for the government to enact moral laws, they did not recognize the new morality of teetotalism but only those that had been well “established” over centuries and had been “customary.” See Mill, *Collected Works*, ed. John Robson, 18:281.

<sup>238</sup> It was natural because “Man exists for the development of his higher powers, and society is justified in its existence and limitations solely by the consideration that its order, method, and machinery are essential to this end.” Lees, “Relations of Liberty to the Temperance Question,” 346.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 346-7.

In the final analysis, the radical prohibitionists and the ultra-Liberals had very different concerns regarding political democracy. The Liberal elite increasingly saw themselves as becoming the political minority in face of the rising middle classes, and they were concerned with the protection of the liberty of the minority against the tyranny of the many. The prohibitionists, on the other hand, upheld majority rule as the core of democracy and envisioned law as the embodiment of the political will of the majority. Whereas Mill valued human development “in its richest diversity,”<sup>240</sup> Lees cared more for the cultivation of its “highest nature.”<sup>241</sup> Even though prohibition was repeatedly labeled class legislation by its Liberal critics, it would be wrong to assume that the law targeted the laborers only. The wine-drinking gentlemen, after all, were the most vocal opponents of the Maine Law. The prohibition program, which was finally introduced in the form of the Permissive Bill (which required a three-fourths majority of rate-payers/voters to enact a prohibitory law in each parish or town) contained elements of social control, but perhaps more importantly, an agenda of popular democracy and social uplifting.

Radical prohibitionists like Lees sought not only to influence mass behavior, but they considered prohibition and mass sobriety as the basis for intellectual elevation and suffrage extension and as the guarantee for the rational exercise of individual political power.<sup>242</sup> More often than not, Lees was trying to enlist the combined moral influence of the majority against social injustices and political atrocities:

If a large number of individuals...speak [our minds against wickedness in high places, whether secular or ecclesiastic], then in time, Republican slaveries, British opium trades,

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<sup>240</sup> Mill, *Collected Works*, 18: 215. Mill quoted Wilhelm von Humboldt.

<sup>241</sup> Lees, “Relations of Liberty to the Temperance Question,” 345.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 348-9.



Neapolitan atrocities, and Perugian massacres will cease to be – burnt up in the full blaze of the public opinion of the civilized world.<sup>243</sup>

Prohibitionism as represented by Lees was reminiscent of the Puritan commonwealth,<sup>244</sup> but it nonetheless had a strong populist strain. Though Mill's style of Liberalism did not distinguish the individual freedom of the gentleman *and* that of the common laborer, it was nonetheless infused with a strong dose of elitism. The backlash against the Maine Law in the metropolitan press shows indubitably that the elite wine-drinkers were worried and irritated by the ascendancy of a "puritanical" provincial middle class, who threatened to transform the political and social culture of Britain.

*Retreat from Prohibition, or Moral Suasion v. Maine Law*

Did the physiological, philological, and political debates change people's minds in any particular direction? Apparently, the war of words did little to sway either the diehard prohibitionists or their wine-drinking opponents, but only hardened their respective positions. But the public controversy had a discernable impact on the politically conservative evangelical entrepreneurs in the temperance movement, people like Thomas Knox, William Tweedie, Samuel Bowly, William Wilson, and Robert Charleton – leaders of the Leagues who had invited Gough to lecture in Britain and to convert respectable society.<sup>245</sup> It was because of the divisiveness of the

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<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 351. "Neapolitan atrocities" referred to King Ferdinand II's brutal crackdown on the 1848 revolution in Sicily, and "Perugian massacres" to the massacre of Perugian civilians by papal troops in July 1859.

<sup>244</sup> Brian Harrison pointed this out in his *Drink and the Victorians*, 194.

<sup>245</sup> Thomas Knox was the owner of a large upholstery firm in Edinburgh (Knox, Samuel & Dickson), president of the Edinburgh Total Abstinence Society and vice president of the Scottish Temperance League. He led the moral suasionist attack against the United Kingdom Alliance in 1856 in the Glasgow *Commonwealth*. He took a moderate stance on the question of teetotalism in the church and took care not to offend respectable church members with radical principles. He was known to be involved in promoting temperance education in schools. Lees believed Knox to be an instigator of the libel suit. William Tweedie, born in Scotland, was Gough's manager and

Maine Law issue – especially the showing of strong dislike on the part of the respectable – that the evangelical teetotalers backpedaled to the relatively safe ground of “moral suasion” in late 1856 to early 1857. By abstaining from immediate political action, the moral suasionists hoped to free themselves from the taint of fanaticism and sever the ties between them and the radical prohibitionists. In a sense, the public controversy over the Maine Law succeeded in redrawing the battle line and shifting the limelight from teetotalism to prohibition (from a confrontation of teetotalers versus drinkers to that of prohibitionists versus anti-prohibitionists). Gough wittingly played a key role in this paradigm shift.

Despite their insistence on personal teetotalism, it is surprising to find how familiar the moral suasionists sounded, when arguing against prohibition, vis-à-vis the Liberals. In fact, it is most likely that the Liberal criticism of the Maine Law had informed the moral suasionist arguments. William Tweedie, editor of the *Weekly Record* and manager of Gough’s tours, compared the Maine Law to a “hot-house” and lamented the moral lethargy induced by the shelter of legal prohibition. For him, the Maine Law became not only detached from but detrimental to the moral struggle. The American lesson, as shown in Gough’s “dead letter,” was that even when the national opinion favored a prohibitory law, there could be danger in its

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promoter. He was the head of the London temperance publishing firm, William Tweedie & Co., and the secretary of the National Temperance League. He also chaired the Temperance Permanent Land and Building Society, which provided saving and mortgage lending services for its members of pledge signers. He was known to be the chief exponent of the “expediency” doctrine (that drinking was no sin and abstinence was but expedient). Samuel Bowly of Gloucester, Robert Charleton of Bristol, and William Wilson of Mansfield were all League officers, evangelical Quakers, and wealthy businessmen-philanthropists. They would later supply Gough with the incriminating evidence for his libel suit against Lees. See Winskill, *The Temperance Movement and Its Workers*, 3: 30, 90-92, 102-4; also Brian Harrison, *Dictionary of British Temperance Biography* (The Society for the Study of Labour History, 1973); and Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford, 1970).

realization. “Emphatically,” he claimed, “the hour of triumph is the hour of danger.”<sup>246</sup> Whereas the political and the moral movements used to be considered complementary and mutually beneficial, the enactment of a prohibitory law would now (following the Liberal logic) lead to the slackening of moral vigilance and the undoing of the moral effort. It is noteworthy that the new preoccupation with moral education originated only a few months earlier in an early 1857 issue (Vol. 2) of the *Weekly Record*, where Tweedie recommended Thomas Knox (of the Scottish Temperance League)’s anti-U.K.A. “Auld Reekie” letters published in the *Glasgow Commonwealth*.<sup>247</sup>

Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, a close associate of Gough’s and a Presbyterian minister from New York City, who used to preach at rallies for prohibition, now (in Nov. 1857) cautioned the temperance men against making political alliances at all.<sup>248</sup> “The mingling of moral movements with party strifes at the ballot-boxes in America,” he argued, “has been a Pandora-box of mischief to the cause of reform.” The politicization of moral reform gave rise to mercenary motives: “Demagogues” rode temperance “as a ‘hobby’ into office.” Perhaps more importantly, the political turn of the movement eroded the leadership of the church: “[T]he formation of a Temperance political party to a great degree muzzles the pulpit.”<sup>249</sup> To disentangle the

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<sup>246</sup> *Weekly Record* (London), Aug. 8, 1857, “Hot-Houses.”

<sup>247</sup> This “first landmark” of the moral suasionist turn of the *Weekly Record* was recounted by John Turner Rae in *The Temperance Record: A Monthly Review of Work and Progress, Literature and Science* 1, no. 1 (New Series, Jan. 1903), 2. “From the time of this reference (to the ‘Auld Reekie’ letter) until now (1903), the pages of the *Record* have been largely occupied with the progress of the educational work, first of the National Temperance League and then of the Band of Hope Union and the Church of England Temperance Society, which is today in a highly organized condition as regards the schools.”

<sup>248</sup> See Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven, 1993), 216. Cuyler arrived in England on Gough’s heels.

<sup>249</sup> *Weekly Record* (London), Nov. 14, 1857, “Letter From New York.”

temperance movement from party politics and to revive moral suasion was, in other words, to bring the influence of the (non-conformist) church to bear on moral reform once again.

The editorial attitude of the *Scottish Review* (Glasgow), the organ of the Scottish Temperance League, shifted perceptibly against prohibition in 1857. While the journal (like its sponsoring organization) had always been moral suasionist in focus, it had rarely taken an openly antagonistic stance on prohibition and had even defended it (as the teetotal pledge for a nation) against attacks from the *Westminster Review*.<sup>250</sup> In July 1857 (two months after the publication of the “dead letter”), however, the tone of union and cooperation turned into “aversion.” The journal issued a direct challenge against the prohibitionists in the guise of a rave review for Rev. Thomas Guthrie (a popular evangelical preacher)’s *The City: Its Sins and Sorrows*. The review singled out for praise Thomas Guthrie’s levelheadedness on the temperance question and his advocacy of church-centered reform (“His main hope lies in the self-denial of the church”). It was a public statement of the journal’s break with radical prohibitionism.<sup>251</sup>

The enactment of prohibitory laws, the *Scottish Review* argued, not only required the molding of a favorable public opinion, as the U.K.A. advocated, but must be preceded by the general transformation of personal habit and practice (sounding a lot like the *Westminster Review*’s “slow march of moral improvement”).<sup>252</sup> The editor declared his “aversion to an immediate agitation for a prohibitory law” and warned against the revival of an uncompromising

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<sup>250</sup> Anon., “The Tactics of Temperance,” *Scottish Review* 4, no. 13 (Jan. 1856): 64-79.

<sup>251</sup> Anon., “The Temperance Movement and the Question of Policy,” *Scottish Review* (July. 1857): 260-273.

<sup>252</sup> “Drunkenness Not Curable by Legislation,” *Westminster Review*, 483-4. The question is whether prohibition would still be necessary if the teetotal habit prevailed, as the moral suasionists demanded. See “Mr. Gough’s Defense,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union* (Sept. 1857): “If it be meant that no law should be created until there will be no opposition to it, then none ever will be created, especially one touching the interests and appetites of men...”

“Chartist spirit” in the temperance circles. He chided the “enthusiastic and impractical bent of mind” and advised the temperance men to “gratefully” receive from the legislature “what ever can be got” and to ask only for “what is likely to be got.” The root of drunkenness for him lay not so much in the drink itself, but in the love of “sensuality.” Therefore, forced abstinence would only remove the “vice” of drunkenness but not the “sin”; and the prohibition of the drink traffic alone would only lead to other forms of “sensual indulgence.” The cure had to start with the change of “taste” and with the development of the power of “self-restraint” and “self-government.” While prohibition dealt primarily with the traffic and public drinking, the review complained, it did nothing to curb home brewing and home consumption. And it was the “family circle” and the moral sanctuary of the home that the church reformers were primarily concerned about.<sup>253</sup>

Amidst the enmity and disputes surrounding prohibition, Gough shrewdly steered clear of the issue in his opening speech in Exeter Hall on August 25, 1857. He took pains not to give offence to his listeners.<sup>254</sup> Humoring the Liberals, he packaged personal abstinence as a “Christian liberty,” making it a choice, rather than a moral or social obligation. Conceding the biblical and the physiological legitimacy of wine-drinking, he recited the moral suasionist mantra that it was “true liberty to deny myself of that which is positively lawful, if by that self-denial I can save one of my brethren from that which maketh him to sin” (Roman 14:21). Appealing to

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<sup>253</sup> Anon., “The Temperance Movement and the Question of Policy,” 268-270.

<sup>254</sup> This was noted in *Christian News* (Edinburgh), Nov. 21 1857 and *Cornwall and Devon Temperance Journal* (Falmouth), Oct. 1858.

the evangelicals, he preached temperance as a human instrumentality to do God's work and emphasized the "bond of living faith" connecting man and his Maker.<sup>255</sup>

There was apparently no sin in drinking per se but for "its influence on the brain or system." The question thus became "the ability of the man to stand it" and some obviously could withstand the influence better than others. Abstinence for these moderate drinkers became another form of philanthropy, of the strong-willed and benevolent men sacrificing their rightful cup to set an example for the weak-minded.<sup>256</sup> Gough invoked his own experience of being reclaimed from the street by a stranger. But most of his stories taught that people did not have to look beyond their family circles and that they were not saving random strangers in the streets but their sons and their bosom friends, the middle and upper class young men (e.g. the YMCA youths). Family-centered abstinence involved the minimal (and most expedient) sacrifice of taking wine off the dinner table, and it required no controversial social or political action.

The moral suasionists made it clear that their teetotalism was "no Asceticism" and it consisted not in the dry facts of physiology, philology, or political philosophy. The temperance men were, instead, "the merriest of the merry, the lightest of the light in heart."<sup>257</sup> Like the evangelical preachers, they impressed not only by "PROVING" but also through "PAINTING" and "PERSUADING." They addressed not only the "Reason" but also the "Fancy" and the

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<sup>255</sup> For a full report of Gough's Exeter Hall speech on "Christian Liberty," see *Weekly Record* (London), Aug. 29, 1857. The speech was reprinted in many other papers and published separately as a pamphlet.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.* The idea of "philanthropic abstinence" had been explored by Prof. James Miller, "Abstinence and Its Place," in *Lectures Delivered Before the Young Men's Christian Association* (1857; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1857), 323. Rev. Thomas Guthrie touted Miller's lecture as reflecting the true sentiments of the temperance reform in *The City: Its Sins and Sorrows* (Edinburgh and New York, 1857).

<sup>257</sup> James Miller, "Abstinence and Its Place," 312.

“Heart.”<sup>258</sup> Indeed, their style of temperance advocacy was more palatable to the society as a whole. Condescending as it was toward the temperance literature in general, the metropolitan press, such as the *Saturday Review*, found the League publications by comparison “sprightly,” showing “the poetic and imaginative side of the teetotal mind,” and occasionally one or two (temperance tales published by William Tweedie) that were “readable,” “well written,” and “free from the intolerance so common in the class of works to which it belongs.”<sup>259</sup>

*Gough v. Lees: Moral Suasionist Goes to Court*

Gough’s “dead letter” came on top of a wave of negative feelings toward the Maine Law, and it jolted already frayed nerves within the teetotal ranks, let alone giving publicans and drinkers something to cheer about. It was emblematic of the betrayal of the prohibition cause by temperance men, who, “once in earnest,” now bolted under the pressure of respectable opinion, for fear of giving offense to the leading members of their churches and communities.<sup>260</sup> The publication of Gough’s bleak report was immediately recognized by the Alliance men as a ploy of the Leaguers to scuttle the Maine Law campaign in Britain and to counter the effects of Neal Dow’s recent visit. Lees and his fellow prohibitionists in the U.K.A. mounted vehement protests against the “dead letter” and questioned the authority and veracity of its author.

Gough did not land in the fray unprepared, either. He came ashore laden with a chest of “documents,” which he had solicited from American “authorities” on the failures of the Maine Law, and sixteen letters were selected to be read at his welcome meeting in Liverpool to certify

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<sup>258</sup> A J. Symington, *Thomas Guthrie: A Biographical Sketch* (London, 1879), 142.

<sup>259</sup> Anon., “The Temperance Press,” *The Saturday Review* 6, no. 125 (Dec. 25, 1858): 641-3. C.f. Dickens’s satire of the Gradgrind system and his eulogy of “fancy” in *Hard Times*.

<sup>260</sup> See *Christian News*, July 4, 1857 and Nov. 7, 1857.

the validity of his “dead letter.”<sup>261</sup> The British prohibitionists also set their agents to work on the other side of the Atlantic, gathering evidence of the workings of the Maine Law in different states. Peter Sinclair of Edinburgh, who used to own a temperance hotel in the city and who had just arrived in New England in early 1857 to lecture for the children, became the U.K.A.’s chief canvasser and correspondent in America, and he was responsible for collecting counter testimonials against the “dead letter” and forwarding them to the prohibitionist press.<sup>262</sup>

The “dead letter” controversy took a personal turn, when the *Edinburgh News* published a report (attributed to none less than Thomas Knox of the Scottish Temperance League), which accused Peter Sinclair of having fled Edinburgh in debt (leaving his family to subsist on charity) and of defrauding the “Yankees” by pretending to be a reverend (while “abusing the Scottish Temperance League and Mr. Gough”).<sup>263</sup> A large number of the particular issue of the *Edinburgh News* made it across the Atlantic “in covers directed in a female hand [supposedly Mrs. Gough’s], well known to persons in Massachusetts and Connecticut,” and the article was said to have been reprinted in the Boston *Congregationalist*, owned and edited by Gough’s friends, much to the detriment of Sinclair’s character and work in America.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> “Mr. Gough in England,” *Weekly Record*, Aug. 1, 1857.

<sup>262</sup> Biographical information on Peter Sinclair is scarce. He was known to be associated with the Band of Hope, a children’s teetotal society, in Britain. He was committed to pushing prohibition, but like other prohibitionists, also exhorted moral effort. He was also the author of an anti-slavery pamphlet later to be published in London during the American Civil War. See Peter Sinclair, *Freedom or Slavery in the United States: Being Facts and Testimonies for the Consideration of the British People* (London, 1863).

<sup>263</sup> “Rev. Peter Sinclair,” *Edinburgh News*, Nov. 7, 1857. Thomas Knox’s authorship was identified in “Mr. Sinclair,” *Journal of the American Temperance Union and Prohibitionist* (New York), Jan. 1858.

<sup>264</sup> Gough would later deny in court that he sent any paper to the Boston *Congregationalist*. However, it turned out that he did (or Mrs. Gough did) send the particular issue of *Edinburgh News* to a few friends of his (though not to Mr. Dexter, the editor of the *Congregationalist*), for it



In retaliation against this perceived personal attack on a U.K.A's agent, Lees wrote an angry letter to William Wilson, an officer of the National Temperance League and a friend of Gough's, threatening to publish information against "ST. BARTHOLOMEW" (of his supposed opium-eating habit) unless Gough and the Leaguers publicly retracted their charges against "Rev. Peter Sinclair."<sup>265</sup> The rumor about Gough's intoxication by drugs and the insinuation of his periodic "blues" had been afloat (no doubt partly owing to the prohibitionists) in London and Glasgow, but Lees's letter was one of the first pieces of hard evidence the Leaguers could get their hands on.<sup>266</sup> It was even better for Gough's allies that Lees had been the leading apologist for the Maine Law movement, an outspoken critic of the moral suasion party and Gough's "dead letter," and an ardent defender of Peter Sinclair. Therefore, when Gough decided to press libel charges against Lees in a court of law on the advice of his League friends (ignoring calls for an extra-legal arbitration by a private temperance tribunal), they had picked their target with care.<sup>267</sup>

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contained a rave review of his own lecture. *Maine Temperance Journal and Inquirer* (Portland, ME), n.d., in News Clippings Oversize Vol. 1 (British Newspapers, 1853-58), Gough Papers (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA): "All the persons, who have received the papers in this country, know very well to whom they are indebted for the favor." Lees mentioned the reprint of the *Edinburgh News* article in the Boston *Congregationalist* (see Lees to William Wilson, Dec. 25, 1857), but I have not been able to locate it. The *Congregationalist* did refer to the article and urged investigation of Sinclair's character on Dec. 4, 1857. It is unclear whether Mrs. Gough was really the "female hand," but there is plenty of evidence in the Gough Papers that she often wrote (and signed) letters on behalf of her husband.

<sup>265</sup> Lees wrote in a letter to Wm. Wilson, Dec. 25, 1857: "The 'Saint' has been often intoxicated with drugs (twice to my own certain knowledge) – once insensibly so in the streets of London – many time in Glasgow until he was helpless." See "The History of the Case – 'Gough v. Lees'" in News Clippings Oversize Vol. 1 (British Newspapers, 1853-58), Gough Papers.

<sup>266</sup> Apart from Lees, the owner of the London Hotel in Glasgow also spread word of Gough's intoxication. Lees to Wilson, Jan. 4, 1857, in *Ibid.*.

<sup>267</sup> They first sought a case for criminal libel at the Court of Queen's Bench on April 22, 1858 in vain, and then at the Court of Exchequer in London for a civil case. By insisting on going to court, they brushed aside the repeated calls for a private tribunal formed by temperance men to

The trial of *Gough v. Lees*, which began with much fanfare on June 21, 1858 and ended abruptly on the same day, was rather anti-climatic when placed in the course of events that informed the temperance controversy. Throughout the trial, Gough, the plaintiff, was never cross-examined by the defense counsel, and was allowed to testify on oath for himself guided by his own counsel.<sup>268</sup> No witnesses were called, even though fifteen (whom Lees brought to court) were present. The plaintiff's counsels were able to stall the defense's requests for the cross-examination of William Wilson, a key witness in the libel case, who had placed the incriminating letter of Lees containing the libel in the hands of the prosecution, and for the admittance of Wilson's letter to Gough communicating the libel, as evidence. Lees, the defendant, never had a chance to be examined in court. The trial, which was expected to last a few days, was concluded rather hastily (reportedly in about fifteen minutes), partly because the defense counsel (Mr. Kenneth Macaulay, a last-minute replacement for Mr. William Bovill, Lees' main counsel) considered his client's case to be unwinnable based on available evidence, and amidst confusion, he agreed to a retraction of the charges against Gough on Lees' behalf in exchange for lower damages, believing it to be in the best interest of his client.<sup>269</sup> Lees would declare after the trial, however, that he did not give his consent to the agreement reached by the counsels on both sides.

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investigate Lees' charges, and showed (ironically) their faith in law. See *Leeds Mercury*, April 24, 1858.

<sup>268</sup> Gough tried to use his diary to defend himself, as he did during the 1845 scandal, but it was brushed aside by the court. John B. Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections of John B. Gough* (Springfield, MA; Chicago; Philadelphia, 1869), 423.

<sup>269</sup> "Gough v. Lees," *Alliance Weekly News*, June 3, 1858; Macaulay's letter in *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 429. Macaulay tried to defend Lees on his motive (he did not have malicious design against Gough and was not going to expose Gough anyhow) and on the private nature of his communication to Wilson (that Lees thought he was only writing to a private friend of Gough's).

The specific circumstances that shaped the outcome of the trial were murky at best, but it was made clear from the onset of the trial that the factional conflict between the moral suasion and legal suasion parties was “essential” to understanding the libel case at hand.<sup>270</sup> The trial records, published in full by the *Weekly Record* and widely reprinted, re-acquainted the public with the “dead letter” controversy and reaffirmed each organization’s distinct (and opposite) position on the Maine Law question.

The Leaguers took the outcome of the trial as nothing less than a total triumph and vindication of Gough’s name (“He is now beyond suspicion”<sup>271</sup>) and of the moral suasion party. The recrimination, however, did not end there. The temperance journals on the opposing sides continued to publish and refute “evidence,” which had not been examined in court. It seems that Gough had won his libel case on technical grounds in court but would still have to pass through the trial of a self-constituted public tribunal. The prohibitionists and sympathizers rallied around Lees and published pamphlets to undermine Gough’s case. Lees himself issued a retraction of his retraction, and assisted in preparing and circulating a pamphlet about Gough’s 1845 scandal.<sup>272</sup>

So vexed were Gough and his League friends by the bad press, even after his recent vindication in court, that Rev. Horace James, minister of the Worcester (MA) Old South Church and a close friend of Gough’s, who was probably present at Gough’s trial in London, returned to

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<sup>270</sup> Here is a report on the confusion in London *Times*, June 22, 1858, “From the London Correspondent”: “Mr. James rises to express his willingness to agree to any reasonable proposal to which Mr. Macaulay may assent; a stream of cross-talk, most of which is inaudible, strains the attention and excites the curiosity of the spectators – a crisis however brought about, is felt to be at hand, though the small finger of the clock does not point to one; Mr. Macaulay, in an apparent confusion of mind and resolution, says what he attempts to unsay immediately after.” Also, see Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 407, 418.

