

THE ABSTAINER.

ORGAN OF THE GRAND DIVISION OF THE
SONS OF TEMPERANCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

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Essays, &c.

THE CLAIMS OF TEMPERANCE STATED AND ENFORCED.

A SERMON BY THE REV. GEORGE CHRISTIE,
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HAB. II. 9-13, 15, 16—"Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. 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 stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity * * * * Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory."

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." The Bible contains those doctrines by the knowledge of which we are made wise unto salvation. It is also remarkable for the perfect code of morals which it contains—and not less so for the discrimination which it manifests in the application of these to the various situations and relations of life. Its searching analysis of human character, and the motives which influence different classes of human beings, is so faithful and explicit that none can read attentively without feeling that the description could only have been dictated by Him who "knows what is in man." The progress of vice is often delineated from the first step—when the person is seen wavering and not yet sufficiently hardened in crime even to resolve to do evil—up to the period when he has cast off regard for laws either human or divine.

At other times we have portrayed the motives which exercise such a mighty influence upon the person who is following the way which is not good. And, while the disclosure is by no means flattering to the individual, he is led a little farther, and invited to contemplate the consequences of following the path of evil. He is also warned of the impossibility of escape from the terrible consequences of transgression. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Keeping before our minds such truths as these, let us direct our attention to that por-

tion of the word of God which has been read as the subject of discourse on the present occasion.

It is not necessary to detain you with an analysis of the topics suggested by these words. Neither do I consider it of importance to conduct you to the same stand point which the Seer occupied when he wrote the words before us. Nor yet would I desire to convey the impression that the evils here depicted, exposed and condemned, presented themselves in the same outward aspect which they have now assumed in connection with the use of intoxicating liquors, and the traffic in them, by which some are enriched, while the victims of the traffic are reduced to beggary. All we desire to impress particularly upon your minds before proceeding to the discussion of the subject is this most evident truth—*That the words of our text set forth those general principles which ought to be admitted as authoritative in all our discussions upon the subject of temperance.* Even thus much secured we are in possession of a citadel from which the enemy could never force us to retreat—however annoying our attacks might be on the different classes who at the present time stand in the way of that social reformation which aims at bringing drunkenness, with its accessories, to a perpetual end.

But we will not be satisfied with appealing to our text for the settling of general principles. Where, except in the writings of inspired men, will we find descriptions so true to life?—or such withering exposure of the hollow arguments by which the traffic in intoxicating liquors is sustained?—or such a conclusive reply to him who pleads the desire of gain as his excuse for trading in this evil?

In fact, the words before us have been selected on account of the abundance of material which they afford for our guidance in the discussion of the subject of temperance.

1. In the first place we have a description of the drunkard—so like the degraded being to whom the epithet may be applied that we instinctively shrink from the contemplation of the picture, as we would from the presence of a fellow being who had thus sunk the man into the beast. Regard for your feelings prevents us from dwelling upon this part of the subject.

2. In the second place, the drunkard maker is brought to our notice in language altogether remarkable and impressive. It contains denunciations vehement and startling.—Against such a woe is uttered. And the language in which it is conveyed reminds us that the God of judgment has weighed the motives under which he acts, and has decided upon their real character. The moving principle is covetousness, or the desire of gain. It is

selfishness, in its least attractive form, viz., where the individual's self is everything, while his brother man is nothing, except as he may be made use of to gratify the rapacious feeling of the selfish man.

Again, the covetous man described in our text is willing to see his neighbour in a state of suffering and shame—provided only that he can thereby advance his personal interests and "set his nest on high." He would go much farther. In order that he may possess the property of him whom he has marked as his victim he will himself form and execute the plot by which he hopes to become the owner of the coveted wealth. And, if you desire to know how far he will go in the infliction of injury rather than miss the object in view, I must refer you to the words before us, v. 10th, "*Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.*" He will consent to be the instrument for the destruction of many people. And, that nothing may be lacking of the price necessary to purchase present advancement and to "*set his nest on high,*" he would sling into the balance his own soul.

I do not wish to leave the impression that those persons to whom I have now shewn these words may be applied are the only class to whom in reality they are applicable. Unprincipled and unscrupulous selfishness finds a lodgment in too many hearts—and has done so in every age of the world. But after these it is not our present business to enquire. Let us however keep in view the principle embodied in our text respecting selfishness, and we shall be all the more capable of judging character correctly, whatever may be the position of the person upon whom we are called to pass judgment.

3. From the 12th and 13th verses, we may obtain instruction from another point which can scarcely be overlooked in the discussion of the subject before us, but upon which the want of time prevents me from entering very fully at present. I refer to a government selling to any portion of its subjects the right to carry on a branch of traffic, which all experience proves to be destructive of the welfare of a community.

Every government that attempts to create a revenue by duties on intoxicating liquors, or by licensing their sale, should ponder these words: "*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity.*"—"Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary for very vanity."

The Bible says: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

It is not to be denied, that the revenue