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THE DEMON ALCOHOL!

THE GREAT DEMORALIZER.

A Sermon preached Dec. 2nd, 1868, in the First Baptist Church, Yarmouth, N. S.,
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Daniel, 5, 1 and 30. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans slain."

In the character and conduct of this man Belshazzar, is brought before us an aspect of the liquor traffic, that is so wide in extent that it touches every phase of civilized life, from the Queen on the throne down to the poor wretch who murdered a helpless cripple in Halifax last week. But not only in the lands of civilization, it also penetrates the darkest regions of heathenism, turns the once healthy Indian into a full fledged drunkard, and leaves him a wreck both in body and soul.

This drunken king, and later on this dead king, presents to us this proposition. "What is the liquor traffic's relation to man's MORALS?" What is meant by morals? Let us be clear at the outset, and define so simply, that we shall not be misunderstood. By the word moral, we mean the quality or character of a man's actions. It is by what a man does with his tongue and hand, that we call him a man who has good morals or bad morals. When we speak of God's moral laws, we mean those laws which He has expressed by words, the divine purity and origin of which have been proven by divine actions. These laws were given for the guidance of men. Moral, means, manner, or way, and these laws are given to us that we may so act that our actions shall be morally good, that the manner or character of our doings by tongue and hand, shall have the approval of the Moral Governor of the Universe. In Eccles. 7. 29 we read that "God hath made man UPRIGHT; but they have sought out many inventions." The uprightness of that passage refers to man's moral nature. That is to say, that when God made man, he made him morally erect; there was no stoop, or sin in him, but his soul was morally upright. When we speak of the "Fall of man," we mean that in disobeying his Creator, his moral erectness or rectitude was lost, that after his sin and because of his sin, his tendency was morally bad. The earliest proof of this was the murder of Abel by his brother, and later on this moral evil reached its climax, when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And He swept all away but eight souls. Even then God did not sweep away the moral badness of man imported into his nature at the fall, for it soon burst forth anew from the very man who had been the saviour of the race, when his sons found him drunk in his tent. If we say that a man's outward conduct is morally good or morally bad, what is the cause of the action that gets the man labelled so? You must admit that a man is not an automaton, but that he is a free agent, and will act according to his own free choice. Then if a man does an evil thing understandingly, he intended to do evil before he did it. And his inward heart must have had an evil motive, which in character corresponded to the outward action.

Now the great question before us to-night is, does intoxicating liquor influence men to do right or wrong? Does it exercise any power inwardly, that affects a man's conduct outwardly? Does it help to make a man morally good or morally bad? Let us look at the man in the text. What was the relation between the wine cup and his morals? Did the liquor which he drank inwardly so influence him, that outwardly he acted more nobly, more wisely, and more kindly? When the liquor was not in him how did he act? When sober he ruled like a king. When drunk, he committed an act, which was a great insult to the God of heaven. His father Nebuchadnezzar brought from the Holy Temple at Jerusalem the golden vessels which were used by the priests in the services of the Sanctuary. Nebuchadnezzar had too much reverence for the holy vessels to use them for anything, and kept them carefully guarded in his treasure house. Yes, and so did his son when he was sober. But there came an hour when Belshazzar sat down in the banquetting house, surrounded by a thousand of his lords, each arrayed in court robes bejewelled and costly. The tables groaned beneath the weight of the superbly prepared viands, and the silver tankards glistened, and the golden bowls dazzled as they reflected the brilliant lights of the Candelabra. By the liveried servants, the

ruby liquor was poured from the vessels into the cups, then lifted to the lips of king and courtiers, then of its own free will it crept upward and brainward, till it made the king jolly and jocular. Half drunken men generally like to have some fun, and in this state of rollicking frenzy the king thought it would be great fun to bring those Jerusalem vessels, and drink out of them, and praise his idols. And in a fatal moment he gave the order to bring those vessels of gold onto the banquet table. With trembling hands the servants place them before the king, and then filled them with the fire-water; then the jolly king lifted them to his lips and quaffed the mocking wine. He handed them to his princes, and wives, and his concubines, and all drank the health of his gods. That action was a great sacrilege; it was morally a bad deed for it was sinning against the God of heaven, thus to prostitute what He had sanctified, to the low purposes of the debauching banqueters. When Belshazzar was sober he would never have thought of using those sacred vessels for such a purpose. With a brain free from the blighting power of strong drink, he would no more have thought of drinking out of those consecrated cups, than of cutting off his right hand. While the carousing monarch was having some "fun" in making a breach in the moral law, the God of the moral law was preparing to execute the penalty on the guilty king. Like a flash of lightning there "appeared the fingers of a man's hand and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace." "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." "God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it." "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." "Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." The king saw the hand that wrote: his countenance changed; and his thoughts troubled him; for he awoke from his drinking reverie to a sense of the awfulness of that God whom he had so basely insulted, but too late to avoid the doom he merited. Listen to the grand charge which the great Daniel brings against him while translating the mysterious writing. Referring to his father's exaltation and humiliation, he says to the offending king, "And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knowest all this: but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of His House before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, HAST THOU NOT GLORIFIED?" "IN THAT NIGHT WAS BELSHAZZAR THE KING OF THE CHALDEANS SLAIN."

Now, sirs, what is the relation between intoxicating liquor and man's morals? Is it not the same relation as that which exists between a fiend and an angel: between Christ and Belial: between Heaven and hell? Who murdered Belshazzar on that memorable night? Darius? NO. According to the reasoning of a common school boy, any one can see that strong drink did it. He was a great man, a mighty wine man, but the ruby wine laid him low. He was an intelligent man, surrounded by culture and refinement, but the mocking draught turned him into an idiot, and under the spell of its frenzy wrought an evil deed, that like the boomerang returned in destructive force on his own head. But say you, "He chose to drink the liquor, and therefore he was responsible for its effects on his brain and consequent death." I grant you the correctness of your argument. I never said that Belshazzar was not responsible for taking that which he knew would stupify him. I know that he who drinks liquor is a suicidist, while the alcohol is at the same time a murderer. Belshazzar's death was a joint work between his will and the wine. What I assert and have proved is this, that liquor so affects a man's brain, that mighty organ of thought, that under its muddling influence, he loses his manliness and all control of his passions, and gives expression to words of the vilest character, conducts himself more like a devil than a man. What I assert and have proved is this, that when a man voluntarily becomes a slave to his alcohol, that like a mighty tyrant it lowers the moral tone of his heart, forces his moral trend downwards, and so thoroughly DE-