<sup>271</sup> *Weekly Journal of the Scottish Temperance League* (Glasgow), June 26, 1858.

<sup>272</sup> Anon., *Gough’s Account of His Relapse* (n.p., n.d.), in the James Black Temperance Collections at the New York Public Library.

America in late 1858 to start yet another testimonial in order to shore up the character of the beleaguered lecturer. The list of names that Rev. James secured on the testimonial and sent over the Atlantic represented a number of American evangelical ministers (including the Beechers) and manufacturers/financiers from all over the northern states; and he chose not to disclose the names of those who had refused to sign or opposed the testimonial outright.<sup>273</sup> The American prohibitionists, like Rev. John Marsh of the *Journal of the American Temperance Union* (now the *Journal and Prohibitionist*), who had stood with Gough during the 1845 scandal, were now conspicuously missing from the list of his supporters.

### *A Temperate Awakening*

The evangelical retreat from political prohibition to (the safer ground of) personal and family abstinence was neither an isolated incident nor a uniquely British phenomenon. It coincided with the so-called Third Great Awakening of 1857-58 in America, which was set off by the stock market crash in New York in September 1857 and was to spread across the Atlantic to inspire a large-scale awakening in Britain in 1859. The revival was a landmark in many ways. Unlike previous revivals, this one was centered in cities (marked by “downtown revivals”) and attended heavily by clerks, merchants, and bankers. The awakening was orderly, organized around the normal business hours, and it featured subdued masculine piety in noon prayer-meetings of downtown churches. The revival realized the harmony between business and religion – “a synthesis of business and religion,” according to historian Kathryn T. Long, in terms of scheduling, employing business promotional methods, and finding religion in business. It

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<sup>273</sup> The selective publishing of the names of the respondents to the testimonial drive was challenged by the *Maine Temperance Journal* (Portland, ME), Jan. 27, 1859. Letters that responded negatively to Rev. James’s testimonial were not published, but are preserved in Horace James, Correspondence, 1852-1870, Miscellaneous Manuscripts (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA).

stressed personal regeneration and piety and skirted all the controversial social reform issues. The revivalists believed that “[a]ny needed social transformation would result from the cumulative personal reforms of regenerate individuals and from the direct, supernatural intervention of God.”<sup>274</sup> The revival was a reaction against the politicization of the evangelical reform movements and the resulting inter-and-intra-denominational strife of the 1850s, and it was supposed to be apolitical, ecumenical, and palliative.<sup>275</sup> It signaled a wholesale retreat of the conservative (or Liberal) evangelicals at mid-century from political and social action, of which the temperance schism that Gough was embroiled in formed a part. It was telling that Gough’s clerical associates and defenders, such as Rev. Theodore Cuyler of New York and Rev. Horace James of Worcester, MA, who had followed on Gough’s heels to Britain, returned home to become leaders in this socially conservative revival.<sup>276</sup>

The temperance schism started in the British movement, but quickly spread across the Atlantic. In fact, Gough’s “dead letter” controversy and his subsequent court battle directly caused the new rift in the American movement, thanks to his close ties with the American orthodox evangelical churches. In November 1857, the Boston *Congregationalist*, the organ of the Congregational church, suddenly opened fire on the Maine Law and its architect Neal Dow in the wake of Gough’s “dead letter” controversy. The article declared that the Maine Law should

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<sup>274</sup> Kathryn T. Long, *The Revival of 1857-58* (New York and Oxford, 1998), 82, 125.

<sup>275</sup> See Richard Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism* (Westport, CT and London, 1978), 159-174.

<sup>276</sup> Cuyler arrived in London in July 1857 and returned to New York after a brief stay, and he became a correspondent for William Tweedie and his paper *Weekly Record*. He reported the noon prayer meetings held in the business district of New York City and assured Tweedie’s readers that despite the panic, the stocks of the Illinois Central (R.R.) remained “perfectly safe.” See *Weekly Record* (London), Nov. 14 and 21, 1857. Horace James arrived sometime in early to mid 1858 and stayed for six months, returning to America to start the testimonial drive for Gough in December 1858.

have been repealed immediately but for “the general good of the cause.” It was not only a positive restatement of the British moral suasionist position, but more importantly, a passionate defense of Gough’s reputation and his “dead letter” argument.<sup>277</sup> At his trial, Gough denied having been in correspondence with the Boston *Congregationalist*, or having had any friendship with Rev. Henry M. Dexter, the paper’s editor, though he conveniently forgot to mention that he was a good friend of the paper’s proprietors, Galen James, a prosperous ship-builder in Medford, MA and his son Rev. Horace James, who may have been present in court that day.<sup>278</sup>

Rev. James concluded that the Gough-Lees conflict was “unquestionably a *religious war*” and “a struggle between the Christian and the anti-Christian, or Christian and *un-Christian* forces in the temperance movement.” Gough was assaulted because he was “the acknowledged leader of Christian and high-minded reform” and as a result of the “jealousy and ill-concealed aversion upon evangelical and spiritual pleaders for the cause.” The recent split of the temperance movement was for him a rite of “purification,” wherein the infidels or non-Christians were “shaken off and dropped from the ranks.”<sup>279</sup> According to Rev. Dexter, the Boston Congregational ministers staged a boycott of the Massachusetts State Temperance Convention held in the city in September 1858, because some agents of the society were “as much opposed to Orthodoxy as to intemperance” and they were “doing all they can...to prejudice the community against Mr. John B. Gough, the latchet of whose shoes they are not worthy to

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<sup>277</sup> *The Congregationalist* (Boston), Nov. 27, 1857, “The Cause of Temperance.” The article was also widely read in Britain.

<sup>278</sup> Rev. Dexter, who was, according to Gough, no friend with him, was one of the signers on Rev. Horace James’s testimonial.

<sup>279</sup> *The Congregationalist* (Boston), Oct. 8, 1858.

unloose.”<sup>280</sup> The temperance alliance of American prohibitionists and evangelicals, who had collaborated to return Gough to the platform after his scandal in 1845, was by all appearances defunct.

#### *From Temperance Reform to Moral Entertainment*

The transatlantic temperance schism that pitted the moral-suasion revivalists against the pro-Maine-Law legalists was ultimately an outcome informed by the broader scientific, biblical, and moral-political debates at mid-century and facilitated by Gough’s second visit to Britain. Unlike in the American North, where it was relatively hard to find respectable folks openly aligned against the cause of temperance and prohibition (whereas drinkers had always voted with their feet), in Britain, prominent literary elite came out to defend the personal liberty and the entrenched custom of (wine) drinking with reviews, editorials, and treatises against the potential encroachment of a Maine Law, which they saw as evidence of the puritanical tyranny of the Non-Conformist majority or the American “democracy.” The elite reactions against the Maine Law agitation did little to change the views or advocacy of hardcore prohibitionists. If anything, it gave the United Kingdom Alliance and its hotheaded agents like Frederic Richard Lees (who may well have relished debates and oppositions) a chance to expose “errors” and to gain a public hearing for their own views. It was the evangelical teetotalers (the gentlemen of trade and ministers of Non-Conformist churches) and half-hearted prohibitionists who buckled easily under the pressure of respectable opinion. While they retreated to the safer ground of voluntarism and moral suasion, they could not leave the field quietly to the U.K.A. They had to denounce political agitation as premature and self-defeating (no doubt, for the benefit of the respectable society). Though Gough abstained from the theoretical debates, he was nonetheless

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<sup>280</sup> *The Congregationalist* (Boston), Sep. 30, 1858.

aware of the issues at stake. Employed by the moral suasionist Leagues to address the respectable society, he changed tack (starting with the “dead letter”) to align himself more closely with his patrons. He began to moderate his stance on the nature of alcohol. He not only admitted to having used it as medicine, but treated the peculiarities of individual physiology and temperament, rather than wine itself, as the cause of drunkenness. He sold abstinence as a “Christian liberty” (as was drinking, though), an expedient choice of self-sacrifice at the family table, not decreed by the Bible but not forbidden therein, either. Despite his preaching, he attended dinners with wine drinking and toasting gentlemen well-wishers (though he and his wife always declined using the wine).

Gough’s seeking redress against Lees in a court of law is rather ironic for him and his friends who had professed a strong faith in moral suasion. The court battle between two of the temperance movement’s best-known spokesmen certainly publicized the differences between the two temperance factions and it personalized and dramatized the factional split. In retrospect, Gough gained nothing from the trial but the ill will of the prohibitionists and his erstwhile allies. His 1845 scandal, which he thought he had left behind, returned to haunt him as a result of the trial. But his role in the British controversy led directly to the breaking up of the once-harmonious American temperance alliance for prohibition. His American friends followed their British brethren in condemning political agitation and in reaffirming their commitment to personal piety and family-centered private reform. For them, Gough had become the embodiment of moral suasion and moderation (after they recruited him as an advocate for evangelical legal suasion in the 1840s). Rev. Leonard W. Bacon of the New Haven First Congregational Church, one of Gough’s partisans and once a temperance zealot, would come out in 1864 to denounce teetotalism and the temperance movement itself (moral suasion or



prohibition) and urge a return to targeting and punishing drunkards. His well-known pamphlet, bluntly titled *The Mistakes and Failures of the Temperance Reformation*, was dedicated reverently to none less than Mr. John B. Gough.<sup>281</sup>

Gough represented the evangelical, commercial, and light-hearted strain of temperance reform, which had lost its radical edge by mid-century. Moral suasion as promoted by Gough and his friends was, in essence, not very different from the studied Liberal opinion as propounded by John Stuart Mill. Its highlighted voluntarism and gradualism offered no offense to the entrenched social custom. In attempting to appear “respectable” and to privatize social reform, the moral suasionists had lost their appetite for real change. From a broad-based social reform, temperance was on its way of becoming paid moral entertainment for a selected audience. For all his professed intellectual deficiencies, Gough read the public mood extremely well. After a tumultuous tour, Gough returned to America in 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, and one of the first lectures he chose to deliver was not on temperance (let alone slavery), but it was “Street Life in London.”<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Leonard Bacon would enter into a long public debate in the *Independent* (New York) with John Marsh, the editor of the *Journal of American Temperance Union and Prohibition* in July-Nov. 1865. He was said to be an adherent of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. See Hugh Davis, *Leonard Bacon: New England Reformer and Antislavery Moderate* (Baton Rouge, 1998), 144.

<sup>282</sup> See Ch. IV for the transformation of Gough’s image after the second British tour.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **The Paradox of the Anti-Theatrical Drama: Dramatic Lecturing Defended and Justified**

Visiting Paris for a second time in the summer of 1879, Gough stopped by the American Chapel, a Protestant mission run by Rev. E. W. Hitchcock<sup>283</sup>, and was invited to address a contingent of French workers through an interpreter. Rev. Hitchcock described for his readers in the *New York Evangelist* what appears to be a comic scene created by translation, with the lecturer's "sentences...broken off in the middle, gestures arrested in mid-air, glowing thoughts interrupted before the climax, illustrations coming out on the canvas in fragments – first an eye, then the nose, the mouth, the chin, the brow, the face entire." Though slow and spasmodic, Hitchcock hastened to add, the lecturer's power was not lost on his listeners: "[T]he French audience saw and felt, and laughed and cried just as the English do."<sup>284</sup>

Despite the frequent reports of Gough's lectures being "unreportable," his unique ability to move an audience was universally recognized and amply discussed by both his contemporaries and later historians and biographers.<sup>285</sup> The Paris episode shows, in slow motion, the lecturer's pantomimic power in a situation where a rhetorical or an informational speech would have certainly failed. It is equally important that Rev. Hitchcock chose to report the speech in the *New York Evangelist*. He was hardly a disinterested auditor. Whether Gough's

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<sup>283</sup> Rev. Hitchcock was a member of the McAll Association, a Presbyterian foreign mission.

<sup>284</sup> *New York Evangelist*, Sept. 11, 1879.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, May 15, 1856. The cliché is that it was impossible to report Gough's lectures in written words and that the reader must hear the lecturer in person in order to appreciate his true oratorical power. For modern scholars' treatment of Gough's lecturing style, see for example Thomas Augst, "Temperance, Mass Culture, and the Romance of Experience," *American Literary History* 19:2 (Summer 2007), 297-323; and Amy Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ann Arbor, 2012), Ch. II.

speech did make as much of an impact on the French audience as described, we can be sure that it had received the stamp of approval from Rev. Hitchcock. Such a report from the field, of a celebrated lecturer who was known to have close ties with American foreign missions, was no doubt intended to brighten up the prospects for the evangelical enterprise. In a way, it was Rev. Hitchcock and a global network of evangelical ministers-cum-reporters who created the legend of the sweeping success of the temperance speaker.

This chapter aims to peel back the rhetoric of adulation surrounding Gough's lecturing performance and illuminate the role of ministers, who doubled as reviewers and reporters, in promoting the cult of Gough. The primary sources discussed in this chapter span the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century – the height of Gough's fame. Critical stances (both positive and negative) on Gough's lecturing style seem to have changed very little in the half century, despite his post-1860 attempt at broadening the range of his topics (see Chapter IV); the only exception was the prohibitionists, who changed their minds about the lecturer after *Gough v. Lees*.

Modern scholars have treated the theatricality of Gough's representation of delirium tremens as a foregone conclusion, but a close study of his contemporary and posthumous reviews reveals that the very "theatricality" of Gough's performance had been a key point of debate. It was no coincidence, either, that those who lauded Gough's dramatic style and defended his character were prominent ministers and leaders of large urban congregations. Considering the revolving door between the pulpit and the rostrum throughout much of the mid and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ministerial support for Gough as a lecturer (and preacher) indicated something more than personal loyalty and friendship. Gough represented a populist force, which the evangelical clergy had come to embrace or tried to harness in order to adapt their religion to the new urban settings of modern America. Their defense (and adoption) of Gough's popular dramatic style and

their desire to retain the Puritan moral codes of the past gave rise to many paradoxes and at times betrayed a sense of unease regarding their own evangelical methods. Whether they had contested successfully with the flourishing entertainment industry and the advancements of modern science by their adaptations or whether they had simply succumbed to secular influences and commercialism is perhaps as lively a debate today as it was in the times of John B. Gough.

### *The Newfangled Oratory*

Gough belonged to a new breed of orators, whose skills had been honed in the marketplace. His style and appearance were a radical departure from the popular notion of classical oratory.

Gough did not strike his audience as charismatic. The first impression of the man was almost always something of a “let down.”<sup>286</sup> He was “a spare, thin man...with a stature by no means imposing.”<sup>287</sup> He had not the “classic head” and “nothing of the *physique* which common notions associate with the orator.”<sup>288</sup> The “hirsute appendages” on his face – a beard that he started growing in the late 1850s – may have added gravity to his looks, but had not erased the “Yankee squareness and angularity” that came to be associated particularly with English immigrants to America.<sup>289</sup>

Gough’s voice was known for its pliability, rather than its stately rotundity. It was marked by “liquid softness, pathos, and reach of compass.” In his early temperance career, he both spoke and sang and would even “halt in the middle of his speech to sing a plaintive

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<sup>286</sup> Anon., “Sketches of Distinguished Orators,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 28, no. 11 (Mar. 1859), 178; *Inverness (Scotland) Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1857.

<sup>287</sup> *Illustrated London News*, Sept. 2, 1854.

<sup>288</sup> Anon., “Sketches of Distinguished Orators,” 177; *Inverness Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1857.

<sup>289</sup> *Banffshire Journal* (Banff, Scotland), Oct. 13, 1857; *Inverness Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1857; Theodor Waitz, *Introduction to Anthropology* (London, 1863), 53.

song.”<sup>290</sup> He used to be able to move thousands to tears by singing alone.<sup>291</sup> In the later years, his once musical voice became “husky and harsh” due to overuse, and it began to play second fiddle to his physical drama. Moreover, he was said to have brought ventriloquism, a form of popular stage entertainment for an actor to produce sounds and voices without appearing to be speaking, into his oratory.<sup>292</sup>

Critics noted Gough’s lectures as being “not regularly structured.” Instead of having “a beginning, a middle, and an end in the orthodox style,” they were “a mosaic of metaphor, anecdote, illustration, and appeal.”<sup>293</sup> He often opened his lecture with commonplaces and an apology for speaking on the “hackneyed” theme of temperance. After abating audience expectation, he brought his dramatic skills into play. Rather than merely relating a tale in the third person, he “assume[d] respectively each character.”<sup>294</sup> He imitated their tones, accents, and gestures. He was said to have “composed his own dramas, painted his own scenery with the tongue, conducted his own dialogues,” and he “was a whole ‘stock company’ in himself.”<sup>295</sup> He did not have a premeditated course of lecture, though he did have in store a repertoire of well rehearsed stories (which he called “facts”) that he would draw on. As a rule, he interwove tragic,

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<sup>290</sup> New York *Evangelist*, Feb. 25, 1886.

<sup>291</sup> *Boston and New England Washingtonian*, n.d., News Clippings Folio Vol. 1 (1843-1845), Gough Papers (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA).

<sup>292</sup> New York *Evangelist*, Feb. 25, 1886; Anon., “John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence,” *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533; Gough used to be a “buffo singer,” i.e., a singer of comic songs in theatre, including some “negro songs” at the Franklin Theatre in Boston. See *Musical World* (London), Aug. 1, 1885.

<sup>293</sup> *Falkirk* (Scotland) *Herald*, Dec. 31, 1857.

<sup>294</sup> Anon., “Sketches of Distinguished Orators,” 179.

<sup>295</sup> *The Independent* (New York), Mar. 4, 1886.

pathetic scenes containing moral lessons with humorous anecdotes intended for comic relief. He was able to turn the audience's mood so quickly that he was said to have "shortened the distance between a smile and a tear."<sup>296</sup>

Much of Gough's appeal in his mid to late career was physical drama. He enlisted every part of his "lithe, nervous body" in his portraitures.<sup>297</sup> Frances E. Willard, president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, recalled vividly the lecturer's play with his "restless, eager hands, supple as India-rubber." Gough even made use of his hair in dramatic representations, "flinging [it] forward in one character, back in another, or standing it straight up in a third." It was said that "his very hair is expressive." People observed that he "talked with his coat tails" because he was in the habit of "doubling up" or "shaking" his coat tails "in the most grotesque climaxes of gesticulation."<sup>298</sup> He had no use for a podium or a reading stand; he never read from a script and rarely stayed stationary. Defying the dignified postures commonly associated with the orator, he "reel[ed], stagger[ed], and f[ell]... in delineation of his theme."<sup>299</sup> "With a hop, skip, and jump" he would give chase to some imaginary bubbles he conjured up in his speech.<sup>300</sup> Audiences marveled at his footwork – how he "goes it with his feet."<sup>301</sup> And his

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<sup>296</sup> T. De Witt Talmage, *T. De Witt Talmage as I Knew Him* (New York, 1912), 164-5.

<sup>297</sup> *Inverness Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1857.

<sup>298</sup> Anon., "John B. Gough," *The Outlook* 117:2 (Sept. 12, 1917), 42; Anon., "John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence," *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533.

<sup>299</sup> Anon., "Notes and Gleanings," *National Magazine* 3:13 (Aug. 1858), 185.

<sup>300</sup> Anon., "John B. Gough," *The Outlook* 117, no. 2 (Sept. 12, 1917); Erwin House, "What is Eloquence!" *The Ladies' Repository* 12:10 (Apr. 1852): 138-39.

<sup>301</sup> Anon., "John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence," *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533.

movement on the platform (“pacing its length wise and cross-wise”) was by no means random and suggests training in melodramatic acting.<sup>302</sup>

Indeed, there was much in Gough’s oratory that resembled the melodramatic mode of acting on the contemporary stage. Rather than putting inner thoughts into verse (what is called “rhetorical acting”), the popular theatre of the 19<sup>th</sup> century “visualized” and “embodied” sentiments. It illustrated the character’s emotional state by action and gestures and accentuated sensational drama by creating “situations” or frozen scenes (tableaux) that minimized spoken words.<sup>303</sup> Gough was, of course, no stranger to the popular theatres of New York and Boston, and he served brief stints in low comedy parts and as a buffo singer. Gough was particularly gifted in visualizing his characters (not just the drunkard). When he described a roofer looking down from a narrow plank erected over the high church steeple, he produced a “shudder” as he “looked down.” He played the character of a minister who fought the craving for drink by locking himself up, and invited the audience to look at the (imaginary) “scars” on his face after the harrowing struggle.<sup>304</sup>

Gough’s performance was intended to stimulate the visual imagination of the audience and to build up a scene or a dramatic moment. Therefore, people remembered his lectures not as unconnected gestures and actions but as a “succession of highly-wrought scenes.”<sup>305</sup> Some

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<sup>302</sup> *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 1860. For the norms of melodramatic acting, see Conrad J. Bishop, “Melodramatic Acting: Concept and Technique in the Performance of Early Nineteenth Century English Melodrama” (Ph.D. Diss., Stanford Univ., 1966), Ch. II, esp. on “movement,” 135-149.

<sup>303</sup> Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983), Ch. 3.

<sup>304</sup> “The Power of Habit,” 4, 8 in John B. Gough, *Orations* (London, 1878).

<sup>305</sup> *Inverness Advertiser*, Oct. 6, 1857. For example, a reviewer recalled Gough’s lectures in the form of “pictures” – of “the boy snatched from the burning house, whilst an agonized mother and assembled thousands hold their breath in anxious fear; the devoted sister bathing in the deep cut

compared his lecture to a “beautifully varying panorama, passing in review before the audience, constantly increasing in interest and effect to the last and closing scene.” Both his mimetic power and his emotional play made his characters “tangible and material,” instilling a sense of detail and realism into his depictions. “So perfect,” it was said, “are his personifications that you almost imagine the actors of the scene before you.”<sup>306</sup>

Gough’s physical and pictorial drama answered to the growing appetite of the audience for visual entertainment. As Gough’s audience became increasingly “fashionable” over the years, there had been a growing social distance between them and scenes of poverty and drunkenness. “Dry statistics will weigh little with such people,” it was argued:

They must see the victim of intemperance reeling before their very eyes; they must be led from their luxurious lounges to the coarse straw and seedy furniture of his hovel; they must see his children growing up the embodiment of wickedness... All this, and such like, must they see – either in living reality, or *mirrored* before them in words that will reach their hearts...before they can be expected to give us the benefit of their example and influence in the prosecution of our great enterprise.<sup>307</sup>

This was the age of “Realist” novels (characterized by lifelike details and illustrations), pictorial prints, and illustrated newspapers and magazines. The different forms of print media were part of the visual (and commercial) culture that proliferated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the development of low-cost printing technology. Gough’s platform drama was frequently compared to popular prints (such as the reprinted works of William Hogarth and the drawings of George

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scar upon a drunken brother’s face; the wan and broken-hearted wife invoking Heaven’s blessing upon her once cruel but now reformed husband; the arrival of the survivors of a shipwrecked vessel at the wharf at New York, and the deep stillness and death-like stare of the vast multitude as they look for some loved friend amid the ill-fated crew; the infatuated man who gives himself up to the rapids of Niagara, and moves swiftly and fearfully on to the whirling gulf below.” Anon., “Sketches of Distinguished Orators,” 180.

<sup>306</sup> Anon., “Sketches of Distinguished Orators,” 179.

<sup>307</sup> *Weekly Journal of the Scottish Temperance League* (Glasgow, Scotland), July 11, 1857.



