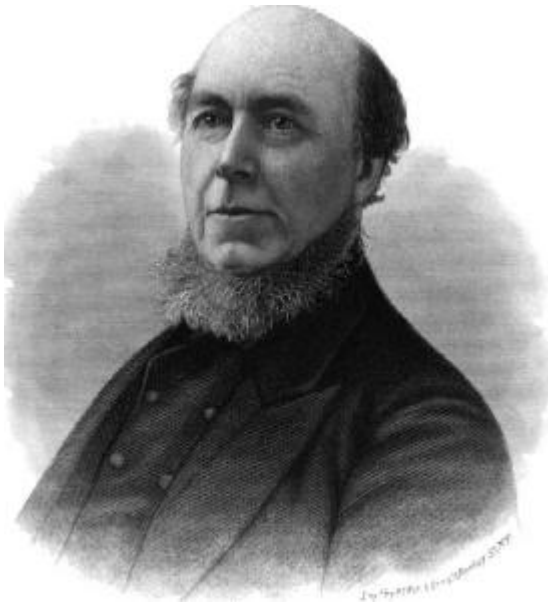


Charles Chiniquy Becomes Motivated to Stop Drinking



Charles Chiniquy

The text is from chapter 28 of Charles Chiniquy's book, "[Fifty Years in the Church of Rome](#)". If you don't know who Charles Chiniquy is, I hope you learn about him for I highly regard him as a type of Martin Luther of North America. More [about Charles Chiniquy](#).

The first man I met was Dr. Douglas, who was waiting for me at Mr. C. Glackmayer's room. He confirmed what I had known before of the number of sick, and added that the prevailing diseases were of the most dangerous kind.

Dr. Douglas, who was one of the founders and governors of the hospital, had the well-merited reputation of being one of the ablest surgeons of Quebec. Though a staunch Protestant by birth and profession, he honoured me with his confidence and friendship from the first day we met. I may say I have never known a nobler heart, a larger mind and a truer philanthropist.

After thanking him for the useful though sad intelligence he had given me, I requested Mr. Glackmayer to give me a glass of brandy, which I immediately swallowed.

"What are you doing there?" said Dr. Douglas.

"You see," I answered; "I have drunk a glass of excellent brandy."

"But please tell me why you drank that brandy."

"Because it is a good preservative against the pestilential atmosphere I will breathe all day," I replied. "I will have to hear the confessions of all those people dying from small-pox or cholera, and breathe the putrid air which is around their pillows. Does not common sense warn me to take some precautions against the contagion?"

"Is it possible," rejoined he, "that a man for whom I have such a sincere esteem is so ignorant of the deadly workings of alcohol in the human frame? What you have just drank is nothing but poison; and, far from protecting yourself against the danger, you are now more exposed to it than before you drank that beverage."

"You poor Protestants," I answered, in a jocose way, "are a band of fanatics, with your extreme doctrines on temperance; you will never convert me to your views on that subject. Is it for the use of the dogs that God has created wine and brandy? No; it is for the use of men who drink them with moderation and intelligence."

"My dear Mr. Chiniquy, you are joking; but I am in earnest when I tell you that you have poisoned yourself with that glass of brandy," replied Dr. Douglas. "If good wine and brandy were poisons," I answered, "you would be long ago the only physician in Quebec, for you are the only one of the medical body whom I know to be an abstainer. But, though I am much pleased with your conversation, excuse me if I leave you to visit my dear sick sailors, whose cries for spiritual help ring in my ears."

"One word more," said Dr. Douglas, "and I have done. Tomorrow morning we will make the autopsy of a sailor who has just died suddenly here. Have you any objection to come and see with your eyes, in the body of that man, what your glass of brandy has done in your own body."

"No, sir; I have no objection to see that," I replied. "I have been anxious for a long time to make a special study of anatomy. It will be my first lesson; I cannot get it from a better master."

