

And from this source flowed fast the innumerable streams of vicissitudes and revolutions, that have conducted our country, from that stage of barbarian simplicity, through all the trials and struggles which have attended her, to the position she now occupies among the nations of the earth. And deeply is it to be regretted that—though our forefathers have always stood foremost on the blood-stained field of liberty:—however truly and devotedly they have contested the dearest rights of man:—however bravely fought or nobly fell, in the sacred cause of truth and religion, and the glorious freedom we now enjoy;—they have ever been enslaved to the most debasing habits of intemperance, implanted first in our native soil by the “all conquering arms of Rome.”

The history of England but too clearly proves the excessive intemperance of our own countrymen in all ages.

William of Malmesbury states, in relation to the Anglo-Saxons, that “the nobility were much addicted to lust and gluttony; but excessive drinking was the common vice of all ranks of the people, in which they spent whole nights and days without intermission.”

King Edmund I. perished by the hand of the assassin, in the midst of his courtiers, who were so much intoxicated as to be unable to render him any assistance.

The drunkenness carried on in the English camp, previous to the battle of Hastings, is quite proverbial; and was evidently the principal cause of their defeat. On the night before the engagement, the English gave themselves up to the enjoyment of their “cups,” and the camp resounded with the voice of riot and inebriate mirth; thus affording to the more temperate Normans an easy conquest.