Cruikshank) and scenes from Dickens's novels.<sup>308</sup> His portraits became commodities both sold as individual prints and reproduced in books and illustrated newspapers and magazines. And it is no coincidence that Gough befriended George Cruikshank, the English political cartoonist turned book illustrator and printmaker, and became an avid collector and promoter of Cruikshank's popular art.<sup>309</sup>

Above all, Gough was a master in reading his audience. He was said to have "an almost intuitive perception into the character of the audience."<sup>310</sup> He was keenly aware of his surroundings, the occasion, and the kind of audience he was facing each night, and he adapted his lecture accordingly. On Sabbath evenings or when speaking from the pulpit, he would refrain from "any reminiscences of a ludicrous nature" and focus on the pathetic and the terrible.<sup>311</sup> In a speech delivered to the juvenile Band of Hope in London, he explained that the presence of adults among the children, which he had not anticipated, made it "doubly difficult" for him to "speak effectively," and that as a result, he would divide his discourse into two parts, one directed at the children and the other at the adults present.<sup>312</sup> Likewise, it was by gauging audience response that Gough ordered his anecdotes and altered his telling. His best effort would have been baffled by a reserved audience. Speaking extempore, he demanded spontaneous

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<sup>308</sup> Gough's best scenes were said to be "equal to the best touches of a Dickens or Scott." Anon., "Sketches of Distinguished Orators," 180.

<sup>309</sup> Gough collected Cruikshank's pictorial works, including cutting out his book illustrations. Cruikshank drew the famous temperance serial prints of *The Bottle* and *The Drunkard's Daughter*. Gough tried to raise funds in America to support the artist. See Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life, Times, and Art* (2 vols., New Brunswick, NJ, 1996) 2:326-28, 403, 488; and John B. Gough, *The Works of George Cruikshank* (Boston, 1890).

<sup>310</sup> *Falkirk Herald*, Dec. 31, 1857

<sup>311</sup> John B. Gough, *Autobiography* (Boston, 1845), 149.

<sup>312</sup> Gough, *Orations, Delivered on Various Occasions* (London, 1854), "John B. Gough's Address to Children, Dec. 28, 1853."

responses from his audience. If it is true that no lecture of Gough's was delivered twice alike, it was because the audience had as much of a role in shaping the lecture as the lecturer himself.<sup>313</sup>

### *Critical Stances*

Though everyone seemed to agree more or less on the basic features of Gough's lectures, their verdicts on his style were as divided as were the debates on his character – indeed, the two were inseparable. To some, Gough's "lectures" looked too much like the popular theater to be taken seriously as moral edification. Gough was considered an actor rather than an orator. His best oratorical efforts may have baffled many an evangelical reporter of "lectures," but they could have never fooled the play-goers, who were familiar with the dramatic ploys and effects.

Gough's most graphic depictions were likened to well played scenes from *Hamlet* or the best stage portrayals by Adelaide Ristori, an Italian actress then popular in the English speaking world.<sup>314</sup> The *North British Mail* remarked not without sarcasm that "[Gough] is so great an actor that we are in doubt as to which is the greater – his loss to the stage, or his gain to the platform."<sup>315</sup>

Others detested the anti-intellectual and populist tendencies of Gough's sentimental drama. George Gilfillan, a Scottish minister of the United Presbyterian Church and a poet and literary contributor for the *Eclectic Review* (Glasgow), regarded Gough's fame as an orator "a blot on the age." Gilfillan found the lecturer's physical drama (his "vermicular twistings" and

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<sup>313</sup> Anon., "John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence," *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533: "To them (the audience) the old theme had the freshness of novelty, and their interest was aroused in watching the growth of the subject as it developed under the influence of each new audience."

<sup>314</sup> Adelaide Ristori's popularity despite the language barrier evidenced, in another way, the diminishing importance of spoken words in drama. See Marvin Carlson, *The Italian Shakespearians* (Washington, DC; London; Toronto, 1985), Chs. 2 and 3.

<sup>315</sup> *North British Daily Mail* (Glasgow, Scotland), Oct. 15, 1878.

“jumpings to and fro”) and his lack of original content (his “eternal self-repetitions” and “barefaced plagiarisms”) “simply disgusting.” Gough’s popularity would “stamp indelible disgrace” on his admirers and “do discredit” to his recommenders, including Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. At the heart of Gilfillan’s ire was his detestation of the public lecturing system, a new commercial and populist institution that, as he saw it, demanded “clap-trap” more often than sensible arguments and preferred “masters of sound and fury” to speakers of true intellect. He advised an aspiring literary author to avoid public lecturing, lest he “vulgariz[e] himself by coming down to the level of his audience.” The public lectures, according to him, suited only “that class of persons who are anxious to acquire the reputation of knowledge, without the trouble of study.” Though “a good substitute for the card table or the theatre,” public lecturing was “of no great value” as “a means of intellectual improvement or moral culture.” For Gilfillan, Gough’s dramatic style epitomized “the degradation of the platform,” and his popularity reflected the intellectual and moral deficit of his followers.<sup>316</sup>

The scientific prohibitionists, who opposed Gough in the *Gough v. Lees* trial, spoke against the dumbing down of temperance lectures with “trashy” tales and sentimentalism.<sup>317</sup> Edward Grubb, one of the first Preston teetotalers and a close associate of Frederic Richard Lees’s, deplored Gough’s “new mode of speech making... adapted to the weakest capacity”:

How easy it is to advocate a cause where neither conviction nor examination are necessary to success – where the features of vice drawn from a wasted life, or the tricks of the stage are more telling in the market than the simple beauties of truth and virtue.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> George Gilfillan, *The History of a Man* (London, 1856), 250-1.

<sup>317</sup> Frederic Richard Lees, *An Inquiry into the Reasons and Results of the Prescription of Intoxicating Liquors in the Practice of Medicine* (London, 1866), 28.

<sup>318</sup> *Weekly Record* (London, England), Sept. 26, 1857.

When deprived of the visual and sound effects impressed upon the brain by the eye and the ear, Grubb concluded, Gough's speeches were barren of meaning. There was no "settled design," no "drift," but only "a profusion of wild, empty rapture, without sense."<sup>319</sup> The excitement thereby produced on the mind was, according to Frederic Richard Lees, temporary and counterproductive to the inculcation of rational thought and intellectual conviction: "The crowds who had feasted on excitement had no taste for the science of the Temperance movement; the stimulus of histrionic 'genius,' had, like gin, the effect of destroying the appetite for normal food."<sup>320</sup>

But for those who had seen Gough through the crises of public confidence (in 1845 and then 1857-8), Gough's affective and illustrative power was superior to logic and argument. They argued that Gough's dramatic illustrations created "a deeper conviction of the truth of his position, than would reasoning of the most consummate logician." His gestures were not superfluous to his speech, but were "so truly in harmony with the mind, as to give a living embodiment to its ideas and thoughts."<sup>321</sup> Gough's lack of academic training was celebrated as a preservative of his "natural" talent, which according to them could have suffered in "the academic mill." The absence of "self-consciousness" and "self-criticism" became a desirable quality in the public lecturer, as without introspection (or rather with single-minded devotion), he could deliver a lecture "as freshly and thrillingly, for the hundredth time as the first."<sup>322</sup> For these people, the goal was not necessarily to elevate the public intellect, but to make converts

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<sup>319</sup> Edward Grubb, *Old and New Temperance Advocacy* (Leeds, 1858), 26.

<sup>320</sup> James Hutchison Stirling, *Impressions on the "Gough-Lees Controversy,"* (n.p., 1860), 111.

<sup>321</sup> *The Elgin and Morayshire Courier* (Elgin, Scotland), Oct. 9, 1857

<sup>322</sup> "Memorial of John B. Gough by George Henry Gould," Worcester (MA) *Daily Spy*, April 20, 1886. This reference was kindly provided by Carol Damon Andrews, an independent researcher of Gould's life in Worcester, MA.

across different social classes and to fill the coffers of temperance societies. They were pleased to see that Gough's performance had proven successful not only with the lowly but with the "high-born, and the wealthy, and the influential," who would lend their resources to aid the movement.<sup>323</sup>

Despite the anti-intellectualism embedded in Gough's drama, we must bear in mind that the ablest defenders and promoters of Gough's lecturing style were not street preachers and small-town Finneyites. They were college-educated ministers of large urban congregations and eminent professors at universities and theological seminaries. They not only practiced but taught and theorized about preaching. Some of them may have been relatively close to the lecturer. Henry Ward Beecher supported Gough during his scandal and libel trial and was reciprocated by Gough's public endorsement during the Beecher-Tilton affair. Theodore L. Cuyler, minister of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn and a Princeton graduate, had known Gough since the 1840s and was instrumental in the lecturer's defense in the Gough-Lees controversy. George Henry Gould, a Congregational minister of Worcester, MA, accompanied Gough on his European tours.

Others may have been more or less acquaintances. Lyman Abbott, successor to Henry Ward Beecher as pastor of the Plymouth Church and editor of several religious magazines, wrote a long introduction for a collection of Gough's lectures titled *Platform Echoes* and claimed to have based his writing on public records rather than personal knowledge. Charles J. Little, professor of logic and history at Syracuse University and a Methodist (later president of the

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<sup>323</sup> *Weekly Record* (London, England), Sept. 26, 1857. William Tweedie wrote in response to Edward Grubb's criticism of the theatricalization and the dumbing-down of temperance speeches: "It may be that the public is much to blame – that it is poor stupid public – that if it would listen to you and your friends it would hear infinitely better lectures, and gain infinitely more knowledge. But what are we to do? It is this poor public with which we have to deal."

Garrett biblical Institute of Evanston, IL), was the author of a rave review for Gough's dramatic oratory in the magazine *The Chautauquan*. Little was said to possess a "rare power of dramatic presentation," with which he could bring a great man to life "in a great way and yet in a distinctly human way"<sup>324</sup>; Thomas De Witt Talmage, pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, whose popularity and pulpit drama rivaled Beecher's, touted Gough's legacy in his autobiography; Edwards A. Park, a prominent theologian at the Andover Theological Seminary and author of a controversial treatise on the "theology of the feelings," wrote one of Gough's memorials, published in the *New England Magazine*.

In Gough, the ministers and professors commended *not* the common drunkard, but the preacher. For them, Gough's oratory was something more than a lay effort to remove an obstacle to religious conversion; rather, it was implicitly religious and had a direct influence on the pulpit. According to Rev. Gould, Gough had "contributed more by his public addresses to the cause of Evangelical religion than any single pulpit in our land," and his lectures contained "enough gospel of late years, pure and unadulterated...to stock half a dozen average pulpit discourses."<sup>325</sup> Rev. Talmage believed that Gough's success as a lecturer "lighted new fires of divine passion in our pulpits."<sup>326</sup> Rev. Park argued that although Gough was not a "thoroughly read theologian," the "reverential spirit" he exhibited in prayers was a "touchstone for sound doctrine," and he believed that "[f]rom his familiar converse many well-instructed clergymen have derived fruitful

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<sup>324</sup> Charles M. Stuart, ed., *In Memoriam: Charles Joseph Little* (Chicago, 1912), 28.

<sup>325</sup> Worcester (MA) *Daily Spy*, April 20, 1886, "Memorial of John B. Gough by George Henry Gould."

<sup>326</sup> T. De Witt Talmage, *T. De Witt Talmage as I Knew Him* (New York, 1912), 164-5.

maxims.”<sup>327</sup> The ministers’ endorsement of Gough’s lecturing style suggested more than a friendly bias but something of their notion of effective preaching suited to the urban ministry. In describing and defining Gough’s drama, they were also justifying the new pulpit style they envisioned and embraced.

### *Anti-Theatrical Drama*

Despite their newfound appreciation for dramatic representation, the ministers remained adamant in their belief that the theater was a school of vice.<sup>328</sup> They were not oblivious to the popular criticism leveled against Gough’s theatricality. They wondered if people would go to hear Gough as they would to see a play. They were even more worried that they (and the evangelical churches) would be seen as patronizing a sort of Puritan theater - that Gough was but “the favorite of audiences deprived by tradition and prejudice of the enjoyments of the stage.”<sup>329</sup> Therefore, it was imperative for them to distinguish Gough’s drama from what they believed to be profane theatrical display. In fact, they went as far as to deny the very theatricality (and the theatrical origin) of Gough’s lecturing, and endeavored to reinvent his drama as the polar opposite of the stage version.

Unlike theatrical fiction, it was impossible, they argued, to separate Gough’s drama from personal experiences, either his own or those of others to whom he bore witness. The realism of

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<sup>327</sup> Edwards Amasa Park, “Distinctive Traits of John B. Gough,” *New England Magazine and Bay State Monthly* 5:1 (Nov. 1886), 3-6.

<sup>328</sup> Theodore L. Cuyler, for example, found objections in the content of the plays (even in Shakespearean classics), the character of the players on and off the stage, and in the “usual accessories” of a play-house. Though allowing for the reading of drama “by the fireside” (as a form of “Christian recreation”), Cuyler still regarded the theater as the main competitor against the divine drama of the church. Cuyler, “Christian Recreation and Unchristian Amusements,” *The Pulpit and Rostrum*, No. 1 (Nov. 15, 1858), 13.

<sup>329</sup> Charles J. Little, “John B. Gough, 1817-1886,” *The Chautauquan* 9:5 (Feb. 1889), 286.

his drama derived from the reality of these experiences. Gough's best acting was no play upon imagination, but spontaneous reactions "to the recollection of actual experience."<sup>330</sup> The ministers reassured their readers (and themselves) that even in recollection no sense of reality was sacrificed. Gough was capable of "realizing" an experience, a character, or a scene in his mind so vividly that he reacted mentally and physically "as if he was undergoing the experience with the exactness of reality."<sup>331</sup> For them, Gough was reliving, rather than merely reenacting, an experience. His drama was thus "fact, not fiction, made vivid to others because eternally real and vivid to himself."<sup>332</sup>

Gough's drama, the ministers claimed, was independent of the theatrical genre. In fact, according to the dramatic preacher Rev. Talmage, Gough had "harnessed" the drama that was once "prostituted" in the play-house, and had "raised" it for the "glorious uses" of temperance and religion.<sup>333</sup> But Gough's drama was no reformed theater. It was fundamentally *anti*-theatrical. "His action, be it understood, was *spontaneously* dramatic, and never theatric."<sup>334</sup> An actor calculated each move for effect, according to the ministers, but Gough was "utterly oblivious of acting." Despite his being a great mimic, "the very moment he became conscious of his mimetic power, it forsook him."<sup>335</sup> His performance seemed "unconsciously '*incarnated*'

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<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>331</sup> Anon., "John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence," *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533.

<sup>332</sup> Charles J. Little, "John B. Gough, 1817-1886," 286.

<sup>333</sup> T. De Witt Talmage, *T. De Witt Talmage*, 164-5.

<sup>334</sup> Anon., "John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence," *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533.

<sup>335</sup> "Memorial of John B. Gough by George Henry Gould," Worcester (MA) *Daily Spy*, April 20, 1886.



with all seriousness of purpose,” and constituted a “spontaneous and self-forgetful expression of Nature and Reality.”<sup>336</sup> To the ministers, Gough’s “careless” drama achieved better effects than the best effort of the theatrical art; and yet it involved no deliberate “acting” and hence no risk of deception or pretense.<sup>337</sup>

The ministers’ defense of Gough’s drama as anti-theatrical was simultaneously an endorsement of his character and that of his eager audience. Much of the difference between Gough’s dramatic oration and the theatrical play, according to the ministers, derived from the moral character of the performer and his audience. “[I]n the play-house men and women both play and are known to be playing.”<sup>338</sup> The theater audience understood a play to be fiction and they wanted to be amused by stage performance regardless of the true moral character of the players.<sup>339</sup> In a sense, the audience were themselves players or participants in a game of deception and self-deception, and their moral character was subject to the insidious corruption of the theater.<sup>340</sup> In contrast, Gough’s dramatic oration aimed at the reformation of “conduct and life.” And those who went to hear the orator saw him as the moral paragon and demanded

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<sup>336</sup> Anon., “John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence,” *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533.

<sup>337</sup> *Banffshire Journal* (Banff, Scotland), Oct. 13, 1857.

<sup>338</sup> Charles J. Little, “John B. Gough, 1817-1886,” 286.

<sup>339</sup> This is the key argument of the evangelicals against the theater. See, for example, Gough’s own anti-theater speech cited in *Christian Advocate* (New York), July 7, 1881. Gough recalled his “disenchantment” with the theater: “the unreality of it... the falsehood and fiction involved in their [players’] profession, in seeming to be what they never were or could be, studying virtue to represent it on the stage, while their lives were wholly vicious, repelled me.”

<sup>340</sup> Little, “John B. Gough, 1817-1886,” 286. According to Little, the theater affected one’s moral character “by subtle and unconscious influences, by a disturbance of its molecules such as those of an iron bridge undergo when repeated jars and pressure crystallize them into disintegrating brittleness.”

sincerity and congruity of word and action from him, “precisely when the *speech is over*.”

Gough’s earnestness in performance and (alleged) consistency of character thus guaranteed that his lecture was no confidence game (despite its dramatic qualities) and that his audience were different from regular play-goers.

The ministers were obsessed with Gough’s sincerity. They pointed to Gough’s self-absorbed performance as evidence of his sincerity. “There is no turning to the chairman,” they observed, “while his audience is flooded in tears, and saying, as did a certain popular actor to his companion in the scene, without relaxing the features that had broken up the fountains of feeling, ‘Those people in the pit would be the better of umbrellas.’”<sup>341</sup> (In fact, this is exactly the kind of “natural acting” that the famous English actor David Garrick championed since the 18<sup>th</sup> century – that an actor should stay in the character on stage, even when they have no lines.<sup>342</sup>) They insisted that there was “no room for doubting the perfect earnestness of the man.”<sup>343</sup> Such reassurances of the character of the man were often carried to the point of excess. Gough was “charged with his own convictions to the very core of his soul, to his finger tips, to each particular hair of his head and to the end of his coat tails.” “He was simple and guileless as a child... He had a tenderness of nature surpassing woman’s.”<sup>344</sup> “Never in all his life,” the reader

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<sup>341</sup> William Reid, *Sketch of the Life and Oratory of John B. Gough* (London, 1854), 72.

<sup>342</sup> Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860* (New York, NY, 2001), Ch. 1.

<sup>343</sup> Falkirk (Scotland) *Herald*, Dec. 31, 1857.

<sup>344</sup> “He takes on the character, not as an actor puts on his part, but as a child assumes in quick succession whatever is necessary to his childish sport.” *Christian Union* (New York), Feb. 9, 1881.

was told, “did he consciously utter a sentence or make a greeting simply for effect.” Moreover, the ministers maintained, “he could not do it.”<sup>345</sup>

More than giving verbal assurances, the ministers participated in Gough’s drama by sanctifying his platform with their presence. It was common for Gough’s lectures to be prefaced by a prayer led by the clergymen and closed with the singing of the Doxology. Needless to say, many of his lectures were held on church venues. Some of the more elaborate events paraded ministers and elite of the churches on the platform and even took on something of a liturgical tone.<sup>346</sup>

The ministers tried not only to legitimize Gough’s drama but to shape the aesthetic experience of his audiences.<sup>347</sup> Gough’s performance was frequently described as having an electro-magnetic effect. The rapid flow of his words gave off “electric sparks” and sent “electric shivers” down the spine.<sup>348</sup> He had “magnetic eyes” and a “vast amount of ‘animal magnetism’ condensed in the heart and the brain,” and his audience was drawn toward him by an electro-

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<sup>345</sup> “Memorial of John B. Gough by George Henry Gould,” Worcester (MA) *Daily Spy*, April 20, 1886.

<sup>346</sup> Some of them resembled a rite of ordination. See for example, report of Gough’s first lecture in Glasgow in *Weekly Journal of the Scottish Temperance League*, Sept. 19, 1857; and Gough’s farewell speech in Boylston, as reported by Boston *Daily Bee*, n.d., in News Clippings Oversize Vol. 1, Gough Papers (AAS): “Dr. Paine (of Holden, MA) came forward and tendered to Mr. Gough the right hand of fellowship in behalf of the clerical brethren present, and of the whole brotherhood of Christians, bidding him God speed in his mission, and invoking a Divine blessing on his labors. The whole assembly then rose, and led by the band, sang the Doxology.”

<sup>347</sup> Available evidence in private diaries/correspondence suggests that Gough’s audience tended to describe his lecture the same way the reviewers did, even using the exact same metaphors. See, for example, Letter from Emeline E. Joslin Colony to Harriet Hall Johnson, Mar. 22, 1863, [\*Allen-Johnson Family Papers, 1759-1992\*](#) (Alexandria, VA, 2010), 1-4: “I have heard it assigned as the reason of his exerting such power over an audience, that he is strongly charged with negative electricity, and while the listeners are supposed to be positively electrified!”

<sup>348</sup> Erwin House, “What is Eloquence,” 139; “Memorial of John B. Gough by George Henry Gould,” Worcester (MA) *Daily Spy*, April 20, 1886.

magnetic pull.<sup>349</sup> The pundits tapped into the popular fascination with the telegraphic science and mesmerism, and reshaped lecture-going as an embodied and simultaneously transcendent experience. The new critical aesthetics concentrated on the lecturer's impressions on the bodily senses rather than the intellect of the audience. The lecture was to be felt corporeally (as an electric shock) rather than to be cogitated upon. In the meantime, by inducing spontaneous emotional outbursts and forging shared sensory experiences, the lecturer was able to create something of a momentary suspension of individuality and turn his audience into one "colossal individuality" and a single "organism, palpitating with a common life and a common purpose."

<sup>350</sup> And the lecturer was felt to be one of them:

[A]s he climbed one step after another, as he essayed yet higher flights, we bore up with him, as if it had but one body, the living, breathing mass of humanity around.<sup>351</sup>

To realize an emotional experience of the unity of individuals among strangers, the lecturer also required the audience's momentary suspension of disbelief and their spontaneous response to his performance. The minister-literati promised the audience that no artful deception, but only amateur or natural-born talent, was involved in Gough's drama. In other words, his performance was not unlike the parlor theatricals, charades, and *tableaux vivants* popular in the mid-to-late Victorian era. These were played by children and attended by trusted family

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<sup>349</sup> George W. Bungay, *Crayon Sketches and Off-Hand Takings* (Boston, 1852), 95; *Massachusetts Cataract and Worcester County Waterfall* (Worcester, MA), "Upper Town Hall, July 29, 1844," in *News Clippings Folio Vol. 1*, Gough Papers.

<sup>350</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Romantic Electricity, or the Materiality of Aesthetics," *American Literature* 76:2 (Sept. 2004), 473; Anon., "John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence," *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533.

<sup>351</sup> *Weekly Record* (London, England), Aug. 29, 1857.

members and friends only, and were off limits to the confidence men.<sup>352</sup> In this sense, Gough's drama was a parlor theatrical writ large. By focusing on domestic relations, he made temperance "so much a family and fireside question" (a domestic drama), creating a safe "familial" environment for the audience to share their "confidence" with the performer and other strangers and to participate freely, at least for a moment, in the cult of sincerity. It is no wonder that some like Rev. Talmage credited Gough for inspiring "confidence" among the people - not only a "new confidence" in the work of "contemporary Christian labourers" but also the "confidence of man in man."<sup>353</sup>

### *Platform and Pulpit*

The ministers' reviews of Gough as sort of a model preacher were very much an extension and addition to their commentaries on homiletics. In endorsing Gough's dramatic style, the evangelical ministers were embracing a populist spirit in preaching. While some like George Gilfillan warned the writer against entering into public lecturing at the risk of "vulgarizing himself," the evangelical ministers embraced the platform as a larger pulpit. Henry Ward Beecher, for one, believed that the platform and the public hall freed the pastor from the institutional and architectural constraints of the pulpit and the church and brought him into direct contact with the man in the street. He disliked the boxed-up and tucked-away design of the pulpit and promoted a layout that placed the pulpit amidst the pews and accentuated the physical proximity of the preacher and the worshipers ("so close that you could lay your hand on them all around").<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> For parlor theatricals and the middle-class cult of sincerity, see Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women* (New Haven, 1982), Ch. 6.

<sup>353</sup> Talmage, *T. De Witt Talmage*, 164-5.

<sup>354</sup> John Hall, T. L. Cuyler, and H. W. Beecher, *Successful Preaching* (New York, n.d.), 61.

