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THE OX DISCOURSE.

PERMANENT AND UNIVERSAL LAWS.

It has been very justly remarked, that the precepts of the law of Moses, though that code was designed for a peculiar people under peculiar circumstances, embody and set forth those eternal and unchangeable principles of right and justice, upon which all good laws and all sound morality must forever be founded. We earnestly solicit careful attention to the following brief exposition of a LAW, embodying an important principle, and consequently as imperative upon us as on any individuals or nations in past time.

"IF AN OX GORE A MAN OR A WOMAN, THAT THEY DIE: THEN THE OX SHALL BE STONED—BUT THE OWNER SHALL BE QUIET. BUT IF THE OX WERE WONT TO PUSH WITH HIS HORN IN TIME PAST, AND IT HATH BEEN TESTIFIED TO HIS OWNER, AND HE HATH NOT KEPT HIM IN, BUT THAT HE HATH KILLED A MAN OR A WOMAN; THE OX SHALL BE STONED, AND HIS OWNER ALSO SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH."—*Exodus xli. 28, 29.*

The principle of this law is all that we are concerned with at present. And it is a very plain one—and a very broad one—brought out here in a specific case, but extending to ten thousand others.

It is this. Every man is responsible to God for the evils which result from his selfishness, or his indifference to the welfare of others. This principle will help us to illustrate the law.

"If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall surely be stoned, but the owner of the ox shall be quit." The design in stoning the ox, was to produce an effect upon men to show them how highly the lawgiver valued human life. The very beast that destroyed it should be cast forth as an abomination.

God says to Noah: "Your blood of your lives will I require. The hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man."

A stigma shall be fixed upon man or beast that shall destroy him who is made after the similitude of God. But why the owner in this case quit, or guiltless? Simply because the ox is not in any way the result of his carelessness, or of his wickedness. From any thing within his knowledge, he had no reason to expect such a result. But if the ox hath been wont to push with his horns, and he knew it, he shall be responsible for the consequences, whatever they may be. For he had every reason to expect that mischief would be done, and took no means to prevent it. And if the ox kill a man or woman, the owner hath done the murder, he shall be put to death. Why? The death was the result of his selfishness, or of his indifference to the lives of others. And according to the law of God, his life shall go for it. The principle of this law, is a principle of common sense.

You see a fellow creature struggling in the water. You know he can never deliver himself. And you know that a very good assistance, such as you can render, will rescue him from a very grave. You look on and pass by. True, you did not touch him. But he dies by your neglect. His blood will be upon your head. At the bar of God, and at the bar of conscience you are his murderer. Why? You did not kill him. You did the owner of the ox lift a hand. But he shall be put to death. You had no malice, neither had he. You did not intend his death—it did not enter your mind. Thus was his crime. He did not care. He was a careless, thoughtless, unprovoked, ungovernable animal, knowing him to be so; and he did the mischief that animal might do, or what suffering he might do. But God held him responsible.

Take another case upon the same principle. And it is concerning this which has caused fear and trembling to most of us. Your dog has gone mad. You hate to kill him, for he has or had some good qualities. You hate to tie him up, for it is too much trouble; and you hate worst of all, to believe that he is mad. It has been testified to you that many have died of his bite, already raving mad; and that many more in different stages of the disease, are coming to the same miserable death. But still you will neither shoot nor shut up the cause of this wretchedness. You do not doubt whether any one of them had the real hydrophobia, or whether the bite would produce the same effects again; and so you leave him loose among your neighbours and your neighbours' children. Is it not a defect of common sense, that you ought to be responsible for the result? And you are. All that perish by means of this animal, are virtually slain by your hand. They owe their death to your carelessness or your selfishness, and it is in vain for you to say—I had no malice, I did not set the dog on—they might have kept out of the way, and if he was mad, it was none of my concern; let every one look out for himself. Would not this be adding insult to injury; and instead of proving your innocence, prove you a wretch past being? But what has all this to do with the object of this address? Much every way. We wish to act upon established principles. We have endeavoured to establish one principle, viz.: that every man is responsible for evils which result from his own selfishness, or indifference to the lives of men.

In other words; to make a man responsible for results, it is not necessary to prove that he has malice; or that he intended the results. The highwayman has no malice against him he robs and murders, nor does he desire his death, but his money; and if he caught the man, he does not care. And he robs and murders because he loves himself, and does not care for others, acting in a different way, but on the same selfish principle with the owner of the ox, and of the mad dog, and on the very same principle, is held responsible.

In the trial of the owner of the ox, the only questions to be asked were these two. Was the ox wont to push with his horn in time past? Did the owner know it when he let him loose? If both of these questions were answered in the affirmative, the owner was responsible for all the consequences.

This is a rule which God himself has established; and it applies directly to the object of this address. Is ardent spirit wont to produce misery, and wretchedness, and death? Has this been testified to those who deal in it, i. e. makers and retailers? If these two things can be established, the inference is inevitable—they are responsible, on a principle perfectly intelligible—a principle recognised and proclaimed, and acted upon by God himself. It is possible that some may startle at this conclusion, and look around for some way to escape it.

What! is a man responsible to God for the effects produced by all the spirit which he makes and sells? This is a most fearful responsibility. Iuded it is. But if these two things are true, every retailer and maker must bear it. And can either of these be disputed? Turn your attention to these two facts: 1st. Ardent spirit is wont to produce misery. 2d. Those who make or sell it, are perfectly aware of its effects. I will not insult any man's understanding, by entering into a laboured proof of either of these positions. *Up, in the great power,* let me refresh your recollection, bring very near to you the holy spirit which ardent spirit has blasted, and the result has ceased to flow. Most of us can remember many a shocking scene which spirit has produced. Let any one of us sit down and count up the number of its victims, which we have known—and their character and their standing in society, and their prospects