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DIVINITY.

ON INTEMPERANCE.

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PROV. xxiii. 29-35.—Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eye shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

This is a glowing description of the sin of intemperance. None but the pencil of inspiration, could have thrown upon the canvass so many and such vivid traits of the complicated evil, in so short a compass. It exhibits its woes and sorrows, contentions and babblings, and wounds and redness of eyes; its smiling deceptions in the beginning, and serpent bite in the end; the helplessness of its victims, like one cast upon the deep; the danger of destruction, like that of one who sleeps upon the top of a mast; the unavailing lamentations of the captive, and the giving up of hope and effort. "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again:" again be stricken and beaten; again float upon the deep, and sleep upon the mast.

No sin has fewer apologies than intemperance. The suffrage of the world is against it; and yet there is no sin so naked in its character, and whose commencement and progress is indicated by so many signs concerning which there is among mankind such profound ignorance. All reprobate drunkenness; and yet not one of the thousands who fall into it, dreams of danger when he enters the way that leads to it.

The soldier, approaching the deadly breach, and seeing rank after rank of those who preceded him swept away, hesitates sometimes, and recoils from certain death. But men behold the effects upon others, of going in given courses, they see them begin, advance, and end, in confirmed intemperance, and unappalled rush heedlessly upon the same ruin.

A part of this heedlessness arises from the undefined nature of the crime in its early stages, and the ignorance of men, concerning what may be termed the experimental indications of its approach. Theft and falsehood are definite actions. But intemperance is a state of internal sensation, and the indications may exist long, and multiply, and the subject of them not be aware that they are the signs of intemperance. It is not infrequent, that men become irreclaimable in their habits, without suspicion of danger. Nothing, therefore, seems to be more important, than a description of this broad way, trodden by so many travellers, that the temperate, when they come in sight of it, may know their danger and pass by it and turn away.

What I shall deliver on this subject, has been projected for several years, has been delayed by indisposition, and the pressure of other labours, and is advanced now without personal or local reference.

Intemperance is the sin of our land, and, with our boundless prosperity, is coming in upon us like a flood; and if any thing shall defeat the hopes of the world, which hang upon our experiment of civil liberty, it is that river of fire, which is rolling through the land, destroying the vital air, and extending around an atmosphere of death.

It is proposed in this and the subsequent discourses, to consider the nature, the occasions, the signs, the evils, and the remedy of intemperance. In this discourse we shall consider

The nature and occasions of Intemperance.

The more common apprehension is, that nothing is intemperance, which does not supersede the regu-

lar operations of the mental faculties and the bodily organs. However much a man may consume of ardent spirit, if he can command his mind, his utterance, and his bodily members, he is not reputed intemperate. And yet, drinking within these limits, he may be intemperate in respect to inordinate desire, the quantity consumed, the expense incurred, the present effect on his health and temper, moral sensibilities, and what is more, in respect to the ultimate and inevitable results of bodily and mental imbecility, or sottish drunkenness.

God has made the human body to be sustained by food and sleep, and the mind to be invigorated by effort and the regular healthfulness of the moral system, and the cheering influence of his moral government. And whoever, to sustain the body, or invigorate the mind, or cheer the heart, applies habitually the stimulus of ardent spirits, does violence to the laws of his nature, puts the whole system into disorder, and is intemperate long before the intellect falters, or a muscle is unstrung.

The effect of ardent spirits on the brain, and the members of the body, is among the last effects of intemperance, and the least destructive part of the sin. It is the moral ruin which it works in the soul, that gives it the denomination of giant wickedness. If all who are intemperate, drank to insensibility, and on awaking, could arise from the debauch with intellect and heart uninjured, it would strip the crime of its most appalling evils. But among the woes which the scriptures denounce against this crime, one is "we unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to consume strong drink." These are captains in the bands of intemperance, and will drink two generations of youths into the grave, before they go to lie down by their side. The Lord deliver us from strong-headed men, who can move the tongue when all are mute around them, and keep the eye open when all around them sleep, and can walk from the scene of riot, while their companions must be aided or wait until the morning.