The ministers' anti-intellectual remarks, their celebration of Gough's original genius untarnished by academic training, reflected their dissatisfaction with the increasingly standardized education of ministerial candidates in theological seminaries.<sup>355</sup> Beecher criticized the seminaries for teaching too much theology and "not enough about men." He feared that the seminary-trained ministers were more interested in "theology in its various branches" than they were "in sympathy with men." He believed that the primary task of the pastor was to "catch men" rather than to expound theology through their sermons, and that a good preacher should be able to turn scholastic theology into "operative theology." The minister must "know his people, and preach to suit their wants."<sup>356</sup> For Beecher, the qualms about losing "dignity" in coming down from the intellectual pedestal were nothing but the "pretense of pride and of an artificial culture." Beecher worried more about insincerity (i.e., assuming the pretense of inspiration of a high order) than the lack of sophistication in the preacher. For him, "[t]here is nothing so dignified as a man *in earnest*."<sup>357</sup>

Lyman Abbott, who preferred Gough's "broad sympathy with men" and his "English common sense" to "philosophic culture," emphasized the experiential basis and the moral applications of religion. He warned against using sermons to advance the congregation's intellectual understanding. Few came to the church, he believed, to be instructed on the

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<sup>355</sup> Whereas it used to be a common practice that young aspirants for the ministry apprenticed with older ministers in preparation for their own pastoral appointments, theological seminaries increasingly took over the education of new ministers in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 53, 55, 61.

<sup>357</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching* (New York, 1872), 170.

philosophy of religion; rather, they came to seek moral and spiritual guidance for their lives.<sup>358</sup>

The preacher's primary object was to make religion relevant and to effect immediate changes in people's lives, rather than to elucidate theological arguments.<sup>359</sup>

Theodore L. Cuyler cited Gough, along with H. W. Beecher and Dr. Thomas Guthrie, in his homiletic lecture as an example of the "heart power" that was essential to successful preaching. He advised young ministers to use pathos and tears (unrestrained but genuine emotions), rather than arguments, to "break down" the audience. Though Cuyler was not against doctrinal preaching, he suggested nonetheless that one "preach to the plainest part of your audience" by mixing "lively and picturesque illustrations" and making the sermon "pictorial to the mind's eye and to the memory" and the diction "shorter and sharper," avoiding "words...puzzling to the common people."<sup>360</sup>

The new emphasis on populist homiletics that qualified Gough as a preacher *par excellence* cannot be isolated from the recent changes made by the same ministers in hermeneutics, which foregrounds the experiential and emotive elements of the Bible. For Lyman Abbott, the Bible in the preacher's hand was no longer a "theological book." It was not made for sectarian doctrinal hairsplitting; nor should it be used to teach science or philosophy. Instead, it

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<sup>358</sup> Theodore L. Cuyler would have agreed with him: "The profoundest men do not come to church to have their brains taxed, but to have their hearts made holier and their lives made better." Hall, Cuyler, and Beecher, *Successful Preaching*, 40.

<sup>359</sup> Lyman Abbott, "Introduction" in Gough, *Platform Echoes* (Hartford, CT, 1884), 29-72, and "The Preacher: His Object, His Instruments, and the Secret of His Power," *Outlook* 63:15 (Dec. 9, 1899), 880-882.

<sup>360</sup> Hall, Cuyler, and Beecher, *Successful Preaching*, 37-39, 44-45.

was a book of religious experiences - “the experiences of God in the souls of men...recorded in every variety and type of literature,” including “drama” and “ecclesiastical ceremonialism.”<sup>361</sup>

Charles J. Little, professor of logic and history at Syracuse University, explained biblical miracles (such as the bush that burns but is not consumed [Exodus 3:3]) as highly subjective and personal experiences, the vision of the devout Moses, rather than scientific and literal truths. Indeed, in addressing such miracles, he was not concerned with “proving that the vision was real and true,” but he taught instead the importance of recognizing the signs of God’s ever presence in people’s lives and of *actively* seeking “personal intimacy” with God.<sup>362</sup> He was theologically liberal and was said to be opposed to the “Back to Christ” movement. This was a movement among some evangelicals that emphasized the historical continuity and the literal study of biblical doctrines and traditions.<sup>363</sup> His sermons reveal that he was a proponent of the gradual or progressive revelation of natural and biblical truths and the idea that “the truth is always there for the patient discoverer.” For him, “your incredulity is only the confession of your limitations.”<sup>364</sup>

Under the influence of Horace Bushnell, who divided the language of the Bible into the poetic and the logical, Edwards A. Park, professor at the Andover Theological Seminary, invented the distinction between the theology of the feelings and that of the intellect in his study

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<sup>361</sup> Abbott, “The Preacher,” 883.

<sup>362</sup> Charles J. Little, *Angel in the Flame* (Cincinnati and New York, 1904), 16, 20, 21, and esp. 23: “Think you, my brothers and my sisters, think you that God is the God of the ancients only, that He has vanished from this later world? No! as the Lord Jehovah liveth, No! He is not the God of the dead, even though their names be Moses and Isaiah and Paul. Or think you that He has no vision or no task for you because your path is not the path of the mighty? Know you not that with God there is no great and no small... God is never far from any one of us.”

<sup>363</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT, 1972), 782.

<sup>364</sup> Charles M. Stuart, ed., *In Memoriam: Charles Joseph Little*, 28, 56.



of the Bible.<sup>365</sup> Though intended to be balanced against the extremes of pietism and rationalism, Park's treatise raised a bitter theological controversy when it was published in 1850. The bone of contention, as Park's chief opponent Rev. Charles Hodge at Princeton pointed out, was the question of "the true relation between feeling and knowledge in matters of religion."<sup>366</sup> Park argued that there were poetic (figurative) passages apart from the logical (literal) ones in the Bible. The former should not be read literally as doctrinal bases like the latter, but should be understood and valued as appeals to the human imagination and emotions. To the discomfort of the ultra-orthodox theologians such as Charles Hodge, Park gave religious feelings an equal footing as he did religious doctrines and suggested that both (sometimes combined) offered access to religious truth. He even hinted at the superiority of the theology of the feelings (though less accurate in diction) in creating better impressions and pointing the common worshipper to the right path.<sup>367</sup> In essence, Rev. Park provided a biblical foundation for emotive preaching, as well as a way to resolve the difficulties and contradictions, within the Bible and between science and religion, resulting from a literal interpretation of the Bible.<sup>368</sup> He was developing something of a populist theology – a theology or hermeneutics geared toward homiletics. It was an effort to

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<sup>365</sup> Horace Bushnell, *God in Christ* (Hartford, CT, 1849); Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 609-613; Edwards Amasa Park, "The Theology of the Intellect and That of the Feelings," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 7:27 (July 1850), 533-568.

<sup>366</sup> Charles Hodge, "Review of 'The Theology of the Intellect and That of the Feelings'," *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (Oct. 1850), 670.

<sup>367</sup> Park used a metaphor to suggest that a mother with "a woman's tact" may have better success in teaching a child than the "punctilious divine." Park, "The Theology of the Intellect," 533-4.

<sup>368</sup> On the contrary, Charles Hodge believed that it was impossible to separate the so-called theologies of the feelings and the intellect, and that intellectual understanding must precede the change of heart and determine the nature of the affections. He criticized Park for accommodating not science but "theories of science" and not philosophy but "speculations of philosophers." Hodge, "Review," 665, 670, 672. For a more detailed discussion of the theological debate, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977; New York, 1998), 147-151.

make the Bible less of an ancient text to be mined for sectarian tenets or explanations of natural phenomena and more of a book highly relevant and emotively resonant with the common people.

### *Church and Stage*

The same ministers, whose liberal hermeneutics and populist homiletics characterized religious liberalism of the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, were instrumental in creating the cult of Gough. For them, Gough represented the new dramatic talent that could counter the influence of other urban attractions, and his non-partisan, non-doctrinal, and yet religiously informed speech circumvented controversial social and theological issues and had a close affinity to the “broader religion” that they preached. On closer examination, their reviews were obviously one-sided, and were even sometimes self-contradictory. On the one hand, they tried hard to convince the readers that Gough was so absorbed in illustrating his theme that he cared nothing for effect<sup>369</sup> – the essence of the anti-theatrical drama. But on the other, he was portrayed to be a spontaneous and interactive lecturer who was highly responsive to his audience and who would adapt and improvise for immediate effect.<sup>370</sup> The attributes and contributions that the ministers ascribed to Gough represented what they wanted to see in him, or in a popular preacher like him, perhaps more than whom he really was.

The paradox of the anti-theatrical drama spoke volumes of the dilemma that the theologically liberal and socially conservative ministers faced in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Calvinism decayed over the course of the century, the ministers were trying to hold

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<sup>369</sup> *Elgin and Morayshire Courier* (Elgin, Scotland), Oct. 9, 1857: “scarcely stopping at a cheer, never inviting one.”

<sup>370</sup> Anon., “John B. Gough: The Master of Dramatic Eloquence,” *Andover Review* 5:29 (May 1886), 533: “His self-criticism in style had relation to its fitness for an audience. If word, phrase, argument, anecdote, illustration did not ‘fit the audience’ he dropped it; and he discovered its fitness or unfitness by actual experiment upon an audience.”

on to Puritan moral values/traditions without the support of Puritan theology. From popular preachers like Henry Ward Beecher to learned theologians like Edwards Amasa Park, these were of a generation who had wrestled with and finally rejected the Calvinist tenets of original sin and predestination.<sup>371</sup> They were staking the legitimacy of their moral government (Sabbatarian, anti-theatrical, anti-pleasure) on human agency, instead of divine sovereignty, and they had to depend on and believe in the sincerity of the individuals. This may have contributed to an acute sense of moral anxiety, as laid bare by their obsessive defense of the conformity of Gough's inner character and outward style.

Anti-theatrical drama was arguably an innovation on the part of the college-educated and theologically-liberal clergy to adopt Realist drama for the evangelical work of mass conversion. The counter-attraction of Gough's newfangled public lecture concurred with the emergence of P. T. Barnum and Moses Kimball's legitimate theater or "museum" catering to respectable middle-class families, which got rid of the third tier (where prostitutes used to ply their trade) and alcohol, employed reputable "stars," and staged moral or domestic drama. Though growing out of antagonistic traditions (the evangelical moral reform versus the entertainment showbiz), Gough's temperance lecture and the legitimate theater had nonetheless converged on a number of occasions.<sup>372</sup> On May 3, 1854, for example, his dramatic lecture was enthusiastically received

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<sup>371</sup> For the intellectual struggle, see especially Park, "The Theology of the Intellect," 567-8. Rev. Park believed that sin consisted only in the act of sinning and was not a passive (inherited) nature; Also, Karen Halttunen, "Gothic imagination and social reform: the haunted houses of Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, and Harriet Beecher Stowe," in Eric J. Sundquist, ed., *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Cambridge, UK and New York, 1986). Halttunen argued that the Beechers' fascination with Gothic horror was a displacement of their anguish over the rejection of the Calvinism of their father's generation.

<sup>372</sup> Theater historians have been debating the true nature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century moral play, whether it was, according to some, such as Jeffrey D. Mason and John W. Frick, a "veritable pulpit," or as Jeffrey Richards argues, just another "highly entertaining, feverish, conventional dramatic exhibition." Mason emphasizes the moral design of the play ("the primary purpose is to

by the audience at the Sadler's Wells Theater in London, which establishment featured moral plays (among them, his friend George Cruikshank's three-act temperance drama, *The Bottle*).<sup>373</sup> Even Gough's platform began to take after the stage, adopting the proscenium arch and an idyllic tableau setting with a vanishing point. (See fig. 2 and 3.)



Fig. 2. Temperance Pavilion at Dunse  
Source: *Illustrated London News*, Jan. 13, 1855

galvanize the audience into accepting the message and acting upon it”), whereas Richards stresses the aesthetic conformity of moral plays with the mainstream melodrama (especially the fact that theatrical managers often toned down or altered the moral message of a play to make it non-obtrusive for the majority of the audience). Like Richards, I see moral theater as deriving from a tradition (of commercial entertainment) different from that of the low-church theatrics of evangelism. But in the final analysis, the seeming contradiction in interpretation merely reflects our own ambivalence toward mass media, mirroring the debate surrounding Gough's popularity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (some believing him to be another George Whitefield, and others seeing nothing but a David Garrick). See John W. Frick, *Theatre, Culture and Temperance Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, UK, 2003), 123; Jeffrey D. Mason, “*The Drunkard* (1844) and the Temperance Movement,” in *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington, 1993), 61-87; Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Early American Drama* (New York, 1997), 245.

<sup>373</sup> Frick, *Theatre, Culture and Temperance Reform*, 94.



Fig. 3 Gough at Sadler's Wells, Sketch by George Cruikshank,  
Source: *Illustrated London News*, May 20, 1854

Paradoxically, the innovation approved by the ministers and supposed to empty the theater and fill the church also became something of a segue to the reconciliation and convergence of church and stage in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>374</sup> Gough, the master of anti-theatrical drama, provided the transition, during and even beyond his lifetime, from the anti-theatrical Puritan tradition to the gradual and perhaps ambivalent acceptance of moral and commercial theater. Gough did this by legitimizing dramatic representation on the platform or

<sup>374</sup> Even the interior design of churches began to take after that of the theater, evidenced by the widespread adoption of the amphitheater-style auditoriums since the 1860s. See Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theater: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, 2002), Ch. 5.

delivering temperance lectures in theaters, and allegedly by attending and promoting the famous moral temperance play, T. S. Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> The story of Gough's attendance at a *Ten Nights* production in Cincinnati and his promotion of the play comes from Honoré W. Morrow, *Tiger! Tiger! The Life Story of John B. Gough* (New York, 1930), 197-201; Amy Hughes suggests that Gough may have gone to see *The Drunkard* on Mar. 16, 1844. Amy E. Hughes, "John B. Gough's Afternoon at the Theater; or, the Tyranny of an Account," in Stephen Johnson, ed., *A Tyranny of Documents: The Performing Arts Historian as Film Noir Detective* (n.p., 2011). Neither story, however, can be independently verified.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Cult of John B. Gough: From Temperance to Moral Entertainment**

On Nov. 21, 1860, shortly after his return from his three year sojourn in Britain, John B. Gough, the celebrated temperance advocate, was announced to speak in New Haven on a new subject, “Street Life in London.” The lecture was the first of a series that Gough prepared based on his experiences in London. It was the first time that he deviated from the temperance theme, and for the very first time, he was to have a manuscript and was to read from it.<sup>376</sup>

Gough explained the sudden change of tack as a result of popular demand combined with personal need: that his friends desired to hear about his travel experiences; and that he also “felt the necessity of change,” after speaking on the same subject for so long, in order to “prevent my losing the elasticity of mind.”<sup>377</sup> But the real reasons were perhaps more complicated. He may have won his high-profile libel trial in London, but to the observers on both sides of the Atlantic (except for his partisans), he was not entirely free of blame in the whole affair, which exposed and deepened the rift in the temperance movement. Thanks to the factional rivalry of the prohibition and moral suasion parties, in which Gough played a conspicuous part, the atmosphere for temperance work had become too divisive and poisonous by 1860. In other words, it was difficult to stake a public position without offending either party. Added to the factional tension in the temperance ranks, public enthusiasm for temperance work was petering out in face of the imminent political crisis of secession (Lincoln was elected president in November 1860). An astute observer of public moods, Gough was not to speak on unpopular

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<sup>376</sup> John B. Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* *Autobiography and Personal Recollections of John B. Gough* (Springfield, MA; Chicago; Philadelphia, 1869), 525-526.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 525-526.

issues. His London lectures were supposed to take people's minds off controversial issues and to be, above all, funny and entertaining. In fact, Gough reportedly refused to give these lectures in churches, as "the humorous character of these particular lectures is such as to make a church inappropriate for their delivery."<sup>378</sup>

The London lecture series marked a significant transition in Gough's career. Admittedly, he did not ditch temperance and would continue to return to the topic; but he proved himself capable of being received by the public on other subjects, and on less dogmatic grounds, as a moral entertainer. Also, he used to rely on the temperance circuits, made up of local temperance societies, national societies, and church societies, but now he became more and more associated with the commercial lyceum bureaus (James Redpath's, James Burton Pond's) and was repeatedly called for by "literary associations." Gough would not be confined to the role of a temperance reformer or a reformed drunkard any longer; he was on his way of becoming an entertainer and a celebrity for a broader moral and respectable public, teetotal or not.

This chapter traces how Gough remade his public image after 1860, and equally importantly, what was done for him by others writing about him during and beyond his lifetime. Gough's death in 1886 did not end his spell over the public. He was commemorated in biographies and elocutionary anthologies and by numerous emulators who aped his dramatic style and recited his lectures. It was the collapse of the Victorian culture (and Prohibition) in the 1920s and 30s that did him in. Before he disappeared completely from public memory, he made his last appearance in popular historical fiction (where he was made a fan of the temperance play *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*) and memorabilia in 1930. This last public appearance did not restore

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<sup>378</sup> *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York), Feb. 26, 1861. "In his new lectures on London, John B. Gough, unlike Wendell Holmes, has 'dared to be as funny as he can' ...Mr. Gough declines to deliver his 'London' lectures *in churches*, upon the ground that the humorous character of these particular lectures is such as to make a church inappropriate for their delivery."



his place in the American pantheon of cultural heroes; but in different (and perhaps unintentional) ways, it consigned him to the circus of curiosities (which is how *we* tend to see him today), sending him further on his way to oblivion.

### *New Lectures*

Upon the popular reception of his “Street Life in London,” Gough followed it up with more lectures on his London travels (“Lights and Shadows of London Life,” “London by Night,” “The Great Metropolis,” etc.), imparting “knowledge” ranging from the famous London fog to how London bartenders recycled spilled alcohol using perforated pewter counter tops to make a “cocktail.” London was for him “an almost inexhaustible field” and his London lectures were “continually called for.” Apart from the standard temperance-themed lectures, which he continued to give on demand, he also began to write new pieces more or less for general amusement under such titles as “Peculiar People,” “Eloquence and Orator,” and “Blunders,” which consisted of humorous incidents he had encountered and anecdotes about celebrities with whom he had rubbed shoulders.<sup>379</sup>

Some had reservations about Gough’s innovation. “He rose so high and penetrated to such a depth when speaking upon temperance,” the *Christian Advocate* observed, “that to see him in the act of simply entertaining an audience produced a kind of shock.”<sup>380</sup> To those who suspected him of abandoning the temperance cause, Gough responded that he was merely using general topics to draw in people who would have eschewed a temperance lecture and he had used every opportunity to drive home his temperance message. However, it is clear from the private accounts of attending Gough’s lectures after 1860 that the impressions the new lectures created

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<sup>379</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections*, 527-28.

<sup>380</sup> “John B. Gough,” *Christian Advocate* (New York), Feb. 25, 1886.

had no bearing on the audience's view on temperance; they were more often "festive occasions," social gatherings for Christian young men to meet their dates, and a substitute for the more somber prayer-meeting on a Sunday evening.<sup>381</sup> Though Gough's lecturing style or effect had changed very little, the content of his lectures were both broadened in range and diluted in terms of moral agenda. The new lectures were indicative of the transformations that Gough underwent after 1860. He was no longer content with being identified as a temperance reformer or remembered as a reformed drunkard. He wanted to become a cultural celebrity.

### *Autobiographical Self-Making*

The revamping of Gough's autobiography in 1869 (originally published in 1845) was part of his post-Civil-War remaking of his public image. The 1869 autobiography was different from the 1845 version in many ways. First, the two versions of autobiographies bear little physical resemblance. The publication of the original autobiography was undertaken at Gough's own risk. It was printed for and hawked by the lecturer (allegedly from "a carpet bushel bag") as he travelled from town to town (later, also for sale at bookstores and other retail establishments).<sup>382</sup> The book itself is a modest and slim volume (duodecimo, 172 pages), bound in plain cloth, with

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<sup>381</sup> The conclusion is based on private letters and diaries of middle/upper-middle-class women, such as Emeline E. Joslin Colony to Harriet Hall Johnson Johnson, Mar. 22, 1863, *Allen-Johnson Family Papers, 1759-1992* (Alexandria, VA, 2010), 1-4; Elizabeth Payson Prentiss, *The Life and Letters of Elizabeth Payson Prentiss* (New York, 1882), journal entry on February 14, 1856; Annie L. Youmans Van Ness, *Diary of Annie L. Van Ness, 1864-1881* (Alexandria, VA, 2004), journal entry on Sunday, April 27, 1873.

<sup>382</sup> That Gough hawked his autobiographies during his lectures was satirized in Boston *Herald*, Dec. 2, 1847. "He (Gough) produced a carpet bushel bag, of about the capacity of the pickpocket Bell's pocket, containing copies of the same (autobiography)." The autobiography was for sale at the Saxton & Miles bookstore in New York City, which he visited before being "drugged" in 1845. L.S. Beck & Son, a home furnishing store in Washington D.C., doubled as bookseller for Gough.

no illustrations.<sup>383</sup> It was priced to be sold quickly and cheaply at 37 ½ cents, and to be read by all those who heard, or heard of, the lecturer. For many, this was not only a printed extension of Gough's autobiographical lecture, but it was considered, especially where he was less widely known, a public testament to the lecturer's character and "professional" credentials.<sup>384</sup>

The republication of the autobiography in 1869 was an entirely different affair. The new book was sold *by subscription* through a Springfield (MA) publisher, Bill, Nichols & Co.<sup>385</sup> Even before the manuscript was finished, local agents (who took out a percentage on the sales) began canvassing each city, town, and village for subscribers.<sup>386</sup> Newspapers followed the writing and printing of the book with anticipation and put out excerpts (teasers) from the "advance sheets" they received.<sup>387</sup> The new book was said to be "gotten up and illustrated with a view to the wants of the subscription trade."<sup>388</sup> It promised to be a substantial volume (552-page octavo), "beautifully bound and illustrated" (by George Cruikshank, the well-known

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<sup>383</sup> A portrait of the author was added in 1847 as a frontispiece with a picture guard, and the statements about the New York scandal were appended to the American editions published after 1846 and were subsequently removed by 1853.

<sup>384</sup> Ronald J. Zboray and Mary S. Zboray, "Reading and Everyday Life in Antebellum Boston: The Diary of Daniel F. and Mary D. Child," *Libraries & Culture* 32:3 (Summer 1997), 285-323. The Childs' diary entries in April 1845 shows that they were reading Gough's autobiography, most likely, after attending his lectures; Donald M. Scott suggests the public lecturer's dependence on the print media to shore up his professionalism. Scott, "Print and the Public Lecture System, 1840-60," in William L. Joyce, et al., ed. *Printing and Society in Early America* (Worcester, MA, 1983).

<sup>385</sup> And it was simultaneously issued by F. Dewey in San Francisco; Sampson Low, Son, & Marston in London, England; and A. H. Hovey in Toronto, Canada.

<sup>386</sup> Ads that solicit agents for the book can be found everywhere from the *Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct. 4, 1869 to *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), Oct. 2, 1869.

<sup>387</sup> See for example *Congregationalist and Boston Recorder* (Boston), Sept. 30, 1869; Dec. 12, 1869.

<sup>388</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco), Oct. 2, 1869.

illustrator for Charles Dickens's novels, and others). It featured "a finely executed portrait of the author on steel" and a list of "engravings on wood."<sup>389</sup> This enlarged and updated volume was sold for \$3.75, which put it well out of the reach of not only the workingmen but also the clerks and the lower middle class. Unlike the first autobiography, which Gough claimed to be "a short and simple annal [sic] of the poor," the new book (and the very fact of its being pre-sold) was a testament of his established fame and respectability.<sup>390</sup> It was not only intended to be read, but to be seen, designed to be displayed in the prosperous middle-class parlor or library; it was a showpiece that demonstrated the virtuous taste and the wealth of the owner.<sup>391</sup>

Popular as Gough's first autobiography was, it had a troubled past as Gough did. The first autobiography was often associated with a certain John D. Ross (whose real name was discovered to be John Dix), an English writer (from Bristol) of minor fame. Dix was said to be a reformed drunkard, converted by Gough. Upon getting acquainted with Gough in early 1845, Ross, or rather John Dix, quickly entered the lecturer's inner circle and helped advance his career as sort of a press agent.<sup>392</sup> He penned sketches for Gough's lectures in newspapers and put together eulogistic songs and poems by evangelical notables in an appendix amounting to some 48 pages in a 172-page book.. Some believed that it was Dix who wrote Gough's autobiography

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<sup>389</sup> *Hartford Daily Courant*, Sept. 23, 1869.

