

Is it a privilege to bear the responsibility of sending abroad pestilence, and misery, and death?

"Our cause is going down," said Judas, "and a price is set upon the head of our master; and if I do not betray him some body else will. And why may not I as well pocket the money as another?" If you consider it a privilege to pocket the wages of unrighteousness, do so. But do not pretend to be the friend of God or man, while you count it a privilege to insult the one and run the other. This is the most common excuse for retailing. "I wish it were banished from the earth. But then what can I do?" What can you do? You can keep one man clear; you can wash your hands of this wretched business. And if you are not willing to do that, very little reliance can be placed on your good wishes. He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. I can hardly conceive any thing more inconsistent with every generous feeling, every noble principle, than retailing ardent spirit at the present day. The days of ignorance on this subject have passed by; every man acts with his eyes open. Look at the shop and company of the retailer. His principal furniture is a barrel, two or three bottles, and a half dozen glasses. He has a few other things just for a show, brooms, earthenware, crockery, &c. The inventory is soon made. I say he has a few other things—for even he is ashamed to appear as a dealer in spirit only. His shop needs no sign—every drunkard knows it as well as were by instinct. And even the blind might discover it by intelligible tokens, and the company is a combination of all the homeless and abandoned. And there stands the retailer in the midst of dissipation, and human nature, in the last stages of earthly wretchedness, in all its degraded forms and filthy appearances, surrounding him. And his whole business is to kindle strife, to encourage profanity, to excite every evil passion, to destroy all salutary fears to remove every restraint, and to produce a recklessness, that regards neither God nor man—and how often in the providence of God is he given over to drink his own poison, and to become the most wretched of this wretched company. Who can behold an instance of this kind without feeling that God is just to him. "He sunk down into the pit which he made, in the net which he hid is his own foot taken."

When we think of the years he has spent in this service, the quantity he has scattered abroad, and the misery he has caused, who can calculate the responsibility? And who would envy him, even though he had accumulated a fortune; or who would take his gains, burdened with all this responsibility? But some one will say, I neither make nor sell it. But you drink it occasionally, and your example goes to support the use of it. You see its tremendous effects, and yet you receive it into your houses, and bid God-speed. As far as your influence supports it and gives it urgency, so far are you a partaker of its evil deeds. If you lend your influence to make the path of ruin respectable, or will not help to affix disgrace to that path, God will not hold you guiltless. You cannot innocently stand aside and do nothing. A deadly poison is circulating over the land, carrying disease, and desolation, and death in its course. The alarm has been given—a hue and cry has been raised against it. Its deadly effects have been described, seen and felt. Its victims are of every class; and wherever wide the difference in fortune, education, intellect, it brings them to the same dead level. An effort has been made to stay the plague; and a success surpassing all expectation has crowned the effort. Still the plague rages to an immense extent. What will every good citizen do? Will he not clear his house, his shop, his premises of it? Will he not take every precaution to defend himself against it, and use his influence and his exertions to diminish its circulation, and thus diminish human misery? He fears God, or regards man, can he stop short of this? Can he, in the plenitude of his selfishness, stand up and say, "I'll make no promises—I'll not be bound—I am in no danger? If I can say this, and stand aloof, shall we count him a good citizen? I speak as unto wise men: judge ye what I say.—*Temperance Recorder.*

#### Remarks suggested by the foregoing Discourse.

1. If there had been men so mad and wicked, as to pay the price of such an ox, would they have been implicated in his

guilt? The application of this remark to those who pay men for making and dealing out intoxicating drinks, after they know their nature by their effects, is obvious.

2. This law shows the absurdity of the argument, often brought forward, in favor of alcohol, that it is a good creature of God. What though it were? Is not the ox so also? In the east, much increase was by the strength of the ox! Besides, is not man also a creature of God, and once a good and noble creature; and if the pernicious article in question, were removed out of the way, it would be far easier to restore him to what he was. Why then should the supposed creature be spared, at the expense of ruin to the real creature of God? How absurd to suppose that every creature of God is to be eaten or drunk! We see in this law that nothing was to be spared which opposed the great end of God in the creation of all things. The brazen serpent was made by the command of God, for a very important purpose, and as a memorial of what might be useful; but when, by the folly of man, it was perverted to a bad purpose, the good king Hezekiah destroyed it.

3. The owner of the ox could not be sure that the animal would kill any—all that can be said against him is that he had much reason to dread such an event—neither is he charged with keeping the ox after any was killed by him, but only after he was "wont to push;" much less is he charged with keeping the ox for the sake of pushing or killing and making gain thereby. But the dealers in the drunkard's favorite drink, continue the business after they have seen or known thousands and tens of thousands being ruined by it, and they prepare and keep this article, though not for the very purpose of ruining men, yet surely for the purpose which they see leads to that result, and they do so for gain. The death occasioned by the ox was what men would call accident—the effect of carelessness; the ruin occasioned by alcohol is the effect of a fixed purpose persevered in for gain. The law respecting the ox shews in how many ways men may be guilty of a breach of the sixth commandment without intending or committing actual murder. Thus we may and ought to see that the law of God is exceeding broad, but not more so than his glory and the happiness of man require it to be.

4. If a man knew that such an ox as here referred to were at or near the way side, and saw another man ignorant of his danger approaching that way, and neglected to warn him; would he not be chargeable with the same criminal indifference to human life as the owner of the ox? And does not this equally apply to all who know the danger of intoxicating drink, and do not warn their fellow men? Do they love their neighbour?

5. The above excellent discourse was written during the days of the old pledge, and therefore speaks only of ardent spirits; but if all the dismal effects of spirits may be and are produced by all drinks, containing an intoxicating quality; is it not foolish and even absurd to condemn one kind and commend or allow another containing the very same bewitching, deadly poison, producing all the fearful effects, which are condemned. If human life be criminally taken away, what matters it by what instrument? Well may Satan rejoice at the folly of those who think it wrong to kill men with alcohol in rum or brandy, and right to do the same thing with alcohol in something called wine!

6. To shew that the dealers in intoxicating drinks act more in opposition to the spirit of the law of God, than the owner of the ox, we may add, that the ox would only kill the body, but the other in many instances ruins body and soul for ever!