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Essays, &c.

DRINKING AND LAWLESSNESS.

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The Rev Dr Burns preached a sermon at the inauguration of the United Kingdom Alliance. The following article contains the substance of the sermon:—

"Lest they drink and forget the Law."
Prov. xxxi. 5.

Our text is the fragment of a paragraph found among words of heavenly wisdom. Though only part of a sentence, it contains a complete sense, and suggests matter for very grave and momentous consideration.

The thoughts which the text breathes were of Divine inspiration, and they were addressed by a holy mother to her son. They obviously refer to the pernicious influence of wine and strong drink on the minds and consciences of men, and therefore an entire abstinence from their use is urged, that the evils specially stated may be avoided. The admonitory caution, you will observe, is not addressed to the illiterate and debased of the people, but the lofty and the great. "It is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink." and for this most important reason: "Lest they drink and forget the Law." But if Kings, and rulers, and law-makers should abstain from the use of wine and strong drink, so also should those who are responsible to law, who should be its ornaments and supporters. In one word, the great doctrine of the text is, the necessary connection between drinking wine and strong drink, and lawlessness. We may appeal, therefore, to monarchs, and judges, and senators, and magistrates, and also to every class of the people, and say: Abstain entirely from wine and strong drinks, lest you forget the law. It should be remembered, too, that the caution as to wine relates of necessity to the wines then used, most of which possessed only a small share of the intoxicating spirit compared with the wines of our day, as the text was uttered more than two thousand years before the production of alcohol by distillation, which forms so large a percentage of the wine now in use—so that in every view the text is most appropriate both to the age and country in which we live, and especially as presenting a motto for the grand occasion which has brought us together.

In further discussing the subject we notice—

1.—THAT THE DRINKING OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS TENDS TO LAWLESSNESS.

In the words of the text, by drinking wine

and strong drink men forget the law. They forget.

1st. *The law of self-respect and self-cultivation.*

Much of our character is left to our own formation. Our mental and moral education is mainly in our own hands. A high regard to our own true dignity is one of the most powerful springs to proper emulation. Thus, self-respect is one of the chief bonds of society, and is a leading incentive to virtuous exertion and noble enterprise. Weaken this and man sinks; destroy it entirely, and he becomes reckless as it regards himself, and valueless as it regards others. This element of our being is constantly addressed in the Divine Word. It is said, "a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

We are to seek to have the approval, not only of God, but of wise and good men. Now nothing so entirely enfeebles this in man as strong drink, and no one so fully makes utter shipwreck of it as the drunkard. Of all men he most glories in his shame. He is obtuse to all delicate emotions: he utterly disregards the opinion of others, and wallows in the mire of self-prostrated degradation. With this, too, there will be utter indifference to self-cultivation. To the improvement of the mind there must be wisely applied leisure; but the drinker's spare hours are devoted to the tavern or the beer-shop. To self-cultivation there must be the right and cool adjustment of the mental faculties; but the drunkard lives in a region of excitement and sensual passion. To the pursuit of knowledge there must be reading and reflection, and persevering study, and investigation; but the craving for intoxicating liquors produces a state of heart and life at utter variance with these, and hence mental deterioration and intellectual sterility are the usual results of a drinking life. Who can tell the number of enlightened minds and stunted intellects which are produced by drinking habits among the youth of our land? Such forget.

2ndly. *The law of love towards their fellow-men.*

Man was designed by his Creator to love himself, to seek his own mental and moral exaltation and well-being, and then he is required to love his neighbor as himself. In this love of our kind there are the outgoings of warm and unselfish affection which bind the husband and wife, and parents and offspring together. There is the soft and genial attachment of brothers and sisters, of friends and kindred; and then in the more outward circles there is the esteem and love of neighboring residents, or persons of our class and or-

der, or of our trade and profession, or of our religion or social circle. Then there is the general affection of goodness towards all men—of pity and compassion towards the suffering, and of commiseration for the unfortunate or self-runned of our species. But drinking wine and strong drink produces a gradual obliteration of this law of Love, from the heart and mind. It makes its victims selfish as well as sensual; it hardens the heart; dries up the sympathies of our gentler and kindlier emotions. It produces alienation between the dearest friends, and separation between the closest kindred. It withers conjugal love, and annihilates parental or filial affection.—It converts man both into the brute and the demon, so that the latter cares not for his offspring, and the mother forgets her sucking child. It rends asunder all relative bonds, and makes home and its associations the horrid scene of strifes, contentions, disorders, and cruelties, too appalling for description or illustration. It sets the tongue on fire of hell, and it ossifies the heart, so that the common benignities of social life have neither a habitation nor a home.

3rdly. *By drinking wine and strong drink, men forget the law of reverence and love and obedience to God.*

A disbelief of Divine things, and a rejection of Divine claims, usually proceed from the heart. A sensual state of mind has no relish for the spiritual and the holy. Nothing tends more to the rejection of Divine beliefs and worship than a state of moral degradation, which unfits us for both. Hence the habit of drinking disqualifies for calm and serious reflection, and utterly unfits for all devotion and real worship. This state of mind will be succeeded by a disrelish for all religious services and pursuits, and then God and His claims will be rejected—His name blasphemed—His authority utterly despised. Can reverence for God and a love of artificial excitement dwell in the same mind? Can love of the sensuous enjoyment of wine harmonise with the pure love of God's holy spirit? Can the devotee of carnal passion be obedient to the moral law? Can any man serve the two masters of pleasure and God—worship with real profit both in the bar-room and the sanctuary—in the boisterous profane tavern and in the secrecy of the closet, or at the family altar? No; let man yield himself up to intoxicating drinks, and the Word of God will lose its savor, the sanctuary its social attractions, the closet its sublime associations, and the domestic altar its holy, its sweet, and genial influences.

By drinking wine and strong drink men forget.