<sup>390</sup> John B. Gough, *Autobiography* (Boston, 1845), 1.

<sup>391</sup> The aesthetic and monetary values of the physical appearances of books are discussed in Ronald J. Zboray, "Antebellum Reading and Ironies of Technological Innovation," *American Quarterly* 40:1 (Mar., 1988), 65-82.

<sup>392</sup> And he did more than that, too. When Gough was accused of stopping at a local tavern in Newburyport, MA in 1845, Dix went to confront the owner and exacted a public apology (with cash reimbursement) on the threat of a libel suit. Dix had tried to start a temperance magazine with Gough, and he was delegated by Gough to look up the latter's father and others mentioned in the autobiography (in order to corroborate Gough's story).

in the first place. As late as in 1869, when Gough's new autobiography was in the press and Dix was dead, some still insisted publicly that Dix, rather than Gough, was the real author of the first autobiography.<sup>393</sup>

The new autobiography gave Gough a chance to reassert his authorship. He was definitely eager to rid himself of the ghost of John Dix, all the more in 1869, because Dix had already become a reviled name in both the literary and the temperance circles by the late 1850s. Not only did Dix relapse into bouts of drunkenness, his credibility as an author was questioned. Dix had won some fame in Boston for his lively sketches of literary and clerical figures, and particularly for a biography of Thomas Chatterton, a child prodigy and author of apocryphal medieval poems.<sup>394</sup> In late 1857, it was revealed by the London *Athenaeum* that Dix, the biographer of Chatterton the famous literary forger had himself forged documents as well as the portrait of the young poet.<sup>395</sup> Almost at the same time, Dix began to publish stories satirizing pledge-signers and teetotalers in the popular magazine *Ballou's Pictorial*.<sup>396</sup>

Dix's disrepute threatened to put Gough's own veracity to doubt – if not his judiciousness in having accepted Dix's literary collaboration in the first place. He took care to erase all traces of Dix from the new autobiography. Not only was the appendix (compiled and edited by Dix)

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<sup>393</sup> George H. Monroe (pseud. "Templeton"), "Boston Correspondence," *Hartford Daily Courant*, Oct. 4, 1869.

<sup>394</sup> Dix's biography of Chatterton was first published in Bristol and London in 1837, and then reprinted in Boston in 1845 and in London in 1851. Dix also published a few volumes on American divines in 1853-4 in London through Wm. Tweedie, no doubt with Gough's influence.

<sup>395</sup> For the controversy over Chatterton, see W. Moy Thomas, "The Inquest on Chatterton," *The Athenaeum* (London, England), Dec. 5, 1857 and Jan. 23, 1858; and Walter Thornbury, "John Dix, the Biographer of Chatterton," *Notes and Queries* (London, England) 4<sup>th</sup> Series, IX (April 13, 1872), 294-296.

<sup>396</sup> John Ross Dix, "Paul Poppleton's Dream: A Tale of a Tea-Tippler," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* (Boston), Dec. 19, 1857.

dropped, but Gough denied that Dix had taken any active part in the writing of the original autobiography. It was he who “dictated” the autobiography to Dix, who was merely “a good short-hand writer,” and the language of the autobiography was entirely his, “excepting only three, or, at most, four instances.” With regard to his new work, Gough insisted that he had allowed no one to touch it but himself: “I have written it, revised it, looked over the proof, and, such as it is, it is mine.”<sup>397</sup> Rather than entrusting the new book to some literary friend, Gough felt confident enough (now ensconced in his celebrity) in 1869 to assume sole authorship and to rely on his own best judgment in making any omissions and additions to his life.

The new autobiography gave Gough a chance not only to tell new stories of his life (since 1845), but to reshape old ones as befitting his new social position. Gough took care to revise his anti-clerical remarks regarding his mother’s burial in a pauper’s grave without Christian rites. Compare the two passages below.

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<sup>397</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 545.

There was no burial-service read, - none. My mother was one of God's creatures, but she had lived- died amongst the poor. She had bequeathed no legacies to charitable institutions, and how could the church afford one of its self-denying men to pray over her pauper-grave? She had only been an affectionate wife, a devoted mother, and a poor Christian; so how could a bell toll with any propriety as she drew near to her final resting-place? No prim undertaker, who measured yards of woe on his face according to the number of hatbands and gloves ordered for the funeral, was there, and what need, then, of surpliced priest? Well, it was some comfort to me, that my poor mother's body could 'rest in hope,' without the hired services of either; and I could not help feeling and rejoicing that he who wept at the grave of Lazarus, was watching the sleeping dust of his servant. O! miserable indeed is the lot of the poor;- a weary, struggling, self-denying life, and then a solitary death and an unblessed grave! <sup>398</sup> (1847)

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<sup>398</sup> Gough, *Autobiography* (1845), 25.

So was she buried! Without a shroud; her shoes on her feet. One of God's creatures – an affectionate wife, a devoted mother, a faithful friend, and a poor Christian; that's all! So there was no burial service read; into that trench she was thrown without a prayer; and that was the end, after a long life of faithful work for others- a life of patient struggle, fighting nobly, lovingly, and hopefully the battle of life. This was the end. No, no, thank God! No, not the end. Her own body rests in hope, and he who wept at the grave of Lazarus, watches the sleeping dust of his servant. Yes, life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel. My poor mother sleeps as sweetly as if entombed in a marble sarcophagus; and thank God, she will rise as gloriously when "He who became the first fruits of them that slept," shall call his humble disciple to come and "be forever with the Lord."<sup>399</sup> (1869)

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<sup>399</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 75-6.

The original passage showed spite at the church and the “surpliced priest” for rendering religious services based on monetary contributions. In the revised version, Gough replaced it with a more uplifting paragraph emphasizing the hope of salvation for the righteous.<sup>400</sup> This no doubt reflected his new standing with the mainline churches.

Another troubling passage for Gough in 1869 was his unequivocal expression of support for legal prohibition in the 1845 autobiography. The original passage, which comes as something of a reflection on his first relapse and recovery and serves as a conclusion to the original text, made it his “imperative duty, to proceed yet another step” (beyond mere Washingtonian moral suasion) to “throw another wall of protection” (that of legal prohibition) around the reformed drunkard.<sup>401</sup> Needless to say, this position had become too forward for the taste of his British patrons by the late 1850s, and he took care to remove the passage from the new book.<sup>402</sup>

The deliberation that went into the changes Gough made to his autobiography is shown, incidentally, in the preexisting British editions of the autobiography. The original text of the autobiography had undergone several changes during its publications in Britain by 1869 – with or without Gough’s consent. The entire concluding passage regarding Gough’s support for legal prohibition was eliminated in the London editions (1846 and later) and was replaced by an

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<sup>400</sup> Frederic Richard Lees noticed a similar discrepancy between the burial paragraphs in the original autobiography and the version that appeared in the *Ipswich Series of Temperance Tracts* (ca. 1856). He argued that Gough made the adaptation “to suit the taste of readers who differ in religious opinions.” It is not clear, however, whether Gough was responsible for making the change in the Ipswich tract. It may very well have been the work of his British editors. See Lees, *Mr. Gough’s Account of His Relapse* (Leeds, England, ca. 1859), 10-11.

<sup>401</sup> Gough, *Autobiography* (1845), 120.

<sup>402</sup> Gough may have tried to do this without detection. The concluding part of the original autobiography, which contained the aforementioned passage, appears as an excerpt (Gough did not mention any editing) in small print in the new autobiography to show that he had been consistent in his position and that he “held the true ground,” when he had deleted a key sentence. See Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 192.



exhortation on the necessity of reliance on God in temperance work, in keeping with the new title *The Hand of Providence Exemplified in the History of John B. Gough*.<sup>403</sup> Likewise, in the Ipswich Series of Temperance Tracts (London and Ipswich, ca. 1856), in place of the passage that mocks the “surpliced priest,” we find a new paragraph (different from the 1869 new edition) praising Christian resignation to suffering in this life in hope of the next.<sup>404</sup> Circumstantial evidence like this strongly suggests that Gough knew exactly which paragraphs of his original autobiography that might offend his readers and that he made a point of repairing them in 1869.

Apart from dropping names of old friends and adding those of the new transatlantic notables that he befriended, Gough also recast the characters in the autobiography in accordance with his new status as a celebrity. There is a distinct shift of focus from the dead wife of his workingman days to the living and devout middle-class lady that he married in his reformed life in the revised autobiography.<sup>405</sup> The working-class wife, who dies with her new-born baby due to the drunken husband’s neglect, was a key element in Gough’s early stories and in the popular songs and verses about him.<sup>406</sup> In 1869, however, he took care to remove the pathetic scene of his lying over the dead wife’s grave after a suicide attempt (“All night long have I lain on the damp grass which covered my wife’s grave, steeped to the very lips in poverty, degradation, and

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<sup>403</sup> John B. Gough, *Record of My Life, Or the Hand of Providence Exemplified in the History of J. B. Gough* (1846; rep., London, 1860).

<sup>404</sup> *The Ipswich Series of Temperance Tracts* (2 vols., London and Ipswich, England, ca. 1856) 2: No. 132, 43-4.

<sup>405</sup> Mary Cheney, Gough’s first wife, was said to be the sister of a fisherman in Newbury, MA. Mary E. Whitcomb, his second wife, was the daughter of a farmer in Berlin, MA. She worked as a school teacher in Boylston, MA before marrying Gough.

<sup>406</sup> See “Lines” (A long time ago) in appendix of *Autobiography* (1845) and Gough’s song, *The Inebriate’s Lament*, as published in *Covert and Dodge’s Collection of Songs, Duets, Glees, Choruses, & c.* (Boston, 1844).

misery”).<sup>407</sup> In the 1845 version, his second wife, Mary E. Whitcomb, whom he married in Nov. 1843, was barely mentioned. By 1869, she had become the center of Gough’s “life” (as published) and was seen as such by the public.<sup>408</sup> (Gough was to dedicate the third volume of his reminiscences, *Sunlight and Shadow*, published in 1880, to her.) Her enlarged presence in the second autobiography, and her sensibility, which Gough took care to highlight, for example by citing a letter from her describing the death-bed scene of her niece, were clearly indicative of the transformation of Gough’s own status from workingman to middle class.<sup>409</sup> Joel Stratton, a waiter at a temperance hotel in Worcester, who had famously saved Gough from the gutter by a brotherly tap on the shoulder in 1842, became in the new autobiography the receiver of Gough’s philanthropy and a model of Christian self-effacing workman whom Gough liked to patronize.<sup>410</sup> Though the impoverished Stratton had been too modest to ask for any favor in his lifetime, Gough announced, without the wonted humility, in his new work that “it has been a source of

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<sup>407</sup> Gough, *Autobiography* (1845), 57.

<sup>408</sup> Contrast *Autobiography* (1845), 89 and *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 210: “I can truly say that I owe much, very much, of what good I have been able to accomplish, to my true, faithful, loving wife”; Peterhead (Scotland) *Sentinel*, Oct. 9, 1857: “Mrs. Gough has been the making of her husband. Oftimes when he is swaying the sympathies of a crowded assemblage, is she upon her knees, praying that grace and direction may be given him and who knows but in this very fact lies the secret of Gough’s success?”

<sup>409</sup> The letter was noted as a special feature of the second autobiography. See anon., “John B. Gough’s Experiences,” *Literary World* (London, England), Dec. 24, 1880, 436-7: “In it, amongst other things, there was a letter from Mrs. Gough, describing the death of a beloved niece, most touching and most beautiful.”

<sup>410</sup> Joel Stratton famously gave Gough a “gentle tap on the shoulder,” and invited him to attend the local Washingtonian meeting. Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 524: “Joel Stratton never once asked of me a favor. He never obtruded himself upon me; never alluded to his instrumentality in my reform; never appeared to pride himself upon it, as if it were a meritorious deed.”

great gratification and thankfulness that I have been able to appropriate three hundred dollars per year to his widow.”<sup>411</sup>

The new autobiography was, above all, a place where Gough could publish, unchallenged, his own renditions of the major controversies surrounding his life. It is where he mounted his own defense against the public attacks on his integrity. After his scandal in New York in September 1845, a supplement was added to the original autobiography containing Gough’s official statement about the incident and a letter of endorsement from his church. The supplement was subsequently removed from the American editions in 1853, when Gough was scheduled to visit Britain for the first time. It never appeared in the British editions. It looked like that he was going to bury the scandal for good, but as a result of the unexpected rivalry with Frederic Richard Lees and as the fallout of their quarrels, public interest was revived in the lecturer’s checkered past.<sup>412</sup> In 1869, Gough felt the need to reintroduce the New York scandal in the new autobiography, and he told his side of the story by setting up the “correct” context (proper sequence of events and sentiments) for the reader.

In his wonted modesty, the lecturer expressed his reluctance to review the “unfortunate calamity,” which after more than two decades still made him “involuntarily draw back with a shudder.” He chose not to start with the main incident, but recounted the threats, calumnies, and traps that he encountered, more than his fair share (he implies), before the New York incident.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 525.

<sup>412</sup> Lees publicized Gough’s scandal in Britain after the libel trial and reprinted William J. Snelling’s anti-Gough pamphlet *Goffiana*.

<sup>413</sup> See Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1870), 196: “Traps were laid for me. I narrowly escaped being drawn into an improper place, by a letter purporting to come from a heart-broken mother, requesting me to call and see her son.” This may have given Honoré Morrow the inspiration for her story about Gough’s narrow escape in London. See later in the chapter on Morrow’s historical fiction on John B. Gough.

In this context, it appears to be only a matter of time before he would fall victim to one of the liquor dealers' darkest schemes. Gough insisted on his innocence and attributed his fall to no moral obliquity on his part but to his naïveté. He wrote that he "had no conception men could prove so devilish in their malice." He closed the chapter in his life with a paean to his wife, who did not even make it into his official statement in 1845 but now loomed large, for her "unfailing devotion" and unwavering trust in him, which obviously was intended to boost public confidence in him.<sup>414</sup>

The temperance libel trial in London, which led directly to the renewed public attention to his New York scandal, was featured prominently in the new autobiography (taking up three chapters). Since the papers on both sides of the Atlantic had been plastered with news about the trial in 1858, Gough chose to revisit the case to justify his course of action. He disclaimed having taken any part in factional intrigues and made himself to be the aggrieved party ("a poor Yankee") who suffered persecution in a foreign land at the hand of a powerful organization (the United Kingdom Alliance) and its henchmen. He made this claim despite his being backed by two equally powerful and deep-pocketed organizations. He went to court solely on the advice of his friends, and it was his enemies who forced his hand by their incessant attacks. He reprinted the trial records and a long defense of his role in the controversy published in *Manchester Times*. In his version of the story, he downplayed the ideological differences between prohibition and moral suasion. Whereas he made sure to avoid mentioning prohibition during his British tour, now he again became a strong supporter of prohibition "from the beginning." He turned the court battle, the outgrowth of an ideological and factional conflict, into a personal victory.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869), 208-9.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 392, 402, and Chs. XXVII to XXIX.

Another important charge that Gough chose to respond to in the new autobiography was all the bad press about the high fees he received for his lectures and his accumulation of wealth. He did not seem to care to refute the charge of his making money any more. The list of his average earnings per lecture over the years, which he chose to publish in 1869, proved the point beyond any doubt. Citing God as his (only) witness, Gough claimed the right of privacy over where his money went. Instead, he was trying to *justify* his earnings on its own terms - that he had to pay his own expenses as well as for his assistants and that the high fees he commanded reflected public demand and his fair market value. "If the associations that employ me are satisfied, I know not why I should not be, - and outsiders have no reason to grumble."

For him, the traditional fundraising methods for supporting the advocates of a benevolent cause, i.e. by taking posthumous donations and by selling subscription papers, were far from adequate. His worldly prosperity was not a blemish, as some thought, but an "honor" to the temperance cause, showing that the cause could sustain its own advocates and their families.<sup>416</sup> Moral enterprise, in his line of thought, should be as profitable and market oriented as any other respectable business ventures (see chart 1). The sustainability of a moral cause in a market society, therefore, depends not merely on the moral or religious impulse, but on how it is marketed. This was the real driving force, apart from the immediate causes of the factional and political crises, behind Gough's remaking of his public image and his reshaping of moral crusade as moral entertainment.

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<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 247-250. See *Christian Advocate* (New York), Feb. 25, 1886, for the opposite view: "He rose so high and penetrated to such a depth when speaking upon temperance that to see him in the act of simply entertaining an audience produced a kind of shock... The modification of his career as he grew older brought with it certain advantages and disadvantages. He gained large sums by his lectures, and lived in an elaborate and very generous way, which once begun, compelled him to make a large income to sustain it."



Chart 1. Gough's Average Earnings

Source: Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1869)

Though hardly seen as “literature” by the cultural elite and jeered for its inordinate influence over women, Gough’s second autobiography was significant for himself and for the well-to-do evangelical middle class.<sup>417</sup> The new autobiography was no longer a drunkard’s narrative, or a beggar’s story. Rather, it was an inspirational self-made man story to “help and stimulate in the battle of life, encourage the despondent, and aid the struggling in their efforts to rise above adverse circumstances.”<sup>418</sup> From “a short and simple annal [sic] of the poor,” the

<sup>417</sup> *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature* (London), Jun. 4, 1870 and Jan. 22, 1881; *The Athenaeum* (London, England), Jun. 4, 1870; the *Chicago Tribune* printed a satirical (and no doubt fictional) story of a book agent being brought by a husband to court and fined for disturbing domestic peace by selling Gough’s autobiography, which possesses an almost seductive influence on the women. See “Gough’s Autobiography – How it Destroyed the Peace of a Chicago Family,” rep., in *New Orleans Times*, Jan. 23, 1870.

<sup>418</sup> Historian Ann Fabian discussed the narratives of beggars, convicts, ex-slaves, and Civil War POWs, etc. as essentially the same as those of the reformed drunkards, in their soliciting public

autobiography had grown into a stately (if a bit unwieldy) volume that adorned the private libraries of many a “self-made” man and woman. Gough reasserted his authorship, reordered his life, and turned his temperance crusade into a story of personal success. He even made stylistic refinement by incorporating quotations from famous persons.<sup>419</sup> It is clear that by 1869, he had aspired to be more than a reformed drunkard or a temperance crusader; he was to be seen as a public celebrity and a cultural hero for the Victorian middle class. (Fig. 4)

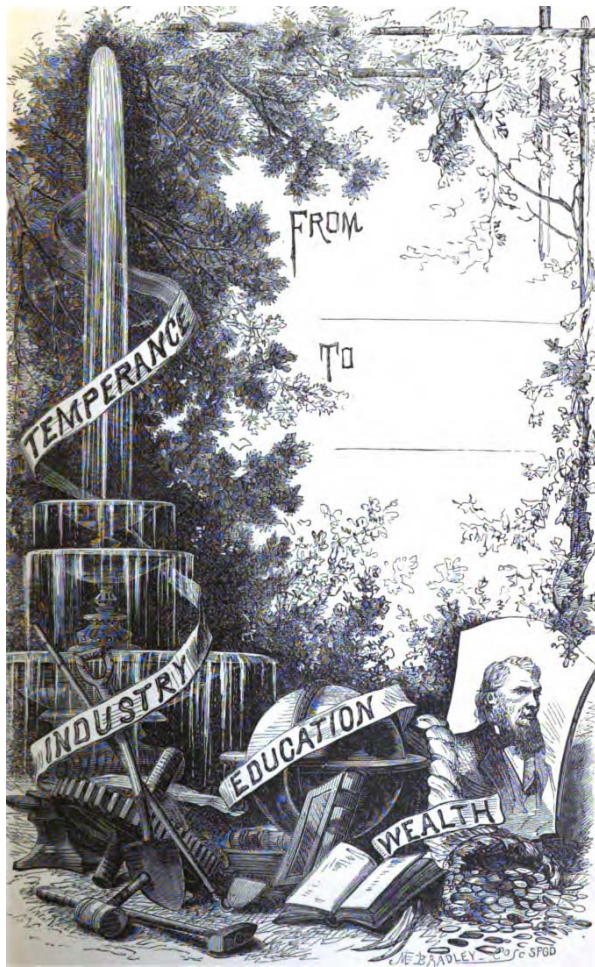


Fig. 4. Frontispiece showing “temperance, industry, education, and wealth”

Source: Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1871)

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support and alms through publishing; Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (1870), vii.

<sup>419</sup> See “John B. Gough’s Experiences,” *Literary World* (London, England), Dec. 24, 1880: “If we are to judge of him by the quotations with which the book abounds, we should say that he is more of a student than we otherwise have supposed him to be.”

### *Biographical Remaking of Gough's Life*

Gough's fame gave birth to a great number of biographical sketches and monographs, which circulated alongside his autobiography and other publications. He appeared (often posthumously) as a biographical subject in self-help literature, elocution handbooks, and temperance and religious memoirs. These literary extensions of his autobiography extended Gough's fame beyond his life span and helped secure him a niche in the pantheon of Christian cultural heroes revered by the Victorian middle class in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They sometimes doubled as didactic advice manuals designed for the urban young men, which related Gough's experiences, especially his early struggles, directly to those of the readers.

There were two book-length biographies of Gough in Britain during his lifetime, published in 1854 and 1878 respectively on the occasions of two of his visits to the island. Both circulated alongside Gough's autobiography. Three American biographies of Gough came out after his death (1892, 1893, and 1930); and the first two were simultaneously issued in Britain and Canada. All but one of the biographies were written by clergymen. Mrs. Honoré Willsie Morrow, wife of the New York publisher William Morrow, was the author of the 1930 historical fiction, *Tiger! Tiger!*, based on Gough's life. Hers, however, was quite different from the didactic biographies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and will be discussed separately in this chapter.

One might wonder why there was a demand for biographies of Gough when his autobiography was readily available. A possible explanation is the price. Since 1869, Gough's subscription-only autobiography had been sold for \$3.25 (1869) and \$3.75 (1870), which barred many who could spare only 25 or 50 cents to hear him or his latter-day imitators from buying the book. To learn more about the life of the celebrity orator, they could turn to a biography (or even



a magazine), which promised a digest of the main facts (and often a cheaper portrait) at one third of the cost (or less).

Admittedly, not all chose the biography over the autobiography for reasons of economic necessity. In Britain, in particular, where cheaper reprints of Gough's autobiography (due to the lack of international copyright protection) were available through the 1880s, biographies of Gough were still being popularly sold.<sup>420</sup> It would seem that the biographies promised more than a condensed story. They functioned as sort of a guide mediating between the raw text of the autobiography and the reader, i.e. the young man. Although the clerical biographers did not aim to tell new stories, they did "group the ascertained facts in a new setting."<sup>421</sup> The re-grouping of facts and the new setting did not necessarily change the gist of Gough's story, but were certainly intended to provide a "cleaner" and a more relatable reading experience, in which moral lessons were spelled out, pitfalls highlighted, and episodes subject to misunderstanding curtailed or expunged.<sup>422</sup>

Following the literary conventions of popular self-made man biographies, Gough's clerical biographers combed his life for examples of "moral inspiration" and "moral warning," and they searched his early life for budding traits, "inner characteristics," or early signs of his future greatness.<sup>423</sup> They praised poverty. Though only "less cruel than sin," it "teaches self-

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<sup>420</sup> Rev. John Thomas's biography of Gough, *The Life and Times of John B. Gough* (London, 1878) went through at least eight editions.

