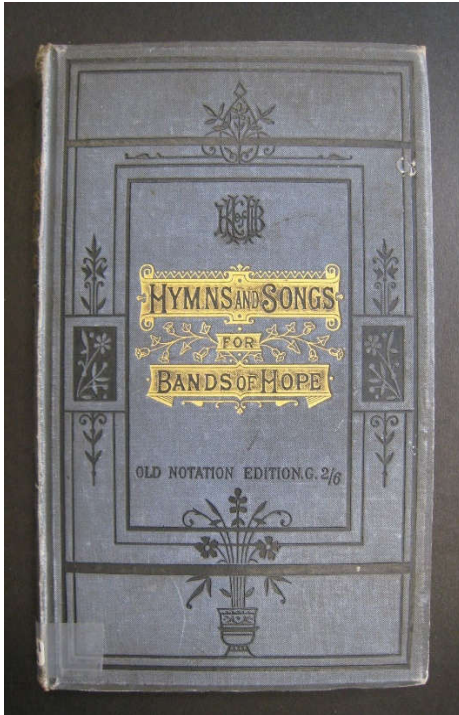


‘Shun All Liquid Fire!’

Nineteenth Century Temperance Hymns in the Elias Library of Hymnology



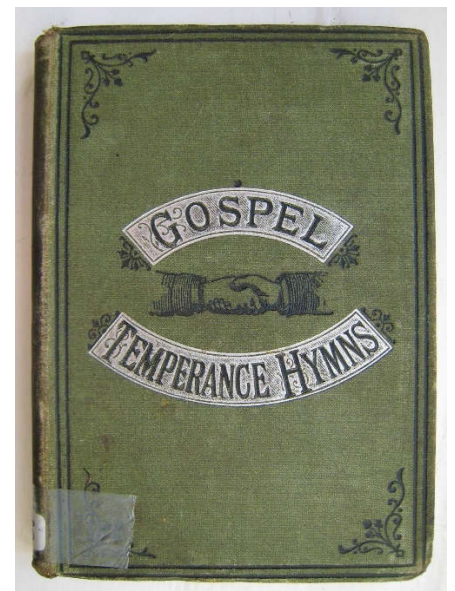
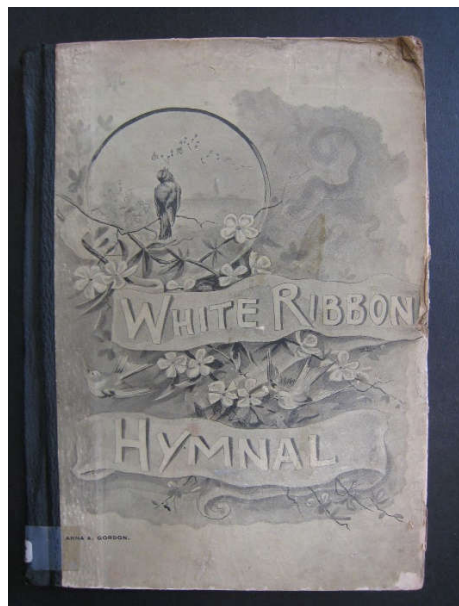
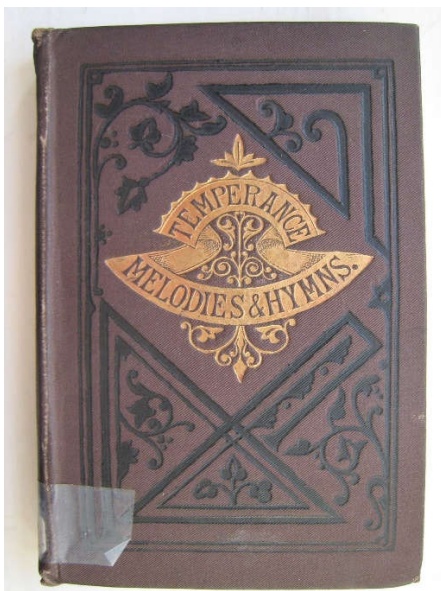
In 1751, William Hogarth published his condemnatory engraving [‘Gin Lane’](#), showing ragged and emaciated drinkers neglecting their children, fighting dogs for food, and rioting, beneath the signs of the innkeeper, the distiller, the pawnbroker, and the coffin maker. One hundred years later, nineteenth century Temperance crusaders still saw drink as a root of many societal evils, particularly in the working classes.

The temperance movement, which required its followers to moderate their drinking of alcohol, or abstain altogether, began in the UK in 1833 with the Preston Temperance Society, founded by Joseph Livesey – one of ‘the Preston Seven’ – and it was at their meetings that the word ‘teetotal’ was coined.

Not long afterwards, in Leeds in 1847, the Band of Hope was founded by an Irish Presbyterian, Ann Carlile, and a Baptist minister, Jabez Tunnicliffe. Their aim was to save working class children from the evils of drink by inviting them to [‘sign the pledge’](#) and swear never to drink intoxicating liquor. Fifty years later, in 1897, the Band of Hope had an incredible 3.5 million members – and its patron was Queen Victoria.

