

drawn from the manufacture, importation, and sale of intoxicating liquors, has in many countries been immense. It has filled with joy the heart of many a one who judges of the prosperity of a country by the receipts of the exchequer. And wily politicians, following in the wake of such men, have been accustomed to measure the rise in the public chest, that they might send abroad the figures, with the sound of trumpets and congratulations, on account of the wonderful prosperity which, within some specified time, has been visiting the land. Nor are they satisfied with telling of the prosperity already enjoyed. They assume the language of prophets, and speak of a yet brighter future—of a prosperity to go on increasing for an indefinite period. Yes, I would say, to increase, as it has hitherto, so long as the people manifest their usual stupidity and indifference, and neither try to discover the origin and course of the golden streams which empty themselves into the Treasury, nor doubt either the wisdom or ability of those benevolent guardians of the people's welfare who engage to open up new channels from the public reservoir by which this wealth shall flow back throughout the land and bring happiness to every man's door.

But, before we resign ourselves to the pleasing reverie which this syren song is intended to induce, let us, as believers in the Bible, examine these things in the light of God's word, which cannot deceive. It will reveal to you the origin of those riches,—stamping truthfully every shilling. Aye, and let me tell you that even contact with other pieces in the Treasury will not efface the mark. The tales of the nursery have left on many a mind the belief that the blood of the murdered man cannot be washed or wiped out. Let the murderer do his utmost, and yet, to his own eye at least, the stain will be as distinct as ever. Just so, the bloody shilling in the Treasury has on it an indelible stain. The men who handle it may deny that they have any responsibility in the matter and affect indifference. But the Judge of all the earth will lay the responsibility where it ought to rest: and we may not anticipate his decision. Still, it would be well for Rulers in christian countries to act with as much consideration as the Chief Priests and Elders of old, who refused to cast the price of blood into the Treasury. And, if there be already in the place of sepulchres a corner for the poor and unfriended stranger, let them take the funds, not to embellish Public Buildings or to carry on "Public Works," but to feed the hungry and clothe the naked among the broken-hearted wives and mothers, or shivering and despised orphans, whom drunkards have entailed to society—while they, at the expense of soul and body, cast their property into the purple stream, a part of which empties itself into the Government Treasury while on its way to the dwelling of him who supplies the life-consuming potion.

We can conceive of nothing more startling than the highly wrought and figurative language of this chapter, as applied to individuals or Governments that take the money which is the price of blood and apply it as others do the funds which they have accumulated by righteous means. V. 11, 12, "For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood and stablishes a city by iniquity!" By a figure of speech not uncommon in the Scriptures the stones and timber of the building are personified. The

imagination of the prophet gives them the voice of man, and they, testifying to the doctrine of a retributive Providence, cry to each other "woe! woe!" as if they already heard the footsteps of justice coming to vindicate the authority of the Almighty Ruler and to show that sin shall not always go unpunished.

The 12th and 13th verses fix our attention more particularly on Governments which accomplish their plans at the expense of human life. But, after all, the oracle does not pass by those whom the Government represents, viz., the people. They have a deep interest in the matter. In fact, it is upon the people that the retribution may be said to fall.

What then is the prospect for the subjects of that Government which attempts to build itself up in the way described in these verses? "The people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." An expression similar to this may be found in Jer. li. 58. It means that the people would exert themselves to prevent the destruction of their city, but their efforts, however great, would be in vain. God himself had given the place over to destruction, and, therefore, their exertions to save it would be fruitless. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of Hosts that the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?"

And here now my friends, instead of that "ignis fatuus" by which many are led astray and induced to give their countenance to laws which create a revenue from intoxicating liquors, we are forced to take a view of the case much less pleasing, but yet far more real and truthful. In the meantime a larger sum is at the disposal of the Rulers of the people. But the accumulation involves a great loss.—Even in a pecuniary point of view there is a loss—perhaps one hundred times greater than if the same sum had been drawn direct from the people—while the injury to the morals of the community and their spiritual interests cannot be computed by any human arithmetic.

But, while God only can sum up the damages, not one tittle of the immense sum shall remain unpaid. Upon the victims of the ruinous traffic—not a few of whom pass annually to their dread account—the consequences fall first, and, it may be, most heavily. In this point of view the evil assumes dimensions of incalculable magnitude. Death, in the most favourable circumstances, is a solemn event. We cannot think of our own departure without a wish that kind friends may be near to smooth the dying pillow and direct our eye to the "star of hope." What then must it be in the absence of these consolations—where instead the poor inebriate reads the sentence, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Even one such death is enough to overwhelm a world with anguish. But, alas! it is not one or a few such that occur. The victims of intemperance are numbered by thousands. It is computed that in Great Britain alone about 60,000 die annually from the effects of intemperance!—And in the United States and British Provinces there must be something like the same proportion. But suppose this number to be an exaggeration. Then let it be the half, or the fourth, and yet—how tremendous an evil!

Then again think of the ruined and degraded families thrown upon the cold charities of the world—left to break their hearts with weeping and sink to a premature grave, or to lie as a burden upon the industrious part of the community.

There is also the injury inflicted upon society by those under the influence of strong drink—such as destruction of property, murders, accidents upon sea and land, which, not unfrequently, occasion the loss of many valuable lives. But the catalogue of evils is too long for me to fill up at present. Remember also that we cannot make any offset to this melancholy list of evils by showing any good done to society. Intoxicating liquors are not useful as a beverage. The most eminent physicians pronounce them injurious to health.—And then the waste of property occasioned by their use is immense. It cannot be less than twice the amount which is expended for bread.

It is estimated that in Great Britain £25,000,000 are expended annually for bread, while £50,000,000 are expended for distilled and fermented liquors, and £50,000,000 more for the protection of society from the crimes which intemperance occasions.

Some years ago the Hon. Edward Everett, of the United States, published the following statistics, showing what ardent spirits had done in ten years in the United States:—

"They have cost the nation a direct expense of \$600,000,000 and \$600,000,000 indirect expense. Destroyed 300,000 lives.—Sent 100,000 children to the poor house.—Consigned at least 150,000 to the jails and prisons. Made at least 1000 maniacs. Caused 2000 to commit suicide. Burnt or otherwise destroyed \$10,000,000 worth of property.—Made 200,000 widows and 100,000 orphan children."

And now, I ask, must this state of things always continue? Must society for ever groan under such evils without hope of their removal? Surely it is the will of our benevolent Creator that evil such as this should come to a perpetual end. Already an effort has been made to check its progress—and the result has well repaid the labour and self-denial by which it has been accomplished. Tens of thousands who, had they pursued their infatuated course, would before this time have filled a drunkard's grave, and felt the curse which is denounced against the drunkard, are now sober and respected members of society—and many of them members of christian Churches. O God, we thank thee for the success with which thou hast crowned our efforts!

But still, my friends, the evil prevails to an alarming extent. Intemperance still stalks abroad over the earth. He goes about "as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." In many places he has had his infernal revenge for the loss which he had experienced through the efforts of the friends of temperance. Oh yes—some who had been for a time reclaimed and led back to the paths of sobriety are again under the power of this destructive agent. And the demoniac laugh of those who can rejoice over that which leads to the eternal ruin of a being originally made in the image of God, has been heard from those places which lie on the high road to hell, while they listened to the tidings that temptation had prevailed, and the poor man had "broken his pledge."

But, my friends, while these rejoiced some of us have mourned. And, while these were our feelings, we felt also that such a calamity may have caused the holy angels to wipe away a tear ere they set out on a new errand of mercy to this our fallen world.

But, while it thus appears that our efforts for the suppression of intemperance have