

The idolater of ancient Greece, or Rome, or even the worshipper of the Idol Juggernaut, might be a liberal and devoted supporter of his faith, and yet retain a very high degree of temporal prosperity and enjoyment. He might still possess a healthy body, and a vigorous mind. He might be an object of love and veneration to those around him, and might prosper in all his undertakings; but the devotee of strong drink makes a voluntary surrender of everything, essential to his happiness, to the god of his idolatry.

1. *He sacrifices the Health of both his Body and Mind.*

The temperate man lives in the constant violation of the laws of his nature, and may, therefore, as rationally expect to enjoy health and strength, as to be free from harm, should he thrust his hand into boiling oil, or hurl himself from the top of a lofty precipice.

The very highest medical authorities might be quoted to prove, that the habitual use of any kind of intoxicating stimulant, however moderately employed, unless required as a medicine, is injurious to human health*—in other words, that the moderate drinking of intoxicating liquor, as a beverage, is no better than moderate intemperance, and must be classed with the practice of opium eating, and sucking tobacco-juice. Ardent spirit has long ceased to have many advocates, except among the most ignorant, or the most interested, and those who unhappily, have become slaves to the use of it; but, as a state of intoxication itself, is a fearful condition of physical discord, to suppose that the intoxicating principle can be taken, in any form without injury, by those in health, seems to involve an absurdity too obvious to need exposure.

In proportion to the health and strength of any constitution, will, of course, be its power to resist the deleterious influence of intoxicating stimulants, and, consequently, the longer it will be in breaking down under the habitual use of them; but it is impossible to conceive, that a state of unnatural excitement, can be produced daily, or two, or three times a day, in any measure, without producing, first, functional derangement, then, organic disease, and, finally premature mortality.

But, admitting it to be possible, for a certain quantity of the less powerful alcoholic liquors, such as weak ale, or the pure wines of vinous countries, to be used, as beverages, without deranging, and enfeebling the constitution of any man, still, it cannot be denied, that excess, in the use of even these is productive of disease and suffering.

Dr. Gordon, physician to the London Hospital, tells us that he has discovered, "by careful observation, on some thousands of cases, that the diseases, distinctly referable to ardent spirits alone, amount to 76 cases out of the 100," what then must be the amount of health destroyed by the fifty million pounds' worth of intoxicating liquors, annually consumed by Great Britain and Ireland, and of which the far greater part, by whatever names they may be designated, must be classed with those strong drinks, whose injurious tendency cannot be mistaken; and whose nature and effects have been so described, by the pen of inspiration,† as to render the use of them, for purposes of self-indulgence, an act of the most flagrant criminality.

When attending meetings held for promoting the cause of missions to the heathen, the reader, has, probably, often heard the voluntary sufferings of those heathens appealed to, as furnishing the most convincing proofs of their degraded and miserable condition, and the most powerful arguments, why the Christian believer should exert his every power to convey to them the light, and liberty of the gospel. That such sufferings have not been exaggerated it is but right to believe, since they have been attested by men whose veracity is above suspicion; but were we to note down the torturing agonies which the love of strong drink has occasioned to the inhabitants of London, alone, in one year, and compare them with all the bodily sufferings, which the entire heathenism of the world has produced, in the same space of time, there is reason to believe, that the balance of self-inflicted torture would be found—not on the side of what are justly called "the dark places of the earth," but of our own highly-favoured, but no less guilty metropolises.

The superstition which prompts the pagan idolater to torment his body, in order that he may obtain the favour of his gods, is but

a comparatively rare exhibition of his folly. Like some of the painful austerities of monachism it is but the violent out-breaking of an unusual, and extreme devotion. It is far from being even common among the heathen, not to say general; and to represent it otherwise, is to deceive the ignorant, and not to enlighten them.

Multitudes of the heathen are as desirous of personal and domestic comfort as ourselves; and are as much distinguished by their observance of the charities of life. To assert the contrary, would be to exhibit our want of information, or want of candour. But how stands the case with many of the inhabitants of this Christianized country? In all our populous towns and cities may be found great numbers, who are dragging out a painful—wretched existence, in consequence of the injuries they are, daily, inflicting upon their bodies, by means of the poisonous property of strong drink. They do not, indeed, walk in shoes, into the bottoms of which sharp spikes have been inserted, but they willingly endure the agonizing inflictions of the gout. They do not suspend themselves by hooks, run through some particular part of the body, but they submit to every species of suffering, which the most violent diseases, in the most sensitive organs, can possibly produce. In proof of this, it is not necessary to refer to the poor, emaciated, cringing and crippled beings, who are to be found lingering about our more splendid gin-shops, for there is hardly a family in the land, whether graced with a coronet, and living in a palace, or occupying some low and filthy cellar, in the dirtiest alley of St. Giles's, which cannot produce evidence to prove, that the worshippers of strong drinks are not a whit behind the heathen, in demonstrating their devotion to their idols, by self-inflicted torments.

But, alas! the health of the body is not the only sacrifice which intemperance demands. The health and vigour of the mind are invariably impaired, and often irrecoverably lost, through the deadly influence of strong drink. Melancholy, idiotism, and raving madness, in two cases, out of five, are distinctly traceable to the same fatal cause; and, hence, the man who indulges in the habitual use of this insidiously destructive stimulant is joined to an idol, which may be satisfied with nothing short of the sacrifice of that, in which all his true greatness consists—of that, without which, although he may retain the form and features of a man, he has no pre-eminence above a beast. We may talk, then, of the voluntary sacrifices of the heathen—we may shudder at the thought of their self-inflicted privations and torments—we may pity, or despise the folly, which leads to those self-inflictions, but we shall look in vain for an idolatrous nation, whose sacrifices, of health and ease to the gods, whom they fear, or venerate, surpass those which are made by ourselves, through our idolatrous attachment to intoxicating drinks!

2. *The lover of strong drink sacrifices his true honour, and most enviable reputation.*

The glory of man is his rational and immortal nature—that mind, which bearing a resemblance to the Infinite and Eternal Author of all things, is fitted for communion, not only with the highest of created spirits, but with God himself. But how is this mind disordered—how are its faculties perverted and debased by intoxicating liquor? Until we become, literally, a nation of drunkards, and are constantly steeped in intoxicating drink, it will be impossible not to esteem sobriety a virtue, and intemperance a low and debasing vice. So lost to everything worthy, and honourable, is a man considered to be, who has entitled himself to the loathsome appellation of a drunkard, that an individual must have advanced to the last stage in the career of intemperate drinking, before he will acknowledge that he is deserving of such an epithet.

But as there are degrees in intemperance, and as intemperance of every degree, is an approximation towards the most disreputable of vices, every step we take in the path of inebriety, from that which is marked, merely, by unwonted exhilaration, to that which indicates the absence of all self-control, involves the loss of a measure of real honour, proportioned to the extent to which we have yielded to the influence of the poisonous draught. "Wine," says Solomon, "is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." As a proof of this, we speak not, now, of the atrocious crimes, which men are, frequently, instigated to commit, when reason has been driven from her throne, by the violence of excited passion. We speak not, now, of the rending of domestic ties—of the breaking-up of all domestic comfort, which has been occasioned by this deadliest destroyer of human happiness. We need not point to the wretch, wallowing in the darkest, and lowest abysses of ignorance, and sensuali-

*For abundant evidence on this subject, the reader is referred to "Bacchus," the Prize Essay—to a pamphlet by Mr. Courteay, surgeon, of Rainsgate, entitled "The Moderate use of Intoxicating Liquors," to the "Course of Brain;" and to other works published by the New British and Foreign Temperance Society.