<sup>421</sup> Rev. Wm. Carlos Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water* (New York, London, and Toronto, 1893), xi.

<sup>422</sup> Rev. Thomas, for example, made short shrift of Gough's controversies in *The Life and Times of John B. Gough* (1878). He deleted Gough's statement on the New York scandal (keeping only the church statement of endorsement) and barely mentioned the Gough-Lees rivalry.

<sup>423</sup> For the biographical conventions, see Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill, 1999), 88-106; Martyn,

reliance, promotes diligence, necessitates economy, stirs enterprise, and is intended to build character.” Gough’s early deprivation not only “allied him with some of the greatest of men” but made him compassionate and generous toward the poor with his later prosperity.<sup>424</sup> They found schooling and education important, but celebrated “the world” as “the greatest of schools” – “whose teacher is experience, whose text-books are hard knocks, and whose terms come high.”<sup>425</sup> Temperance was definitely a key theme, but drinking wasn’t so much a sin as was the “social glass.” The ministers believed that no youth of innocence would take to drinking unless it was branded as “respectable.” It was the social circle that a young man chose to join, by taking or refusing a social glass, that mattered. Drinking was but an act of initiation into the society of urban vices, and ultimately, into a life of unbelief.<sup>426</sup> The ministers stressed the infinite possibility of improvement, of changing one’s life and expanding on one’s slim capital through work.<sup>427</sup> They did not celebrate money making per se, but treated it as the natural outcome of

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*Apostle of Cold Water*, xi, 19-20; Rev. Edward Augustus Rand, *A Knight That Smote the Dragon, or the Young People’s Gough* (London, 1892), 17, 20.

<sup>424</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 33, 50.

<sup>425</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 19, 325: “We are confident that an academic education would have hurt more than it could have helped him... A fastidious culture would have refined away much of Gough’s popular power. What he might have gained in routine knowledge would have poorly compensated us for what he must have lost in spontaneity”; Rand, *A Knight*, 16.

<sup>426</sup> Rev. William Reid, *Sketch of the Life and Oratory of John B. Gough* (London, 1854), 22-23; Rand, *A Knight*, 55.

<sup>427</sup> Rand, *A Knight*, 154-5: “For the sake of the young let me earnestly say that we must not close our eyes to the importance of this fact, *work*. A bar of iron that is worth five dollars can be turned into horseshoes worth \$10.50. Work longer and harder on that iron bar. You can separate it into needles that will bring you \$355. Split it up into the blades of penknives, and your labor will bring you \$3,295. Make one more trial. Instead of these horseshoes, needles, or penknives, stretch out the iron into the balance-springs of watches. Your five-dollar bar will net you \$250,000. So much for work, work, work...”

human effort and as a parable in the striving for something of a more abstract greatness or usefulness. (“Greatness is like money, it is easier won than held.”)<sup>428</sup>

The biographers brought home for the young readers the morals embedded in Gough’s life story. Remarking on young Gough’s arrival in New York City in 1829 (which recalls the young Franklin in Philadelphia in 1723), Rev. Rand asked the reader pointedly, “What would *you* do alone in a big city, entering it as a stranger, wanting to go somewhere and wanting to do something, but utterly at a loss as to place or pursuit?” Continuing in the use of the second person, he urged the reader to “[p]ut yourself in the place of that boy of fourteen,” to “[g]et under his trunk,” and to “[m]ake his situation your own” – “what would *you* have done?” Rev. Reid made sure that people read Gough’s experience as relevant and instructive to their own: “The course of John Gough has been that of thousands who have betaken themselves to our large cities to push their way in the world. Snares are planted in every path and the young are required to avoid them at the time when they are least aware of their existence, and have least power to resist their seductive influence.”<sup>429</sup> Rev. Martyn’s study of Gough’s early character was clearly meant to encourage the readers to examine themselves for signs of future glory. “You know it not to-day, if still young,” he wrote, “but there is something about you inevitably indicating what you will be by and by.” He made the study of a great man an opportunity for self-discovery and self-development and an exercise with high stakes: “It will be lamentable if you make a mistake – if, by the frost of any careless living to-day, you blight tomorrow’s flower.”<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 321.

<sup>429</sup> Reid, *Sketch*, 22.

<sup>430</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 20.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Gough's biographies were simply a rehash of the Franklinesque self-made man story. The clerical biographers gave more than an account of the individual's efforts that made up his personal greatness. Looming over the great reformer, there was an even greater figure in the biographies – that of the Christian woman. “Two women were this reformer's guardian angels,” Rev. Martyn declared, “First, his mother; when he lost her he lost himself. Next, Mary Gough; when he found her he found himself.”<sup>431</sup> Gough's life, in other words, can be seen as seven years of dissipation (in the world of men) bracketed by the company and moral guidance of Christian women.<sup>432</sup> It was the mother who planted in the son the seeds of religion and the habit of prayer, which might later be forgotten or buried due to their separation but never erased; and it was the Christian wife who re-awakened the husband's dormant religious feelings and persuaded him to rejoin the church.<sup>433</sup>

To these women, the clerical biographers sang paeans worthy of the saints. An emblem of the long-suffering and self-sacrificing Christian woman, Gough's mother, “*after the manner of her sex*, put up with self-denial so that it was changed to coronation” (emphasis added).<sup>434</sup> Gough's second wife, Mary, “[l]ike Mary of old...proved by her life-work that deep in her heart was planted the element of consecration.”<sup>435</sup> “What child of misfortune has not found help in woman?” Rev. Reid asked, “At every turn in John Gough's life, we find her like a ministering

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<sup>431</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, xiv.

<sup>432</sup> Gough's “turning away from home” and to “an unworthy social circle” was the direct cause of his downfall, according to Rev. Rand, but Gough's first wife presented a challenge to the story. Rev. Martyn suggested that she had married Gough in order to “reform him” and her failure brought on her death. See Rand, *A Knight*, 75-6 and Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 67.

<sup>433</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 105; Reid, *Sketch*, 5.

<sup>434</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 18.

<sup>435</sup> Rand, *A Knight*, 130.

angel waiting on him.”<sup>436</sup> Indeed, the biographies can be read as a eulogy of Christian womanhood, as much as the story of a self-made man.

Not only were the female influence and feminine qualities celebrated, but they prevailed over men’s in the biographies. Gough’s mother’s influence on the boy overcame his father’s effort to toughen him up and to make a soldier of him. Gough himself also came in for praise: “Probably nothing saved him (from a soldier’s fate) but the feminine delicacy of his temperament, his dread of physical pain, and his early withdrawal from the scene (of Sandgate).”<sup>437</sup> Gough’s sensibility made him a soldier “of a grander type,” according to Rev. Martyn, “a moral hero, whose campaigns were as real as they were bloodless, and whose peaceful victories were ‘no less renowned than war.’”<sup>438</sup>

Rev. Reid discovered in Gough’s mother “a heroism outrivaling her husband’s courage on the field of battle.” “Within many a woman’s heart,” he argued, “there is a courage which no annals of bravery can surpass; and on the humble sphere of domestic life there have often been prepared better blessings for the world than the greatest victory ever secured.”<sup>439</sup> Even the minister himself took a backseat here to the mothers and wives, and the church to the home. “It is the home-life,” Rev. Rand maintained, “that should go down to the strongest motives and lay hold of them, even as a man in building strive to touch a strong, rock foundation.”<sup>440</sup> Home or

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<sup>436</sup> Reid, *Sketch*, 15.

<sup>437</sup> Rev. Rand saw Sandgate as a place full of “rampant militarism” (with its castle ruins and cross-channel smuggling activities). See Rand, *A Knight*, 24.

<sup>438</sup> Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 24.

<sup>439</sup> Reid, *Sketch*, 9-10.

<sup>440</sup> Rand, *A Knight*, 72.

“home-life” (and its womenfolk) seems to have become the new rock upon which the church was to be built; indeed, it was the church reincarnated.

The clerical biographers’ accolades for Christian women showcased the special affinity that existed between the “feminized” (disestablished, de-Calvinized, and sentimental) minister and his increasingly female-majority flock in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ann Douglas studied the cultural process of feminization at work in the American context, the most puerile (and yet popular) form of which, she suggests, the English Victorians had somehow managed to avoid due to their greater sophistication and “cultural cohesiveness.”<sup>441</sup> But it would seem that in the case of Gough’s biographies, British or American, the clerical authors spoke the same language of Christian sentimentality, and they (and their readers) would have understood one another perfectly across the Atlantic. The only difference, in hindsight, is that the British dissenters who embraced liberal theology and feminine virtue weren’t nearly so numerous and socially influential as their American brethren.<sup>442</sup>

Gough’s biographies were intended as much for the young men, as for their mothers. After all, it was expected that mothers would buy and read the biography for and with their sons. They were encouraged to emulate Gough’s mother in inculcating early religious impressions, to discover and cultivate the early signs of greatness in their sons, and to guard them against bad social company and moral pollutions. The moral of the biographies was, after all, that had Gough been accompanied by a Christian mother or wife, he would never have fallen. In the final analysis, Gough’s biographies weren’t so much replicas of the self-made man story any more; they served rather to domesticate and Christianize the self-made man, a task Gough had

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<sup>441</sup> Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977; rep., New York, 1998), 5.

<sup>442</sup> This also explains why the Sunday School movement and the temperance movement in Britain, for example, never flourished to the same extent as their counterparts did in the U.S..

deliberately taken on in his second autobiography. They expunged the Franklinesque elements from Gough's original story, and they taught that the greatness of the self-made man can be found perhaps less in the man himself than in the tempering influence of Christian womanhood.

<sup>443</sup> Gough's self-making was significantly not a story of the return of the prodigal son to his father, according to the clerical biographers, but a re-discovery (with the aid of his Christian wife) of "his mother's Bible" and "his mother's God."<sup>444</sup>

### *Gough in 1930*

When Honoré Morrow's biography of Gough came out in 1930, memories of the great dramatic orator had already begun to fade. To be sure, Gough still lived on in elocution textbooks, self-help readings, and temperance histories, and his autobiography still graced the bookshelves of many a home library, but even Morrow herself (b. 1880) was too young to have heard (or if she did, remembered) Gough lecture.

Morrow certainly wasn't the first woman writer who had ever taken an interest in Gough's life, but she was the only biographer, man or woman, who had since written anything other than a formulaic didactic story.<sup>445</sup> Her book answered to the new critical demand,

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<sup>443</sup> The Franklin I refer to here is not the purified version of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the mundane and jovial old man of the 18<sup>th</sup>, who advised the appearance of industry as highly as its reality and who cracked jokes with the great evangelist George Whitefield.

<sup>444</sup> Rand, *A Knight*, 75; Martyn, *Apostle of Cold Water*, 50. The re-discovery of "his mother's Bible" was actually realized and staged in 1857. The bible was claimed to have been lost by Gough in a groggery in Bristol, RI, "some fifteen years ago," and was recovered "in the corner of an old attic," through the agency of the daughter of Rev. John Overton Choules, and it was presented to Gough in 1857 just in time for his departure for his second tour of England. See "John B. Gough's Farewell Address," Worcester (MA) *Daily Transcript*, July 10, 1857.

<sup>445</sup> She explained the "circumstances" that prevented Gough from obtaining an education funded by the Allen Street Methodist Society (about which Gough did not give any details in his autobiography) as a result of his youthful dalliance with the daughter ("of the dimpled and buxom type that is an inevitable and deadly meance to the adolescent as well as the older male")

emerging in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which prized biographical details and psychological profiling over their didactic value. Whereas the suppression of certain (personal) facets/details of a public person's life was desirably suited to the didactic purpose of the Victorian biography, critics at the turn of the century demanded a more "rounded, multifaceted character." They asked to be shown the "whole truth" (without, however, descending into scandal-mongering sensational journalism), and they championed the reader's right to know over the biographical subject's right to privacy.<sup>446</sup>

The "truth" that critics and readers demanded was not necessarily the strictest adherence to known facts, but that something which would come across as true to character. Morrow took greater liberty than anyone else with Gough's life (as publicized in the autobiography), muddling the line between a biography and a novel (for which she was criticized). To be sure, she did not alter the main story line of Gough's life, but she inserted entire (fictional) episodes and conversations to round out the characters and to enliven her narrative. For example, not only did she spice up Gough's "drugging" story in 1845 by adding that a woman "accosted him with the ancient suggestion," Morrow came up with another story of Gough's abduction in London by a "cabby." This time, however, Gough was able to get out of the trap by burning down the house! Similarly, she made the dramatic orator an enraptured patron and later a promoter of T. S. Arthur's popular stage play, *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*. Gough, according to her, visited a theater in Cincinnati during his aimless wandering about in the city.<sup>447</sup> It was her sensationalistic, yet

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of the landlady he boarded with. This is as close as she came to moralizing. Morrow, *Tiger! Tiger! The Life Story of John B. Gough* (New York, 1930), 45.

<sup>446</sup> For an excellent discussion of the changes in biographical convention at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 312-318.

<sup>447</sup> Morrow, *Tiger! Tiger!*, 184-187, 197-201.



not entirely out of character, portrayal of Gough that gave rise to the concern that readers not already familiar with the facts of his autobiography wouldn't be able to tell facts from fiction.<sup>448</sup>

It was not Morrow's goal to make a saint of the lecturer, or just to rehash his autobiography, but it was to make him interesting and "human" for the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An important component of his humanity, Morrow decided, was the psychological and physiological struggle against alcoholism. The constant battle with the prowling "tiger," and his repeated setbacks and comebacks, became the main theme of the biography, instead of the 19<sup>th</sup> century version of the Christian remaking of the self-made man. This made her portrayal of Gough "true to life" for the 20<sup>th</sup> century readers, who were obsessed with psychology and psychic crises.<sup>449</sup>

The *Los Angeles Times* praised the author of the "imaginative biography":

She does not gloss over any of Gough's weaknesses nor try to cover up his many falls from grace, but she always sees him as a man hard-beset by passions, who yet consistently tried to control himself and to save others from the curse that was laid upon him.<sup>450</sup>

What made Morrow's biography uniquely her own was her portrayal of the women who had influenced Gough's life. The women in her story ceased to be the long-suffering victims and the self-effacing wives that the ministers touted in the didactic biographies. They were strong-willed, independent women who did not shy away from political or public action without, however, being stiff-necked radicals. For the first time, she depicted Gough's parents' marriage

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<sup>448</sup> Florence Finch Kelly, "Rum and John Gough," *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1930.

<sup>449</sup> For the popular concern over neurasthenia and the emergence of a therapeutic culture in the fin-de-siècle America, see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Anti-Modernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York, 1981), Ch. 1.

<sup>450</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 9, 1930.

as an incompatible and unhappy one.<sup>451</sup> Jane Gough, under her pen, clashed with her husband over the choice of their church (she being a Baptist and he a Methodist), stating that she would not give in to her husband's wish but would only do "as my conscience directs."<sup>452</sup> Likewise, Morrow turned Mary Whitcomb, Gough's second wife, whose view on the woman question was in reality quite conservative, into Gough's mentor on the issue of women's public leadership and political activism, and Frances E. Willard, with the help of Mary Gough, became the instrument of Gough's conversion to the public support of an independent women's movement (WCTU) and a political campaign for Prohibition.<sup>453</sup>

Morrow was a self-revealing writer, and she wrote herself into the biography. She was born in Iowa to transplanted New Englanders and was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin. She wrestled with the Victorian social expectations for women. Apparently, she could not bear children, and she divorced her first husband (Willsie) in 1922 before marrying again in 1932 to William Morrow, the publisher. She explored social and familial issues through fiction, including interracial romance and women's right to divorce. She was also genuinely concerned about the moral and societal decline brought on, as she saw it, by the influx of southern Europeans and the dwindling population of the WASP race. According to biographer Frederic Taber Cooper, this prompted her to write about the Reclamation Service and the West, where the "old stock Americans" predominated.<sup>454</sup> In *Tiger! Tiger!*, she revamped the self-made man story

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<sup>451</sup> "The boy (Gough) was old and keen enough now to realize that his parents were so essentially different that they never could agree on important matters." Morrow, *Tiger! Tiger!*, 11.

<sup>452</sup> Morrow, *Tiger! Tiger!*, 12.

<sup>453</sup> Morrow, *Tiger! Tiger!*, 203-4, 271-2, 279-87, 288-293.

<sup>454</sup> Frederic Taber Cooper, *Honoré Willsie Morrow: A Sketch* (New York, n.d.), 5. Cooper was also rather defensive about the interracial marriage consummated in Morrow's popular Western

as the drama of a man's constant struggle with his inner demon and a showcase of strong-minded women. Gough was still the hero, but a hero brought down to size (if not dwarfed by the women). It was moralistic without being moralizing, sensational without being voyeuristic. It marked one direction in which the Victorian bildungsroman of the self-made man was turning, from didactic biography to historical fiction. Gough had become more flesh and blood, endowed with the inner feelings and weaknesses of a "rounded, multifaceted character," and at once more immaterial (lessening the moral demand on readers).<sup>455</sup>

But Morrow's biographical novel wasn't the only kind of memory about Gough being passed on in 1930. Edward Van Every's book of 19<sup>th</sup> century sporting journal memorabilia, *Sins of New York*, signaled another turn that Gough was to take in popular culture. He was to become a symbol of Victorian hypocrisy and the curiosity of a by-gone era, if not the butt of a (men's) joke. Van Every's book came out in the same year as Morrow's biography and was published by her old publisher, Frederick A. Stokes.<sup>456</sup> A sports journalist and a biographer of famous pugilists, Van Every was a cultural descendent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century sporting men and his publications represented not only the survival but the resurgence of the culture of the "masculine" man against Victorian femininization.<sup>457</sup> *Sins of New York* featured true crime

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novel, *The Heart of the Desert* (1913), which was unusual for its time. According to Cooper, it was "an open secret" that Morrow's original ending was the couple (an Apache Indian and a white woman)'s separation ("even then she sensed the tragedy involved in such ill-starred union"), but "a more orthodox 'happy ending'" was demanded by the publishers for popular circulation. *Ibid.*, 3. I'd take Cooper's word with a grain of salt.

<sup>455</sup> Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 318.

<sup>456</sup> Edward Van Every, *Sins of New York: As "Exposed" by the Police Gazette* (New York, 1930), three printings, Oct. 15, Oct. 23, and Oct. 30.

<sup>457</sup> Van Every was the biographer of William Muldoon, the champion wrestler and personal trainer for the pugilist John L. Sullivan; and later of Joe Louis, the black boxing champion. For the resurgence of masculinity from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, see E. Anthony Rotundo, *American*

stories, famous scandals (including Gough's), and racy illustrations culled from the old issues of the *National Police Gazette*, edited by George Wilkes and Enoch Camp after 1845 and Richard Kyle Fox after 1877. It did away with any pretense of moralizing and even mocked the righteous tone of the early *Gazette* editors.<sup>458</sup> For the first time in seventy years, the public was re-acquainted with the story of Gough's fall in New York City from a source other than Gough's own account (the last publication of the *Police Gazette* story was during the Gough-Lees controversy in 1858). The story, titled "The Trials of the Tippling Temperance Talker," was re-printed along with a full-page reproduction of an engraving of "Beauty and the Beer" (Fig. 5) featuring "the dashing daughter of a brewer," with her skirt flying and ankles showing, driving a cart loaded with beer kegs as "a pretty girl's practical protest against teetotalism."<sup>459</sup>

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*Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993), Ch. 10 and Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago, 1995), 19-20.

<sup>458</sup> George Wilkes, for example, branded himself a moral crusader while exposing Gough in the New York scandal of 1845.

<sup>459</sup> The engraving itself does not have to do with the Gough scandal. Van Every did not always have the engravings conform to the text. The same image was picked out and reprinted in a *New York Times* book review. It is very likely that many (male) readers were on their lookout for the illustration in the book and must have come across the *Police Gazette* story on Gough.



Fig. 5. Beauty and the Beer.  
Source: Edward Van Every, *Sins of New York* (1930)

Introducing *Sins of New York*, Franklin P. Adams, a well-known newspaper columnist, treated the old *Police Gazette* crime stories, or rather the 19<sup>th</sup> century journalistic rendering of the stories, as quaint and laughable idiosyncrasies of a by-gone era. The later *Police Gazette* (the *Gazette* that Richard Kyle Fox had turned since 1877 into a “pink periodical” of sensations and sports) became part of the old boys’ collective reminiscences of their adolescence in the ‘80s and ‘90s. Adams fondly recalled staring at the ankle-showing women and sensational crimes scenes printed in the *Police Gazette*, which he could only find at Frank’s barber shop in Chicago, a haunt for local boys “whose faces never needed Frank’s razor oftener than once a week.” And he

added, tongue-in-cheek and no doubt with the ministers and Sunday school teachers in mind, that poring over those pictures did not send him or any of his playmates to the jail or the poor house. Rather, the only moral for him was that “nothing does youth much harm. Or good.”<sup>460</sup>

*Sins of New York* made light of Victorian sensibility and even the *Police Gazette* itself, which operated on the fringes and sometimes in opposition to the Victorian mainstream. It was a light-hearted read for men – not only to be enjoyed by old boys as a shared adolescent experience, but by their sons and grandsons as an entertaining curiosity of the gas-lit era. Reaching into the past was not only for the “Old Gentlemen” like Adams, who grew up in the 1880s-90s, to regain a measure of their “Vanished Virility,” but for them to connect with their sons and grandsons as men. Men of the next generations would be writing about the 1930s and its popular tabloids with as much amusement and curiosity as Adams and Van Every did about the quaint *Police Gazette*, and they would surely laugh at the “Old Gentlemen,” as the latter did at the *Gazette* readers, for “get[ting] a kick out of those outworn one-hoss shays of journalism.”<sup>461</sup>

Many men would have heard of the Gough scandal for the first time in the 1930s through *Sins of New York*. The story was no doubt new to many readers, but the message was clear enough: Gough and his story of entrapment were typical of the Victorian (and clerical) hypocrisy about women and drink. Gough would be passed down this line of “masculine” memories of the sporting men as nothing but a “tippling temperance talker” and a curiosity of the past – of the hypocritical (feminized) Victorian era.

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<sup>460</sup> Van Every, *Sins of New York*, v-vi.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

*Sins of New York* stood for what some moral critics deplored as the moral decline of modern American society. It was this kind of publication (which would “proudly present...scandals of the past as authentic history”) that the critics named in contrast to Morrow’s historical novels of great men, which were “timely” and a “tonic” for “the American spirit.”<sup>462</sup> Though seen as complete opposites (and probably catering to different readerships), Morrow’s and Van Every’s re-creations of Gough both deviated from the didactic tradition (didactic biographies of Gough were still being produced in the 1930s<sup>463</sup>) and fed on the public fascination with the sensational details of a celebrity/notoriety’s life. Both, in their own ways, had become the undoing of the Victorian evangelical culture, the pedestal on which Gough’s fame stood. When the foundation caved in, Gough ceased to be a hero, he became merely a man and a curiosity.

#### *From Lecturer to Elocutionist*

As widely printed and read as Gough’s autobiographies and biographies were his lectures, published in newspapers, tracts, and collected volumes.<sup>464</sup> Some worried that printing Gough’s lectures verbatim would be inadvisable, as he was “so much of a repeating orator,” and should his lectures be committed to texts, they would “lose much of their pity and force.”<sup>465</sup> And yet

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<sup>462</sup> Laura Bell Everett, “Timely Novels,” *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (San Francisco) 89:4 (Apr. 1931), 121.

<sup>463</sup> See, for example, Rev. Harry Malcolm Chalfant, *These Agitators and Their Ideas* (Nashville, TN, 1931).

<sup>464</sup> It was estimated that “over a million copies of his lectures have been sold, and over a hundred thousand of his autobiography.” See Rand, *A Knight*, 187.

