

woman, Sarah, the wife of Abraham is distinctly noted. Woman's age, ever since, appears not to have been a subject for history or discussion.

THE TRAFFIC IN STRONG LIQUORS

IMMORAL AND DESTRUCTIVE

BY REV. ALBERT BARNES.

"Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people."—*Isaiah* lvii. 14.

THE MANUFACTURING AND VENDING OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS IS MORALLY WRONG, AND OUGHT TO BE FORTHWITH ABANDONED.

We mean that it is an employment which violates the rules of morals that ought to regulate a man's business and conduct. In one word, by any rules of life that have been set up to regulate the conduct of men, whether in the Bible, in the necessary relations of the social compact, in the reason and conscience of Christians, and of other men, this business is incapable of vindication, and is to be regarded as immoral.

This proposition, however, we confine simply to the business where they are sold as articles of *drink*. For to sell them as medicines, with the same precaution as other poisons are sold, would be no more immoral than it is to sell arsenic. And to sell them for the purpose of manufacture, where they are necessary for that purpose, is no more immoral than to sell any other article with that design. Between selling them for these purposes, and selling them as drink, there is, as any one can see, the widest possible difference.

When we speak of this business as immoral it is also important to guard the use of the word immoral. We do not mean that no man may be engaged in it, and be an honest man, or even a Christian. For our belief is, that many such men have been, and are still, unhappily engaged in this traffic. The time has been when it was thought to be as reputable as any other employment. Men may not see the injurious tendency of their conduct. Thus the slave-trade was long pursued, and duelling was deemed right, and bigamy was practised. But for a man to maintain that all these would

* Intoxicating is the proper word, and is judiciously chosen by Mr. Barnes, as it should be by all to describe the liquors to be avoided.

be right now, and practise them, would be a very different thing.

In this view of the subject, we do not of course speak of the dead, or offer any reflection on their conduct or character. Many men are unwilling to regard this traffic as wrong, because, by so doing, they would seem to convey a reflection on their parents, or friends, who may have been engaged in the same business. But nothing of this kind is intended. The great laws of morals are indeed unchanged, but the degrees of light and knowledge which men possess may be very different. Man's conduct is to be estimated by the light which he has. They who sin without law are to be judged without law, and they who sin in the law are to be judged by the law. Your father might have been engaged in the traffic in intoxicating liquors. Whether he was innocent or not, is not now the question, and has been determined by a higher tribunal than any on earth. The question now is, whether you can pursue it with a good conscience; or whether, with all that you know of the effects of the traffic, it be right or wrong for you to pursue it.

With these necessary explanations, I proceed to prove that, in the sense in which it has been explained, the traffic is MORALLY WRONG: and in doing so I shall take for granted two or three points which are now conceded, and to establish which would lead me too far out of the way. The first is that this is not an employment in which the *properties of the article are unknown*. The seller has as good an opportunity to be acquainted with the qualities of the article, and its effects, as the buyer. There is no concealment of its character and tendency; there can be no pretence that you were deceived in regard to those qualities, and that you were unintentionally engaged in the sale of an article which has turned out to be otherwise than you supposed it to be.

Its direct tendency is to produce disease, poverty, crime, and death. Its use tends to corrupt the morals, to enfeeble the intellect, to produce indolence, wretchedness, and woe in the family circle, to shorten life and to hurry to a loathsome grave: to spread a pall of grief over families and nations. It is ascertained to be the source of nine-tenths of all the pauperism and crimes in the land. It fills our streets with drunkards, our alm-houses with loathsome wretches, our jails with poor criminals, and supplies our gibbets with victims.

It is agreed further and well understood, that

this is the regular effect of the traffic, and manufacture, and the use of this article. It is not casual, incidental, irregular. It is uniform, certain, deadly. It is not a periodical influence returning at distant intervals; but it is a pestilence breathing always—diffusing the poison when men sleep, and when they awake—by day and by night, in seed-time and harvest—attending the manufacture and sale of the article *always*.

Now the question is, whether this is an employment in which a moral man and a Christian man ought to be engaged? Is it such a business as his countrymen ought to approve? Is it such as his conscience and sober judgment approve? Is it such as his God and judge will approve?

In examining this, let it be remembered that the reason why this occupation is engaged in, and the sole reason, is to make money. It is not because it is supposed that it will benefit mankind, nor is it because the man supposes that duty to his Creator requires it, nor is it because it is presumed that it will promote public health, or morals, or happiness, but it is engaged in and pursued solely as a means of livelihood or of wealth. And the question, then, is reduced to a very narrow compass. In answering it, I invite the attention to a few very obvious but undeniable positions.

1. It is an employment which tends to counteract the very design of the organization of society. Society is organized on a benevolent principle, one of the best adapted instances of design and of benevolence anywhere to be found. It is on this principle that a lawful employment—an employment fitted to produce sustenance for a man and his family—will not interfere with the rights and happiness of others. It may be pursued without violating any of their rights, or infringing on their happiness in any way. Nay, it may not only not interfere with their rights and happiness, but it will tend to promote directly their welfare, by promoting the happiness of the whole.

Now we maintain that this traffic is a violation of this wise arrangement. It tends to sap the foundation of the whole economy. It is solely to benefit the trafficker, and it tends to evil—evil only, evil continually.

2. Every man is bound to pursue such a business as to a *render a valuable consideration* for that which he receives from others. Thus the merchant renders to the farmer, in exchange for the growth of his farm, that which