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TEMPERANCE IS THE MODERATE USE OF THINGS BENEFICIAL, AND ABSTINENCE FROM THINGS HURTFUL.

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Selected Articles.

THE VOYAGE OF LIFE.

AN ALLEGORY.

Life is a voyage, in the progress of which, we are continually changing scenes; we first leave childhood behind us, then youth, then the years of ripened manhood, then old age with his locks of snow. While musing upon the mutability and various scenes of human life, I sunk into a slumber amidst my meditations, and, on a sudden, found my ears filled with the tumults of labour, the shouts of alacrity, the shrieks of alarm, the whistle of the winds, and the dash of waters.

My astonishment for a time repressed my curiosity; but soon recovering myself so far as to enquire whither we were going, and what was the clamour and confusion? I was told that we were launching out into the ocean of life; that we had already passed the streights of infancy, in which multitudes had perished, some by the weakness and fragility of their vessels, and more by the folly, perverseness, or negligence, of those who undertook to steer them; and that we were now on the main sea abandoned to the winds and billows, without any other means of security than the care of the pilot, whom it was always in our power to choose, among great numbers that offered their direction and assistance.

I then looked round with anxious eagerness; and first turning my eyes behind me, saw a stream flowing through flowery islands, which every one that sailed along seemed to behold with pleasure; but no sooner touched, than the current, which though not noisy or turbulent, yet irresistible bore him away.

Beyond these islands all was darkness, nor could any of the passengers describe the shore at which he first embarked.— Before me, and on either side, was an expanse of waters violently agitated, and covered with so thick a mist, that the most perspicacious eye could see but a little way. It appeared to be full of rocks and whirlpools; for many sunk unexpectedly while they were courting the gale with full

sails, and insulting those whom they had left behind.

So numerous, indeed were the dangers, and so thick the darkness, that no caution could confer security. Yet there were many, who, by false intelligence, betrayed their followers into whirlpools, or by violence pushed those whom they found in their way against the rocks.

The current was invariable and insurmountable; but though it was impossible to sail against it, or return to the place that was once passed, yet was not so violent as to allow no opportunity for dexterity or courage, since, though none could retreat back from the danger, yet they might often avoid it by oblique direction.

It was, however, not very common to steer with much care or prudence; for, by some universal infatuation, every man appeared to think himself safe, though he saw his consorts every moment sinking round him; and no sooner had the waves closed over them, than their fate and their misconduct were forgotten; the voyages were pursued with the same jocund confidence; every man congratulated himself upon the soundness of his vessel, and believed himself able to stem the whirlpool in which his friend was swallowed, or glide over the rocks on which he was dashed: nor was it often observed that the sight of a wreck made any man change his course; if he turned aside for a moment, he soon forgot his rudder, and left himself again to the disposal of chance.

This negligence did not proceed from indifference, or from weariness of their present condition for not one of those who thus rushed upon destruction, failed, when he was sinking, to call loudly upon his associates for help which could not now be given him: and many spent their last moments in cautioning others against the folly by which they were intercepted in the midst of their course. Their benevolence was sometimes praised, but their admonitions were unregarded.

The vessels in which they embarked, being confessedly unequal to the turbulence of the stream of life, were visibly impaired in the course of the voyage: so that every passenger was certain that how long

soever he might, by favourable accidents or by incessant vigilance be preserved, he must sink at last.

This necessity of perishing might have been expected to sadden the gay, and intimidate the daring; at least to keep the melancholy and timorous in perpetual torments, and hinder them from any enjoyment of the varieties and gratifications which nature offered them as the solace of their labours; yet in effect none seemed less to expect destruction than those to whom it was most dreadful; they all had the art of concealing their danger from themselves; and those who knew their inability to bear the sight of the terrors that embarrassed their way, took care never to look forward, but found some amusement for the present moment, and generally entertained themselves by playing with hope, who was the constant associate of the voyage of life. Yet all that hope ventured to promise, even to those she favoured most, was, not that they should escape, but that they should sink at last; and with this promise every one was satisfied, though he laughed at the rest for seeming to believe it.

Hope, indeed, apparently mocked the credulity of her companions; for, in proportion as their vessels grew leaky, she redoubled her assurance of safety; and none were more busy in making provision for a long voyage, than they whom all but themselves saw likely to perish soon by irreparable decay.

In the midst of the current of life was the gulf of intemperance, a dreadful whirlpool interspersed with rocks, of which the pointed crags were concealed under water: and the tops covered with herbage, on which ease spread couches of repose; and with shades, where pleasure warbled the song of invitation. Within the sight of these rocks, all who sailed on the ocean of life must necessarily pass. Reason indeed was always at hand to steer the passengers through a narrow outlet, by which they might escape; but very few could by her remonstrances, be induced to put the rudder into her hand, without stipulating that she should approach so near unto the rocks of pleasure, that they might solace themselves with a short enjoyment of that