

the wine would ferment and burst the bottles."

The fact that old wine was considered the best, need not imply that it contained alcohol. The taste or qualities of old wine might be more esteemed, in the same manner that some articles of food are more esteemed when old than new.

The words drunken and drunkenness in Scripture, in all probability mean sometimes the immoderate use of the harmless as well as of the intoxicating wine. The following passage in Ecclesiastes, seems to favor this understanding:—"Blessed art thou, O land! when thy princes eat in due season, for strength and not for drunkenness."—10. 17.

Drunkenness, no doubt, was a word analogous to gluttony, and might frequently mean an excessive or sensual use of a good article, without necessarily implying, that a man had swallowed poison.

In such texts as—"Wine that gladdeneth the heart of man"—"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." We may, without violence, understand that the unfermented wine, like a good meal of wholesome food, stimulated the stomach in a natural and agreeable manner, without supposing that it contained the fiery, intoxicating and poisonous principle alcohol.

Strong drink (*shukher*) is generally understood to mean the juice of the date or other fruits of the palm tribe, which was thicker and more pungent than the juice of the grape, but like the latter might be either fermented or unfermented: consequently, the famous passage in Deuteronomy, cannot be construed into a permission to use intoxicating liquor.

It must not be supposed that I am attempting to disprove the existence of intoxicating drinks in old times; the allusions to drunkenness and its effects are too common, both in sacred and profane writers, to leave any doubt that the nations to whom I have alluded, frequently abused themselves by the use of alcoholic liquors. But I think it has been made apparent that *all* the drinks which they used as articles of luxury or instruments of courtesy and conviviality, were not intoxicating: the wine which was commonly drunk, and drunk with the approbation of the good and the wise, being of a harmless nature. This wine appears, however, to have been considered an article of luxury, as we find the priests at particular times, and the Nazarites and stricter religious sects, such as the Essenes, always abstaining from it, which satisfactorily accounts

for the outcry which was raised against our Saviour for being a wine bibber. The Jews being astonished that one professing to be so holy as Jesus, should not mortify the flesh, like the Essenes and John the Baptist, by abstaining from so luxurious an article as wine. But there is no need for imagining that the Saviour of mankind countenanced, by his example, the smallest use of an article which was so certain to be abused, and to be productive of incalculable evils, as alcohol.

If we understand that the wine commonly used by the Jews, was preserved in a syrup form, and diluted with water when about to be used, the miracle at Cana will appear in a new light.

The bridegroom had diluted and served up his wine. When that was exhausted, Jesus was told by his mother, "They have no wine." Rather than allow the ceremony to terminate abruptly, and the guests to be disappointed, he consents to supply them miraculously with more wine: and tells the servants to fill the water pots with water. They are probably surprized, seeing that no wine has first been put in; but his mother's injunction, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," commands obedience. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water which was made wine, he says to the bridegroom, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine (that is wine not much diluted), and when men have well drunk, that which is worse (that is more diluted), but thou hast kept the good wine till now." In other words, the miracle had been so complete, as to transform the water into the richest sort of wine.

About the use of wine in the Eucharist, it would appear that our Saviour expressly guards against any mistake being made with alcoholic wines, by using the words "fruit of the vine." A mode of expression which renders the universal error (as I believe it to be) of Christian churches, in employing intoxicating wine, the less excusable. Yet this error has been so general, and alcohol has been considered, by what process of reasoning I know not, so essential to this sacred ordinance, that the Kirk of Scotland, if I am correctly informed, authorised the use of whiskey or beer at the Lord's Supper, in certain cases, when wine could not be obtained. And so strong is this prepossession in the minds of mankind yet, that we have recently seen all the Tem-

perance men in the United States (and they are neither few nor pusillanimous), absolutely bullied into a renunciation of the right of discussion upon this point, and made to say, that with the question of wine at the Lord's Supper, they, as Temperance men, had nothing to do. As if it were not a primary duty on their part, both as Temperance men and Christians, to purify and preserve the table of the Lord from the pollution of alcohol, if such they considered it. Let it not be understood that I have said one word against the use of wine in this sacred ordinance; I only wish it to be such wine as our blessed Lord himself used.

It may be objected that what I have advanced is only circumstantial or presumptive evidence, and not direct proof. I answer, that if there be any doubt about passages of Scripture, it is perfectly clear that we should adopt the understanding which is most in accordance with our knowledge of the goodness and consistency of God's character. To me, it would require proof as clear as the sun at noon day, to establish that God ever sanctioned the use of such a destructive and misery-creating article as alcohol. But instead of the proof being clear on this side, it decidedly preponderates, as I have attempted to show, on the other side, namely, that the Deity never sanctioned, either by his prophets or his Son, the use of intoxicating wine or alcoholic drinks of any kind.

Thus then, the mind should be left perfectly unbiassed to form the opinions respecting alcohol, which reason and experience suggest; and these opinions I cannot better express, than by borrowing the words of a distinguished medical writer upon physiology and dietetics, in the *Metropolitan Magazine* for January 1837:—

"It is the effect," says he, "of prussic acid, to lower the nervous system below the natural standard. It is the effect of ardent spirit first to excite the nervous system above, and then to depress it below, the natural standard also. Both these effects are poisonous—both will destroy life, if carried far enough—neither will destroy life if not carried far enough. Prussic acid, therefore, and ardent spirit, are equally poisons, though neither will destroy life unless taken in sufficient quantity." After detailing several proofs and experiments, he goes on to say:—"Here, then, we have direct and irrefragable proof, that ardent spirit is not only a poison, but a poison of the very same nature as prussic acid, producing the same effects—killing by the same means," and "*the intoxicating power of wine and ale depends upon the ardent spirit which they contain.*"—p. 25. In another place he asserts that these drinks are never either necessary or useful.

* This is susceptible of another interpretation. The Bible and Talmud both inform us, that strong narcotic or intoxicating drinks were given to criminals immediately before execution, to stupify them and deaden the sense of pain.

† This may appear absurd to those who have not read; but hear what Potter, in his Grecian Antiquities, says:—"The wine was generally mixed with water." "There was no certain proportion observed in this mixture. Some to one vessel of wine poured in two of water; some to two of wine mixed five of water; and others, more or less as they pleased."—Vol. ii. p. 359, 360. Who ever heard that the habitual drinkers of alcoholic wines mixed them with water in any proportion?