

I. THE DRUNKARD'S DANGER. 11. Woe

—From verse 8 to verse 23 there are six distinct woes pronounced. The first is against **AVARICE** (vs. 8) shewn in the appropriation of the land by a few large proprietors, to the impoverishment of the people. The same sordid desire for gain is at the root of the liquor traffic. If it were not such a very profitable business no one would engage in it. The second woe is pronounced against **INTEMPERANCE**. The "woes" of the Bible are solemn warnings, predictions of the inevitable consequences of continued evil-doing. **Unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink**—Whenever intoxicating liquor is indulged in, even in moderation, it is almost sure to culminate in the condition here described. The craving for it so grows upon the drinker that eventually dissipation becomes his main business from morning till night (Prov. 23: 29, 30; Eccl. 10: 16). It was considered specially degrading to be "full of wine" in the morning (Acts 2: 15; 1 Thess. 5: 7). To "follow" strong drink, implies a habitual custom. The "strong drink" of Bible times was a fermented liquor made from dates, pomegranates, apples, honey, barley, &c. Distilled liquors were not known, nor were those in use adulterated. All the Bible denunciations of drink refer to "pure" liquors, represented by the light wines, beer and cider of to-day. **That continue until night, till wine inflame them**—Margin "pursue them." (Prov. 20: 1; 23: 32). In the morning they seek strong drink, in the evening it drives them. It kindles every bad passion, destroys self-control, silences reason and shames decency. With fatal persistence the luxury of every civilization has taken to drink; and of all indictments brought by moralists against nations that which they reserve for drunkenness is, as here, the most heavily weighted. The crusade against drink is not the novel thing that many imagine who observe only its late revival amongst ourselves. In ancient times there was scarcely a state in which prohibitive legislation of the most stringent kind was not attempted and generally carried out with a thoroughness more possible under despots than where, as with us, the slow consent of public opinion is necessary. A horror of strong drink has in every age possessed those who from their position as magistrates or prophets have been able to follow for any distance the drifts of social life. Isaiah exposes as powerfully as ever any of them did where the peculiar fatality of drink lies. (G. A. Smith).

12. **And the harp and the viol**—The viol is usually called a "psaltery." It was like the lyre but with twelve strings. **The tabret**—A kettle drum or tambourine. **And pipe**—The flute, or flageolet. **And wine are in their feasts**—Music, which would elevate the soul, is used to enhance the pleasures of revelry and excite sensuous emotions. **But they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands**—No

one who has had to do with persons slowly falling from moderate to immoderate drinking can mistake Isaiah's meaning here. Nothing kills the conscience like the steady drinking of intoxicants. (G. A. Smith). God's displeasure is plainly seen but men will not take note of it (Job 34: 27; Ps. 23: 5; Hos. 4: 11).

13. **Therefore my people are gone into captivity**—The northern kingdom had been recently destroyed and carried captive to Assyria. Others regard these words as the prophetic present. This is the reason why they were about to be carried into captivity. **For lack of knowledge** (R. V.)—Because of their foolish recklessness and wilful ignorance as to God, his law, and his visible manifestations of providence, chastisement and grace (ch. 1: 3; Hos. 4: 6; Luke 19: 44). (J. F. and B.) **And their honorable men are famished**—Heb. "Their glory are men of famine." No one is so exalted by rank or wealth that strong drink cannot bring him to poverty and disgrace. **And their multitude**—The common people as contrasted with the nobles, or "honorable men." **Dried up with thirst**—Contrast to their drinking. In their deportation and exile they shall hunger and thirst. (J. F. and B.)

14. **Therefore hell**—R. V. marg. "or the grave. Heb. *sheol*." The place of the dead without special reference, except so far as the context demands, to its moral character. **Hath enlarged herself** (R. V. "her desire") and **opened her mouth without measure**—So many perish through strong drink that the abode of the dead is represented as growing more ravenous and opening wide its gaping mouth to swallow up everything noble and good in every rank of life. **And their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it**—A vivid description of the engulfing maelstrom of intemperance. When our judges tell us from the bench that nine-tenths of pauperism and crime are caused by drink; and our physicians, that if only irregular tipping were abolished half the current sickness of the land would cease; and our statesmen, that the ravages of strong drink are equal to those of the historical scourges of war, famine, and pestilence combined, surely to swallow such a glut of spoil the appetite of hell must have been still more enlarged, and the mouth of hell made yet wider. (G. A. Smith).

15. **And the mean man**—The man of humble rank. **Shall be brought down**—To a lower degradation. Picture the effect of drunkenness upon the poor and the working classes. **And the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled**—Neither education nor intellect necessarily places any man above the peril of excess. Who has not heard of the pitiful failing of Pitt, Addison, Brown, Lamb, Coleridge. (Farrar).

16. **But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment**—The holiness of God