The British Women’s Temperance Association was formed in 1876 to persuade men not to drink, and members – it was exclusively for women – wore a white ribbon as a sign of solidarity and to identify each other. In 1880, another wave of temperance swept the country with the Gospel Temperance or Blue Ribbon movement, brought from America by Richard T Booth, who inspired another million people in England to sign the pledge by the end of that decade.

Throughout the nineteenth century (and beyond), all of these organisations – and plenty more, both Dissenting and Anglican, secular and religious – took to the streets and lecture-halls to spread the word, with speeches, meetings, parades, magazines, and hymns.



“Wesley said years ago, it was a pity Satan should have all the best tunes.

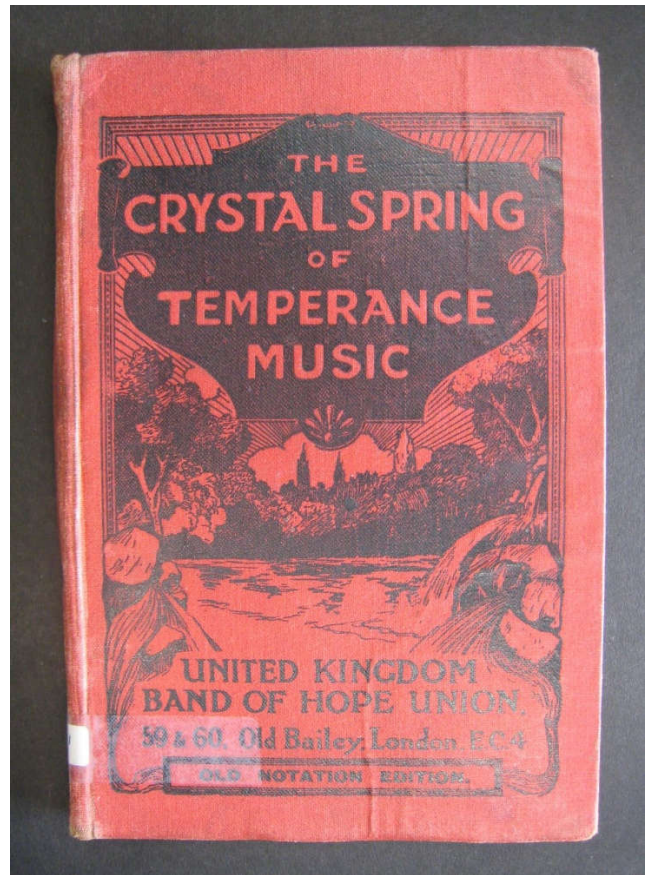
The same may as properly be said of songs, which have contributed much to intemperance. Surely it is time that both music and song which have been thus perverted, should at once be rescued to the aid of temperance.”

John Marsh, *Temperance Hymn Book and Minstrels* (New York, 1841)

The Dissenting Churches were known for their strong links with the Temperance crusade, and hymns and songs were one of the cornerstones of the movement. A quick look at some of the temperance hymn books from the Elias Library of Hymnology at Westminster shows collections published for use by a variety of bodies and meetings: Bands of Hope, Gospel Temperance meetings, the BWTA (*The White Ribbon Hymnal*), the Church of England Temperance Society, and local bodies like the Leicester Temperance Society (*Temperance Melodies*).

The hymns themselves make interesting reading. There are at least three distinct themes: the first type sing the praises (quite literally) of water and are an exhortation to remain strong in resisting alcohol: like Preston & Hull’s [Shun All Liquid Fire](#), or EP Hood’s *The Crystal Spring* – “while others praise the red wine’s rays, my drink’s the crystal spring”.

Some follow Hogarth’s engraving and paint a sorry picture of the miseries caused by addiction – like HC Work’s [‘Father, Come Home’](#), where a child implores a drinking man to return to his home, his wife, and his dying son.



And a third group are martial, and are a rousing call to arms, to “join the march” or “the battle”, to “fight the fight”, and to join with “the army” or “the crusade” with banners and battle cries – like Sargant & Mason’s “Join the Temp’rance army, boys!” or FL Armstrong’s [‘Unfurl the Temperance Banner’](#). Ultimately, however, where those who [‘Bravely wage the Temperance battle’](#) led the government in the USA to legislate the Prohibition Era after World War One, the Temperance movement in the UK never quite gained enough traction to enact a similar decree.

Helen Weller, Archivist
January 2020

Bibliography and Further Reading:

Temperance hymn texts and scores at <https://hymnary.org/>

‘Joseph Livesey’, at <http://www.visitpreston.com/welcome/famous-prestonians/joseph-livesey> (nd)

‘140 Years of the White Ribbon Association’, at <https://white-ribbon.org.uk/140-years-white-ribbon-association-part-one/> (nd)

‘History of Hope UK (formerly the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union)’, by David Edgington, at <https://www.hopeuk.org/wp-content/uploads/History-PDF-.pdf> (nd)

‘Unconvincing Hymns of the Temperance Army’, by Hannah Notess, in *The Toast* <https://the-toast.net/2015/08/13/unconvincing-hymns-of-the-temperance-army/> (August 2015)

‘The Blue Ribbon Army: Gospel Temperance in England’ by Lilian Lewis Shiman, in *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 391-408 (December 1981)