It is a matter of undoubted certainty, that habitual tipping is worse than periodical drunkenness. The poor Indian, who, once a month, drinks himself dead all but simple breathing, will out live for years, the man who drinks little and often, and is not, perhaps, suspected of intemperance. The use of ardent spirits daily, as ministering to cheerfulness, or bodily vigor, ought to be regarded as intemperance. No person, probably, ever did, or ever will, receive ardent spirits into his system once a day, and fortify his constitution against its deleterious effects, or exercise such discretion and self-government, as that the quantity will not be increased, and bodily infirmities and mental imbecility be the result, and, in more than half the instances, imbrication. Nature may hold out long against this sapping and mining of the constitution, which daily tipping is carrying on; but, first or last, this foe of life will bring to the assault enemies of its own formation, before whose power the feeble and the mighty will be alike unable to stand.

All such occasional exhilaration of the spirits by intoxicating liquors, as produces levity and foolish jesting, and the loud laugh, is intemperance, whether we regard those precepts which require us to be sober minded, or the effect which such exhilaration and lightness has upon the cause of Christ, when witnessed in professors of religion. The cheerfulness of health, and excitement of industry, and social intercourse, is all which nature demands, or health or purity permits.

A resort to ardent spirits as a means of invigorating the intellect, or of pleasurable sensation, is also intemperance. It is a restraint upon nature, to exert, in a short time, those results of mind and feeling, which in her own unimpelled course would flow with less impetuosity, but in a more equable and healthful current. The mind has its limits of intellectual application, and the heart its limits of feeling, and the nervous system of healthful exhilaration, and whatever you gain through stimulus, by way of anticipation, is only so much intellectual and vital

power cut off at the latter end of life. It is this occult intemperance, of daily drinking, which generates a host of bodily infirmities and disease: loss of appetite—nausea at the stomach—disordered bile—obstructions of the liver—jaundice—dropsy—hoarseness of voice—coughs—consumptions—rheumatic pains—epilepsy—gout—colic—palsy—apoplexy—insanity—are the body-guards which attend intemperance, in the form of tipping, and where the odious name of drunkenness may perhaps be never applied.

A multitude of persons, who are not accounted drunkards, create disease, and shorten their days, by what they denominate a "prudent use of ardent spirits." Let it therefore be engraven upon the heart of every man, that the daily use of ardent spirits, in any form, or in any degree, is intemperance. Its effects are certain, and deeply injurious, though its results may be slow, and never be ascribed to the real cause. It is a war upon the human constitution, carried on ostensibly by an auxiliary but which never fails to substract more vital power than it imparts. Like the letting out of waters by little and little, the breach widens, till life itself is poured out. If all diseases which terminate in death, could speak out at the grave, or tell their origin upon the coffin-lid, we should witness the most appalling and unexpected disclosures. Happy the man, who avoids the appearance of evil, as not to shorten his days by what he may call the prudent use of ardent spirits.

But we approach now a state of experience, in which it is supposed generally that there is some criminal intemperance. I mean when the empire of reason is invaded, and weakness and folly bear rule; prompting to garrulity, or sullen silence; inspiring petulance, or anger, or insipid good humour, and silly conversation; pouring out oaths, and curses, or opening the storehouse of secrets, their own and others. And yet, by some, all these have been thought insufficient evidence to support the charge of drinking, and to justify a process of discipline before the church. The tongue must falter, and the feet must trip, before, in the estimation of some, professors of religion can be convicted of the crime of intemperance.

To a just and comprehensive knowledge, however, of the crime of intemperance, not only a definition is required, but a philosophical analysis of its mechanical effects upon the animal system.

To those who look only on the outward appearance, the triumphs of intemperance over conscience, and talents, and learning, and character, and interest, and family endearments, have appeared wonderful. But the wonder will cease, when we consider the raging desire which it enkindles, and the hand of torment which it lays, on every fibre of the body and faculty of the soul.

The stomach is the great organ of accelerated circulation of the blood, of elasticity to the animal spirits, of pleasurable or painful vibration to the nerves, of vigor to the mind, and of fullness to the cheerful affections of the soul. Here is the silver cord of life, and the golden bowl at the fountain, and the wheel at the cistern; and as these fulfil their duty, the muscular, and mental and moral powers act in unison, and fill the system with vigor and delight. But as these central energies are enfeebled, the strength of mind and body declines, and lassitude and depression, and melancholy, and sighing, succeed to the high beatings of health, and the light of life becomes as darkness.

Experience has decided, that any stimulus applied steadily to the stomach, which raises its muscular tone above the point at which it can be sustained by food and sleep, produces, when it has passed away, delay, a relaxation of the over-worked organ, proportioned to its preternatural excitement. The life-giving power of the stomach falls of course as much below the tone of cheerfulness and health, as it was injudiciously raised above it. If the experiment be repeated often, it produces an artificial tone