

habitual and in the end excessive indulgence. Great philosophers have usually been abstemious; but they have also been much secluded from the world.

The seclusion referred to, was rather privacy—exemption from interruption or intrusion; and it is certain that continuous labor is better endured than irregular efforts.

We know now unmistakably that the great novelist of our own time who enchanted the world by a power that like Shakespeare seemed as if inspired—certainly underived from culture—died prematurely from inebriety at an age but little beyond that of the renowned dramatist.*

Can it be justly argued from such examples that genius derives any of its inspiration from this self-consuming process, or that in any sense this artificial stimulation of forced effort is a refocalization of mental vigor. This would be unwarranted. On the contrary, the law of nature is that all human excellence is by normal development from a germinal element. The grand conception of the intellect and the splendor of poetic imagery and diction, must come from the mysterious, perhaps heaven-born power of the soul in the exercise of its natural functions. No promethean fire can be brought down in aid of this congenital endowment.

From this source has been derived all that is left to us by human genius. It is only when the natural power has been overtasked that the auxiliary has been thought needful—but whatever has been then produced is only by an enforced effort of nature wasteful of its inherent vigor,

Great thinkers, or men of great intellectual endowment of any kind, brought into public life, have often fallen victims to too great pressure. Mr. Pitt was undoubtedly intemperate, but in an aristocratic style. Sheridan, who deserves a much higher estimate than that of a mere rhetorician, as he has been commonly rated—who was in fact a man of great ability, while he was most affluently gifted with oratory and colloquial wit, became an inebriate. Our own country has furnished memorable instances of the wreck of statesmen.

Who will fail to call to mind as chief in this sad category, the great Massachusetts senator—in intellectual power never surpassed—but weak in moral resolution to resist sensual proclivities. There seems to be a tendency in political life to the sin of intemperance. Our Federal and State Legislature give testimony to this. The *present* is all—the *future* is uncared

*Dickens died at the age of 56; Shakespeare at 53.