I then shook hands with him and went to my patients, with whom I passed the remainder of the day and the greater part of the night. Fifty of them wanted to make general confessions of all the sins of their whole lives; and I had to give the last sacraments to twenty-five who were dying from small-pox or cholera morbus. The next morning I was, at the appointed hour, by the corpse of the dead man, when Dr. Douglas kindly gave me a very powerful microscope, that I might more thoroughly follow the ravages of alcohol in every part of the human body.

"I have not the least doubt," said he, "that this man has been instantly killed by a glass of rum, which he drank one hour before he fell dead. That rum has caused the rupture of the aorta" (the big vein which carries the blood to the heart).

While talking thus the knife was doing its work so quickly that the horrible spectacle of the broken artery was before our eyes almost as the last word fell from his lips.

"Look here," said the doctor, "all along the artery, and you will see thousands, perhaps millions, of reddish spots, which are as many holes perforated through it by alcohol. Just as the musk rats of the Mississippi river, almost every spring, did little holes through the dams which keep that powerful river within its natural limits, and cause the waters to break

through the little holes, and thus carry desolation and death along its shores, so alcohol every day causes the sudden death of thousands of victims by perforating the veins and opening small issues through which the blood rushes out of its natural limits. It is not only this big vein which alcohol perforates; it does the same deadly work in the veins of the lungs and the whole body. Look at the lungs with attention, and count, if you can, the thousands and thousands of reddish, dark and yellow spots, and little ulcers with which they are covered. Every one of them is the work of alcohol, which has torn and cut the veins and caused the blood to go out of its canals, to carry corruption and death all over these marvelous organs. Alcohol is one of the most dangerous poisons I dare say it is the most dangerous. It has killed more men than all the other poisons together. Alcohol I cannot be changed or assimilated to any part or tissue or our body, it cannot go to any part of the human frame without bringing disorder and death to it. For it cannot in any possible way unite with any part of our body. The water we drink, and the wholesome food and bread we eat, by the laws and will of God are transformed into different parts of the body, to which they are sent through the millions of small canals which take them from the stomach to every part of our frame. When the water has been drunk, or the bread we have eaten is, for instance, sent to the lungs, to the brain, the nerves, the muscles, the bones wherever it goes it receives, if I can so speak, letters of citizenship; it is allowed to remain there in peace and work for the public good. But it is not so with alcohol. The very moment it enters the stomach it more or less brings disorder, ruin and death, according to the quantity taken. The stomach refuses to take it, and makes a supreme effort to violently throw it out, either through the mouth, or by indignantly pushing it to the brain or into the numberless tubes by which it discharges its contents to the surface through all the tissues. But will alcohol be welcome in any of these tubes or marvelous canals, or in any part or tissue of the body it will visit on its passage to the surface? No! Look here with your microscope, and you will see with your own eyes that everywhere alcohol has gone in the body there has been a hand-to-hand struggle and a bloody battle fought to get rid of it. Yes! every place where King Alcohol has put his foot has been turned into a battlefield, spread with ruin and death, in order to ignominiously turn it out. By a most extraordinary working of nature, or rather by the order of God, every vein and artery through which alcohol has to pass suddenly contracts, as if to prevent its passage or choke it as a deadly foe. Every vein and artery has evidently heard the voice of God: "Wine is a mocker; it bites like a serpent and stings as an adder!" Every nerve and muscle which alcohol touched, trembled and shook as if in the presence of an implacable and unconquerable enemy. Yes, at the presence of alcohol every nerve and muscle loses its strength, just as the bravest man, in the presence of a horrible monster or demon, suddenly loses his natural strength, and shakes from head to foot."

I cannot repeat all I heard that day from the lips of Dr. Douglas, and what I saw with my own eyes of the horrible workings of alcohol through every part of that body. It would be too long. Suffice to say that I was struck with horror at my own folly, and at the folly of so many people who make use of intoxicating drinks.