<sup>465</sup> *Journal of the Union* (New York), Oct. 1857; newspapers, such as Leander Streeter’s Boston *Daily Star*, had always tried to publish full-length reports of Gough’s lectures, but the first attempt at publishing Gough’s lectures (mix of reports and original texts) in a single volume was made by Wm. Tweedie in 1854, in the wake of his successful debut in London.

instead of wearing out public interest, Gough was able to repeat the same stories (albeit rearranged in order or context) in front of an audience with great success during his lifetime. His lectures were not only read, but recited and reenacted by others on various occasions; some of his choicest passages became stock pieces in popular elocution and recitation handbooks published between 1865 and 1910.

Not only did people read and recite Gough's lectures, they paid to hear them re-delivered and re-performed by imitators. In fact, quite a few rode Gough's coattails to fame by doing public recitations of his lectures or giving impersonations of the famous orator. Helen Potter, a popular dramatic reader, became known in the 1870s and 80s for her impersonations of lyceum celebrities. She made over \$20,000 in her second season alone, and Gough was one of her signature performances.<sup>466</sup> William Noble, the founder of the Blue Ribbon Gospel Temperance Movement in England, claimed to have embarked on his public speaking career in the early '70s by having Gough's orations placed in his hand by his mother and by redelivering these addresses for thirteen evenings straight at the National Standard Theater in London, attracting some 75,000 people in total.<sup>467</sup> E. Tennyson Smith, a temperance lecturer, made his name by giving public recitals of Gough lectures in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, and the effects he produced were so close to the original that he was dubbed "The Second Gough."<sup>468</sup> Russell H. Conwell, the Baptist minister famous for his "Acres of Diamonds" speech, cited Gough as his inspiration

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<sup>466</sup> James Burton Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius; Memories of Famous Men and Women of the Platform and Stage* (New York, 1900), 171.

<sup>467</sup> He was allegedly one of the pallbearers at Gough's funeral in Worcester, MA. "Mr. William Noble," *Railway Signal* (London) 10, No. 5 (May, 1892), 89-90.

<sup>468</sup> "Tennyson Smith and Gough," *Zion's Herald* (Boston), Jan. 4, 1905; for his exploits in Australia and New Zealand, see, for example, *Grey River Argus* (Greymouth, NZ), Aug. 21, 1891, and *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, AU), Oct. 26, 1911.



and mentor, who had introduced him to the platform in 1862. In 1875, Gough enjoyed such a high stature in public eyes that he publicly endorsed Ann Eliza Young's crusade against Mormonism and wrote an introduction for her best-selling exposé of Mormon polygamy, *Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage*.<sup>469</sup>

That Gough was able to mesmerize an audience on a well-worn theme or with an oft-told story, as we know, is largely due to his dramatic performance and his spontaneous adaptability. The proliferation of the *texts* of his lectures owes as much to the temperance publishing houses as to the popular elocution movement in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Concomitant with the flourishing lyceums and Chautauquas of the Gilded Age, the elocution movement was an outgrowth of the self-improvement-cum-leisure culture. The same people who attended lyceum lectures and Chautauqua shows wanted to improve their own rhetorical skills; and they were told that rhetorical education was no longer just necessary to the traditional public careers of law, politics, and pulpit – nor should it be confined to the college curriculum. It was desirable for everybody, and for the pleasurable enjoyment of private life. The goal of rhetorical education was, according to Mrs. J. W. Shoemaker, a popular elocution instructor, “the enlargement and elevation of human personality through the proper cultivation of the power of expression.”<sup>470</sup> It was not just a professional tool but an essential part of personality development and self-realization.

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<sup>469</sup> The exposé has recently been turned into a historical fiction and crime thriller by David Ebershoff. Ebershoff, *The 19<sup>th</sup> Wife: A Novel* (New York, 2008). Ebershoff pulled out Gough's preface, and instead, fabricated an introduction by Harriet Beecher Stowe. (Such is fame.)

<sup>470</sup> Mrs. J. W. Shoemaker, *Advanced Elocution: Designed as a Practical Treatise for Teachers and Students in Vocal Training, Articulation, Physical Culture and Gesture* (Philadelphia, 1896), 3.

Along with public lecturers like Gough, who got paid for delivering original addresses, there emerged a new profession of “elocutionists,” who earned their living by doing public readings of well-known literary and oratorical pieces *and* by teaching the art of elocution to the general public.<sup>471</sup> They suggested that not only did lay people need a system of knowledge, simplified and condensed from the academic version, about the mechanics of elocution, but they also needed to improve through practice. One of the best exercises, according to contemporary thought, was to recite the “great works” – not merely to repeat the oration word for word but to emulate the manner and, more difficultly, the “passions” of the orator.

For about half a century between 1865 and 1915, Gough’s lectures were the stock pieces in the anthologies of “great works” in popular elocution manuals and reciters. Some of his frequently quoted passages include “The Pilot,” the (fictional) story of a heroic steam-boat pilot who succeeds in running his burning boat on shore and saving the passengers while sacrificing his own life<sup>472</sup>; “The Power of Habit,” a parable of the danger of moderate drinking, which pictures a heedless pleasure party floating down a seemingly placid river headed for the fatal plunge over the Niagara Falls, despite repeated warnings of the rapids ahead; and “The Apostrophe to Water” (under different titles), a eulogy of the divine qualities of pure water and a flight of rhetoric serving as the climax of an address<sup>473</sup>. Selected for elocutionary exercise and

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<sup>471</sup> Thomas A. Hyde and William Hyde, *A Natural System of Elocution and Oratory, Founded on an Analysis of the Human Constitution, considered in its three-fold nature – mental, physiological and expressional* (New York, 1886), 6.

<sup>472</sup> The story of John Maynard, widely attributed to Gough but by no means invented by him, was immortalized by the German Naturalist writer, Theodor Fontane, in a ballad that some German school children still recite. See George Salomon, “John Maynard of Lake Erie: The Genesis of a Legend,” *Niagara Frontier* 10:3 (Autumn 1964), 73-86.

<sup>473</sup> This was attributed to Gough, but disputed by some as originated by a Methodist camp meeting preacher, Paul Denton. See *Daily Cleveland Herald* (Cleveland, OH), Feb. 1, 1861.

(obviously) for moral edification, these passages were supposed to be recited and performed before a private or public audience with both intellectual and moral benefits.<sup>474</sup>

The popularization of Gough as an elocutionary model for the general public created a contradiction of ideals between the ministers and the elocutionists. As we see in Chapter Three, though favorable to populist homiletics and open to lay preaching, the ministers were adamant that the best preaching came straight from the heart, unrestrained by the mind. Gough was praised for being the most natural public speaker, with a born talent, and his type of dramatic speaking was defined against the theatrical variety and was justified by its being entirely spontaneous, untrained, and therefore “artless.” In theory, Gough should have no value for the emulators, as he had no “art” and could not be copied without raising the question of moral duplicity. In the elocution manuals, however, Gough became an artist among the many. Though it was maintained that nothing would ever be reproduced to equal the lecturer’s original effects, the students were nonetheless encouraged to approximate his manner of speaking with elocutionary instructions. The elocutionists held out the hope that there was something about the “artless” orator that people could study and emulate after all.

Helen Potter’s impersonation handbook gave people such a shot at greatness. In giving an account of her Gough impersonation, Potter acknowledged that “[a]ny attempt to impersonate his rare gift of mimicry, his pathos and humor, must, perforce, fall short of the original.” But of course, she continued to give detailed instructions on how to pull off the impression, including notes on the delivery (tones, breaks, accentuation, down to the minute detail of how Gough

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<sup>474</sup> Nan Johnson, “The Popularization of Nineteenth Century Rhetoric,” in Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran, eds., *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL, 1993), 148.

habitually acted before a lecture<sup>475</sup>) and costumes (apart from a wig and a fake beard, female players were advised to wear a dress coat and vest over a plain black broadcloth skirt and to use a low curtain or screen, running from the entrance to the podium, to conceal the skirt). She cautioned that the Gough impression should not be attempted without the actor being “in full sympathy” with the lecturer and his subject. “Neither the subject nor the lecturer should be caricatured,” she emphasized, as “the public will not accept it,” and because “Mr. Gough is cherished in the hearts of the people, and his memory revered.”<sup>476</sup>

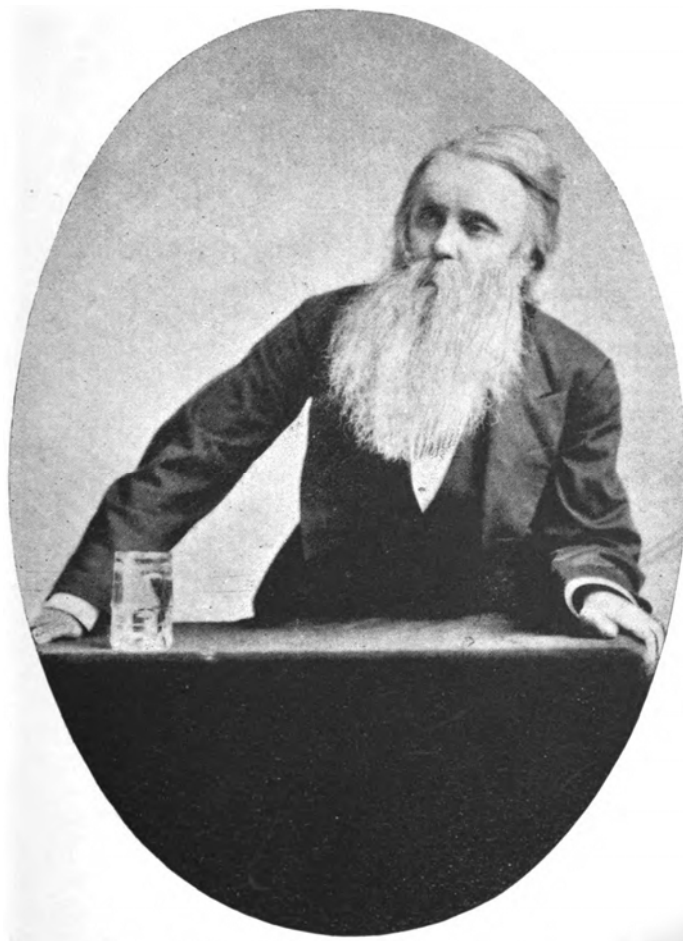


Fig. 6. Helen Potter as Gough  
Source: Helen Potter, *Helen Potter's Impersonations* (1891)

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<sup>475</sup> The actor/ress is supposed to enter the character the moment he/she steps on the platform.

<sup>476</sup> Helen Potter, *Helen Potter's Impersonations* (n.p., 1891), 6.

Admittedly, impersonation was, for Potter, no mere imitation of sound, intonation, likeness, and manner (“the outer senses”); it required “an *inner* sense” (which she defined as “intuition” or “the sixth sense”) that she urged the students of the elocutionary and histrionic art to seek out. For her own Gough impression, for example, she “never undertook the impersonation without a silent invocation, or prayer, for the right spirit to go out with the words, that they might bear the power of conviction with them, and reach the souls of all within reach of her voice.” By stressing the “inner sense” or the “right spirit,” she was not discounting the possibility of a successful reproduction, but was rejecting the formulaic acting of melodrama; her emphasis on the “inner” over the “outer” senses points to the modern histrionic emphasis on character study and identification.<sup>477</sup>

Gough may have been a difficult subject for emulation, but he was no longer “inimitable.” Commenting on E. Tennyson Smith’s performance of a Gough lecture, the *Grey River Argus* of Greymouth, New Zealand wrote:

[Gough’s lectures] were unique of their kind, and impossible to all mere imitators. No one but a trained elocutionist and consummate actor could follow Gough in the style of temperance lecture he founded.

Smith was “so close a copy” of Gough and was able to deliver Gough’s lectures “with such power and naturalness,” because he had “studied his model faithfully.”<sup>478</sup> To stage the Gough character was a feat that required careful study and perhaps the skills of a professional, but it was, for all intents and purposes, doable.

Gough’s stepping off the platform and into the elocution manuals and reenactments not only solidified and extended his celebrity; it indicated an interesting twist in the evolution of the

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<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, ix-x, 6.

<sup>478</sup> *Grey River Argus* (Greymouth, NZ), Aug. 21, 1891

Victorian cult of sincerity. Elocution was considered an art (and a science) of outward form, which revolved on the cultivation of vocal skills and physical expressions and consisted of a system of definable rules. The public enthusiasm for elocution naturally raised the specter of insincerity that forever haunted the Victorian middle class – that people would practice the art of elocution without revealing their natural inner feelings. The elocution manual writers had to contend with this perpetual fear of hypocrisy somehow – some even faulted others for overemphasizing the “external signs of elocution” while overlooking the “inner spirit.”<sup>479</sup> They argued that art did not necessarily lead to the obscuration of nature; instead, if properly trained, one may use art to guide and refine natural passions. “Passion...*may* know more than art,” Allen A. Griffith, a popular elocution instructor, wrote, “but art sometimes knows *better* than passion.”<sup>480</sup> The elocutionary art was thus necessary to the promotion and realization of one’s natural self.

Indeed, the elocutionists argued that the perfection of self cannot be achieved but through the conjunction of art and nature. Some even suggested that art and nature were potentially transferable and that some of our “natural” traits were but a form of habituation by art. If the training were persistent, it would form a “habit” (a second nature, if you will) and “a part of the personal talents of the man.” Great oratory like Gough’s, especially when read aloud and repeated, was conducive to the cultivation of a “taste” that was to inform one’s “natural” style.<sup>481</sup> Art, under the right circumstances, seems to have morphed into nature itself.

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<sup>479</sup> Hyde and Hyde, *A Natural System of Elocution and Oratory*, 6.

<sup>480</sup> Allen A. Griffith, *Class-Book in Oratory: A Complete Drill Book for Practice of the Principles of Vocal Physiology and for Acquiring the Art of Elocution and Oratory* (24<sup>th</sup> ed., St. Louis, 1879), 4.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

The possibility of a dialectic resolution of the “art versus nature” problem may not have eased the Victorian anxiety over practical deception (or theatrics). It reflected a compromise approach to the central dilemma of late Victorian culture, as conceived by historian Karen Halttunen. This was the delicate balance between sincerity or authenticity and refinement.<sup>482</sup> When caught between “what we feel ourselves” and “what we ought to feel” in an elocutionary exercise, instead of conforming expressions to feelings (as antebellum advice manuals would probably suggest), the reader was now told to “call up, from taste [being a cultural product of rhetorical training], some ideal rule to settle an uncertainty of opinion.”<sup>483</sup> In the end, the self abdicated its power of arbitration on the ethical question of authenticity versus pretense, which was then reduced to a question of rhetoric to be decided by some definable rule of the elocutionary “science” – rules that the “great men” like Gough were supposed to teach.

Thus, the elocutionary exercise came dangerously close to acting, which also had its own rules of physical movement and vocalization to fall back on. Some elocutionists even suggested that elocutionary exhibitions “occup[ied] a position midway between the lecture platform and the stage, avoiding on the one hand the dry details and matter of fact of the former, and the doubtful propriety of attendance on the latter.” Elocution was important, because it was useful to all, “public speakers” or “those who seek merely for voice improvement.” It also attracted all. Even the most “[f]astidious people can attend a course of readings who could not with propriety visit a theatre.”<sup>484</sup> Gough had become both the author and the inspiration of this new form of elocutionary entertainment.

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<sup>482</sup> Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT, 1982).

<sup>483</sup> Griffith, *Class Book in Oratory*, 4.

<sup>484</sup> Hyde and Hyde, *A Natural System of Elocution and Oratory*, 6-7.

### *Celebrity, Temperance, and Self-Making*

The cult of Gough, which emerged in the mid-to-late 1840s, peaked in the 1870s and 1880s, and then quickly dissipated in the 1930s (see chart 2).<sup>485</sup>



Chart 2. Google Ngram Search with “John B. Gough”

As he branched out into other (not strictly temperance-related) topics after his second British tour, Gough successfully transformed himself from a reformed drunkard and a temperance advocate into a moral entertainer and a public celebrity. He did this, partly, through the careful editing and repackaging of his autobiography, turning the story of a drunkard’s recovery into that of his material and spiritual self-making; it was also done for him by the evangelical minister-literati, who, for the sake of their readers, whitewashed Gough’s past and Christianized and domesticated the self-made man (while touting the Christ-like qualities of Christian women). What’s more, Gough became involved in the post-war popular elocution movement, as sort of a grassroots extension of the commercial lyceums and Chautauquas. His lectures became a model for popular

<sup>485</sup> Google NGram Viewer, input search “John B. Gough,” accessed June 6, 2013.



imitation and recitation and promised concrete elocutionary skills for self-promotion aside from moral edification.

It was no coincidence that Gough reached his peak of fame in the 1870s-80s. His popularity was indicative of the success of the cult of the self-made man. In his study of the “self-made” celebrity in American history, Leo Braudy points out that “[t]he element of theater is central to the concept of the self-made man, because it binds together its spiritual and material aspects... [by] *transforming the internal sanctions of the old morality into external structures of behavior and self-display*” (emphasis mine). He observes that the popularization of the myth of the self-made man in America coincided with the waning of the anti-theatrical prejudice and the “new willingness to believe in outward signs of election and spiritual transcendence” in the 1870s-80s.<sup>486</sup> Gough negotiated the conflicted cultural terrain of the Gilded Age, and he hit upon the right alchemy, the right balance of the material and the spiritual. He was able to put on an affective self-display with the appearance of sincerity (“anti-theatrical drama”) and his moral drama was embraced by an audience who were ready and willing to believe.

It was no surprise, either, that Gough’s fame fell off rather abruptly in the 1930s (after a very gradual decline over four decades). The very cultural pillars and religious sanctions that propped up his celebrity collapsed, undermined not only from without, by the new “masculine” men, like Edward Van Every and Franklin P. Adams,<sup>487</sup> but from within, by the new women like

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<sup>486</sup> Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York and Oxford, 1986), 510-11. Theater historian Claudia Johnson also identifies the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as when the rapprochement between the church and the stage began. See Claudia Johnson, *Church and Stage: The Theater as Target of Religious Condemnation in Nineteenth Century America* (Jefferson, NC, 2008), Ch. 11.

<sup>487</sup> They were hardly Honoré Morrow’s “old stock Americans.” Franklin Pierce Adams, born Franklin Leopold Adams, changed his middle name to “Pierce” at age 13. His father, Moses Adam, a German Jew, had changed his name to the more respectable Adams. He married into a third generation German Jewish family in Chicago. See Sally Ashley, *F. P. A.: The Life and*

Honoré Morrow, descendents of New England evangelical Protestantism, who half-openly rebelled against the Victorian stereotype of women.

In the end, Gough's fame did not outlive his times, paradoxically, because of his popularity. The popular lecturer (or reformer) who abides by the rules of the market does not tell his/her audience what they need to know, but what they want to hear. Part of Gough's post-war transition was to make his lectures unobtrusive and pleasantly amusing (such as by telling stories of his foreign travels) for a mass audience weary of political controversies. He no longer insisted on total abstinence for all, and he dragged his feet when it came to Prohibition. His popularity depended as much on his dramatic skills as on his knack of knowing and humoring his audience. Temperance, too, had undergone changes. From an expression of spiritual aspiration for self-perfection in the 1830s, and the Samaritan act of brotherly love in the 1840s, temperance had become, by the 1870s, primarily an outward measure of Protestant middle-class respectability (especially when drunkenness was associated with Catholic immigrants) and an ingredient in one's personal success. As Gough had implied in 1869, drinking wasn't nearly half as bad or "sinful" as appearing drunk in public, which could damage one's "influence for good," especially for a public personality like himself.<sup>488</sup> Rather than having a clean conscience, Gough's last word of advice to the aspiring young men was, fittingly, "Keep your record clean!"<sup>489</sup>

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*Times of Franklin Pierce Adams* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1986), 23-25. Van Every's parentage and history are somewhat murkier. He may have lost his father early on. His mother, Whilemina [sic] Van Every, listed in the 1900 federal census as head of household, was a first generation immigrant from Germany. Van Every may have been a fire insurance clerk before he turned to journalism.

<sup>488</sup> Gough, *Autobiography and Personal recollections*, 329-330.

<sup>489</sup> This was engraved on Gough's tombstone in the Hope Cemetery in Worcester, MA.

## CONCLUSION

### John B. Gough, the Man, the Lecturer, and the Victorian

Scholars who studied Gough have always looked at him with a jaundiced eye. I am perhaps no exception. After all, it doesn't take too much digging around for us to surmise that Gough was a hypocrite, an actor, and a cheat so congruous to our notion of the ostensibly prudish Victorians. The moral verdict on the man came almost too quickly, in retrospect, to allow an in-depth study of the lecturer, who had held large audiences spellbound for forty years. There has been a tendency for us to project modern sensibility and cynicism into the interpretation of his drama and his popularity – that his titillating moral ambiguity was his main attraction.

This may seem true to us, but definitely not so for a majority of Gough's vast audience, the men and women of the evangelical middle and upper middle classes on both sides of the Atlantic. In private letters and diaries, middle and upper class women, who paid to hear Gough lecture, confided their adoration and enthusiasm for the lecturer and recommended him to their friends.<sup>490</sup> They showed the utmost confidence in Gough's character and consistency. A widow in Detroit, who had only \$200 per annum to live on, willingly gave Gough the one dollar she had

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<sup>490</sup> These letters and diaries have become digitized and searchable in *North American Women's Letters and Diaries, Colonial to 1950*, University of Chicago, <http://solomon.nwld.alexanderstreet.com/>. These include, for example, Emeline E. Joslin Colony to Harriet Hall Johnson, Mar. 22, 1863, *Allen-Johnson Family Papers, 1759-1992* (Alexandria, VA, 2010), 1-4; Elizabeth Payson Prentiss, *The Life and Letters of Elizabeth Payson Prentiss* (New York, 1882), journal entry on February 14, 1856; Annie L. Youmans Van Ness, *Diary of Annie L. Van Ness, 1864-1881* (Alexandria, VA, 2004), journal entry on Sunday, April 27, 1873; Elizabeth Emma Stuart to Kate Stuart Baker (daughter), June 22, 1850, in *Stuart Letters of Robert and Elizabeth Sullivan Stuart and Their Children 1819-1864: With an Undated Letter Prior to July 21, 1813* (2 vols., New York, 1961). See also Juliet A. Gilmer. Letter to John Baker Tapscott. 1846, Mar. 31. John B. Tapscott papers. Huntington Library, CA.

saved to pay for her laundry and suffered losing her caste by doing the wash on her own.<sup>491</sup> A mother in Edinburgh gave Gough a handkerchief to wipe his sweat while speaking on the platform, as he had “wiped away a great many tears (of mothers)” with his lectures.<sup>492</sup> A female correspondent of the *Maine Farmer* wrote on receiving word of Gough’s passing that she felt “as if a personal friend died,” and that although she had never heard Gough’s lectures in person, she had “seen that lonely (funeral) procession (of his mother’s) over and over” in his autobiography.<sup>493</sup>

It would be presumptuous for us, from the vantage point of history, to think of Gough’s believers as dupes, or merely as gullible women. For one thing, the most ardent and outspoken puffers and backers of Gough, as I have shown in the dissertation, were men of the world, experienced journalists/publicists, reforming ministers, and shrewd merchants. For another, we may consider ourselves as disenthralled from the Victorian sentimental culture, but we are not totally immune from the modified form of hero worship today.<sup>494</sup>

Gough was such a polarizing figure in his day that it wasn’t for the lack of “exposures” that he held sway over the respectable Victorians for so long; rather, it was their refusal to disbelieve. More than once, his defenders contemplated but then quickly dismissed the

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<sup>491</sup> See Elizabeth Emma Stuart to Kate Stuart Baker (daughter), June 22, 1850, in *Stuart Letters of Robert and Elizabeth Sullivan Stuart and Their Children 1819-1864: With an Undated Letter Prior to July 21, 1813* (2 vols., New York, 1961).

<sup>492</sup> John B. Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (Springfield, MA; Chicago; Philadelphia, 1869), 336-37.

