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TEMPERANCE IS THE MODERATE USE OF THINGS BENEFICIAL, AND ABSTINENCE FROM THINGS HURTFUL.

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Selected Articles.

A Complete View of the Principles and Objects of Temperance Societies.

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[Continued from our last.]

The history of distilled spirits furnishes melancholy evidence of the truth of this principle, and the propriety of this plan. Louis XII. of France first gave permission to distil spirits on a large scale. So terrific were the effects that, twenty-two years afterwards, Francis, his successor, was obliged, for the safety of his subjects, to enact a law that the drunkard who remained incorrigible, after severe monitory punishments, should suffer amputation of the ears, and be banished from the kingdom. How much more wisely would Francis have acted, if, instead of banishing the pernicious material of drunkenness! Let us take another example: Sweden was a temperate country, on account of ardent spirits being, to a great extent, prevented from coming into ordinary use. In 1783, however, Gustavus, king of Sweden, gave permission for opening spirit-shops in all the villages of his kingdom. His object was to increase his revenue, and that object he apparently for a time accomplished; for immediately ardent spirits were loaded with fictitious excellencies, by those who loved them, and those who were interested in their sale; the drinking of them, which had formerly been carried on in secret, now became respectable; and the consumption of them was greatly increased. But mark the consequences! Such was the increase of drunkenness and crime, of fatal accidents and premature mortality, that the very same king who gave the permission was obliged, for the preservation of his people, to withdraw it, and, by the repeal of his law, put ardent spirits under the same bondage as before. We need not travel so far, however, for the wisdom of experience, as either to France or Sweden. Our own country furnishes it in abundance, did we but receive it. Take two examples for illustration. In 1556 the Irish parliament passed an act at Dro-

gheda against distilling spirits at all; and our fathers in those days understood the matter well, for distilled spirits are described in the act as "a liquor nothing profitable to be daily drunken and used." This was a simple dictate of truth, before prejudice and intemperance appetite had warped the judgment. It is mentioned by Colquhoun, in his work on the police of London, as a curious and important fact, that during the period when distilleries were stopped, in 1796 and 1797, though bread and every necessary of life were considerably higher than during the preceding year, the poor in that quarter of the town where the chief part reside, were apparently *more comfortable, paid their rents more regularly, and were better fed than at any period for some years before*, even though they had not the benefit of the extensive charities which were distributed in 1795. This can only be accounted for by their being denied the indulgence of gin, which had become in a great measure inaccessible from its very high price. It may be fairly concluded that the money formerly spent in this imprudent manner had been applied to the purchase of provisions and other necessities, to the amount of some hundred thousand pounds. The effect of their being deprived of this baneful liquor was also evident in their more orderly conduct. Quarrels and assaults were less frequent, and they resorted seldom to the pawnbrokers' shops; and yet, during the chief part of this period, *bread was fifteen-pence the quarter loaf, and meat higher than the preceding year, particularly pork, which arose from the stoppage of the distilleries, but chiefly from the scarcity of grain.*

Between 1721 and 1750, when the use of distilled spirits was encouraged, there were each year nearly as many deaths from intoxication in London as there were in the entire twenty-nine years between 1686 and 1715, when spirits are not in general use. In Dublin there died of intoxication, *each year*, between 1746 and 1757, more than double the number that had died in the entire of the preceding twenty years, when there was not the same general use of spirits.

Such glaring historical facts should long since have taught every thinking man that ardent spirits, as an article of common use, are calculated to brutalise the habits, inflame the passions, and dissipate the wealth of a nation. They are proofs that the substance is not fit for diet at all, that it presents too easy and too short a road to drunkenness to be left open at all, and that, in proportion as facilities of obtaining it are presented, the state of a country will become degraded and reprobate, and the state of neighbourhoods, and families, and individuals, deplorably miserable.

Legislators have been most grievously abused by false notions respecting this pernicious liquor—the wisest and best of men have been sadly deceived; but the eyes of the world are opening upon its base, and it will soon be confessed by every enlightened, conscientious mind, that ardent spirits, enjoyed as a beverage of life, are calculated to destroy the health, interrupt the labour, deprave the morals, and ruin the happiness of any people.

Let us look around us, and see every where the desolating effects of allowing ardent spirits to continue in ordinary use. Our country groans under them. What must be the state of society in London when, in a single morning, seventy-two persons are brought to one of the police-offices in a state of bestly intoxication, and a large proportion of these are females, lifted in a state of insensibility from the streets! What must be the state of a country when the chief magistrates of its metropolis proclaim to the world, as the Middlesex magistrates have lately done, that the terrific increase of beggary, madness and crime is chiefly attributable to the use of ardent spirits; and, more astounding far, that there is in their hands no power of checking the desolating evil. Scotland has long been famous for sobriety; yet surely that is a strange sobriety which sends to the police offices of Edinburgh, in a single week, 206 individuals, men, women and children, in a state of abominable drunkenness—which supports, in Glasgow and its suburbs, 1800 houses for the sale of ardent spirits, and sends from them to the police offices annually