What I learned that day was like the opening of a mysterious door, which allowed me to see the untold marvels of a new and most magnificent world. But though I was terror-stricken with the ravages of strong drink in that dead man, I was not yet convinced of the necessity of being a total abstainer from wine and beer, and a little brandy now and then, as a social habit. I did not like to expose myself to ridicule by the sacrifice of habits which seemed then, more than now, to be among the sweetest and most common links of society. But I determined to lose no opportunity of continuing the study of the working of alcohol in the human body. At the same time I resolved to avail myself of every opportunity of making a complete study of anatomy under the kind and learned Dr. Douglas.

It was from the lips and works of Dr. Douglas that I learned the following startling facts:

1st. The heart of man, which is only six inches long by four inches wide, beats seventy times in a minute, 4,200 in one hour, 100,300 in a day, 36,792,000 in a year. It ejects two ounces and a half of blood out of itself every time it beats, which makes 175 ounces every minute, 656 pounds every hour, seven tons and three-quarters of blood which goes out of the heart every day! The whole blood of a man runs through his heart in three minutes.

2nd. The skin is composed of three parts placed over each other, whose thickness varies from a quarter to an eighth of a line. Each square inch contains 3,500 pores, through which the sweat goes out. Every one of them is a pipe a quarter of an inch long. All those small pipes united together would form a canal 201,166 feet long equal to forty miles, or nearly thirteen leagues!

3rd. The weight of the blood in an ordinary man is between thirty and forty pounds. That blood runs through the body in 101 seconds, or one minute and forty-one seconds. Eleven thousand (11,000) pints of blood pass through the lungs in twenty-four hours.

4th. There are 246 bones in the human body; 63 of them are in the head, 24 in the sides, 16 in the wrist, 14 in the joints, and 108 in the hands and feet!

The heart of a man who drinks nothing but pure water beats about 100,300 a day, but will beat from 25,000 to 30,000 times more if he drinks alcoholic drinks. Those who have not learned anatomy know little of the infinite power, wisdom, love and mercy of God. No book except the Bible, and no science except the science of astronomy is like the body of man to tell us what our God is, and what we are. The body of man is a book written by the hand of God, to speak to us of Him as no man can speak. After studying the marvelous working of the heart, the lungs, the eyes and the brain of man, I could not speak; I remained mute, unable to say a single word to tell my admiration and awe. I wept as overwhelmed with my feelings. I should have like to speak of those things to the priests with whom I lived, but I saw at first they could not understand me; they thought I was exaggerating. How many times, when alone with God in my little closet, when thinking of those marvels, I fell on my knees and said: "Thou are great, O my God! The works of Thy hands are above the works of man! But the works of Thy love and mercy are above all Thy

other works!"

During the four years I was chaplain of the Marine Hospital, more than one hundred corpses were opened before me, and almost as many outside the hospital. For when, by the order of the jury and the coroner, an autopsy was to be made, I seldom failed to attend. In that way I have had a providential opportunity of acquiring the knowledge of one of the most useful and admirable sciences as no priest or minister probably ever had on this continent. It is my conviction that the first thing a temperance orator ought to do is to study anatomy; get the bodies of drunkards, as well as those of so called temperate drinkers, opened before him, and study there the working of alcohol in the different organs of man. So long as the orators on temperance will not do that, they cannot understand the subject on which they speak. Though I have read the best books written by the most learned physicians of England, France, and United States on the ravages of rum, wines and beer of every kind and name in the body of men, I have never read anything which enlightened me so much, and brought such profound convictions to my intelligence, as the study I have made of the brain, the lungs, the heart, veins, arteries, nerves and muscles of a single man or woman. These bodies, opened before me, were books written by the hand of God Himself, and they spoke to me as no man could speak. By the mercy of God, to that study is due the irresistible power of my humble efforts in persuading my countrymen to give up the use of intoxicating drinks. But here is the time to tell how my merciful God forced me, His unprofitable and rebellious servant, almost in spite of myself, to give up the use of intoxicating drinks.