<sup>493</sup> “John B. Gough,” *Maine Farmer* (Augusta, ME), Jun. 3, 1886. Then she made a mistaken connection between the “lonely procession” and alcohol (Gough never blamed his mother’s death on his using alcohol, at least not in the book), but this shows exactly how the author’s control of a text is easily lost in its reception by readers.

<sup>494</sup> As the Victorians worshiped Andrew Carnegie, we do today Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs.

unthinkable, the grave prospect of his secret drinking or opium-eating.<sup>495</sup> When original sin and innate depravity had loosened their hold on the popular mind at mid-century, it became imperative that people had faith in the innate goodness of man. In this light, Gough's private character or who the man was on the inside was somewhat irrelevant to his audience's faith in him, or to the story I tell. He served, rather, as an entity on whom (or which) his followers projected their desires and fears (e.g. sincerity and its theatrics, self-making and its competition with piety, commerce and its role in social reform) and as a focal point of public debate. In a way, Gough may not have appeared to be the center of my story despite my focus on his public career. Rather, in different chapters, he has led to (or participated in) the social and cultural confrontations of different classes of mid-Victorian society (Ch. I); the reassertion of (Liberal evangelical) reform conservatism as opposed to radical thought and political change (Ch. II); the ambivalent adoption of dramatic Realism by the evangelical clergy (Ch. III); and the making of a public celebrity and the emergence of Christian moral entertainment (Ch. IV).

Unlike E. P. Thompson, who credited the Methodists with taming labor for the British industrial barons, I do not believe that there was a conspiracy behind Gough's popularity orchestrated by conservative evangelical merchants and ministers to market hypocrisy.<sup>496</sup> Their conservative reformist agenda, as advocated by Gough, suggested their contentment and perhaps mild discomfort with the standing social and moral order. While the dream of (Liberal) free-

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<sup>495</sup> For example, see "Vindication of Mr. Gough," *Leeds Mercury*, Jun. 22, 1858:

For our won part when we first heard of these charges we felt that if Mr. Gough was in truth addicted to the use of intoxicating drugs, our faith in human nature must be considerably shaken, and we should be tempted to regard almost every man we met as an hypocrite. It was absolutely necessary not only for the sake of Mr. Gough himself, but for the sake of the thousands who in England and America have regarded him as the apostle of Temperance.

<sup>496</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963). Thompson was the son of a Methodist minister, who became a Communist Party member.

market capitalism may today seem bankrupt because of two world wars and global financial crises (or is it?), it seemed at their time to be perfectly just and proper. Gough represented the majority and the mainstream when he preached and practiced the blending of business and reform/religion, the balance of self-control (temperance) with self-display, and the justification of a new faith (“calling”) in work (with profit as a natural outcome) not only as a means of living but as a way of life (hence the continued accumulation of wealth through incessant work).<sup>497</sup> Except for alcohol, however, Gough’s brand of teetotalers did not preach abstemiousness. Gough was himself an avid consumer. He shopped for fashionable clothes and personal accoutrements befitting a gentleman, and he bought a country estate and built a mansion for himself, with a nice cupola, a full library (featuring the largest collection of George Cruikshankiana on this side of the Atlantic), and later additions of a servant’s quarter, a stable, and a bowling alley.<sup>498</sup> All in all, his inimitable success cannot be considered a singular case of personal hypocrisy, but it was emblematic of the cultural malaise of a growing consumer democracy.

Owing to his very mainstream-ness, Gough often slipped under the radar for the students of radical reform movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was only recently redeemed from the oblivion by scholars of theatrical performance and spectacle. In our own haste to see Gough (as we do our scandal-riddled celebrities and politicians today) as a “familiar” cultural phenomenon, whose *faux pas* could only have piqued public curiosity, we are but revamping the attacks on

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<sup>497</sup> This is what Max Weber termed the “Protestant ethic.” Gough was noted in obituaries and biographies for having “died in the harness” (he was struck with apoplexy while lecturing in Philadelphia in 1886). See, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (1930; London and New York, 2010).

<sup>498</sup> Remember the gold watch and the watch guard, when he went “missing”! He was booed and pelted with vegetables by “impudent” Londoners, walking down White Hart Street in London in his new and fashionable waterproof thigh-high boots. See Gough, *Platform Echoes* (Hartford, CT, 1887), 362. The staff at the Boylston Historical Society kindly showed me the Gough house in the summer of 2010 and informed me about its features and past glory.

Victorianism, which dated from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (as I have shown in Ch. IV); we have perhaps become too occupied with the man on the stage to look behind the curtain and find out who or what was pulling his strings.

## APPENDIX I

### Forgotten Reformers

Deacon **Moses Grant** (1878-1861), Brattle Street (Unitarian) Church, Boston

The Grants made a fortune after the Revolution in the upholstery business by catering to a growing appetite for interior décor – especially inexpensive wallpaper.<sup>499</sup> Neither Grant, Jr., nor his father (also named Moses) received higher education.<sup>500</sup> The father and son joined the fashionable Brattle Street Church in the late 1780s after quitting the New North Church where the Grant family had long worshiped.<sup>501</sup> They served successively as deacons of the Brattle Street Church. In the 1830s, Grant, Jr., decided to retire from the active management of his paper business and devote full attention to charities and temperance reform. He was president of the Eye and Ear Infirmary in 1846 and became a subscriber to the Boston Athenaeum in 1850 (His son Moses Pierce followed suit in 1856). Politically, Grant, Jr., was conservative: a Young Federalist (elected member of the Washington Benevolent Society in 1812) and then a Whig (elected Alderman from 1848 to 1851). His social work steered clear of radical issues of the day. He refused to be enlisted in the anti-slavery cause and declined selling paper to William Lloyd

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<sup>499</sup> Grant's wallpaper with simple geometric (known as "harlequin") designs has been found widely in historic middle-class dwellings in the New England area and beyond. See [http://www.historicnewengland.org/collections-archives-exhibitions/online-exhibitions/wallpaper/history/Early\\_American.htm](http://www.historicnewengland.org/collections-archives-exhibitions/online-exhibitions/wallpaper/history/Early_American.htm); Moses Grant was listed as one of the richest men of Massachusetts. See Abner Forbes and J. W. Green, *The Richest Men of Massachusetts: Containing a Statement of the Reputed Wealth of about Fifteen Hundred Persons* (Boston, 1845), 30-31.

<sup>500</sup> In fact, no Grants had gone to Harvard (a rite of passage for Boston Brahmins) until Moses Grant, Jr.'s grandson Moses Grant Daniell.

<sup>501</sup> His father was a participant in the Boston Tea Party and a possible member of the Sons of Liberty in Boston. See Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party & the Making of America* (New Haven, 2010), Appendix.



Garrison's *Liberator* for its being an "injurious, if not incendiary sheet."<sup>502</sup> He was less known for his culture than for his wealth: he had been too much involved in trade<sup>503</sup>; he was remembered as "a man of sound judgment, superior business talents, a practical philanthropist, and a sincere Christian," but not as a genteel Brahmin.<sup>504</sup>

**George Hurlbut** (?-1846) and **George Clinton Ripley** (1812-1895), president and secretary of the Brooklyn City Temperance Society

The Hurlbuts were natives of New London, CT and were newcomers to New York.<sup>505</sup> George's father, Samuel, became a ship owner and a West Indies trader sometime after 1783 in New London.<sup>506</sup> The real fortune of the family, however, was made in New York City on Southern

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<sup>502</sup> See William Lloyd Garrison, *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* (6 vols., Boston, 1981), 6: 302.

<sup>503</sup> It was not until the third generation (Moses Pierce Grant, son of Moses Grant, Jr.) that they began to shake off that association. In a private letter to her sister-in-law, Elinor Mead Howells, wife of William Dean Howells, remarked that "[d]riving out with ladies seems to be his (Moses P. Grant) occupation in life." Ginette de B. Merrill and George Arms, ed., *If Not Literature: Letters of Elinor Mead Howells* (Columbus, OH, 1988), 105, 133.

<sup>504</sup> G. W. Bungay portrays Grant as below average size and unimpressive in appearance, and "has a singular habit of twitching the muscles of his face and shrugging his shoulders when excited; often speaks abruptly, when pressed with business, and does not always appear to the best advantage at first sight, but wears well and 'improves on acquaintance.'" Bungay, *Crayon Sketches and Off-Hand Takings* (Boston, 1852), 93; Rev. William R. Alger of the New North Church corroborated the roughhewn businessman image in his funeral sermon for Moses Grant, Jr.: "he [Grant] lacked philosophic thought, and the most advanced freedom of spirit; that the whole aesthetic side of his nature was meager." Alger, *Good Samaritan in Boston: A Tribute to Moses Grant* (Boston, 1862), 7.

<sup>505</sup> George Hurlbut, uncle of George, fought and died in the Revolution. John Hurlbut, also uncle of George (cousin of his father) was elected to the local Committee of Correspondence. Samuel Hurlbut, George's father, too young to have taken part in the fighting, was said to have served in the US Navy as a midshipman. Henry Higgins Hurlbut, *The Hurlbut Genealogy* (Albany, NY, 1888), 95-97.

<sup>506</sup> Joseph Hurlbut, George's uncle, died in a shipwreck in the West Indies in 1795. Frances Manwaring Caulkins, *History of New London, Connecticut* (New London, CT, 1895), 582.

cotton. George was one of the three Hurlbut brothers (Elisha Denison and John Denison) who owned the large New York-based shipping firm of E. D. Hurlbut & Co., which plied the Gulf coast and later ran packet lines to major European ports. The brothers married into New York and Brooklyn local families,<sup>507</sup> but had not broken into the inner circles of the Knickerbocker elite (who survived the Revolution more or less intact, unlike their Boston counterpart). They supported the Seamen's Friends Society and the Home Missionary and Tract Society, but were not involved with the anti-slavery circles of Arthur and Lewis Tappan or any other radical reform society. George Hurlbut was remembered, in particular, for his social conservatism:

His views of right and wrong were discriminating and decided... He could tolerate none of the radical views which are becoming so fashionable at the present day... He gave no countenance to notions or practices, which disorganize society, which corrupt youth, which lessen respect for the laws, or which rob law of its just penalty, either in its letter or its administration. Although a young man...he lent no sanction to measures or views subversive of good order, or which in a spirit of innovation or vainglorying, aim to break up the foundations of many generations...<sup>508</sup>

George Clinton Ripley came from Oakham, MA and moved with his wife to Brooklyn from Boston in 1841. He had a long career clerking with the New York dry goods firm, Holbrook, Nelson, & Co. before going into the life insurance business in 1861. He became an officer and later the president of the Brooklyn-based Home Life Insurance Company. He was a founder of the Philharmonic Society of Brooklyn and president of the Long Island Historical Society and

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<sup>507</sup> Edwina Hicks Hurlbut, wife of John Denison, was daughter of Jacob M. Hicks, a "gentleman" (albeit known for his spitting) and owner of a good portion of land on Brooklyn Heights. Martha Purser Hurlbut, wife of Elisha Denison, was daughter of George H. Purser of New York (apparently not George H. Purser of the Tweed Ring). And Sarah Louisa Lewis Hurlbut, wife of George, was the sister of Rev. William B. Lewis, minister of the Third Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, where George was member and trustee.

<sup>508</sup> In George Hurlbut's funeral sermon, Rev. Wm. Beale Lewis, Hurlbut's brother-in-law, praised him for his social and political conservatism. Lewis, *Christ Would Have His People Where He Is: A Sermon, Preached in the Third Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, NY* (New York, 1846), 26-27.

Museum.<sup>509</sup> The Ripleys and the Hurlbut brothers lived in the same neighborhood (the fashionable Brooklyn Heights), went to the same church (Presbyterian), and supported the same kind of ameliorative and order-preserving reform, and they were all members of the Brooklyn New England Society. They knew each other well (Ripley named his son George Hurlbut), and had close social and business ties with other Yankees in New York.<sup>510</sup>

**Jesse W. Goodrich** (?-1857), editor of the *Massachusetts Cataract and Worcester County Waterfall*, Worcester, MA

Goodrich was a native of Pittsfield, MA and was known to be one of Gough's early friends and an instrument in Gough's reformation. Goodrich was a lawyer and a hard-dealing businessman. Once the president and trustee of the Kennebec Lumber Company, an unincorporated joint stock company speculating in Maine land, he ran afoul of the stockholders during the financial crisis of 1837 for defaulting in interest payment and was sued for taking out unauthorized notes and mortgages on company-owned land (whether he benefited personally from the dubious transactions or not, we do not know).<sup>511</sup> In the early 1840s, however, he began to switch focus to the temperance enterprise. He served as the president of the Worcester Washingtonian Society

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<sup>509</sup> Elsie Ripley Clapp, granddaughter of George Ripley, remembered him fondly, many years after he died, as a supporter of the Underground Railroad and the anti-slavery movement, but this cannot be verified. Sam Stack, *Elsie Ripley Clapp: Her Life and the Community School* (New York, 2004), 11.

<sup>510</sup> *Brooklyn* (NY) *Daily Eagle*, Dec. 28, 1846.

<sup>511</sup> Jesse Goodrich Papers in Miscellaneous Manuscripts, American Antiquarian Society; *Daily Atlas*, Mar. 22, 1842, "Supreme Judicial Court of the Worcester County."

and edited the society's weekly journal, the *Cataract*, which under him became the voice of the legal suasion faction within the temperance community in Worcester.<sup>512</sup>

**Benjamin Webb Williams** (1816-1905), owner (after 1869) of the Williams Lecture and Musical Bureau, Taunton, MA

Born in Salem, MA, Williams was the editor of the Taunton (MA) *Dew Drop* and a temperance firebrand. He was sued for libel (and subsequently acquitted) in 1845 for publishing a story impugning the character of a grocer in Taunton, who allegedly sold liquor with no license.<sup>513</sup>

Williams was one of Gough's early employers and would later become the founder and manager of the Williams Lecture and Musical Bureau. He was actively involved in the no-license campaign and the agitation for passing a "Maine Law" in Massachusetts.<sup>514</sup>

**Rev. John Marsh**, editor of the New-York-City-based *Journal of the American Temperance Union* (JATU), was a native of Wethersfield, CT and was trained for the ministry at Yale under Timothy Dwight. He was the long-time secretary of the American Temperance Union and he was responsible for bringing Gough to New York City and for organizing the lecturer's first tour of upstate New York in 1844. The *JATU* tried to recapture the direction of the temperance movement in the 1840s and channel the energy of the popular temperance movement toward a legislative campaign to end liquor licensing. It was to turn against Gough in the late 1850s at the time of the *Gough v. Lees* trial.

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<sup>512</sup> He published by subscription his phrenological chart and description as a matchmaking tool. His will, the execution of which was predicated on the beneficiaries' teetotalism, was later invalidated by his relatives in court.

<sup>513</sup> B. W. Williams, *Report on the Trial of B. W. Williams and Others* (Taunton, MA, 1846). The court decision was a complete reversal of the *Commonwealth v. Cheever* (1835).

<sup>514</sup> Alfred A. Wright, *Who's Who in Lyceum* (Philadelphia, 1906), 28-29. Williams paid Gough \$8 per lecture in 1842.

## APPENDIX II

### Friends and Foes, 1845-46

GOUGH SUPPORTERS IN AND AROUND PHILADELPHIA<sup>515</sup>:

#### New-School Presbyterians

Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, Corresponding Secretary of the Philadelphia Bible Society

Rev. Ezra S. Ely, First Presbyterian (North Liberty)

Rev. Mr. Robert Adair, First - (Southwark)

Rev. Mr. Willis Lord, Seventh -

Rev. Mr. Wm. Ramsey, Twelfth -

Rev. Elias J. Richards, Western -

Rev. Joel Parker, Clinton Street -

Rev. M. LaRue P. Thompson, Fifth -

Rev. John L. Grant, Eleventh -

Rev. Mr. Wylie could be First Reformed, Rev. Samuel B. Wylie or Rev. T. W. J. Wylie or Reformed, S. O. Wylie

Rev. Jos. T. Cooper, Second Associate

Rev. Amasa Converse, Editor of *Christian Observer*

Episcopalian

Rev. Mr. Richard Newton, St. Paul's

Rev. Mr. J. M. Douglass, St. Matthew's

#### Baptist

Rev. Mr. Geo. Higgins, Second (Southwark)

Rev. Abraham D. Gillett, Eleventh

Rev. Mr. Geo. B. Ide, First

#### Independent/Mission

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<sup>515</sup> Names compiled from News Clippings Folio Vol. 2 (ca. 1845-48), Gough Papers, AAS; Occupational and denominational information was obtained from *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory* (Philadelphia, 1845-1847) and relevant census data.

Rev. John Chambers, First Independent

Rev. Henry D. Moore, missionary at the Christian Home Missionary Society of the City and County of Philadelphia and freelance writer

Rev. M. E. Cross of the Congregational Church in Darby, PA

Rev. W. C. Howard, Member for life of the American Bible Society

Rev. Mr. Burroughs, Baptist Home Mission

### Non-Clergy

P. S. White (Philip S.) attorney, 419 Coates

Judge Bouvier (John Bouvier), office 23 S 7<sup>th</sup>, h. 433 Sassafras

Professor Gibson (Wm. Gibson, M.D., NW Sch 7<sup>th</sup> & Chestnut, taught surgery at UPenn

Wm. J. Mullen, surgeon dentist and Maine Law advocate, 181 Pine

Col. Robinson (Thomas Robinson) gentleman, 17 Palmyra sq.

John Ely. Gent., SE 10<sup>th</sup> & Spruce

Henry Gibbons, M. D. 167 S 3<sup>rd</sup>

Geo. Washington Reed, watchmaker, NW 2<sup>nd</sup> & Vine, h. 50 Vine

Geo. W. Allen, M. D., 45 N 8<sup>th</sup> and 28 S 6<sup>th</sup>, h. 77 Wood.

Florence Thomas B., Sec'ry. Comptrollers public schools, 11 state house, h 48 Lombard

Hon. Edward A. Penniman, banker, involved in the bank war (currency war) against British and other foreign banks in 1837-8 (See *Niles Weekly Register*, Vol. 52, pp. 197-8)

Matthias, Benj., gentleman, 352 Vine

Smith, Wade T., merchant, 160 High, h. 3 W Penn Square

Col. W. P. Smith, involved in the petition for Congress to pass laws to relieve the monetary embarrassment of Pennsylvania, 1834.

W. Wilson (likely) Wm. Wilson, mer., 14 S 6th, h Spruce ab 7<sup>th</sup>

Edwin Booth, mer., 78 High, h 199 N 9th

Sprogell Marshall, atty. and coun. 188 S 9<sup>th</sup>

Geo. H. Burgin, M.D. on board of controllers for City of Philadelphia 1844-5

Wm. Sloanaker, publisher, NE 3<sup>rd</sup> & Dock, h. 135 N 12<sup>th</sup>

Sloanaker Wm. & Co. pub's *Daily Sun*, NE 3<sup>rd</sup> & Dock.

Judge Todd, (James), Attorney General of Fayette County

John Bouvier, Recorder of Philadelphia

Todd James, att'y & coun., 152 'Walnut, h 276 Callowhill

Todd David S., att'y & coun., 152 Walnut, h 149 Button wood

James Todd, president of the Citizen's Mutual Insurance Company of Penn., Office 152 Walnut street.

Moore John D. dentist, 133 Spruce

M. A. Root, Root & Collins, photog-raphists, 140 Chestnut; and teacher of writing, 140 Chestnut, h Sch 8th bel George

Barrett C. B., printer, 33 Carter's alley, h 57 Franklin

Clarke Thomas C, editor of *Saturday Museum*, 56 S 12th

M'Calla William, collector, 5 N 11th

Women (of the Ladies' Temperance Union of the City and County of Philadelphia)

Mrs. S. Collins, Cynthia Painter Collins, wife of Simeon Collins, bookseller, mother of Frances Amelia Collins, corresponding secretary of the Ladies Temperance Union

Mrs. Dr. Bryan, Elizabeth L, wife of James Bryan, physician

Miss Sarah H. McCalla/M'Calla, (very likely) related to William M'Calla, erstwhile com. merchant, 1845-55 collector of tobacco revenue

Miss Mary Ann Rhoads/Rhodes, sister-in-law of Edwin Booth, broker.

S. M'Cawley, unknown connections

Harriet Probasco, printer, editor of *American Women*

ANTI-GOUGHERS IN NEW YORK<sup>516</sup>:

Brewster W. Platt, no information found

John B. Nelson, (perhaps) engineer, 46 Leonard

Salmon Bronson, Thomsonian physician, 94 W. Broadway

W. M. Judson, ship carpenter

Richard W. Waddy, shoemaker, 123 Walker, h. do.

H. T. Sammons, cartman

Thomas Farley, (likely) moulder

Francis D. Allen, Jr., seller of temperance books, Franklin Bookstore

J. Pitcher, no information found

John Reilly, (likely) rigger

Alphonso Figsbee, printer, 20 Madison

Francis J. Hedenberg, tinsmith, 79 Division, h. 79 do

Wm. H. Wanmaker, marble cutter

Henry McGaviston, no information found

James H. St. John, (likely) machinist

P(eter) J. Powless, ship carpenter, 307 Washington

Wm. P. Egbert, hatter, 104 Laurens

Adam C. Flanagan, president of the Prospect Temperance Society; printer, 142 Delancy

John E. Munson, (likely) bookbinder

Wm. H. Lines, (likely) boardinghouse, 336 pearl

J. Foster, too common a name

James Stockwell, keeper of the Croton Lunch, a temperance restaurant

Levi Burr, printer

William Allen, (likely) ship carpenter

Abrahma A. Bertran, no information found

Edward M. Osborn, (likely) clerk, 39 Rose

Solomon Dean, Jr., tinsmith

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<sup>516</sup> This is based on New York *True Sun*, Jan. 20, 27, 28, 29, 1846, *Doggett's New-York City Directory for 1845* (New York, 1845), and relevant census data. A good indication of the anti-Goughers' lower socio-economic status is the difficulty of locating information about them.



Isaac C. Bennett, (house)painter, r. 48 First  
Joseph K. Barr, printer, rear 13 Forsyth  
James Mason, too common a name  
Jesse Thomas, (likely) carpenter  
Stephen Munson, (likely) carpenter  
James Chamber, shipmaster, 131 Lewis  
C. J. Russell, no information found  
James Kaighin, no information found  
Samuel Feeks, no information found  
Albert Vanderhoof, sailmaker, 72 Eldridge  
Charles L. Curtis, carpenter  
William B. Burrill, undertaker or hardware (?)  
Joseph Murphy, too common a name  
A. D. Wilson, president of the Marshall T. A. society, homeopathy physician, 42 Walker  
Joseph Manning, silversmith, 291 Pearl  
Henry Aked, bookbinder  
Alexander Bains, no information found  
James Welch, (likely) carpenter  
Robert M. Van Dike, marble carver  
Charles Falconi, no information found  
A(mos). J. Williamson, printer  
Francis McIlvain, unclear  
Wm. Savage, (likely) bookbinder, 81 Watts  
Monroe Tompkins, no information found  
James Baker, (likely) shoemaker  
Wm. B. Patterson, no information found  
Wm. Kelly, too common a name  
James Dalyoil(?), no information found  
Wm. Hart, printer  
Wm. Alley, no information found  
Samuel Frellors, no information found

Joseph Medmore, no information found

Timothy Van Dike, no information found

Thomas G. Mead, bookbinder

Wm. M. Davis, bookbinder, 89 Clinton

Peter McDonald, president of Total Abstinence Caledonian B. Society (Rechabite), printer<sup>517</sup>

Total number: 63

Carpenters: 7; Printers: 7; Bookbinders: 5;

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<sup>517</sup> The wives of Peter McDonald and James Stockwell were involved in organizing a female auxiliary society for the T.A. Caledonian B. Society. See *Crystal Fount and Rechabite Recorder* (New York), Nov. 29, 1845.

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